



Wisdom for Work
Colossians 3:23-24
September 1, 2019

Labor Day was started to celebrate the contributions that the Labor movement made to working people. In the late 1800s, people of all ages often worked exceedingly long hours (even 7-12s) in extremely unsafe conditions. Even children as young as five often toiled in mills, factories, and mines, earning a fraction of what adults made. The Labor movement improved matters considerably, but still work can be difficult in various ways. Today we'll consider some of God's wisdom for work.

All this will apply to both men and women who work. Any man or woman who has a family has a responsibility for them that must be met (Ephesians 5:21-6:4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Peter 3:1-7), and both are wrong if they neglect them by work. If anyone wonders, Scripture indicates that it is indeed possible for a woman to work outside her home at least in some degree and still be an exemplary wife and mother (Proverbs 31:10-31).

1. Don't be a talker, slacker, or sluggard (Proverbs 14:23; 18:9; 21:25; cf. 12:11).
2. Those who are unwilling to work, should suffer the consequences (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12; cf. Proverbs 16:26). This is different from being unable to work.
3. Instead, work! It is good, right, and godly to work (Proverbs 12:11; 14:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:8).

4. There are multiple good reasons for working, and we need to be conscious of them. First, we can support ourselves and our families (Proverbs 12:11; 14:23; cf. 16:26) and not be dependent on others (1 Thessalonians 4:12; cf. 2:9; 3:8). Second, so that we have something to share with people in need (Ephesians 4:28). Third, when coupled with leading a quiet life and minding our own business, work is an aspect of our daily lives that can win the respect of outsiders (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; cf. 1 Timothy 6:1-2). Work can be Christian!
5. It is right to work wholeheartedly and well (Colossians 3:23-24; cf. 1 Timothy 6:1-2; 1 Peter 2:18).
6. But don't overwork (Proverbs 23:4; cf. Isaiah 55:1-3). "No one on his deathbed ever said, 'I wish I had spent more time at the office'" (Paul Tsongas).
7. If people work for you, treat them fairly, including paying them properly (James 5:4; Colossians 4:1; Ephesians 6:9).

Most of the Bible's wisdom for work is fairly basic, but it gives us confidence that we are doing the right thing. There are many other issues and also an unlimited number of specific problems and situations we face at work today. A good number of these have to do with people and relationships, and much of the wisdom God gives for relationships in general can be applied to these. For other matters, I encourage you to pray for wisdom (James 1:5) and seek counsel from spiritually mature Christ followers (Proverbs 12:15; 13:10; 19:20).

Finally, the language of work is also used in the Bible to describe spiritual serving, including that done by people who are supported by the church as well as those who work regular jobs.

One reason it is so important to learn healthy boundaries and practices in regard to our jobs is so that we will have time and energy to be "abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

