

Sermon: Living Your New Life in Your Work

IN *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. What would be your 'dream' job?
2. What was the difference between your 'best' and 'worst' jobs? (include volunteer, hobbies, paid/unpaid positions)

UP *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. How would the early Christian Church have considered 'slavery' in light of what Paul wrote in 1 Tim 1:8-11?
Spend some time researching what is said in the following links:

<https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/passages/related-articles/slavery-in-the-new-testament>

<https://www.compellingtruth.org/slavery-New-Testament.html>

2. How do Gen 1:1, 26 and 2:7, 15 indicate God's principles of 'work'?
How do 1 Cor 10:31 and Col 3:17, 23 add to our understanding that God had a good plan for work?
3. Genesis 2:16, 17 are pivotal verses about God's perfect plan for man.
What happened?
How did this affect 'work'? (Genesis 3:17-19) What effects do you see today?
How might the statistic that only 1 in 3 people are satisfied and fulfilled in their work be a result of this?
- 4." 'When you leave for work on Monday morning, or go to school or college, or to volunteer, you would be correct in saying to your loved ones, 'See you later, I'm off to worship!' "
What did Pastor Henry mean by this statement?
How does Romans 12:1 impact this idea?

OUT *Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community*

1. How can Pastor Henry's sermon help expand your understanding of 'work'?
2. What steps can you take to treat your work world as a place of 'worship'?
How can the group pray for you?

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

THE WORD (NIV)

Colossians 3:22-4:1

²²Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism. . . Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

1 Timothy 1:8-11

⁸We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. ⁹We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine ¹¹that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

Genesis 1:1, 26; 2:7, 15

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . . ²⁶Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." . . . ⁷Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. . . ¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

1 Corinthians 10:31

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Colossians 3:17

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

Sermon Study Summary

Our study of Colossians 3 continues as Paul explains that putting our trust in Jesus and surrendering our lives to Him as Lord and Saviour will have a radical impact (in a good and Godly way) on our relationship with friends, our spouse and family, and the people with whom we work. Today's sermon begins with Paul's words in Colossians 3:22 – 4:1 to show what BEING IN CHRIST looks like in our work. To understand more fully and apply the principles here, this is the first of two studies. It is important we first address the issue of slavery, and then give the big picture of what the Bible teaches about work.

To be clear – slavery is as abhorrent to our Lord as it is to us today. Paul, inspired by God, clearly spells out that slavery is unacceptable to our God. (1 Timothy 1:8-11) Did Paul condone slavery by not condemning it? No, Paul is simply recognizing slavery as the reality in that day (Col 3:22). In the Roman Empire there were over 60 million slaves. Slavery was entrenched in all levels of society. The typical 'home,' or household, consisted of a father, a mother, their children and the servants (slaves) who worked for them. Most businesses were family-operated and the work was based in the household. Not until the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century did people leave their homes to go 'away to work.' For most slaves life was not filled with torture and abuse. Slaves were a valuable business asset and were generally not treated cruelly (unlike women and children of that day). But slaves were the property and under the absolute authority of the master of the home, a loss and lack of freedom no doubt creating strong and life-long resentment towards their owners.

Here Paul is addressing those slaves who have become followers of Christ and saying – since your life and identity are now IN CHRIST – this is how Christ would have you behave and respond to your master. Paul also addresses those slave owners who have come to faith in Christ, informing them how they are now to treat their slaves. Though Paul clearly disapproves of slavery, he does not tell them to go on strike or rebel. Instead he gives guidance to both the slave and the slave-owner about how to respond to the situation they are in – now that they are Christ-followers. Christ's mission was not to start a revolution against the rulers of the day. His mission was to start a revolution of the heart transformed by God's love, and thereby to begin to change what is wrong with the world. Paul reminds everyone of their new life and identity in Christ; challenges them to live and love like Christ, to think and behave in a radically different way from that of others in their culture. By sowing these seeds of heart change, the love of Jesus Christ started changing those hearts, and as their hearts changed, so did relationships, homes and evil systems.

With this background in mind, can we now see these principles taught by Paul applied to our work, and what it means to represent Christ in our workplace? How satisfied are we in our work? Often, we feel underappreciated, ignored, bitter, upset by office politics. Work feels like a necessary evil, something to endure in order to be able to do what we really want to do. Research tells us that only 1 out of 3 is fulfilled in their work, yet we spend nearly 40% of our entire life working. But this is not what God intended work to be. If we want to find satisfaction and fulfillment in our work, it is critical that we understand God's plan and design for work. Note the use of the word "work" – even though all employment is work, not all work is employment. For instance, the homemaker managing the home and family; the student studying; the volunteer performing an unpaid task – all are working. Also note the difference between being unable to work and being unwilling to work.

God's plan for our work involves at least 3 principles: a) work originates with God (Gen 1); God created – and said it was all good, blessed the 7th day, made it holy and rested (Gen 2:3); b) God calls us to join Him in His work (Gen 1:26) Before sin entered the Garden, (Gen 2:15) work was intended as a blessing, part of the original design for us in His image, with skills, abilities, strength and intelligent minds. Work was NOT a punishment for sin; and c) all work matters to God (Col 3:17, 1 Cor 10:31). Our highest calling is to glorify God in ALL WE DO, including our work. All honest work, no matter how insignificant it may seem to us or to others, is valuable to God.

We see several **major truths** in the Scriptures about work. **First**, that God has a plan for work and He intended work to be a blessing for us. **Second**, that God's plan for work was broken by sin. Adam and Eve could enjoy the fruit of every tree in the garden, except one. God gave them both opportunity and power to choose, to trust and obey, or to reject Him. They used their God-given freedom to say no, to rebel – that is what sin is. A separation came between God and man – all creation was affected, including work. Though work still retains some of its original beauty and even when it is good, it is broken. A) Sin made work a struggle. Gen 3:17-19 lists the consequences. We are also frustrated in the workplace; overlooked or ignored, with no opportunities or need for our skills and abilities. B) Sin made work FUTILE. Gen 3:19 - Sin brought death into the world, and what we accomplish here will be wiped away. C) SIN turned work into an IDOL. Gen 11:4 At Babel, the nations wanted to make a name for themselves – motivated by pride – the heart of all sin and the mindset that leads to idolatry. So is there any hope?

This leads to the **Third** major truth. JESUS CHRIST brought meaning back to our work. By His death on the cross, He provided a way for us to live eternally with God, and for Him to become the centre of our lives, our relationships and our work. He replaces the struggle, the futility and the idolatry of work with Himself. Jesus did not remove the curse on our work, but He does replace the meaninglessness of it. **First**, Jesus replaces the struggle of work - with His perspective: (Col 3:23) As we offer our bodies as living sacrifices in life, so do we worship God through our daily work. (Rom 12:1) And while worshiping God with our work, God is working in us to transform our character. We are learning patience and servant-hood. Further, God is transforming us into the image of His Son, Jesus. Our spiritual growth is in the closer relationships of our home, volunteer ministries, schools and workplaces. God's word promises that **because Jesus lives**, our work and everything we do to the glory of God, is not in vain! (1 Cor 15:58)