

MEN AT
WORK

M E N A T
W O R K

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**Regular Baptist Press
1300 North Meacham Road
Schaumburg, Illinois 60173-4806**

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© 2004

Regular Baptist Press • Schaumburg, Illinois

1-800-727-4440 • www.regularbaptistpress.org

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RBP5317 • ISBN: 1-59402-030-2

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YOUR WORK

When you think about how to be a godly man, do you think about your job? Not many people think of “work” as being a characteristic of godliness, and yet it is. God works, and God created work! Genesis 1 describes one of God’s significant work weeks. His work on earth began with the creation of the world, continued with the task of separating the light from the darkness, included the finest details imprinted on the first man and woman, and ended with a day of rest.

Creation was far from God’s only work. God demonstrated His ultimate work through Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, which brings salvation to man (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4). Christ is currently working to build a home in Heaven for all His children (John 14:2, 3). Ephesians 2:10 describes every child of God as God’s “workmanship.”

As creatures made in the image of God, we are made to work. Adam’s first job description included naming all the animals and subduing the earth. And you thought you had a lot to do!

When sin entered the world, work became difficult. Genesis 3:19 states, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.” In light of this curse brought upon humanity, men need God’s help and one another’s encouragement in order to become God’s men at work.

Most men will spend almost one hundred thousand hours in their lifetimes working at a job. That is an enormous investment of time and energy. The goal of this study guide is to help men experience God’s plan for work rather than merely enduring the time at work.

1

PURPOSE AND VALUE OF WORK

Why do you work? Imagine going to your mailbox and finding a letter informing you that a distant relative has died and has left you ten million dollars. Stop and think, *What would I do about my job?*

Some men would take a couple days off work to develop an investment and spending plan. Many would quit their jobs altogether. What would you do?

How we put bread on our tables is a huge part of life. Most men are serious about their responsibility to provide for their families. However, God's plan for work is deeper than work merely being a means to pay bills. God has planted into the heart of all men the need to work.

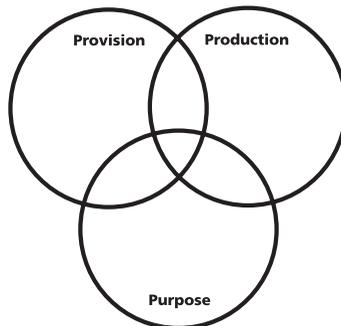
Let's take a look at how work originated. The first few chapters of the Bible show God at work.

1. The word "work" first appears in Genesis 2:2 and 3. What stands out to you about God's work in these verses? _____

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Many people dream of the day when they won't have to go to work any longer. How many of us have stood in a long line, waiting to pay for gasoline or milk, and have heard some guy boldly proclaim, "If I hit the jackpot, I'll quit my job so fast it will make my boss's head spin," and then watched as he bought twenty dollars worth of lottery tickets? This scenario might hit a little closer to home with some men: eagerly counting down the days to retirement as a time "when work will be no more," or so we think. These attitudes are evidence of the fact that many men have never discovered the true point of work.

The Bible teaches that work includes three primary goals: provision, production, and purpose. The challenge is to find and maintain a balance within these three areas of work. Have you noticed how tough it is to find balance?



Area 1: Provision

One reason why we work is to put food on the table and pay the bills. The man who desires to follow God must move beyond seeing only his own needs to gaining a vision for the greater needs of God's work. This progression could be viewed in this way:



Place a mark on the line where you view yourself today.

Purpose and Value of Work

2. On day six of creation God created man and woman. Look at the account in Genesis 1:26–31. In Genesis 1:28 and 29 God gave Adam and Eve jobs. What were they? _____

Other Bible passages expand upon this principle of provision.

3. What steps did the apostle Paul list in 1 Thessalonians 4:11 and 12 as ways to prevent being in need? _____

4. What warning does 1 Timothy 5:8 give about not providing for one's own? _____

5. Who else should we provide for according to Ephesians 4:28?

Area 2: Production

The second goal of work is production. What kind of lives would we have today if Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Benjamin Franklin, or Bill Gates had been lazy?

God instructed Adam to cultivate the earth. Think of all the productivity it took to fulfill God's command. We work to produce those items that improve our effort to "cultivate" the earth.

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Just as God stepped back after each day of creation and said, “It is good,” we desire to step back after a job is done and say, “It is good!” A man who works all day and feels he has accomplished nothing is frustrated by that lack of production. God wants us to be productive, and He may even navigate us through jobs in order to bring us to a place where our presence and impact are needed.

6. In the following passages in Genesis, what “production” did God expect from Adam?

• Genesis 1:28 _____

• Genesis 2:15 _____

• Genesis 2:16, 17 _____

• Genesis 2:19, 20 _____

7. What does your job produce that can improve efforts to “cultivate” the earth? _____

Area 3: Purpose

The third area of work is purpose. Jesus said in Matthew 18:11

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that He came “to save that which was lost.” Paul’s mission was to preach the good news about Jesus (1 Corinthians 9:16). Moses’ purpose was to lead Israel to the Promised Land (Exodus 3:10). Joseph’s purpose was to organize Egypt in preparation for a famine (Genesis 38—41; 45:5). Nehemiah’s purpose was to rebuild Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:1–5). The greater the purpose that a job has, the greater fulfillment that job brings.

8. What attitude did Jesus have about the work He did?

• John 4:34 _____

• John 9:4 _____

• John 17:4 _____

When God defined man’s job on the earth as “be fruitful, and multiply, and . . . subdue [the earth]” (Genesis 1:28), God was saying that Adam’s “job” mattered. Every morally responsible job has some meaningful purpose in God’s process. So your job matters too!

Jesus knew His work was valuable because it pleased His Father. Throughout His earthly life Jesus modeled these balanced characteristics of work, and He continues to do so. Jesus **provides** for our eternal need of salvation and for our everyday needs (John 3:16; Philippians

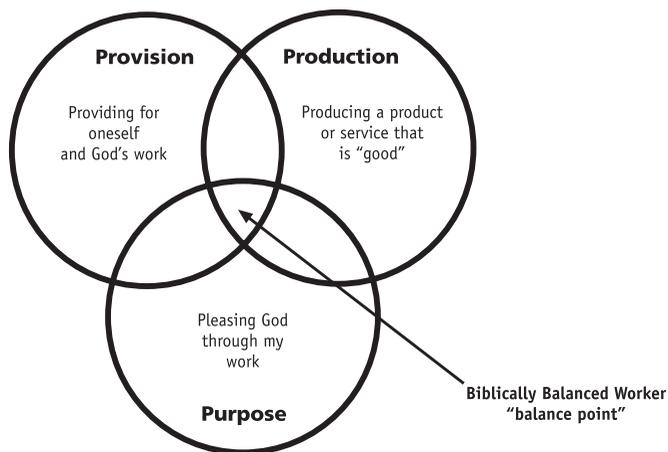
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4:19). Jesus demonstrates the goal of **production** through the church (Matthew 16:18). Jesus demonstrates the **purpose** of His work in us (John 15:8–11; Ephesians 5:27).

9. What do Colossians 3:23 and 24 teach about whom you are to please with your work? _____

The attitude you have about your job is important to God. Whether you are a factory worker, a salesperson, a missionary, a grocer, a computer technician, a doctor, a pastor, a lawyer, a mechanic, or an office manager, your work matters to God! When what we do is powered by the motivation to please God as our true employer, the provision, production, and purpose of our work combine to greatly reward us. God seems to want at least two things in the heart of a person as it relates to his job: (1) right actions concerning the job, and (2) the right attitude about the job.

Look again at the balance required in the three areas of work. The pursuit of this balance as modeled by Christ will unlock God's unbelievable, fulfilling potential for your work.





Heart Check

Work is important to God.

Work helps you be a **provider**.

Work helps you serve others.

Work enables you to be **productive**.

Work has **purpose** in life.

Place an X where you are on the balanced work diagram (p. 14).

What actions or attitudes can you take at work to move you toward the balance point? _____

Verses for Meditation

“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23, 24).