

Session 4

Man as Worker - Adam

Genesis 1 – 3

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” Genesis 2:15

- I. The challenge to the role of men as workers in our society.
 - A. Work has become a means to an end, not an end.
 1. At the creation, man (and woman) were created to work, not as a means to an end but as an end in itself (we are not told why). Gen. 2:15, 18
 2. Only after the fall did work become despised. Gen. 2:19
 3. Today, for many of us, work is so despised that we work only to pay the bills and to retire.
 4. We value ourselves frequently for our ability to obtain a good job through negotiation rather than skill. We value our work on the job in terms of how much we can get for as little effort as possible (more pay, better benefits, fewer hours).
 - B. The goal of not working had moved from fantasy to near reality for some until the recent economic turndown.
 1. Early retirement (by 35?).
 2. Putting machinery into play to do our work and therefore sit by and watch. (e.g. computerized psychotherapy)
 3. Putting capital into play and “letting your money work for you.”
 - C. We have become increasingly separated from the fruits of our labors.
 1. The time between completed work and payoff has increased dramatically in many sectors (e.g. we may never see a product on which we are working make it to the market).
 2. The separation between our work and the product has become increasingly distant. (e.g., Few people make a complete automobile or boat today.)
 3. We may work on a proposal for weeks or months, only to lose in the competition for the proposal.
 4. We witness a significant disparity between some very difficult work for low pay (such as law enforcement) and very little work for high pay (many professional athletes).
 5. We are increasingly unlikely to be recognized for the quality of our work and our loyalty to the company. *Anyone* can be laid off.
 - D. We are working harder than ever. Yet the stress from work is not the satisfactory exhaustion felt by the worker on the farm or the manual laborer.
 - E. Our identity as a “worker” has undergone remarkable changes (few us today are proud that we are simply “good workers”).
 - F. Little in our society tells us to value work in and of itself.

- G. The problems with work in society are especially felt by men, for men are, in general, more identified with their work than women.
- II. The challenge to role of men as workers in the church.
- A. We have come to look upon the church as a refuge from work.
 - B. Our leadership roles in the church frequently are separated from work, at least on the surface (praying in public, leading singing). At times, “church work” for men becomes more an ego trip than service.
 - C. We are as likely (perhaps more likely) to praise a man for secular work as for work in the church, except for those “works” which are public (such as leading a prayer).
 - D. As in society, the fruits of many church works are not evident during the period of work. (ESL and evangelism)
 - E. The “works” of the church are frequently associated with more feminine concepts of work. (preparing a meal, visiting the sick, teaching young children) These “works” appear foreign to men (perhaps they shouldn’t appear foreign but they do).
 - F. The “works” of the church are frequently too closely tied to “evangelism”. Don’t misunderstand this. It is as if we feel we must see the evangelistic result of conversion of others before we value it (and this sounds very self-serving to many outside the church). Perhaps we should simply do the good work and let the “work” glorify God as God gives the increase. (Matthew 5:16; I Corinthians 3:6)
 - G. Though we may give lip service to the importance of good works in the man’s Christian life, we don’t, as a church, practice what we preach. We don’t expect our men to work. This may appear strange, but consider the characteristics of a “faithful” man in the church as we view them.
 - 1. Attends service regularly.
 - 2. Faithful to his wife.
 - 3. A kind father.
 - 4. Leads prayer, waits on the Lord’s table. Occasional teaching (not required).
 - 5. Contributes generously to the congregation.
 - 6. Comes to some special events (such as a seminar).
 - 7. Is friendly, greets others.

Where’s the work? Where is the personal sense found in these men that they are working for the Lord?

- III. Man put in the garden to work. (Genesis 2:8, 15)
- A. God placed man in, of all places, a garden. In such a place, the man could worship God (he communed with God and was constantly surrounded by God’s creation) and he could work (gardens are a process, not a product).

- B. Eden is perfect but there is no magic present. Gardens cannot look after themselves. They are not self-perpetuating.
- C. The Hebrew word *abad* translated “work” normally means to serve.
- D. The Hebrew word *samar*, translated to “take care”, basically means to exercise great care, to the point, if necessary, of guarding.
- E. Physical labor is therefore not a consequence of sin. Eden is not a paradise in which man passes his time in idyllic and uninterrupted bliss with no demands on his daily schedule.
- F. From the Genesis (and Old Testament) account, it is clear that worship and work are closely connected. It would be difficult to worship if one does not work.
 - 1. The day of worship is actually the day of rest from work (work and worship are in a constant cycle). Genesis 2:2, 3; Exodus 34:21
 - 2. The first fruits of work are an integral part of worship. Deuteronomy 26:10
 - 3. We can best praise God for his mighty works when we develop some concept of work itself. Ps. 19:1

IV. Steps toward getting men to work in the church.

- A. We must place a greater emphasis on selfless service (service which does not directly benefit the individual by building up that individual’s ego, service which does not directly benefit the church’s size, reputation or bank account). (Phil. 2:5 – 8)
- B. We must identify and emphasize the nature of good works. (Gal. 6:10)
 - 1. Working with our hands. (I Th. 4:11)
 - 2. Working with our “backs”. (Ephesians 6:10)
 - 3. Working behind the scenes. (Matt. 6:3)
 - 4. Working to help others. (Matt. 10:42)
 - 5. Working from the motivation of brotherly love. (Acts 20:35)
- C. We must emphasize that a central aspect of the Christian life is a life dedicated to good works. (We are initiated into Christ for a life of worship and work – Matt. 22:37)
- D. We must develop a church atmosphere that emphasizes the importance of work and service.
 - 1. In the workplace, we expect there to be defined work associated whenever we are hired to a position. In the church, we should expect every member to assume a work (everyone is a minister). Jesus calls us to a life of Christian work.
 - 2. We should attempt, whenever possible, to match the job to the talents of the individual. Nevertheless, we should not expect the individual to invent the job. The church needs workers! Matt. 9:35 – 38 is not just referring to evangelism. If we cannot identify clear and defined needs which we can present to a new convert, what we are basically saying is, “Our church

really doesn't need your help. But if you can find something to do, we will certainly support you in that work." Remember, the apostles appointed the seven men because there was a specific benevolence need in the Jerusalem church. Acts 6:1-7.

- E. We must tie work and worship more closely. We must tie work and teaching more closely (the apprenticeship).
- V. Examples of works in the church for men.
- A. Short term domestic and foreign mission trips (working vacations).
 - 1. Disaster relief.
 - 2. Short term medical mission efforts in third world countries.
 - B. Building and maintenance programs.
 - 1. Habitat for Humanity.
 - 2. Local handy men, especially to help the elderly and poor.
 - C. Work crews at the church – well supervised, half-day efforts.
 - D. "Saturday Schools" for boys – teach boys within the church and visitors skills such as mechanics, sports (e.g. golf or tennis), etc. (We have turned the instruction of boys by men over to secular society far too much. We expect, for example, that a coach will teach our kids soccer or basketball.) Men need to take up once again their historical role of masters of certain works (and other activities) so our boys (and girls) can become apprentices.
 - E. Big Brother programs. Men should take on the role of a male role model for the fatherless children of the congregation.
 - F. Confidential financial counseling programs (perhaps some lectures coupled with personal, private meetings).
 - G. Listening to someone unburden his heart about his struggles as a man.
 - H. Career days for children (show and tell).
 - I. Instruction on use of computers and the internet for the congregation.
 - J. Work in a garden (what better place can a man get in contact with God and His creation?).
 - K. Performing one's secular work specifically as a work for the church.
 - 1. Perhaps taking a less well paying or position of lower status so one can influence others.
 - 2. Selecting a job where taking a strong stand for the Lord is not easy.
 - 3. Dedicating oneself to being the best worker possible so that one's secular work can praise the Lord.

Unfortunately, however, we truly don't know as yet how to get most men to work in the church. We seem many times caught between praising secular works (either in the workplace or with the congregation) and encouraging sacred works which just don't fit many men.

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