

MODULE 6 EMPLOYMENT READINESS

SESSION 2: DEVELOPING POSITIVE WORK VALUES

Key Ideas for This Session:

- An example of God’s joy in good workmanship is in His own creation.
- Any legitimate, pure, and positive job is important in God’s eyes.
- Positive work values include quality of output—training, skill, and craftsmanship.
- Good co-workers and healthy collaboration are a blessing while laziness and hasty decision-making are not wise.
- Key verse: Genesis 1:31
God saw all that He had made, and it was very good indeed.

How would you define “hard work”?

Do you think modern society places value on hard work or the outcome of the work? How has work shaped you for the good or the bad? Work is an integral part of the way we survive and fill our days. How we see work and its value places an important part on how we see ourselves and our lives.

Do you think hard work honours God?

The Bible describes how David and Moses were both called by God while they were busy working and tending their flocks. Jesus called most of His disciples while they were hard at work. Jesus, in His teachings, often spoke well of industrious people and hard-working managers who were able to turn a profit for their bosses. Jesus Himself, worked as a carpenter, helping His father Joseph, until He began His public ministry. In fact, historical research shows that Jesus continued to work after the death of Joseph in order to financially provide for His mother and siblings.

Think about how work/jobs have made you feel over your lifetime—whether it is helping around the house, at school, volunteering...and then onto paying jobs. Most of us will spend at least half of our lives working. Work is a place where much of our character and discipline is formed.

Does good work depend on the type of job you have?

Do you think the Bible teaches that God is interested in our work? (Circle one)

Yes No

Do you think that God will supply us with wisdom and understanding so we can do our work with excellence? (Circle one) Yes No

Read Exodus 31:1-10.

Then the Lord said to Moses, ²“See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, ³and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills—⁴to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, ⁵to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts. ⁶Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given ability to all the skilled workers to make everything I have commanded you: ⁷the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant law with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent—⁸the table and its articles, the pure gold lampstand and all its accessories, the altar of incense, ⁹the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, the basin with its stand—¹⁰and also the woven garments, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests, ¹¹ and the anointing oil and fragrant incense for the Holy Place. They are to make them just as I commanded you.”

List the things God has given these individuals the skills to produce. Why might God care about these details?

Read Isaiah 28:23-29

Listen and hear my voice; pay attention and hear what I say. ²⁴ When a farmer plows for planting, does he plow continually? Does he keep on breaking up and working the soil? ²⁵ When he has leveled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cumin? Does he not plant wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field? ²⁶ His God instructs him and teaches him the right way. ²⁷ Caraway is not threshed with a sledge, nor is the wheel of a cart rolled over cumin; caraway is beaten out with a rod, and cumin with a stick. ²⁸ Grain must be ground to make bread; so one does not go on threshing it forever. The wheels of a threshing cart may be rolled over it, but one does not use horses to grind grain. ²⁹ All this also comes from the Lord Almighty, whose plan is wonderful, whose wisdom is magnificent.

Discuss whether God is portrayed as practical in the way He desires us to approach our work.

The Bible describes King Solomon as being very wise. He was known for his ability to judge wisely and to teach others the wisdom God gave him. Read each of the following passages and summarize each statement he makes concerning work. Discuss your findings in small groups.

Ecclesiastes 3:22

So I saw that there is nothing better for a person than to enjoy their work, because that is their lot. For who can bring them to see what will happen after them?

Ecclesiastes 4:9-11

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour: ¹⁰ If either of them falls down one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. ¹¹ Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?

Proverbs 28:19

Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies will have their fill of poverty.

Proverbs 6:6-11

Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! ⁷ It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, ⁸ yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. ⁹ How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? ¹⁰ A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—¹¹ and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.

Proverbs 22:7

The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender.

Proverbs 21:17

Whoever loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and olive oil will never be rich.

Proverbs 15:22

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

Proverbs 21:5

The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.

Read the following case study and discuss the questions that follow:

Jeff is an ex-prisoner who was able to participate in a work-release program after completing 18 months of re-entry preparation. After his release from prison, Jeff faced many financial pressures and was often tempted to go after the “easy money.” While at the work-release program, Jeff had set his expectations to get a job that paid a minimum of \$25 an hour.

After just 30 days in the work-release program, Jeff was facing the possibility of having to go back to prison because he had not been able to land a job that met his expectations. He had several job offers, but none of them paid the \$25 an hour that he needed. There were not many good-paying jobs available, and Jeff discovered that his prison record scared off many employers. Jeff became very discouraged and fell back into some of the behaviours of his past. He began to isolate himself from his mentor and other positive people in his life. He felt ashamed that he could not get hired. His feeling of self-worth was very low.

Jeff’s mentor stuck with him and one day he asked Jeff, “Is getting a job about working for \$25 an hour or is it about trusting God? In response to his mentor’s question, Jeff finally took a minimum-wage job. But after the first day of work, Jeff quit because he felt that the job was beneath him. Once again, his mentor asked him a question, “Is your ego or a job more important?” Jeff got the point, and he went back to his employer to apologize for quitting so suddenly and asked if he could have another chance. His employer took him back.

Jeff began the job again, and this time he made up his mind to have a positive attitude and to do a good job. Within three months, his positive attitude and hard work paid off. Everyone could see that Jeff's heart was in his work and that he was a hard worker. Jeff was promoted and was given a raise.

What does the story mean by "easy money"?

Why do people fall back into old behaviours that they were legitimately trying to get away from?

How might that make them feel? How can you prepare yourself against this?

What was in Jeff's attitude that was harmful?

What Biblical principles are demonstrated by Jeff's situation, both before and after his promotion to supervisor? (Review the verses provided in this session to answer this.)

For any of us, reading these scenarios might make us regret things we have done in our own past and cause us to feel guilty over choices and/or missed opportunities. If this is the case for you, remember that guilt is a position and not a feeling—you are either guilty or you are not. If guilty, then work on restoring the situation (name the wrong, make amends, change your behaviour, move on). If you are not guilty, then pray and let it go.

Break into small groups and discuss the following if there is time, or consider these topics this week:

- *Reflect on Proverbs 31:10-31 this week with regards to work ethic, purpose and serving God by serving others. Do you think the woman (described in these verses) has a satisfying life?*
- *What are your barriers (if any) to having positive work values? What might you do to change this?*
- *What are some skills you could start working on today as you prepare for employment in the future?*