



Discipleship Course

6. Being distinctive- Work and priorities

Being God's people today

The Big idea

God made people to be workers, and this world to be worked. That's the world we still live in, and although the entry of sin into the world has made work hard, as we follow Jesus we are called to honour and work for Him, as we do our daily work.

Introduction: What's the point of work?

- *What does the world say is the 'purpose' of work?*
- *How might that be different for a Christian?*

1. God's design for work (Gen 1-2, p.4)

- God made people to be workers
- God made the world to be worked
- All for the glory of God and the good of others

"The most important command," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." Mark 12:29-30

"Work is cultivating the world to bring glory to God and to love and serve others"

2. Our problems with work (Gen 3:17-19)

3. The Christian's new boss at work (Colossians 3:22-4:1, p. 1184)

- a. Your new boss is never away
- b. Your new boss always cares about your work
- c. Your new boss cares about your treatment of those who work for you

Seminar groups

Stream 1: Dealing with conflict at work

What can cause conflict in the workplace?

- **Read Matthew 7:1-5 (p. 971)**
 - How can these verses help us when we're critical of others?
 - How can they help us when others are critical of us?
- **Read Titus 3:1-5 (p. 1199)**
 - What principles do v1-2 give us for how to conduct ourselves in difficult relationships at work?
 - How should v3 set realistic expectations for relationships at work?
 - How should v3-5 stop us being judgemental?

Stream 2: Being a witness at work

- What do you think it means to 'be a witness for Jesus' at work?
- What are the challenges to being his witness?

Read Titus 2:9-10 (p. 1199)

- How can Christians employees make Christian truth 'attractive'?
- If this is going to happen, why is it important that colleagues know we are a Christian?
- How can we let people know that we are?

Read Colossians 4:5-6 (p. 1184)

'Outsiders' are just people who aren't Christians.

- How do these verses encourage us to relate to non-Christian colleagues?
- What opportunities might there be through work to be a witness?
- How can you 'make the most' of these opportunities?
- Conversation is about how we relate with other people- how should we be doing this?

Stream 3: How to stop work taking over

- What are the signs that work is beginning to 'take over'?
- What are some of the negative effects of our over-work? On us? On others?
- What are some of the reasons in our own hearts that we can over-work?

God wants us to rest

Read Exodus 20:8-11 (p. 78) What rationale does God give for taking rest?

Read Psalm 127:1-2 (p. 624) How does God warn us against over-work here?

God wants us to find our significance in Him, not in our work

In Chariots of fire, shortly before the 100m race one of the runners, Harold Abrahams says, "And now in one hour's time I will be out there again. I will raise my eyes and look down that corridor; 4 feet wide, with 10 lonely seconds to justify my whole existence. But WILL I?!"

He looked to his vocation as an athlete to justify his whole existence. It's easy to do the same with our work. How might this kind of thinking lead us to over-work?

Read Colossians 3:1-4 (p. 1184)

- How has Jesus changed what life is all about for a Christian?
- How can that free us to work hard, but to stop at the end of the day?
- Is there any practical help you can offer each other on creating good boundaries for work and the rest of life?

Stream 4: Working for the Lord when I'm not working

- What view does the world have of 'retirement'?
- What about those before retirement who don't 'work for a salary'?

Although we might retire from paid employment, the Bible never talks about retiring from 'work'. God has made us as workers not just for the first 65 years, but always! Although the opportunities for 'work' will be different in retirement, God still calls us to work for His glory and the good of others.

- If work is "contributing to the world for the good of others", how might we 'work for the Lord' even when we're not working for a salary?

<i>For the retired</i>	
Psalm 71:14-18 (p. 584)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the Psalmist's great desire as he gets older?• How can we use retirement to this end ourselves?
Philippians 3:12-14 (p. 1180)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was Paul's great goal in life?• How can we use retirement to 'strain forwards' and 'press on'?
<i>For others who don't work</i>	
Colossians 3:17 (p. 1184), and 1 Cor. 15:58 (p. 1155)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All too often the world either makes us feel useless for not working, or encourages to be indulgent because we don't have to work! How do these verses shape our attitudes differently?• What opportunities do you have to 'give yourself fully to the work of the Lord'?

Taking it further in the week

Reflect

- Think through the things you can give thanks to God for about your work
- How has the Bible's teaching on work challenged your own attitudes?

Read

- Read through **Acts 20:32-35**.

Paul talks about his own attitude to his work. Since he was a full time missionary, it will be different to most of our work, but there are still some helpful principles we can apply.

- What is Paul's basic motivation for his work?
- How can we turn work into 'receiving' for us? How can we think of it as 'giving' to others? What is the encouragement for us to do the latter?

Respond

- Whatever your work situation is, thank God for the opportunities he's given you there, and pray that you would want to honour him at work more than anything else.