

The Concept of "Work" in the Bible

The God, who created us, gave us instructions on how we are to live. One of those instructions involved work. Before sin entered the world, work was a necessary part of life; after sin entered the world, work was still necessary, but became more tedious and burdensome. Nevertheless, it is still an obligation, and the unpleasant aspects of work are our own fault (as a human race, all being descendants from Adam).

God also set provided one day of the week, in which we were to set aside our daily activities, and redirect our attention toward the Creator. In doing this, we would not become slaves to our daily activities; but would remain free and capable of focusing our priorities in the right direction. Sin has corrupted our values, so that we tend to neglect the Creator, to whom we owe our existence. This has corrupted not only our desire to set aside time for God, but has also affected our values and priorities in every other relationship we have.

In the following sections, our main focus will be on the "work" aspect of life, rather than on the one day in seven in which we change our focus and priorities. A few of the many Scripture passages are listed, so you can examine them for yourselves.

In its broadest sense, the term "work" could embrace any activity that can be done as an expression of love for God and "neighbor" (other people). This allows room for the wide variety of skills and abilities that God has given to people.

The original command to work - Genesis 1:26, 28

Adam's first work project - Genesis 2:15,19-20

God set aside one day of the week as special. Though the specific circumstances related to that day have changed at various times in history - such as after Jesus rose from the dead - the basic principle remains unchanged - Genesis 2:2-3

Both work and time for God are part of the Moral Law (10 Commandments) which was given to Israel - Exodus 20:8-11

There are many examples and commands related to work in the Old Testament, as well as examples and commands related to setting aside time for God. The book of Proverbs has many work-related sayings that are helpful to anyone who is willing to learn from them. They provide examples of what tends to happen when a person is willing to work. Other passages warn about what tends to happen when a person is lazy - a "sluggard." (Though injustice or sin may sometimes prevent things from happening exactly the way that is described in these verses, they describe the types of things that a person can normally expect.) Below are just a few of the verses; by reading Proverbs, you can find many more.

Proverbs 10:4-5

Proverbs 12:11

Proverbs 24:33

Proverbs 28:19

The sins of others does not remove our obligation to do what is right. However, there may be times in which we must remember that there will be a final day of justice (when Jesus returns), and all things will be made right at that time. Here is an example of injustice: Proverbs 13:23

In the New Testament, our obligations have not changed.

Ephesians 4:28

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

2 Thessalonians 3:10-11

We do not told very much about what life will be like in eternity, on the new earth, when sin and all its effects will be gone forever. However, work will still be a part of life. We won't be sitting around lazily forever; we will still be doing things!