



SHARING SCRIPTURE

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The Christian and Work

For use: December 6 - 12

Texts: Genesis 3:19; Deuteronomy 16:15; Exodus 25:10-30:38; Galatians 5:22-26; Ecclesiastes 9:10; 1 Corinthians 10:31

An unfortunate casualty of the COVID pandemic is the job market. Unemployment has skyrocketed this year, and the effects can harm both our pocket books and our mental health. Recent research bears out the emotional toll of the loss of employment. The CDC discovered that unemployed young adults reported symptoms of depression three times more often than their fully employed peers did.

Increased stress is certainly one contributor to the added depression and anxiety, but another aspect is a damaged self-image. “The loss of a job is a really significant loss,” Emma Steiner, Director of Clinical Services at Philadelphia’s Council of Relationships said. “Jobs often have a lot to do with how we think about ourselves, identity and purpose. There’s also a sense of identity that may come with being able to provide for other people, or yourself. Shame can be really profound when you lose a job. Your negative beliefs about yourself can be reinforced, and depression can be related to that.”

One way that Steiner tries to help her unemployed clients weather this crisis is to remind them that this is a temporary situation, even though it is dragging on for months. Another approach she takes is to point out that this is affecting everyone, and her clients are struggling through no fault of their own. “It’s really important that people keep that perspective,” she said. [1]

God established in us the sense of well-being that comes from being productive and enjoying the results of our accomplishments. Just as God's creation was declared good, we can also revel in the satisfaction of a job well done. Originally, Adam and Eve’s labor in the garden gave them a sense of partnership with God, cooperating in God’s work of developing an ideal habitat

for humans and all living creatures. After the fall, work became necessary to provide for daily human needs.

Even though sin ultimately corrupts whatever work humans are involved in, God still sets a high standard. We see a good example of this in God's direction to the Israelites in building the wilderness sanctuary. God raised up artisans with skills of excellence to build a worship edifice reflecting the perfection of heaven. Though we can't always replicate that level of excellence in everything we do, God still empowers us to do our best in whatever we put our hands to.

The most fulfilling work that humans can perform is that which blesses others. When our work is essentially self-serving, it will never be ultimately satisfying. Serving others brings a sense of well-being that we'll never achieve through selfish service. When we focus on our wants and wishes, we can never have enough; there will always be something more and better just outside of our reach. Helping others puts our lives and current situations in perspective. When we align our wants with our actual needs and a concern for meeting the needs of others, we will discover that we are actually achieving the desires of our hearts.

~Chuck Burkeen

[1] <https://www.inquirer.com/health/coronavirus/coronavirus-covid-unemployment-philadelphia-mental-health-20201201.html>

For Reflection

Connecting: If you won a multi-million dollar lottery jackpot tomorrow, would you return to your regular work? If not, what would you do to keep busy? Share your thoughts with your group through your online social connections.

Sharing: Ecclesiastes 3:22 says that there's nothing better than being happy in your work. How do you best find happiness in your employment?

1. I set my bar of achievement pretty low so I'm never disappointed
2. I determine the job or position that I really want, and then I do whatever it takes to rise to that status
3. I've learned to accept my lot in life so I'm not frustrated by what I don't have
4. I remind myself that what I do makes a real difference, and contributes to the betterment of society
5. I'll answer this once I can get back to work after this crisis
6. Other:

Applying: Brainstorm with your group ways that you can lift the spirits of anyone in your congregation or community who has lost employment recently. How can you effectively connect with them in the current COVID climate?

Valuing: Reflect on an achievement that has given you a great sense of satisfaction. What was it about that feat that was so fulfilling? Take a few minutes to personally pray for any upcoming project, that it will also be as rewarding. Ask God to surprise you with a new opportunity to bless others, and receive a blessing through this.

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Paul Richardson
Executive Director

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