



HARD WORK — Is It Outdated?

Alex sighs as he lifts another box onto the truck of the moving company he works for. ‘Why am I stuck in this dead-end job?’ he asks himself. ‘When am I going to hit it big? My life would be so much better if I didn’t have to *work!*’

Like Alex in this scenario, many today do not enjoy working hard. “A lot of people think that it’s beneath them to do ‘menial’ work,” says an auto mechanic named Aaron. “Their attitude is: ‘I’m only doing this until a better opportunity comes along.’”

Why do many feel that hard work is not for them? Perhaps they have been influenced by the media, which often portrays an “ideal” life as one of luxury and ease. “People think that the harder you have to work to make a living, the less successful you are,” says Matthew, a maintenance worker. A janitor named Shane has noticed the same trend. He says: “A full day’s work for a full day’s wage is something that people simply do not do anymore.”

On the other hand, many successful people actually enjoy hard work. “I think that hard work

is extremely rewarding, especially when it’s directed toward worthwhile goals,” says a 25-year-old construction worker named Daniel. Andre, 23, would agree. “I believe that happiness and enjoyment are linked to work,” he says. “Less work and activity is not a venture that will lead to long-term happiness—only long-term boredom!”

How have people like Daniel and Andre developed a positive view of hard work? Simply put, they have applied Bible principles in their life. Far from discouraging hard work, the Bible promotes diligence and perseverance. But the Bible does more than just tell us to work. It also shows us how to *enjoy* our work.

Which Bible principles can help you to find satisfaction in your work? We invite you to consider a few of them, as discussed in the following article.



How to Enjoy Hard Work

“Everyone should eat and drink and find enjoyment for all his hard work. It is the gift of God.” (Ecclesiastes 3:13) If God wanted us to enjoy our work, is it not logical that he would show us *how* to find such joy? (Isaiah 48:17) Thankfully, he does—through the pages of his Word, the Bible. Consider the following Bible-based advice for finding satisfaction in your work.

CULTIVATE A POSITIVE VIEW OF WORK

Whether your work is mostly mental, mostly physical, or somewhere in between, recognize that “there is benefit in every kind of hard work.” (Proverbs 14:23) What sort of benefit? For one thing, hard work helps us to care for our material needs. True, God promises to provide for the needs of those who sincerely worship him. (Matthew 6:31, 32) But he also expects us to do our part by diligently trying to earn an honest living.—2 Thessalonians 3:10.

Thus, we can view our work as a means to an end. Work is an honorable way to care for our responsibilities. “Providing for yourself is an accomplishment,” says 25-year-old Joshua. “If you

are able to pay for what you need, then your work is doing what it is supposed to do.”

Moreover, hard work contributes to our self-respect. After all, hard work is just that—hard. When we discipline ourselves to stick with our work—even if it seems boring or difficult—we can have the satisfaction of knowing that we held ourselves to a high standard. We have won a victory over the inclination to take the easy way out. (Proverbs 26:14) In that sense, work brings an intense feeling of satisfaction. “I love the feeling I have after a long day of work,” says Aaron, quoted in the preceding article. “I may be exhausted—and my work might have even gone unnoticed by others—but I know that I’ve accomplished something.”



APPLY YOURSELF TO YOUR WORK

The Bible speaks highly of the man who is “skillful at his work” and the woman who “delights to work with her hands.” (Proverbs 22: 29; 31:13) Of course, a person does not become skillful automatically. And few of us enjoy doing things that we are not good at. Perhaps that is why many do not enjoy their work; they simply have not put forth enough effort to become good at it.

In reality, a person can learn to enjoy almost any kind of work if he approaches it with the right mind-set—that is, if he focuses on learning how to do the job well. “When you put your best into a task and see the results, it’s very satisfying,” says 24-year-old William. “You never get that feeling from cutting corners or doing only the minimum.”

FOCUS ON HOW YOUR WORK BENEFITS OTHERS

Avoid the trap of thinking only about how much money you are earning. Rather, ask yourself such questions as these: “Why is this job necessary? What would happen if it wasn’t done—or it wasn’t done right? How does my work benefit others?”

That last question is especially good to think about, for work is most satisfying when we see how it benefits other people. Jesus himself said: “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.” (Acts 20:35) In addition to those who benefit directly from our services—such as customers and employers—there are others who benefit from our hard work. These include members of our household and those in need.

How They View Hard Work

“When I’m tired at the end of the day, I feel a real sense of accomplishment and joy. I know I really *worked* that day.”
—**Nick.**

“Working hard is the best way to work. If you’re going to do something worthwhile, do it right.”—**Christian.**

“The human body can do extraordinary things. I like to show my appreciation for the gift of life by using it to work hard and help other people.”—**David.**

Members of our household. When a family head works hard to provide for members of his household, he benefits them in at least two ways. First, he makes sure that they have the physical necessities of life—food, clothing, and shelter. He thus fulfills his God-given responsibility to “provide for those who are his own.” (1 Timothy 5:8) Second, a diligent breadwinner teaches by example the importance of hard work. “My father is a great example of someone who has a good work ethic,” says Shane, quoted in the preceding article. “He is an honest man who has worked hard his whole life, the majority of it as a carpenter. From his example, I’ve learned the value of working with your hands, building things that will have practical use for other people.”

Those in need. The apostle Paul advised Christians to “do hard work . . . so that [they] may have something to share with someone in need.” (Ephesians 4:28) Indeed, when we work hard to provide for ourselves and our family, we may also be in a position to help those who are less fortunate. (Proverbs 3:27) So hard work can enable us to experience the greater happiness of giving.



GO THE EXTRA MILE

In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: “If someone in authority compels you into service for a mile, go with him two miles.” (Matthew 5:41) How might you apply the principle behind those words to your own work? Rather than simply doing the minimum, look for ways to do *more* than is required. Set personal goals; challenge yourself to do your work better or faster than expected. Take pride in even the small details of your work.

When you go the extra mile, you are more likely to enjoy your work. Why? Because *you* are in control of your actions. You are giving more because you want to, not because someone forced you to. (Philemon 14) In this regard, we might recall the principle recorded at Proverbs 12:24: “The hand of the diligent ones will rule, but idle hands will be put to forced labor.” True, few of us will be put under literal slavery or forced labor. However, a person who does only the bare minimum may feel that he is enslaved, always under the yoke of the demands of others. But the person who goes the extra mile—doing more because he *chooses* to—feels in control of his life. He remains master over his actions.

KEEP WORK IN ITS PROPER PLACE

Hard work is admirable, yet we do well to remember that there is more to life than work. True, the Bible encourages diligence. (Proverbs 13:4) But it does not encourage becoming a workaholic. “Better is a handful of rest than two handfuls of hard work and chasing after the wind,” says Ecclesiastes 4:6. The point? A workaholic may never enjoy the fruitage of his labor if his work consumes all his time and energy. In effect, his work becomes as pointless as “chasing after the wind.”

The Bible can help us to cultivate a balanced view of work. Although it says we should apply ourselves to our work, it also advises us to “make sure of the more important things.” (Philippians 1:10) What are the more important things? These include spending time with family and friends. Even more important are spiritual activities, such as reading God’s Word and meditating on it.

Those who keep their life balanced are likely to enjoy their work even more. “One of my former employers is a great example of someone with a balanced work ethic,” says William, quoted earlier. “He works hard, and he has a good rapport with his clients because of the quality of his work. But at the end of the day, when the job is done, he knows how to leave his work behind and focus on his family and his worship. And you know what? He’s one of the happiest people I know!” ■