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The Book of Proverbs

Introduction

- <https://www.cnn.com/2024/05/23/tech/elon-musk-ai-your-job/index.html>
- A day coming when your job is replaced? When jobs will be optional? “If you want to do a job that’s kinda like a hobby, you can do a job,” Musk said. “But otherwise, AI and the robots will provide any goods and services that you want.”
- One day soon you may have an AI pastor.
- AI movement sounds both scary and awesome. Optional work? Isn’t that the dream?
- The problem is God didn’t create work to be optional. Work is a part of God’s plan for your life, and honestly, we don’t often think well about God’s plan for our work. We think of work as something we want to avoid. We think of work as something we want to do make money so we can do the things we really want to do.
- You will work 80,000 hours over the course of your life. How will you spend those 80,000 hours? Will you make the most of those hours or wish you were doing something else? Business Insider article a few years ago: 80% of people dissatisfied with their jobs. 40% say that their job is extremely stressful.
- You probably haven’t heard many messages on work, but we desperately need the wisdom of God for our work. The Book of Proverbs has much to say about the way we work. Three truths to help us to work for the glory of God.

God created you to work.

The Lord founded the earth by wisdom and established the heavens by understanding. By his knowledge the watery depths broke open, and the clouds dripped with dew ([Proverbs 3:19-20](#)).

- Our God has always been at work. Creation is evidence of His work. Created the heavens and earth by sound of His voice. Created man from the dust of ground - breathed life into man.
- God is still at work. He is sustaining you right now - giving your breath. He is at work to ultimately bring this present age to conclusion and bring us into a restored creation - new heaven and new earth.
- Follower of Jesus, He is at work in you ([Philippians 1:6](#)).
- **We reflect the image of God when we work.**
- [Genesis 1:26-28](#) - When you work you imitate our God who is constantly at work. When God created humanity, the first thing he gave humanity was a job. In [Genesis 2](#), Adam given the job of being a gardener - to cultivate the garden of Eden and the job of naming the animals. Work for Adam was good.
- **One of your greatest opportunities to shape culture is through your work.**
- You need a better understanding of work. We call work a *vocation*. Vocation literally means *calling*. God has put a call on your life to work, which means every job is sacred.
- You view God as a way to make money so you can have what you want or go on that vacation. When you finally are able to save enough money to take that dream vacation - that's really living. BUT - from God's perspective - real living is bringing God glory as you day by day get up, and grind at your job with a Christlike attitude, with joy in your heart, and with a desire to serve others.

- Work is spiritual in nature because the way you work speaks volumes about what you believe about living for God and loving others.
- When thinking about your career, instead of asking, “What can I do to make the most amount of money so I can do what I want?”
- **Ask, “How, with my existing abilities and opportunities, can I be of greatest service to other people, knowing what I do of God’s will and human needs?”** (Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 66). If that’s working customer service, how can you be a blessing? If that’s lawn care, how can you be a blessing? If that’s janitorial service, medical work, police officer, school teacher, business owner, how can you use your 80,000 hours of work over the course of your life to bless and serve?

You work in broken ways.

- Work is a gift, but work is also cursed ([Genesis 3:17-19](#)). This is why you have so many obstacles in your work. Your work is full of thorns. Work is fulfilling and at the same time extremely frustrating. Work is full of obstacles and hardships, but those obstacles and hardships do not change the reality that God created work for our good and His glory.
- Work is cursed, and we are broken. We bring our brokenness to our jobs. Proverbs reminds us of how we bring our brokenness to our jobs.
- **We tend to be lazy or idle.**

Idle hands make one poor, but diligent hands bring riches. The son who gathers during summer is prudent; the son who sleeps during harvest is disgraceful ([Proverbs 10:4-5](#)).

- Notice that Solomon calls a lazy person disgraceful. Lazy people fail to contribute to their family and to the needs of others.

The slacker says, “There’s a lion in the road - a lion in the public square!” A door turns on its hinges, and a slacker on his bed. The slacker buries his

hand in the bowl; he is too weary to bring it to his mouth! In his own eyes, a slacker is wiser than seven who answer sensibly ([Proverbs 26:13-16](#)).

- The slacker makes excuses. What excuses do you make for avoiding work? It's too hard? It's too hot? The slacker takes no initiative. The thought of work wears him out. The slacker just lets things go undone. The slacker is prideful. He talks about what he can do but does nothing.
- If we're honest, we all have a bit of laziness in us. We procrastinate and then stress when we haven't gotten the job done.
- **We tend to idolize our work.** Some of us make too little of our work, but many of us make way too much of our work.

Don't wear yourself out to get rich; because you know better, stop! As soon as your eyes fly to it, it disappears, for it makes wings for itself and flies like an eagle to the sky ([Proverbs 23:4-5](#)).

- We idolize our jobs because of the empty promise that it can give us the financial security and prosperity that we want. We overwork so we can live in the right neighborhood or drive the right car or take the right vacation.

Like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who strays from his home ([Proverbs 27:8](#)).

- We idolize our jobs because we think that in our jobs we find our true identity. We tend to define ourselves by what we do (I'm a teacher, a pastor, a doctor), instead of finding our identity in Jesus Himself. I am a child of God - that's my true identity.
- When I find my identity in my career, I will give my career my best and everyone else my leftovers, including my family. Some of us have no balance in our lives because we give all of our time to our careers.

- The American way is to hold up busyness as a badge of honor because we want people to know how important we are - as if the place we work couldn't exist without us. We stay so busy with our work that we fail to give our families any time, our church any time, or our relationship with God any time.

You can work wisely.

- Brokenness affects the way that we work, but there is a better way. We can work wisely. Proverbs gives us ways to work wisely for the glory of God.
- **Work with purpose.**

Do you see a person skilled in his work? He will stand in the presence of kings. He will not stand in the presence of the unknown ([Proverbs 22:29](#)).

- Skillful is someone who has honed their craft. Followers of Jesus work with skill to accomplish two purposes: worship and influence. Work is an act of worship because we are able to give our best to the Lord trusting that as we give our best, He uses our work to provide for our needs and use our work as a blessing to others. You work to influence. You make life better for others when you work. When you work for the glory of God, it opens up opportunities to point people to the glory of God. (Think Joseph.)

- **Work diligently.**

Go to the ant, you slacker! Observe its ways and become wise. Without leader, administrator, or ruler, it prepares its provisions in summer; it gathers its food during harvest ([Proverbs 6:6-8](#)).

- Solomon takes us to a tiny insect to teach us how to work. An ant is industrious, accountable, and works under strenuous conditions. How diligent are you in your work? Do you complain about your work or just tackle it?

- **Work ethically.**

Those with twisted minds are detestable to the Lord, but those with blameless conduct are his delight ([Proverbs 11:20](#)).

Better a poor person who lives with integrity than someone who has deceitful lips and is a fool ([Proverbs 19:1](#)).

- You're a follower of Jesus. Represent Jesus well in your work. Don't cheat your employer. Be at work on time. Work while you are at work. Don't leave early. Be honest. Don't call in sick just because you want a day off. Are you the same person at work as you are at church? Would your coworkers describe you as a person of integrity and character?
- God is always at work, and His greatest work is the work of salvation He has done in your life. Consider Jesus. Look at how Jesus toiled. Look at how He labored for us. He lived the perfect life we could not live and then in pain and agony suffered through the greatest work of all - dying in our place so that we could have His righteous record applied to our account. Look at how Jesus worked to defeat death through His resurrection.
- Our work is cursed. In our work, we have to put up with the thorns. However, Jesus, the One who had a crown of thorns placed upon His head, is removing the thorns. Because of His death and resurrection, we can trust the promise of God that someday Christ will return and make everything right. There is coming a day that we will be with Him in a new heaven and new earth and once again our work will always be satisfying and always free from thorns. This morning, if you have not placed your faith in the One who is redeeming everything, turn to Him by faith.
- Follower of Jesus, work in light of your understanding of the Gospel.

Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ. ([Colossians 3:23-24](#)).

- When you wake up and go to work tomorrow, it's for Jesus. It's for His glory. NOT simply to earn a paycheck and better your lifestyle. If that's so, when you go to work tomorrow, ask the question, "How can I best live for the Kingdom of God while I am at work today?" If you ask the question, it will probably help you to work with a heart of thanksgiving, a Christlike attitude, and diligence as you imitate Christ and live as salt and light in the work place.