

Fil-Am Community Church

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Key Verse: 1 Cor. 10:31 (NIV)

“WORKING FOR GOD’S GLORY”

1 Cor. 10:31 (NIV)

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

This is Labor Day weekend. Labor Day is a strange holiday. While we call it "Labor Day", we try to do as little labor as possible and most working people have the day off. Nobody has wished me a "Happy Labor Day". I didn't get any Labor Day cards. We don't decorate the house, or give Labor Day gifts. The florists and greeting card manufacturers haven't found a way to capitalize on it.

Then also, it's a bad weekend for a church because everyone wants to travel. Labor Day is different things to different people. To the factory or office worker, it may be a day off. For policemen, who deal with extra traffic and alcohol abuse, it's a tough day. To farmers and ranchers, it's just another day to feed the cattle and work in the fields. For preachers, it is an opportunity to talk about work. And so, here I am, going to talk about work.

Work is a very important part of God's will for people. And God intends for us to bring him glory when we do our work. In fact, the Bible is very clear that every aspect of our life should bring honor and glory to God.

Please get your Bibles and turn to 1 Corinthians 10:31 and let's read together, *"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."*

Whatever you do... this includes the work we do in the office, in school, at home, in church, and what-have-you. And no matter who you are, you have work to do. You might be a homemaker, a student, a factory worker, work in an office, or maybe a retiree, but you definitely have some type of work you are involved with. And whether you knew it before today or not, the Bible has a lot to say about your work.

What I'd like to share with you this morning are Principles for Christian Workers. There are three of them. These principles, if truly lived out in your work environment, will make you the type of worker that God will be proud of, and will give you the confidence you need to know that you are working as God intended.

1. MY WORK IS WORK DONE FOR GOD

You might be an office worker, hospital worker, factory worker, working student, housekeeper, but if you are a Christ follower, your work is ultimately done for God.

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." – Colossians 3:23

This verse tells us that ultimately our goal in all of our work is to please God.

Author Howard Hendricks sat in a plane that was delayed for take off. After a long wait, the passengers became more and more irritated. Hendricks

noticed how gracious one of the flight attendants was as she spoke with them.

After the plane finally took off, he told the flight attendant how amazed he was at her poise and self-control, and said he wanted to write a letter of commendation for her to the airline.

The flight attendant replied that she didn't work for the airline company, but for Jesus Christ. She said that just before going to work she and her husband prayed together that she would be a good representative of Christ.

That is what the Bible is talking about when it says to do everything as though we were working for the Lord. Whatever work I'm doing, whatever my occupation is, whether I'm a sales clerk, an accountant, a computer programmer, a nurse, a lawyer, etc., ultimately my boss is God and not any human being.

I work to please God, not men. And when I do that, men are pleased as well because of the dedication and integrity I bring to my work.

Now, I know how difficult sometimes it can be in the workplace – I've worked in an office where there were always intrigues and gossip. I also remember working for a boss who easily blurts out the four-letter word whenever something goes wrong at work. Can you relate to that?

I say all that to let you know I've been out there in the marketplace and I know what it is like, and I know how difficult it can be. But I also know from personal experience that when I begin to work as if I were working for God it changes my entire perspective on what I am doing.

Now, working for the Lord also means putting in time and effort that is expected of you at work. I remember when I was working for the Development Bank of the Philippines. We didn't have any timekeeping machine. What we had was just a simple log sheet where on one column, you wrote your name and in the next column you wrote the time you arrived. And you know what, everyday, almost everyday, you would see a long list of names on one page having the same arrival time. So, someone writes 8:05, and throughout the page, it's 8:05, it never changes.

Nowadays, in offices, people surf the internet more than they do their actual work. But before the internet, there was the phone. Lots of people spent company time making phone calls to whoever.

This is just like Mrs. Smith who applied for a job. "So tell me, Mrs. Smith," asked the interviewer, "have you any other skills you think might be worth mentioning?"

"Actually, yes," said the applicant modestly. "Last year I had two short stories published in national magazines, and I finished my novel."

"Very impressive," he commented, "but I was thinking of skills you could apply during office hours."

Mrs. Smith explained brightly, "Oh, that was during office hours."

So, my point is, working for the Lord means being honest with our time and effort as it relates to our work. Remember, our real boss is God and he knows what we are doing whenever our earthly boss is not looking.

2. MY WORK SETS THE STANDARD FOR OTHERS

Andrew Carnegie, who was the richest man in the world years ago, once said, “the average person puts only 25% of his energy and ability into his work. The world takes off its hat to those who put in more than 50% of their capacity, and stands on its head for those few and far between souls who devote 100%.”

I believe that Carnegie is correct in his observation.

Many have gotten so used to a lackluster performance that when someone puts in the most minimal effort they are congratulated for their hard work. And again, this applies whether you're in the workplace, a student, or whatever.

I read about a pastor who built cabinets for a living before he entered the ministry. He worked with a guy named Don. He noticed that Don would disappear from his workbench for an hour or so at a time and no one knew where he was. One day he walked back to where they kept huge pallets of 4 x 8 sheets of plywood stacked up at least 15 feet in the air. And there he saw Don climbing down the side of the stack. He asked Don what he was doing and he confided in him that every day he climbed up there to take a nap where no one could see him. Oh, and to top it all off, Don was considered one of the best and hardest working cabinetmakers.

Now what Don did was wrong for anyone, but it would be especially wrong for a Christian, because, as you remember, we are working for God. And since we are working for God, we want to set the highest standard for what can be expected.

“Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is

commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God.” – 1 Peter 2:18-19 (NIV)

Now at the time this text was written, slaves and masters had a little bit different role than what we probably think because we always think of those terms based on the history of slavery in the United States. But the slaves of that day were much closer to employees than they were slaves. Some of them were laborers, but many of them were professional people, including medical doctors. Of course, they didn't have the freedom that we do to just quit one job and go to another, but much of their situation was similar to our own. The reason I point this out to you is to demonstrate that what Peter wrote for them is still relevant and applicable to us today. We are to accept the authority of those over us and do what they say, as long as what they tell us to do doesn't compromise the biblical principles we are living by.

In my former church, someone confided in me that her boss wants her to sign some documents for him whenever he is not around. No problem if that's her signature. The problem is her boss wants her to copy his signature. Which, of course, is tantamount to forgery. Being an honest Christian, she refused.

Now, I don't know what her boss thought of her after that. But I know she set a standard for her work, a standard higher than her boss's. Because it is God's standard.

My work is work done for God. It sets the standard for others. And,

3. MY WORK ENABLES ME TO SUCCEED

In the Christian world today we have two extremes views when it comes to thinking about success, especially when we talk about financial success.

On the one hand we have the “prosperity” preachers, who preach what is commonly called “the health and wealth gospel” that says God wants all Christians to be rich and He wants all Christians to be healthy at all times. Then on the other hand we have Christians that think it is wrong to have a lot of money and that God wants everyone to be poor to keep them humble.

Both of these extreme views are exactly that – extreme. I believe that the Bible teaches that God wants us to be successful, but we need to be careful how we define success.

First, let’s consider financial success. *“All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.”* – Proverbs 14:23 (NIV)

I cannot see anything wrong with making a profit, and being financially successful. I think it is great when someone is able to rise to the top of whatever profession they are in and make more money doing it. In the Bible we have the example of several men that were very wealthy by anyone’s standards – men like Abraham, or David, or Solomon – and God does not condemn them for their wealth or for seeking wealth.

If someone has the drive and the ability to make something of him or herself and make millions of dollars doing it, I say more power to them. I think that becoming financially successful can be a godly thing if done right, and it gives that financially successful person the opportunity to be generous in ways he or she could not have been otherwise.

Do you know how many missions and ministries of the church worldwide are able to prosper because of wealthy Christians that give to them? Probably a whole lot more than you think. So this can be a very good thing in many different ways. On the other hand, if we think that the accumulation of wealth alone is a good definition of success we are sorely mistaken.

While most of us would consider a wealthy person a success, there are many wealthy people who have sacrificed the success of their family, or the success of their faith in their drive to possess more and more.

In May of 2005, after nine seasons, the popular sitcom “Everybody Loves Raymond” broadcast its final episode. The star of the show, Ray Romano, went from being a struggling stand-up comedian to being one of the highest-paid actors on television. At the conclusion of the last day’s filming, Romano spoke to the studio audience, reflecting on his past and his future. He read from a note his brothers had stuck in his luggage the day he moved from New York to Hollywood, nine years earlier.

“My older brother Richard wrote, ‘What does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, and loses his soul?’” said a tearful Romano. Then, he added “Now I’m going to work on my soul.”

Ray Romano is a very funny guy, and he has made a lot of money by being one of the best in his field, but he admitted that while he was successful in one area of his life, he had been neglecting the most important area...his own soul.

I know some pretty poor people who I would consider successful, and I know some pretty rich people I would consider successful, and I know a

whole lot who are somewhere in between. Because true success is not based on how much money you have in the bank, but on the condition of your soul, and on the love you give and receive from your family, and on the relationship you have with God.

If you are able to make a lot of money and also be a success in these areas, that is great, but never neglect the most important areas for those are the areas that are going to count the most in the long run.

The basic biblical principle for success is this – work as hard as you can and do what you can to move ahead and achieve as much as possible – as long as you don't have to sacrifice your friends, your family, and your faith in the process.

In 1993, Benny Hinn, one of the foremost and popular preacher of the “Prosperity Gospel” went to the Philippines. The prosperity gospel, otherwise known as the “Name It and Claim It” theology, says that all you need to do to make things happen in your life is to confess the Word of God. It means that if you want to get rich, just speak verses from the Bible about getting rich and you will get rich sooner or later. Benny Hinn doesn't hold that view anymore because his trip in the Philippines changed his outlook.

In an interview with Charisma magazine, he says, "Some of the most precious Christians live there amid such poverty, such need. Yet you see such satisfaction, such fulfillment with them. They are happier than many Christians I know in America who have everything."

And he continues, "The teaching on prosperity has gone too far. It has become a business. It is no longer 'give so you will bless somebody.'"

It has become 'give to get.' It has become selfish, worldly. ...I feel terrible that I once put too much emphasis on material prosperity. And now I am saying, 'Lord, please forgive me.'" Whether Hinn still has this conviction today is another story.

Tomorrow morning some of you are going to drive into the office, some into the shop, others will be going to school, and some will be working from home. No matter what you do these principles apply. God doesn't just want to be your God on Sunday mornings or during your devotional time – He wants you to take Him to work with you and allow Him to work through your life even there.

Are you willing to start doing that right now? More importantly, are you willing to work on your soul right now with the help of God? The truth is, the work on your soul has already been accomplished by Jesus Christ on the cross. He labored hard for your soul, went through the most agonizing experience any person could ever gone, because he loves you. He was persecuted, tortured, and nailed on the cross so that you don't have to work for your salvation.

People think that being saved or going to heaven means doing something to please God. But you know what will please God? It is acknowledging that you cannot do anything to save yourself and just putting your faith in Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. His finished work on the cross is enough to save you. And it gets better because when Jesus rose from the dead on Easter, he conquered sin and death forever and that means you get the gift of eternal life. Isn't that amazing? You're receiving the greatest gift there is and with you doing nothing practically.

The Bible says we are all sinners and condemned to die. Jesus died for us instead. All you need to do is to ask forgiveness for your sins. So, right now, I just want everyone to please bow your heads and close your eyes as I extend an invitation to everyone.

Let us Pray...