

How to Work and Be Happy

This is Labor Day Weekend. You know, 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. We don’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. 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 preachers, it’s an opportunity to talk about work. And to the people in the congregation, you have no choice but to listen to a message about work when you’re trying to avoid it. But, before we get down to serious work this morning, let me crack a joke.

Ben walks into his boss’s office. “Sir, I’ll be straight with you, I know the economy isn’t great, but I have three companies after me, and I would like to respectfully ask for a raise.” After a few minutes of haggling, the boss finally agrees to a 5% raise, and Ben happily gets up to leave. “By the way”, asks the boss as Ben is getting up, “which three companies are after you?” Ben replies, “The electric company, water company, and phone company.”

When it comes to our career, most of us have our dream job and then we have our real job. How did you end up in the job that you have? How did you end up in the career choice that you made? Would you describe yourself as being happy with that choice? Do you look forward to going to work each day? Have you ever considered the link between your work and how that impacts your walk with Christ? This morning, my message is entitled “Don’t Work, Be Happy”. Just

kidding. I just wanted to make a play on the title of a famous song, “Don’t Worry, Be Happy”. So, the real title of this message is “How to Work and Be Happy”.

You know, your job is a big deal to God. In fact, there is a lot of plain talk in the Bible about work. Here are a few examples:

“Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.” (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)

“For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘If a man will not work, he shall not eat.’ We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12)

“He who has been stealing must steal no longer but must work, doing something useful with his hands”. (Ephesians 5:28)

There are several reasons why so many people are not happy with their jobs. Some of us feel underappreciated by our employers. Others of us followed the career path we did to please our parents. Some of us did it for the money while others of us chose the road of least resistance.

This morning, whether you like your job or not, let me give you a fresh perspective on your job so you can appreciate it more than you ever have. Folks, You can be happy at work if you,

1. **View It as a Blessing**

It occurred to me while writing this message that some people may have the wrong idea about work based on the story of Adam and Eve. They are under the impression that man was never intended to work, to just relax in paradise, and only was saddled with the responsibility of work after sin came into the world.

However, that is not at all what the Bible teaches. From the very beginning, God

gave Adam some responsibilities. Notice these verses found in the book of Genesis. *“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. Now, no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground... The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it... Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.”* (Genesis 2:2-5, 15, 19-20 NIV)

From day one, God gave Adam responsibilities to fulfill in the Garden of Eden. Even before that, God set the example for us of a productive life where it says that God finished the work he had been doing. Now, what happened when Adam and Eve sinned and found themselves banished from the Garden of Eden? We find the answer in chapter three of Genesis. *“To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.’”* (Gen. 3:17-19)

Now, catch this important distinction. God didn't curse Adam or curse his work. He cursed the ground – or, in other words, God made the ground much more

resistant to Adam's work. Adam could still get results from the tilling of the ground – but, only with hard and difficult labor. Now, there were thistles and thorns where there once were none. Sweat would be required for bread to be provided. The dirt that now was cursed would also claim their lives someday.

What does that mean? Work has never been a curse but a gift from God and a part of his purpose and plan for mankind from the beginning. The way sin impacted our work is simply that it made it more difficult to accomplish than it once was. However, work is not a curse from God but one of his greatest gifts. It is a blessing to have a job. Especially after you retire and you earn the fruit of your labor. Look at Kuya Elvin and Ate Bebutte.

The best way to choose a career or to improve your attitude about your current position is to change your attitude about it. Look at it not as a burden but as a blessing to you from the Lord. It's a blessing to have a job in which you are able to utilize the talents and abilities that God provided to you.

Dr. Thomas Szasz, an American academic and psychiatrist, says “The greatest analgesic, soporific, stimulant, tranquilizer, narcotic, and to some extent even antibiotic—in short, the closest thing to a genuine panacea--known to medical science is work.” And the late former president Ronald Reagan was famous for saying, “The man who does what he loves will never work another day in his life”.

One of the things you should ask yourself about your current job is if it is something that you can fall in love doing. Do you have a true passion for it? Are you excited each day to get back to facing the challenges it presents to you? If you cannot answer “Yes” to that question, evaluate why and what can be done to change it. If you just need to adjust your attitude, begin praying for God to do that. On the other hand, if you have taken this career path for all of the wrong reasons, don't stay in this rut. The right job for the right person is a blessing God wants you to know and experience!

You can be happy at work if you view it as a blessing. Also, if you

2. View It as a Bridge

The right job will be a bridge for you to accomplish many wonderful things. Here are just some of the more obvious ones.

a. It is a bridge for building a good reputation.

Someone has wisely said, “Every job is a self-portrait of the person who does it. Autograph your work with excellence.”

One person I am proud of is my brother Jun in New Jersey. For 23 years in a row, he has never missed a day at work and he has never been late although he is a Filipino like me. He works for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Each year they give him an award for Perfect Attendance. Each time they give him a dinner as a prize and a gift card. And I told him jokingly, “What, if on the night you are to receive the award, you don’t show up?”

Our jobs are a bridge for building a good reputation. How is that going for you?

Another bridge that our job is designed to be is that

b. It is a bridge for ministering to the needs of others.

You see, your job offers to you a wonderful opportunity for reaching out and meeting others’ needs. The Bible says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people”. ([Galatians 6:10](#)) It also says, “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” ([Philippians 2:4](#))

If you will pay closer attention, you may find that the reason God has placed you in the job that you have is that you might have the opportunity to reflect the love of Christ towards them. There is an old saying that goes, “People never care how much you know until they know how much you care”. Who do you work with that needs to know that you care about them?

c. It is a bridge for introducing the reality of Jesus Christ.

Many of the people whom you work with will never come to a church service like this one. Few of them are going to turn on their television or go online and hear a gospel message and fewer still are going to get into their car and drive to any type of evangelistic crusade. What does it mean to you? It means that at work God has called you to begin to build relationships when you can introduce the gospel naturally. But listen, it doesn't mean you preach in the cafeteria or pass out tracts on your coffee break. It just means finding opportunities to share Jesus with your co-workers in a discreet and subtle way. Listen to how Paul describes that happening.

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” ([Colossians 4:5-6](#))

Here is how Peter describes our bridge building methodology. **“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.” ([1 Peter 3:15-16](#))**

We must be careful in presenting Jesus to others at work. We don't want to turn them off. The rule of thumb is, if the person is someone who you see every day, you talk to everyday, have a conversation with on a regular basis, you don't have to share your faith right away, like pulling out a gospel tract and witnessing boldly, so to speak. Build a bridge first. Win the person's trust and friendship. Then, when the right opportunity comes, share Jesus.

When I was still working for DMV at Richmond, I had the opportunity to work with Jim Hancock who is a direct descendant of John Hancock, one of the signers of the US Constitution. If you see his large and stylish signature, you'll

agree he is a descendant. Anyway, Jim is a religious person. In fact, he is a chaplain at their church called the Unity Church. It is a church that believes in universalism which holds that all religions are the same. They assert that we all worship one God but Jesus is not god. At first, I asked questions about his religion just to know where he stands on certain religious issues but I didn't argue with him.

I tried to be a friend to Jim by inviting him twice to a movie which he accepted. Then one day, in the office, he began to open up to me and shared his life story with me. I learned that his wife left him for another woman and they are now divorced. They have two children and he is raising them by himself the best he can. Two months after his divorce, he began dating another woman in his church.

A few weeks later, he came to my office with a sparkle in his eyes and said, "Rolly, you wouldn't believe what happened last night. I attended a healing session in our church and I believe I was healed with some of the emotional troubles I was having. And you know what, Tracy was there. I found out later that she herself was experiencing some of the things I've been experiencing myself. I think God allowed our paths to cross so that we can go through life together."

He sounded so upbeat and positive. That's when I thought I'd share my life story with him as well. He had shared his story with me already and I thought he would be open to listening to mine. I told him about my search for meaning and truth early in my teens. I mentioned how I turned from one religion to another. And then, I told him I began to read the Bible and learned about Jesus and how Jesus died for me and rose from the dead. Basically, I shared the gospel in a very tactful and unobtrusive manner. He didn't realize that he was being witnessed to.

I didn't ask him whether he would like to receive Jesus. I planted a seed and that's all that matters at the time. We're still good friends since I left DMV and we've been in touch ever since. I always make it a point to see him whenever I go

down to Richmond or somewhere in that area. I'm praying that the seed I planted would grow. But I'm leaving it to God. And, btw, he texted me recently that he just got married and even **showed me their picture together**. I just didn't ask whether it's the same woman he talked to me about years ago. He actually wanted me to marry them, but he couldn't wait.

Our work can be a bridge to introduce the reality of Jesus Christ. Are you building this bridge at work?

Finally, you can be happy at work if you,

3. View Your Job as a Building Project

There are two particularly strong passages of scripture which, if taken to heart and applied, will change the heart and the mind of a Christian about their job, whatever it may be. The first passage is found in the advice Paul provided to the Christians in one of the earliest churches. **“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”** ([Colossians 3:23-24](#)).

The implication of this verse is clear: as a Christian, it is much more important HOW you do what you do to earn a living than it is WHAT you do to earn a living. We have this unfortunate practice of attributing greater worth to some people because of the job that they hold. We also tend to denigrate people who serve in jobs we may look down at or not fully appreciate. The truth of the matter – any job you hold may be transformed when you view it as a way to serve the Lord and glorify God in whatever it is that you do.

This verse was written to people who were living, for the most part, as nothing more than menial slaves. Their lives were never going to improve, their work conditions would always be bleak.

Now, you may not be working as a slave but it may seem like that sometimes. You dread the arrival of your boss in the morning, you get scared whenever you get an email asking you to report to your boss's office, you feel like he or she doesn't like you because you get scolded instead of encouraged. But everything changes, however, when you begin to view your occupation as both a way to honor God and to represent God in the way in which you accomplish your daily tasks. The Bible says, *"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."* (Col. 3:17)

Now, the second passage is even more profound. It is directed to the Christians who lived in Corinth. *"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."* (1 Corinthians 3:9-15)

Take a moment and let the truths of this passage soak in. As you do, reconsider what you do or what you are considering doing and evaluate in light of this important teaching. It drives home one of the most crucially important truths about our professions. Notice that we work not for a corporation, not for a company, not for a boss or even for ourselves if we own our own business. Whatever we do, we work for the Lord. We are fellow workers with other Christians and our boss is the Lord. And the sum of our labors is going to be

inspected by God at the end of our lives. More specifically, God is going to inspect the building products we have utilized throughout the years.

He is going to look to see if we built our lives and our professional reputations with products that will stand the test of time and pass God's standard of quality. It is clear from reading the New Testament that ultimately, we are going to give an account for what we have done with our talents, with our treasures and with our time. Since in the sum of a person's life, so much of all three of those components will have been linked to our jobs, our accountability before God needs a careful consideration of how we live out our careers.

The test of fire eventually comes to every one of us. Once they have come, it becomes clear to us what kind of foundation we have used to construct our lives. The simplest way to speak of that when it comes to our career choices is that those decisions will have either lifted up the name of Jesus and brought others closer to the Lord – or it will have been the principal and primary obstruction which came between us and obedience to the Lord. The flame will not corrode or blacken gold, for fire burns it pure and clean, and gives it a shining color.

There were three men who worked side by side as masons on a great cathedral. Each one was asked why he did what he did. The first man answered that he was working for a certain amount of money each day. The second man said he was a brick layer and did so to pay off a hospital debt. The third man said he was building a great building for the worship of God. All three men were doing the same tasks but with far different intentions. God wants you to find joy and purpose in your labor. As the saying goes, **"Bloom where you're planted."** Friend, God has placed you in that job for a purpose.

As the shadows fell on the life of Solomon and he reflected back upon his life, this is the conclusion to which he came. ***"Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor"***

under the sun during the few days of life God has given him” (Ecclesiastes 5:18-19).

An American television network filmed an interview with Mother Teresa, a woman who gave her life to feed starving people and minister to the dying. The person conducting the interview asked Mother Teresa about her feelings of being used of God to minister to the poor. She answered, "But it is His work. I think God wants to show His greatness by using my Nothingness." She was asked later, "You feel you have no special qualities?" Mother Teresa replied, "I don't think so. I don't claim anything of the work. It is His work and I am like a little pencil in His Hand. That is all. He does the thinking, He does the writing. The pencil has nothing to do with it. The pencil has only to be allowed to be used."

Will you be a pencil in the hand of God? Will you allow God to use you to glorify him at your place of work? From now on, will you view your job as a blessing from God, a bridge to minister to others and introduce Jesus, and a building project that would lift up the name of Jesus? Only when you answer "yes" to these questions that you'll be happy at whatever work you do.