

Make Your Life Bigger - Make Much Of Christ From Eight To Five - The *aim* of all Christians is exactly the same. Whether you are a pastor, a para-church leader, a missionary, a Bible College teacher, a butcher, a baker or a candlestick maker. The *aim* of your life is to pursue Christ whole-heartedly and make Him look like treasure to those around you. There is not one goal for clergy and another goal for laity. There is not one goal for seminary graduates and another for accountants. If Christ is Lord He is Lord of *all*. There is not one inch of life where He has not stamped "*Mine!*" all over it.

Somehow we must bring this consciousness into our work. If we go to work with the same aim as everyone else - to be *good* at our job and *successful* in earning a living - we will look exactly like everyone else who goes to work in this fallen world. And we will *waste our lives* while we work. How are we to make much of Christ from eight to five? How are we to magnify Christ and take up our cross where we work day to day? Your workplace is the zone in which you will encounter more people outside Christ than any other part of your life. How can you make Christ look like treasure to these people?

1) **WE GLORIFY GOD IN OUR WORK WHEN WE MANIFEST THE IMAGE OF GOD AND OUR LOVE FOR CHRIST IN THE WORK WE DO** - There is nothing distinctly *Christian* about doing good work. There is nothing distinctly *Christian* about being *diligent* in your work. The Bible holds up the example of the ant as a creature that is diligent, hard working, and planning for its future. But no one would say the ant is a Christian.

So this is what we must come to terms with. How does a Christian bring the *image of God* and *gratitude to Christ Jesus* into his work in a way the ant never can? How does the Christian glorify God in his work in a way that a beaver never can. Beavers build dams. They work hard at their project. They do what they are designed by their Creator to do. As far as I can tell, they seem to enjoy their work. They do it without grumbling. Can a Christian glorify God in his work in a way the beaver never can?

The answer is "*Yes,*" the Christian *can* glorify God in a specific, Christ-exalting way. He can do some things in his work that the beaver never can:

a) **No beaver brings a God-awareness into his task.** This is why we talk about the "*instincts*" of animals. They do what they were designed to do without *self-evaluation*. They bring no "*God-awareness*" into their tasks.

But you and I are different. We alone, of all the creatures on earth, can bring a sense of *calling* into our tasks. We can rejoice in each new morning as an opportunity to grow in character and holiness. We can remind ourselves that every breath and movement of muscle, and every talent is *not* of ourselves, but is a precious gift of our Heavenly Father.

This is part of the image of God in each one of us. Everything we do - not just the "*church*" part of our lives - is more deeply pulled into the conscious pursuit of God's glory through the *purchasing power* of the blood of Christ Jesus: **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** - "**Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.**"

b) **No beaver builds dams for *other* beavers other than itself.** Beavers build their dams with an eye to their own provision and their own survival (or their offspring). God created them to do this by *blind instinct*. Beavers don't *ponder the goodness of God*, the miracle of grace and provision, and decide *intentionally* to forgo their own provision to help with the work of some other creature.

But the Christian is different by design. The Christian can do his work with a sense of compassion and the needs of others. He can *provide* for himself without having the *motive* of providing solely for himself. He can, as Paul says, "**....work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need**"(Eph.4:28). I'm going to come back to this point when I close.

2) **WE GLORIFY GOD IN OUR WORK WHEN WE DO IT IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT ENHANCES AND BEAUTIFIES OUR TESTIMONY OF CHRIST AS SAVIOR AND LORD - Titus 2:9-10** - "**Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, [10] not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.**"

These are truly amazing words. And they carry extra punch because they prove that *any* work - even the unjust labor forced upon slaves - can be done in such a way that it glorifies God and advances the gospel. You may or may not like your job. You may or may not want to be in your present job long-term. You may or may not feel you are being treated *justly* at your workplace. But you *can* do the work you do in a way that truly glorifies your heavenly Father and advances the gospel of Christ Jesus.

a) **It means the way you do your work can *detract* from the beauty of the gospel, just the way an ugly dress or ridiculous hair style or gaudy ear rings can take away from the loveliness of a woman.** You can do your job in a way that renders the work of Christ useless for some lost soul. You can make it very difficult (impossible?) for someone to see the reality of conversion and eternal life by the way you function at your job Monday morning. This would be especially meaty instruction for those who, like the slaves Paul was addressing, might be prone to bitterness and nastiness, perhaps given to complaining about the unjust treatment they were receiving.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 - "**....and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, [12] so that you may live properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.**" The point of these verses is *not* that your work has the power to *save* anyone. It can't. But it *can* put obstacles in the way of the gospel message. It *can* turn people off from the words you or someone else will speak about Jesus Christ and salvation. So Paul reminds all of us that we don't just work *unto ourselves*. Don't *waste* your work time merely earning a living. Adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ.

b) **Paul assumes that people will *know* we are Christians in the workplace.** This just follows logically from the text as night follows day. If my work is to *adorn* the message of the gospel - if my *work* is to beautify and make credible my *words*, then Paul's obvious assumption is that there will be testimony given to the gospel of Christ.

The necklace only serves its purpose around the beautiful woman's neck. The earrings serve no purpose in a box under the bed. I would rather take my *wife* out for dinner than her *earrings*. This is what Paul is saying. The central thing is the gospel. The way you work only *adorns* it.

So Paul assumes we all do our work in such a way that *when we speak for Christ* - when we present the actual message of the gospel into words - our testimony will be all the more appealing and alluring and beautiful and inviting to those outside. This verse should forever silence the nonsense that we don't *tell* others about Jesus, we just let our *lives* do the talking. How contrary to Paul's clear instruction! Your actions, all by themselves, can *never* tell who Jesus Christ is. They can *never* explain the reality of sin and the meaning of the cross and resurrection. Your actions, by themselves, can never warn others about the Second Coming, nor heaven or hell. No. The purpose of our actions - *especially* in the huge part of our lives we spend at work -

is to make our words **weighty** when we witness for Christ.

- 3) **WE GLORIFY GOD IN OUR WORK AND EXALT JESUS CHRIST AS THE SUPREME TREASURE OF OUR LIVES BY PURSUING OUR TASK WITH DILIGENCE AND EXCELLENCE, BUT STILL NOT LABORING FOR "BREAD THAT PERISHES."** - John 6:27 - "**Do not labor for the food that perishes**, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."

When Jesus says we are not to work for "**food that perishes**" He is simply referring to normal physical food. He's not thinking of anything especially sinister in itself. He is telling us that, in our work, our **aim** - our **goal** - is not to be the gaining of things that go bad and wear out. "**Don't go to work Monday morning just to gain things that have no eternal value!**" That's what Jesus is saying.

Now, certainly you have to eat. You have to live in this world. And we all know how expensive that can be. But, while we do have to eat and own, we only have to eat and own so much. We do our work like we are in **war-time**, not **peace-time**. And Jesus warns His followers there is a terrible deception in every job that you will have a better life, and a more meaningful life, and a more secure life, if you have **more** than if you have **less**.

Let me suggest two vitally important indicators that you are laboring hard, but in a way that exalts Christ as treasure and not merely for bread that perishes:

- a) **Do your work with an eye, not to bread that perishes, but to meeting the needs of others who are hurting.** Nothing manifests a worker who is **in** the world, but not **of** the world like this does. There are **thousands** of Christian kids who are going to die of starvation this week **needlessly** because rich Christians in churches like ours don't take a "**Child Care Plus**" pamphlet and show the love of Jesus to them.

Ephesians 4:28 - "**Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.**" You can **steal** to have. You can **work** to have. Or, you can **work** to **give**. Only the third option enhances your work as Christ honoring and Christ treasuring in this working world. Only the third option reveals a heart that is released from the waste of toiling for bread that perishes. Only the third option turns your 8 to 5 job into an exhilarating, passionate adornment for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- b) **Finally, if you would treasure Christ rather than labor for bread that perishes, see the goal of your work as extending the missionary outreach of Christ's kingdom.** 1 Peter 2:6-9 - "For it stands in Scripture: 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.' [7] So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,' [8] and 'A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.' They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. [9] But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

We are now a "**chosen race.**" **Chosen for what?** What have you been chosen for? Peter tells us in verse 9 - "**....that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**" Your self-identity has been given an **extreme make-over**. You used to live life as a **possessor**. But that's been totally changed. You are now a **proclaimer**. You **go** to work, but not for bread that perishes. The goal of your work is to furnish your calling, and your calling - and the calling of millions of other Christians who are in this world but not of it - is to **proclaim Christ's excellencies in this world**.