

Resonate

BIBLE STUDY

**“THE TIME OF OUR LIVES:
TIME TO WORK”**

The pressures of work can weigh on us but we know it is a necessary part of our schedules. The Word of God teaches us how to manage this area of life. This week we will learn about time management at our vocations.



Today's Scripture:
Colossians 3:22

The Word

In one of my first jobs, I worked for a tyrant. This man would yell at us depending on his mood for the day. He would lie, deceive, and cheat others in order to push his agenda through. He scared me. Many times I left his presence in tears. I saw him break others down as well. It was horrible.

Some of you have a similar work environment. You may dread going to the office because of who is in charge or because of who sits in the cubicle next to you. I want you to know that I am sensitive to what you may be going through. The verse we will study today will not be an easy one to read but please bear with me as we explore its truths.

Colossians 3:22

Verse 22: I felt like a slave at my job but in reality I was free to leave. I could have quit at anytime and I am sure my tyrannical boss would have enjoyed my resignation. This verse, however, was written to true slaves, people who were living under the bondage of another human being. From history we know the brutality of slavery in our nation. Sadly, this cruel practice has been occurring throughout the world for thousands of years.

Picture a slave, someone forced into servitude to another. Imagine the atrocities this person may have experienced at the hands of someone else. Can you feel their shock as they read this verse? We get upset because our boss passed us over for a promotion. These people were being forced to live for and serve another yet the Lord tells them to “obey”.

God does not agree with slavery. But since this culture allowed this evil practice, God was showing them a way to hold up Christ even in their unjust situations. If slaves were called to do this, how much more should we since we only *work* for or with someone instead of being *enslaved* to them.

When you are asked to do something by your boss, do it. Even if it may not seem the best course of action, do it. If you can voice your opinion, then share your thoughts but if it is not an open environment, then follow the course of action your employer has stated. You show reverence to the Lord by following through at work.

There was a secretary at my work who only would do what she wanted to do. If her employer gave her directions on something but she did not agree with it, she would flat out refuse to get it done. Sometimes the secretary would lie about attempting the project but later claim she was not able to complete it. Yet, she always wondered why she received low scores on her evaluations. The secretary did not know that disobeying God's command of obeying her employers led to the problems at work.

When we choose to honor God by honoring our employer, we can alleviate some of the stress of our jobs. Instead of fighting to get our way, we can just allow our employer to have his. We know that he is ultimately responsible for his poor decisions. But, we are responsible for doing our best in whatever is asked of us. When we do our best, God is pleased no matter what the outcome may be.

Obeying in action only, though, is not enough. The attitude behind the action must also be pleasing to God. We can say "yes, I will do that" and still slam a door, gossip to other co-workers, or roll our eyes. The words do not match our attitude. God wants us to follow through not only in action but in attitude as well.

I struggled with this. When I worked for "my tyrant" I would often gossip about his abuse to others. It was wrong of me to do. I did not have a good attitude and usually when he walked into the room I would emotionally shut-down. Where laughter had been in my office only moments before, I would meet him with a forced greeting. My attitude did not match my obedience.

From my many mistakes I can honestly tell you that what I am writing today is not easy. But this does not get us off the hook. God calls us to obey those in authority over us. By obeying that earthly authority, we honor our Heavenly Authority. How much honor is God receiving by your attitude and your follow through at work?

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to help you to honor Him at your work.

Do you have a difficult time following orders at work? If so, what do you think causes this?

How will you follow through on projects or tasks at work even if you do not agree with them?

In what ways have you showcased a poor attitude at work?

Do you need to apologize to anyone at your workplace?

How will you improve your attitude?

Side note: If your employer asks you to do something immoral or illegal then do not follow his directions. That would bring dishonor to the Lord and He is your main priority.

DAY 2

Today's Scripture:
Colossians 3:22

The Word

When I worked as a counselor on night shift, sometimes there was nothing to do. Our jobs were dependent upon the police calling us about runaways. No calls meant no work and there was little else to do in our one room office. My co-workers and I would sit around and talk after all of our paper work was caught up. One night around 8:30 p.m. we were discussing events of the day when suddenly we heard people walking up to our office. One of the counselors threw open our journal log pretending to write in it and grabbed the phone as if she was going to make a call. The people who ended up walking into the office were a quartet that the guy I was dating had hired to sing a song to me for Valentine's Day. As sweet as that was, nothing compared to watching that counselor's face turn bright red as she realized we had caught her being fake about her work because she thought the boss was dropping in. We laughed about that long after she left the job. It taught us all a lesson.

All of us from time to time put on a show about our work. Yet, this fakeness dishonors God. He wants us to do what is right whether the boss is walking in on us or not.

Colossians 3:22

Verse 22: We studied this same verse yesterday but today I want to narrow in on the phrase "not only when their eye is on you". We need to always give our best performance. To know how to do this, we need to forsake ways that are not "our best":

Playing video games on work time
Shopping on-line
Taking extra long breaks
Prolonging lunch
Exaggerating our work performance

Taking credit for other's ideas
Sitting around talking about nothing but changing it to a work conversation when the boss comes in
Bringing office items home for our personal use
Breaking policy rules about personal e-mails or phone calls
Belittling the boss or gossiping about him when he is not around
Sleeping on the job
Running personal errands while out for a work errand
Coming to work late
Leaving work early

That is just a few examples. You may be able to think of more. These are ones that I've done or have worked with others who have done them. Sadly, all of these dishonor God. Ultimately, He is the "Boss" over all of us and His eye is always on us even though our earthly boss may walk out of the room.

Sometimes the pressures of work may build because we are wasting time avoiding work instead of finishing the tasks that need to be completed. Then we have more piled on the next day because we did not complete our to-do list in a timely manner. This often leads to delays and excuses which could have been avoided if we had worked when we were supposed to work.

Not only is it not right to abuse work time, it is unfair to our family when we have to bring work home because we squandered the day. When you are with your family, you need to be present with them. When you are at work, do your work so you will not drain your precious family time.

Another abuse at work is not staying up to date. In most fields, you need to grow in the latest technology, research, tools, etc. It is only right for the people you are working with and the people you are working for that they should receive the best and that best may be something you need to educate yourself on.

I am about to tell you something frightening. My mom who worked in the medical field for over 35 years told me that some doctors do not stay up to date on the latest research and technology. They would treat patients with medicines that have since been replaced or did not know of new technology that could help people with certain ailments. That upset me. I may be treated by a lazy doctor who has not kept up with research to know the best ways to care for my medical needs.

Just as the people in the medical field must stay up to date, so should the rest of us. Every field provides opportunities to learn more and grow in our professional skills. This will help you to give your best at work.

To radically change our work habits requires intense effort on our part. Hopefully, you will be rewarded and "win the favor" of your employer. But this cannot be your main motivation. There will be times when you won't get the raise, no one says "thank you", the promotion will be given to someone less qualified, or the deal still does not go through. What do you do then? You will need to rest in the fact that you showed respect to God by doing your best at work. By not cutting corners, you can be confident

instead of ashamed in your work. Then, even if your boss does suddenly walk in, you will have no need to fear (or grab a phone to pretend to make call.)

Up Close and Personal

Confess anything that you are doing that is not right at work.

What are you doing at work that needs to stop?

How do you need to improve your work performance?

What step will you take to get updated about research, technology, skills, machinery, etc. at your workplace?

DAY
3

Today's Scripture:
Colossians 3:23-25

The Word

In college, we received our grades by mail. At the end of one semester I received an F in biology. I was shocked. I had carried an A in that class so how was it possible that my final grade was an F? After numerous phone calls, I finally reached the professor. She informed me that my final project had never been turned in. The final project had been a group collaboration. One of the group member's responsibilities was to type up the research the rest of us had done and to turn the report in. She failed to follow through on her task. Thankfully, the professor overturned my grade upon finding out the name of this girl: she was known by the professor as a poor student.

We have a reputation in our schools, in our homes, and in our workplaces. You know the people who work hard and those who do not. When a major project at work comes up, you know who you do not want on the team because they often do not follow through. You also know the person you desire to work with because they get the job done. As believers, we are called to always be the responsible workers.

Colossians 3:23

Verse 23: We are to work with all of our hearts. This is not a halfway effort. This is not about doing a mediocre job. This is tackling everything with gusto. You want your boss to be so impressed with you that he always wants to hire Christians because they are the best workers. Are you giving the Christian workforce a good or bad name?

Bob Coy is a famous preacher in Ft. Lauderdale. He shares openly about how after he became a Christian all he wanted to do was help out at the church. One of the ministers took him aside and confronted him about his neglect of his job in order to do “church work”. He taught Bob that ministry is everywhere and that his poor example at work was hurting the name of Christ.

Our work habits are a witness to those around us. If you are failing on the job and causing others to have to pick up your slack, why would they want to hear about your relationship with Christ? If they are irritated with you, they do not care to know your God. But if you do a wonderful job, then others around you will be more willing to hear about your Lord and Savior. Your work is a witness. What are you telling the world?

Our motivation to work with all our heart is beyond winning those around us over. The main goal is to please our Lord.

Colossians 3:24

Verse 24: Did you know that you will be rewarded for the work you are doing? Most people only think ministers get rewarded by God for their work. This is not true. Every person is commended by God for the job they did in their workplace. Your work is holy unto God. You are not a businessman. You are a businessman working for the Lord and He will reward your work. The same goes for housewife, accountant, dentist, secretary, custodian, manager. All jobs are unto God and will be rewarded by God if you do your work in a way that serves Him. He gifted you to be doing your job so when you do your job well, He wants to reward you! Isn't that amazing?

While it is a wonderful truth that we will be rewarded in eternity, there is a flip side as well. If we are poor workers on earth, we will be penalized on earth.

Colossians 3:25

Verse 25: Just because we are believers, God is not going to promote us at work. In fact, if we are giving Him a bad name, He will make sure we know it. Sometimes people lament “Why didn't I get that promotion, God” yet everyone else at work knows the other person deserved it. Our prayer life does not give us the “inside edge” for a better job. Instead, our work habits are rewarded because we prove ourselves faithful then God opens the doors for us.

If you are having troubles at work, evaluate your work performance. Do not look at the other people on the job and compare yourselves to them. You need to evaluate yourself as an employee of the Lord. If you can honestly say that you are working with

“all your heart” then ask God for his help with your work troubles. If you realize that you are not giving your all at your job, then improve your performance. This may be what will turn your work problems around.

You have a holy calling. Whatever your job may be, your workplace is holy ground, for it is unto the Lord. Treat it with the respect and wholeheartedness that it deserves.

Up Close and Personal

Thank God that He is so gracious and wants to reward your faithful service at your job.

Are you working with “all your heart”? If not, how can you improve?

Does your work portray a good or bad witness? What may need to change?

How do you feel about the truth that you will be rewarded for your work?

What are your thoughts about God penalizing your poor work performance?

DAY
4

Today's Scripture:
Colossians 4:1

The Word

I heard about a business splitting. One of the owners I knew was a Christian. The employee going with this Christian businessman said “I’ll stick with him even though I have to keep after him. He wants a lot but he is cheap. But it does guarantee me jobs. Yet, I have to keep telling him, what you want and the price you are willing to pay, doesn’t add up.” He was asking for “Lexus” work while paying a “KIA” price. God rebukes this type of attitude.

Colossians 4:1

Verse 1: Every employer should give what is “right” and “fair” to their employees. No worker should feel as if they are being cheated, used, or overworked. The employer is to take care of his employees.

At one place I worked, I remember a secretary summing up the workplace. She said, “Every since they hired him to be in charge, more doors have been closed”. It was a literal and metaphorical truth. Morale dropped and people kept their doors shut. They would rather be alone. How is the morale in your office? If it is low, and you are in charge, the blame is yours. It is time for you to evaluate if you are treating your workers “right” and “fair”.

Employers will be judged upon how they treat their employees. God is over the workplace. He wants the employer to treat the employees as the Lord treats the employer. What are some of the ways God treats us: with respect, with grace, with mercy, with encouragement. He also expects us to grow and not be stagnant. He challenges us to be more and do more. When we do fail, God rebukes us but the rebuke is always saddled with love. As an employer do you show the traits of God to others?

In the book, *The Christmas Carol*, a stark contrast is shown between the main character, Ebenezer Scrooge, and his former employer, Fezziwig. Scrooge was cold and calloused except for his love for money. He would deprive his employee, Bob Cratchit, of coal for the fire to save money causing poor Cratchit to freeze. Morale was obviously low. Fezziwig, on the other hand, would throw elaborate Christmas parties for his employees, spending money on them. People enjoyed working for Fezziwig. No one wanted to be around Scrooge.

As a Christian employer, your first responsibility is not to make money but to honor God. If you are seeking yourself first in the business, you are sinning at your job. You are to place the Lord first in your business and care for those who He has brought to work under you. This does not mean that if there is a problem you do not have to make the decision to fire someone. There will be tough calls; I am not minimizing the responsibility. However, everything you do must honor God by being “right” and “fair” to those around you. Your Master is watching how you run the business.

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to help you to treat others in a way that is “right” and “fair”. This is true for both employer but also the employee.

How is the morale in your office?

What can you do to improve morale?

Are you treating each employee in a way that is “right” and “fair”? If not, what changes will you make?

As an employee, how can you pray for your employer?

DAY
5

Today's Scripture:
2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

The Word

In our culture we live for the weekends. We treat work as an evil necessity that gives us the money to do what we really want. Many people strive for quick fortunes in order that they may quit working altogether. For those of us who desire to just lounge around, the Word has a strong rebuke against us.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

Verse 6-15: Idleness is sin that leads to more sin (busybody). Those who refused to turn from this sin received church action against them.

Do not be idle or lazy. Do not be a busybody or gossip. These characteristics are offensive to God. The Lord takes work seriously and so should we. We must rid ourselves of idleness and replace it with doing a good job. This will involve a change in our hearts, minds, and wills. But it must be done for it is too important to neglect.

If you are only living for the weekend, it is time to evaluate your attitude toward work. You were created to work. Even in the paradise of Eden, Adam and Eve took care of the garden. In heaven, we will not be loafing around on clouds. Instead, we will be released into the creative work of serving God. Work is not to be dreaded but embraced for it brings fulfillment to our intricate personalities, talents, passions, and gifts.

For those who do have a good work ethic, teach those around you how to work in a way that pleases God. Some people do not know that their workplace is holy ground. Show them how they can serve the Lord by being faithful laborers on the job. It may transform an idler to a passionate worker.

Up Close and Personal

Confess any idleness in your life.

What are your thoughts about church action being taken against idlers and busybodies?

When are you idle?

How can idleness be replaced with work?

What will you do to prevent yourself from joining in with idlers or busybodies at work?

Who can you motivate toward working for God instead of idling?