

Christian Education

The Christian and Work

Lesson #11 for December 12, 2020

Scriptures: Genesis 3:19; Deuteronomy 16:15; Exodus 25:10-30:38; Galatians 5:22-26; Ecclesiastes 9:10; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 15:58.

1. Which would you rather live, a life busy with activity? Or, a life of complete leisure with nothing specific that you have to do? For a little while, a life of leisure might seem great. However, most of us would become bored and would be looking for something to do. Of course, there are some of us who would be happy to fill our lives with leisure activities!
2. Do you think Adam and Eve were disappointed with the work that God gave them to do in the Garden of Eden? Absolutely not! We do not know everything that they did. Did they plant anything new? What happened to the fruit that developed on the trees? Did it just stay in perfect condition, waiting for them to harvest it? And if the garden was of any size at all, there is no way the two of them could have consumed all of the fruit, nuts, and grains that would have been produced. Did they feed the animals with the same food? In any case, I am sure their work was enjoyable and exciting.
3. However, now we live between the time when the Garden of Eden was placed on this earth at creation and the Garden of Eden that will come back to this earth at the third coming when lions will eat grass. Is it still true that work can be a blessing? From the Bible we know clearly that every Jewish child, at least the males, was to be taught a trade. It was criminal of a father not to teach his son a trade!
4. And think of the experience of Jesus who spent most of His time on this earth working in a carpenter shop. Don't you wish you could see some of the work He produced? Is it possible that some Roman Catholic Church somewhere has a piece of work that Jesus supposedly produced? What kind of carpentry did Jesus do? Did He and His father travel to the nearby city of Sephoris to work for the Roman legion who were established there? Did they build houses as well as furniture and other things that could be built in a shop?
5. We know quite a bit more about the apostle Paul's work. The Roman government had soldiers established almost everywhere. And many of them lived in tents. We do not know if there was one standard pattern that was expected for all those tents or not; but, obviously, many, many tents were needed. The Roman army was probably one of the main customers for Paul and his associates in the tent-making business. There were times in Paul's life when he worked much of the night so he could preach during the day. But, there were other times when he was supported by the work being done by other members of his team so that he was able to focus on his writing and his ministry.

Acts 18:1-4: ¹After this, Paul left Athens and went on to Corinth. ²There he met a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, for the Emperor Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³and stayed and worked with them, because he earned his living by making tents, just as they did. ⁴He held discussions in the synagogue every Sabbath, trying to convince both Jews and Greeks.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Acts 18:1-4). New York: American Bible Society.

2 Thessalonians 3:8-12: ⁸We did not accept anyone's support without paying for it. Instead, we worked and toiled; we kept working day and night so as not to

be an expense to any of you. ⁹We did this, not because we have no right to demand our support; **we did it to be an example for you to follow.** ¹⁰**While we were with you, we used to say to you, “Whoever refuses to work is not allowed to eat.”** [Could we follow that rule today?]

¹¹ We say this because we hear that there are some people among you who live lazy lives and who do nothing except meddle in other people’s business.

¹²In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we command these people and warn them to lead orderly lives and work to earn their own living.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

6. Solomon is thought to have been the wisest man who ever lived. Obviously, he did many, many things, most of which seemed to have been for his own pleasure.

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13: ¹²So I realized that all we can do is to be happy and do the best we can while we are still alive. ¹³All of us should eat and drink and enjoy what we have worked for. It is God’s gift.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

7. So, what is implied by the word *work*? It is a simple Anglo-Saxon word. *Work* implies doing some job to put food on the table, pay the bills, and, hopefully, save a little for the future. To many people, losing a job is worse than doing an unpleasant job. Work also gives the person a sense of purpose and worth. It is often how we respond when someone asks, “What do you do?” It is also true that many retired persons continue to either work part-time or volunteer. Why is that? If one has nothing to do, s/he will die early.
8. There is good evidence that giving a teenager a job, especially if it is something that he likes or at least does not mind doing, will keep him out of delinquency.
9. In many Seventh-day Adventist boarding schools, a work assignment is an essential part of the education.
10. *Work* is first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 3:19.

Genesis 3:19: “You will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce anything, until you go back to the soil from which you were formed. You were made from soil, and you will become soil again.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

11. Of course, we know that work was not a part of the punishment for sin because Adam and Eve had their very pleasant work while they were still in the garden. Unfortunately, there are many people who feel that their jobs are complete drudgery, and they hope to retire as quickly as possible. However, others come to think of their job as what gives their life meaning and identity. If they are away from their work for too long, they feel depressed or disoriented. Sometimes, in retirement, such people fall apart physically and psychologically, and even die prematurely.
12. But, for Christians, work should be more than just earning a living. No matter what industry or type of work one is involved in, his/her lifework is supposed to be combined with his/her spiritual ministry. How can we best integrate a spiritual component into the work that we are currently doing?
13. Almost everyone has to do something in his work. Sometimes, it is nothing more than pressing computer keys; but, it is still doing something!

Deuteronomy 16:15: “Honour the LORD your God by celebrating this festival for seven days at the one place of worship. Be joyful, because the LORD has blessed your harvest and your work.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

Ecclesiastes 9:10: Work hard at whatever you do, because there will be no action, no thought, no knowledge, no wisdom in the world of the dead—and that is where you are going.—*Good News Bible*.*

Proverbs 21:25: Lazy people who refuse to work are only killing themselves.—*Good News Bible*.*

Jeremiah 1:16: “I will punish my people because they have sinned; they have abandoned me, have offered sacrifices to other gods, and have made idols and worshipped them.”—*Good News Bible*.*

14. Should we believe that God has given us work to do to find fulfillment and joy? Just thinking about work does not take the place of actually doing something.

Proverbs 10:4: Being lazy will make you poor, but hard work will make you rich.—*Good News Bible*.*

Proverbs 12:14: Your reward depends on what you say and what you do; you will get what you deserve.—*Good News Bible*.*

15. So, in what sense is work intended to be a blessing?

Psalms 90:17: LORD our God, may your blessings be with us.

Give us success in all we do!—*Good News Bible*.*

16. One of the blessings of work is that we may earn something which we can give to support God’s work in other parts of the world.

Acts 20:34-35: “You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words **the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’**”—*New International Version*.* [We have not been able to find these words in the teachings of Jesus. Did Paul have access to some of Jesus’s words that we do not have?]^{†‡}

17. Think of the story of Nehemiah that we studied a few quarters ago. He met with almost every kind of opposition that one can imagine. So, he prayed: “But now, God, make me strong!” (Nehemiah 6:9, *GNB**)

18. Glance over Exodus 25:10-30:38. In these six chapters, God gave an incredible amount of detail about constructing the tabernacle in the wilderness. Why did He need to go into all of that detail? And why did all that information need to be saved for us?

19. Remember that Moses had probably lived in tents for the previous 40 years. He knew how to make a tent—probably how to make a good tent—and how to set it up so it would not collapse. But, this tent was very special. Look at the different coverings and the detailed description of the furniture inside the tent. There were four layers covering the tabernacle.

20. Read Exodus 25:23-30. It is clear that God wanted His handiwork to be perfect. He was not interested in sloppy work! But, **God went beyond just giving all those details. He endowed individuals with the skills to do it just right.**

21. Does God endow us with skills to do specific tasks in our day? Do you feel like God has apportioned you the work that you do? Notice what God said about the people He chose to work for Him.

Exodus 31:1-6: ¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² “I have chosen Bezalel, the son of Uri and grandson of Hur, from the tribe of Judah, ³and I have filled him with my power. I have given him understanding, skill, and ability for every kind of artistic work— ⁴for planning skilful designs and working them in gold, silver, and bronze; ⁵for cutting jewels to be set; for carving wood; and for every other kind of artistic work. ⁶I have also selected Oholiab son of Ahisamach, from the tribe of Dan, to work with him. I have also given great ability to all the other skilled workers, so that they can make everything I have commanded to be made.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Exodus 35:30-35: ³⁰ Moses said to the Israelites, “The LORD has chosen Bezalel, the son of Uri and grandson of Hur, from the tribe of Judah. ³¹God has filled him with his power and given him skill, ability, and understanding for every kind of artistic work, ³²for planning skilful designs and working them in gold, silver and bronze; ³³for cutting jewels to be set; for carving wood; and for every other kind of artistic work. ³⁴The LORD has given to him and to Oholiab son of Ahisamach, from the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach their crafts to others. ³⁵He has given them skill in all kinds of work done by engravers, designers, and weavers of fine linen; blue, purple, and red wool; and other cloth. They are able to do all kinds of work and are skilful designers.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Exodus 36:2: Moses called Bezalel, Oholiab, and all the other skilled men to whom the LORD had given ability and who were willing to help, and Moses told them to start working.—*Good News Bible*.*†

22. Have you ever wondered what kind of tools the builders of the tabernacle at the foot of Mount Sinai used? Did they have previous skills from their time in Egypt that helped them in making those items of furniture and the tent for the tabernacle? When they finished their work, did they look at it and say: “Wow, that’s better than I could have imagined myself”?
23. There can be no question about the fact that God intends for us to make the sharing of the gospel and the finishing of God’s work on this earth our first task. So, how are we to integrate that with whatever our other job is? What difference does it make if we do a good job?
24. The story is told of a man who visited his friend who was dying in a Florida hospital.

A patient lay dying at Florida Hospital as his closest friend kept a vigil at his bedside. Nurses moved in and out of the room, caring for the patient’s needs. Seeking to keep the conversation moving, the friend asked the nurses where they had their training. Many had said that they were educated at Florida Hospital College.

This made a big impression on the friend. He then subsequently made several visits to Florida Hospital College to see what it was like. Why? Because he had told people that the nurses trained at this school seemed to him to constantly give more tender loving care to his dying friend than did those nurses who had been trained somewhere else. That is, he was able to see a big difference between them and others in regard to their attitude toward his dying friend.

Thus, he asked many questions about the college and its mission, and

eventually he left a gift of \$100,000 to educate more nurses such as those he had seen in action. Yes, spirituality is a way of life.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, December 9.

25. Sir Run Run Shaw donated millions of dollars to build a 1200-bed hospital in China because of the excellent care he received as a young man from Dr. William Miller, an early Adventist missionary to China, and later care he received at the Adventist Hospital in Hong Kong.
26. The Troesh family donated \$100 million to help build the new hospital at Loma Linda because of the good care that they have receive over the years.
27. Do people look at your work and recognize that it is a step above what other people do?
28. Jesus said:
Matthew 5:16: “In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.”—*Good News Bible.**
29. Is that supposed to apply to our work? Do people praise God in heaven because of the work we do? None of us can avoid making some kind of impression on the people we interact with on a day-by-day basis. What kind of impression is it?
30. When you think of *stewardship*, what comes to mind? In many peoples’ minds, it might involve only financial matters. But, is that what God intended? In business parlance, organizational theory says that *stewardship* refers to management’s responsibility to develop and utilize properly all available resources.
31. So, what are we to do with the resources with which God has blessed us? Don’t we believe that each one of us has at least one talent? How many of us have multiple talents? Peter had some clear words to say about that.
1 Peter 2:5: Come as living stones, and let yourselves be used in building the spiritual temple, where you will serve as holy priests to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ.—*Good News Bible.**
32. So did Solomon and Paul.
Ecclesiastes 9:10: Work hard at whatever you do, because there will be no action, no thought, no knowledge, no wisdom in the world of the dead—and that is where you are going.—*Good News Bible.**
1 Corinthians 10:31: Well, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do it all for God’s glory.—*Good News Bible.**
33. Unfortunately, many people today have compartmentalized their lives. In one compartment, they place their work. In another compartment, they place their home life. In another compartment, they might have a leisure life; and then, in a final compartment is their spiritual life. But, God intends for our spiritual life to be integrated into every compartment of our lives.
34. What would happen if a significant proportion of Seventh-day Adventist Church members took upon themselves Paul’s attitude that our first work is to spread the gospel and whatever else we do is to support that task?
35. You may think that your job is unpleasant or even boring or, perhaps, even impossible. Consider these words from Paul.

Ephesians 6:5-8: ⁵ Slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling; and do it with a sincere heart, as though you were serving Christ. ⁶Do this not only when they are watching you, because you want to gain their approval; but with all your heart do what God wants, as slaves of Christ. ⁷Do your work as slaves cheerfully, as though you served the Lord, and not merely human beings. ⁸Remember that the Lord will reward everyone, whether slave or free, for the good work they do.—*Good News Bible*.*

36. In considering the work that was assigned to Adam, **it is important to recognize that the “curse” was not placed on the work or on Adam but was placed on the ground.**

The life of toil and care which was henceforth to be man’s lot was appointed in love. It was a discipline rendered needful by his sin, to place a check upon the indulgence of appetite and passion, to develop habits of self-control. It was a part of God’s great plan for man’s recovery from the ruin and degradation of sin.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 60.1.

37. Do we properly think of our work as God does?
38. With all his wealth and all of his wives, Solomon had some difficult words to say about work.

Ecclesiastes 2:18-24: ¹⁸ Nothing that I had worked for and earned meant a thing to me, because I knew that I would have to leave it to my successor, ¹⁹and he might be wise, or he might be foolish—who knows? Yet he will own everything I have worked for, everything my wisdom has earned for me in this world. **It is all useless.** ²⁰So I came to regret that I had worked so hard. ²¹You work for something with all your wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and then you have to leave it all to someone who hasn’t had to work for it. **It is useless,** and it isn’t right! ²²You work and worry your way through life, and what do you have to show for it? ²³As long as you live, everything you do brings nothing but worry and heartache. Even at night your mind can’t rest. **It is all useless.**

²⁴ The best thing anyone can do is to eat and drink and enjoy what he has earned. And yet, I realized that even this comes from God.—*Good News Bible*.* [These are the words of an old, depressed man.][†]

39. Is that how you feel about your job?
40. How did he manage to support those 1000 wives and concubines? Did they work to help support themselves? Did they rotate the cooking responsibilities? Why did he come to the place where he felt that it was all just a waste?
41. How do you understand this? Second Thessalonians 3:10: “While we were with you, we used to say to you, ‘Whoever refuses to work is not allowed to eat.’”—*Good News Bible*.*
42. Notice that the problem is for **those who refuse to work**, not for those who for one reason or another cannot work—at least at the present time.
43. Step back and take a larger view of work and its context. Work is one of only three things that we still have and value from the original creation and Eden. We have the Sabbath, marriage, and work. We all recognize that work can, at times, have its downsides. Many of us will spend the majority of our waking hours as adults in working. Wouldn’t it be best if we could feel that we have accomplished something for God during those hours?

Galatians 5:25: The Spirit has given us life; he must also control our lives.—*Good*

*News Bible.**

44. Is God pleased with us when we do the best possible job that we can even if it is not directly spiritually related? God certainly blessed Bezalel, Oholiab, and those who worked with them to do an excellent job on the tabernacle!
45. What kind of work do you think we will do in heaven? Will we all be farmers? Will we have to set aside some vacation time to travel to other worlds to visit them? Will God give us directions and blessing and skills to do whatever work we are asked to do?
46. Could the work of planting and harvesting take us away from our time for worshiping God? After God created Adam, He did not think it was wrong to give him Eve. He did not say to Adam, "Isn't God enough?"

God gave our first parents quite a few things that would engage their attention and time—the animals, the exquisite natural beauty, the responsibility of “replenish[ing] the earth” (*Gen. 1:28*), having “dominion” over the creation (*Gen. 1:28*), and finally “work[ing]” and “keep[ing]” the Garden of Eden (*Gen. 2:15, ESV*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 146.[§] [Note that the brackets and the content in brackets in the paragraph above are in the *Bible Study Guide*.][†]

47. Does working together with fellow Christians develop a sense of togetherness?
48. Several of the ancient patriarchs that we can read about apparently had a close relationship with God. It was described as they *walked with God*. (*KJV** and *NKJV**)

Genesis 5:22-24: ²²After that, Enoch lived **in fellowship with God** for 300 years and had other children.... ²⁴He spent his life **in fellowship with God**, and then he disappeared, because God took him away.—*Good News Bible.*†*

49. A small boy in Sabbath school class was asked how Enoch got to heaven. He said: “One day, Enoch and God took a long walk and finally, God said, ‘We are closer to My house than we are to your house, so let’s go to My house!’”

Genesis 6:9-10: This is the story of Noah. He had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Noah had no faults and was the only good man of his time. He lived in fellowship with God.—*Good News Bible.**

Genesis 48:15: Then he blessed Joseph:

“May the God whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac served bless these boys! [Joseph’s two sons: Manasseh and Ephraim]

May God, who has led me to this very day, bless them!”—*Good News Bible.*†*

Did any of those who volunteered to work on the tabernacle at the foot of Mount Sinai consider it a burden to have to do so? Or, were they “ready volunteers”?

Exodus 35:21: And everyone who wished to do so brought an offering to the LORD for making the Tent of the LORD’s presence. They brought everything needed for use in worship and for making the priestly garments.—*Good News Bible.**

50. If many different women were preparing pieces of material for the tabernacle, did they all match? Where did they get the skins and threads and so forth with which they worked? Was it all made of spun goats’ hair? It seems clear from what we can read that those who volunteered to help in building the tabernacle did so without any coercion of any kind. More

than that, when Moses asked the entire congregation to donate various items from which to build the tabernacle, he had to finally tell them to stop donating! (Exodus 36:4-5) Does that happen in church building projects in our day?

51. Could you truthfully say that your job is a service for God? Do you strive each day to do an excellent job using wisdom and skill? Do you enjoy your work? Do you look forward to going to work each day? Does taking a biblical view of your education and your work make it easier to enter into it with enthusiasm? Do you look forward to working in heaven?

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