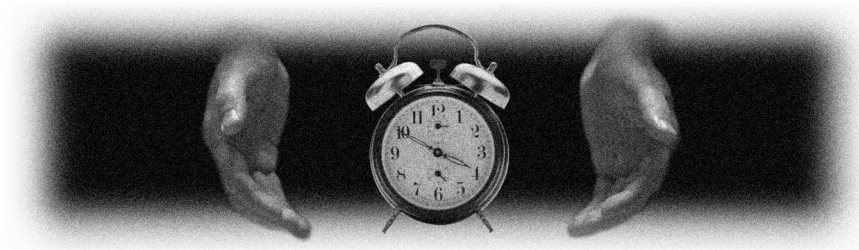


Lord of Our Labor (Work)



SABBATH—AUGUST 27

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Genesis 1:27, 28; Genesis 2:15; Genesis 3:17-19; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; Ephesians 4:28; Matthew 25:14-30.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘If you have extra clothes, you should share with those who have none. And if you have extra food, you should do the same’ ” (Luke 3:11, NlrV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: People who live with Jesus as their Lord will do honest and hard work that produces results. The work of their minds and hands will bring honor to God and blessings to people around them.

THE HONOR OF LABOR. God asks us, as followers of Jesus, to set our minds on heavenly things, not on earthly things. At the same time, God calls us to be useful in our daily work. When Ellen White talks about Jesus' parable¹ of the talents, she says, “God has called us to serve Him in this world. Faithful work is as much a part of true religion as is devotion. . . . Every man and woman who is truly converted will be an honest and hard worker.”—Adapted from *Christ's [Jesus'] Object Lessons*, p. 343.

This week, we will study the gift of work for people who have accepted Jesus as their Savior and Lord. We will discover that doing hard and honest work that produces results is an important way to teach other people about the kingdom of heaven.

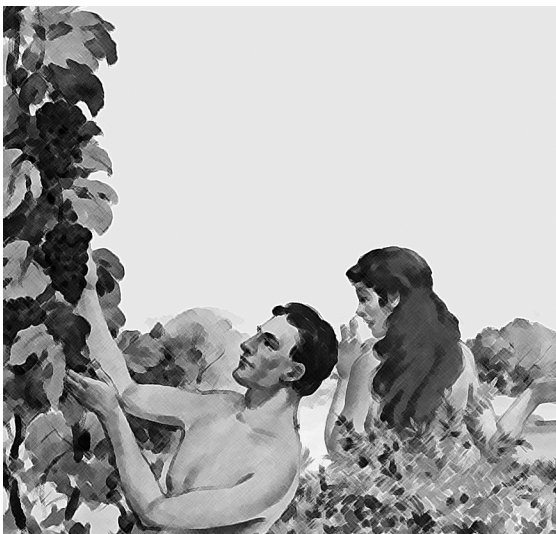
Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 3.

¹parable—a simple story that teaches a moral or religious lesson.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 28**THE GIFT OF LABOR (WORK)
IN EDEN
(Genesis 1:27, 28; Genesis 2:15).**

Many people have the idea that labor is negative. But labor is really something good in a sinful world. Meaningful labor for the human family was part of God's original (first) plan.

What kind of work did God give to Adam and Eve? Genesis 1:27, 28; Genesis 2:15. Why should there be work in a sinless place? Why is work in a sinless place important to the idea of work in general?



The Garden of Eden was a perfect place. All creation was happy in peace and unity. In this ideal situation, God gave Adam and Eve meaningful work. Their work was good for

the Garden itself and for the world in general. Adam and Eve were to enjoy the created world and become involved in it. They were to rule over the created world. In a sense, they were gardeners-rulers. Created out of that world, Adam and Eve became part of it and worked in it as laborers.

We understand that we have the ability to grow, to learn, and to be changed. Then, why do you think God wanted Adam and Eve to have work and responsibilities?

How does your work give you opportunities to grow, to learn, and to be changed? What could you do in your work to help you grow, learn, and change?

MONDAY—AUGUST 29**THE CHALLENGES OF LABOR
AFTER THE FALL (Genesis 3:17-19).**

Sin led to many negative results. The most terrible result was death. Adam and Eve experienced death themselves. Before that, they saw the terrible result of their sin when Cain killed Abel. Sin spoiled the human family and changed the world.

How did sin change the world and our work in it? Genesis 3:17-19. Were these changes a punishment for sin? Or were these changes the natural results of sin?



It is not clear how much time passed before sin spoiled God's perfect creation. But Adam and Eve must have enjoyed the honor of working in Eden. When sin entered, the world became rough and unfriendly. Adam and Eve were then forced to work until they sweat hard. Decay and death in the natural world would remind them that they would die. This was a big difference from the Eden they had once enjoyed.

A quick reading of Genesis 3:17-19 seems to show that God was being very rough on Adam and Eve. But, if you read more deeply, what else can you see in these verses? How did God use these changes to help Adam and Eve?

"It was God's purpose to use work to reduce the evil done to the world by man's disobedience. Work lessened (reduced) Satan's temptations. Work also helped to stop the spread of evil. Worry, tiredness, and pain often come with work. But labor still means happiness, growth, and a safeguard against temptation. The discipline that work gives stops people from being lazy and selfish. Work also helps people to do and make good things and to be strong in purpose. So work is a part of God's plan to help us recover from the Fall."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People*, p. 213.

What examples have you seen of how work can help us spiritually?

TUESDAY—AUGUST 30

DOING WELL IN OUR WORK (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12).

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12. Then answer the following questions:

1. Whom should the people avoid?

2. Whose example should the people follow? _____

3. What reason did Paul give for working to earn his bread?

4. What was Paul's attitude² toward people who refused to work?

5. How would you sum up Paul's message? What are the principles³ in Paul's message that we should use in our own lives? How should we relate to work and to people who do not work?

6. How might people who are not working be excused from work? What is your responsibility toward such people?

When we do our work well, we are blessed in many ways. We are able to care for the needs of our families and loved ones. Our work also brings honor to the Lord we serve. We may be plowing a field. We may be caring for the sick. We may be working in the

home or operating a small business. Whatever we do, we can use our labor for the honor of our Lord and the blessing of people around us. This is how a person who is living under Christ as Lord should feel.

“If any would not work, then he should not eat.” How do you connect this warning with the idea of grace and forgiveness? If we follow this idea, how can we treat people better than they deserve, just as Christ has treated us better than we deserve?

WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 31

WORKING FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS (Ephesians 4:28).

What principle about work did Paul share with the believers in Ephesus? Ephesians 4:28.

Paul practiced what he preached. He spoke to the Ephesian elders before leaving Miletus. He said, “ ‘I haven't [have not] longed [wanted] for anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that I have used my own hands to meet my needs. I have also met the needs of my companions [friends]’ ” (Acts 20:33, 34, NIV). Paul's teaching in words and life reminds us of the advice of another servant of our Lord. John the Baptist challenged his hearers to let

²attitude—how you think and feel about something or someone.

³principles—basic rules for daily life.

the results of their work bless the people around them. “ ‘If you have extra clothes, you should share with those who have none. And if you have extra food, you should do the same’ ” (Luke 3:11, NIV).

What important message does James 2:14-20 have for people who claim to be saved by faith alone? How does this advice help us understand what saving faith is?

What is interesting about James’s words is the kind of works he connects with faith. We often like to think of works as not stealing, not killing, not breaking the Sabbath, et cetera. These are all part of what it means to follow Christ. But James talks about something different. He talks about taking care of people who are in need. It is not enough to just say nice things to these people or to offer a prayer for them. James is giving us an example of the kind of works that show true faith. We need to be careful that we do not get caught in paying an exact tithe, while not doing “the more important things of the law,” like being fair or showing mercy⁴ (Matthew 23:23, NIV). The Pharisees⁵ were good about tithing everything exactly. But they forgot to be fair and show mercy.

Helping the poor requires time and money. How much of your time

and money are you willing to spend helping poor people around you? What does your answer say about the kind of faith you have?



Helping other people shows we have true faith in Jesus.

THURSDAY—SEPTEMBER 1

**WORKING AS WE WAIT FOR OUR LORD’S RETURN
(Matthew 25:14-30).**

Jesus told a parable that showed the importance of making the most of everything we have while we wait for His return.

What lessons can we learn from Jesus’ parable in Matthew 25:14-30 for our lives today?

“There is not one person who does not have any talent at all. Not one

⁴mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

⁵Pharisees—religious leaders of Jesus’ day who believed a person must keep God’s law to be saved.

person lacks a work to do for the Lord. Not one person is to be excused. Not one person is to remain lazy. But every man is required to do his best. God entrusts men with the talents that are to be used in holy service for Him.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, “Redeem the Time Because the Days Are Evil,” *Review and Herald*, April 21, 1896.

This parable comes right after the parable of the foolish virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). The parable of the foolish virgins focuses more on the life of faith, devotion, and prayer. This life leads to the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The parable of the talents is about the active Christian life. It is not about just praying and believing and studying, but about outward work for God.

We should try to do all of our work faithfully as the faithful servants did.

How do we understand Matthew 25:14-30 on the basis of salvation by faith alone? (Romans 3:28; Romans 4:1-13, Galatians 2:16).

Our faith will be shown in our works. Our works also will show what we do with the gifts God has given us. We cannot separate our Christianity from how we live. How we live cannot be separated from how we do our work. Faithful and honest labor can be a powerful example of our faith. Faithful, honest work also can be a powerful witness to the God we serve.

Suppose someone knew that your faith was reflected from how you did your work. What ideas would they receive about your faith?

FRIDAY—SEPTEMBER 2

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read *Christ's [Jesus'] Object Lessons*, pp. 359, 360.

God calls some people into full-time service for Him. These people have the honor and responsibility to devote all their work time to God's business. Ellen White spoke of this call in a letter written in the early 1900s. “Many young men and women are now involved in work to earn money. But they will feel inspired to give themselves to the service of God and to become channels of light. . . . Let these young men and women be given an opportunity to get an education for the work of God. And let all God's workers help, cheer, and encourage one another with prayers and helpful words. Let them remind one another of the honor and responsibility of the work they are doing.” —Adapted from Letter 66, 1901, *Manuscript Releases 311*, p. 44.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does the Sabbath fit in with work? What message does the Sabbath tell us about our work?
2. Compare⁶ what you have learned

⁶compare—show how things are the same.

this week about work with Galatians 6:2?

3. In every time period, God raises up women and men who honor Him in their work. Think of a person you know who has brought glory to God and blessing to others in his or her work.
4. Is there anyone in your own church family who is not working? What can you do as a church family to (1) care for his or her family's greatest needs and (2) find work for the person?
5. "Everyone should provide [care] for his own relatives. Most of all, everyone should take care of his own family. If he doesn't [does not], he has left the faith. He is worse than someone who doesn't [does not] believe" (1 Timothy 5:8, NIV). As a class, discuss what

this verse says about how we should treat someone who refuses to care for his or her family.

