



Christ's Commission Fellowship

Los Angeles

DGROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE
MAY 25, 2014

Why Work?

For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

1 Corinthians 15:9-10

Do you enjoy work? Most of us do not and end up dreading the coming of the start of a new work week. Bob Black in his essay "The Abolition of Work" (1985), he says "no one should ever work. Work is the source of nearly all the misery in the world. Almost any evil you'd care to name comes from working or from living in a world designed for work. In order to stop suffering, we have to stop working."

Do you feel the same way? Do you agree?

The apostle Paul wrote almost 2/3 of the New Testament, but before he became a follower of Jesus, he was a persecutor of the Christian faith. He was one of Jesus' most hardworking apostle. He was a very learned man and has probably a lot to boast of – but we see the humility of his heart when he says, "*for I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle*" and he goes on to appropriate the success of his ministry to God. He recognizes that on his own it would have been impossible to do all that was asked of him but he says "*but by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove in vain; but I labored more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.*"

This attitude and realization of the power and magnitude of God's grace is only possible when we continue ***to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*** (2 Peter 3:18) then we can appropriate our successes to the glory of God. Because it is only through Him and through His power working in us that we can achieve anything. This is why it is very important that we continue to grow in our faith, growing more intimate in our relationship with God, and growing more and more Christ-like.

The Christian life is likened to a seed, that has been planted and that needs to grow. It has to be nurtured and nourished. All Christian life starts from a COMMON GRACE (Matthew 5:45), then from there God makes available to us the SAVING GRACE (Ephesians 2:8-9). Ephesians 2:8-9 emphasizes to us that this grace of God is a gift, not something that we have earned through good works. And if we respond appropriately, and receive this gift of grace in faith then we become born again. We then transition from the darkness to the Kingdom of God.

When we are now truly saved, God then gives us our Calling, our Profession or the ENABLING GRACE. Ephesians 4:11-12 says ***and He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.*** This reminds us that each one of us has a specific calling – some of us are called to be pastors, some prophets, some evangelists but most of us are called to be saints who are to be used in building up the body of Christ. This simply means that whatever your professions maybe – you maybe a doctor, a teacher, a lawyer, a manager, or an employee – all of these are still a calling from God. And God wants to use these professions, use us in our professions to reach out to those in the marketplace who have yet to know Jesus. It is when we receive this calling that we receive our Enabling Grace.

The sad truth though is that sometimes those who profess to be Christians do not bring their Christianity to their workplace. They become Sunday Christians, secret agents . . . not wanting to manifest their Christianity in the workplace. Instead of being a witness to others of how it is to bring glory to God even in the marketplace. But we are called to be different from the world, we are called to exhibit Christlikeness in every aspect of our lives, even in the marketplace. Because it will be through our life, through the

transformation of our lives that others will see Jesus in us. It is only then that they will have proof of the grace of God at work.

There are things in life that on our own we cannot do, but by faith through God's enabling grace – all things are possible. It is not our knowledge, or skills, or talents . . . it is God working in us and through us that makes all things possible. He enables us so that we can fulfill His work for us. Our response to His calling – is faith.

Jesus says in Matthew 17:20 **And He *said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith ^{as}the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.** Our faith can be as small as a mustard seed, but if we plant it, nurture it and nourish it, that small seed will grow into a tree. The only way we will receive the enabling grace of God is when our faith starts to grow – Romans 10:17 says **so then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.** Furthermore, we should always bear in mind that **without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that He exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek Him.** (Hebrews 11:6)

Going back to our first question – WHY WORK?

Work was ordained by God. It was His creative invention from the beginning. We see in Genesis 1:26 **Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."** It was God's intention for man to rule. It was God's intention that we be the best among His creation, this also means that in the workplace – we have to be the best that we can be because that is what God wants us to be. As we go through to Genesis 2, we see that when everything had already been created still there was no one to work the ground. No one to take care of His creations. (verse 5). And so God created man and in Genesis 2:15 **the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.** It was not God's intention for man to just sit around and do nothing. It was God who instituted work as part of man's life.

Work is lifetime. God intends that humans are to work as long as they live. We were created in the image and likeness of God – and this means that we have to emulate God. God worked – He created the world. For six days He created and on the seventh he rested.

But what makes work difficult? Genesis 3:17 -19 **Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it';**

**Cursed is the ground because of you;
In ^{it}toil you will eat of it
All the days of your life.
¹⁸ "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
And you will eat the ^{plants} of the field;
¹⁹ By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return."**

God ordained work and work was supposed to be beautiful but because of sin, God cursed the ground. . . and this changes our perception of work. This is the reason why work has become difficult. Because of sin.

And yet though work is difficult and tiresome we have to work aims to provide money or resources to supply the necessities of life, to provide quality of life in the satisfaction of a job well done; and to serve God. In 2 Thessalonians 3:10 **if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.** The amazing thing about God's love and grace is that even though we deserve to have a difficult time working for our daily bread – His love and grace enables us and equips us to do the things we have been called to do.

In all the areas of our life, in everything that happens in our life God is sovereign IF we have faith, and IF we obey His commands.

We are reminded by Paul in Colossians 3:22 ***Servants, do what you're told by your earthly masters. And don't just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best.*** Do not be satisfied with mediocre, aim for excellence. How can God reward you with more if you are not doing your best? Remember the Parable of the Talents?

How can God reward you with a promotion if you are unwilling to do your best at where you are now? How can God reward you with good grades if you are unwilling to study or to listen to your teacher? How can God give you more, when you are unwilling to work with what you already have?

Don't just do what you have to do to get by, but work heartily, as Christ's servants doing what God wants you to do. And work with a smile on your face, always keeping in mind that no matter who happens to be giving the orders, you're really serving God (Ephesians 6:6-7)

Always bear in mind – we are not doing our best for our earthly masters, for our bosses, for our teachers, for our supervisors – or for anyone else. . . we are doing our best for the Lord because it is His will for us to excel in what we do. When we work excellently , we have to remember that we are bringing glory not to ourselves but to the Lord. It was only when Jesus died on the cross that this curse was lifted. (Galatians 3:13)

This in fact is our greatest and most challenging calling – to excel in the marketplace – not for recognition, for applause, for promotion but to excel so that people will see Jesus in our lives. So that people will know that even though no one watches us, we will continue to do our best in our job because we are doing it for the Lord and not for anyone else.

God is ready to overwhelm you with more blessings than you could ever imagine so that you'll always be taken care of in every way and you'll have more than enough to share (2 Corinthians 9:8)

But only IF we received God's gift of grace by faith. Only IF we obey His commandments. Only IF we continue to grow in knowledge and wisdom of Christ Jesus. Only IF we continue to strive to continue to grow more and more like Jesus.

And even in this God will enable us. Philippians 4:13 says ***"I can do all this through Him who gives me strength."***

It is when we are surrendered and willing that God is able to work in us and through us. It is when we are rested in Him, that He does His best work in us.

Works: Journaling task

1. In the place where God has put you now, how can you do your best?
2. What is God calling you to do?
3. Are you able to excel for God? Are you willing to excel for God?
4. Do we slow down and rest. . . and allow God to work?