

# Why Work ?

Work has become a distasteful word in the English language, most people (misguidedly) seem to be striving to get out of doing work.

Unions seek to get for their members more pay for less work.

Instant foods to make less work in kitchen for the housewife.

Automatic gadgets so that less physical effort is needed.

Anything that will ease or remove the effort of work is popular.

## Did God intend us to work ?

If so, what are the benefits we can reap from a right attitude towards work?

## Basic reasons why people work in this society.

**Proverbs 14:23** [NIV] *“All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.”*

To get rich is the main incentive for work.

Money is related in this society to power, and there a natural drive in all mankind to desire power so as to be able to rule over other people.

**Genesis 1:26** [NIV] *“Then God said, Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and **let them rule over** the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”*

To rule is a God given desire, but to relate this to using wealth as a power to rule oppressively is a misunderstanding of rulership.

**2 Thessalonians 3:10** [NIV] *“For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: **“If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”**”*

This is an incentive only where there is **not** a welfare state.

I feel that the way the Welfare State has been set up and is run is a great disincentive to people to experience the value of work.

God set up a far superior system within the statutes that He gave to the model nation ancient Israel.

These were designed for a land owning agrarian economy which is the only type of economy that is self-regulating.

Today most of society is based on an industrial economy which is subject to the fluctuations in the consumer's desire to purchase yet more goods and can be easily and dramatically changed by the fickle incentive of fashion and culture.

This type of economy means that many personal skills that bring employment and wealth today may be redundant tomorrow.

It also leads to unemployment, with no land owning base that would enable to feed himself and his family until he can re-train with new skills that are in demand.

During this time of re-training the incentive and desire to work would not be lost, which can very easily happen when a person becomes dependent on hand-outs that do not involve personal labour.

In the film *Fiddler on the Roof* there is a song '*If I were a rich man*', remember the words "*wouldn't have to work hard*".

The singer considered reading Holy Scriptures all day long the **only** Godly thing to do.

He then appealed to God, "*Would it spoil some vast eternal plan if he were a rich man?*" (and not have to work hard).

This study aims to answer that very question!!

Would not working spoil some vast eternal plan that God has for mankind?

## **What is God's attitude towards work ? ... and why he wants us to work.**

**John 10:10** [NIV] "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; **I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.***"

Always remember this desire God has for us to enjoy life to the full.

Note that mentioned in contrast to a full life was one who steals, that is one who gains goods or wealth without working for them.

**Ecclesiastes 9:7-9** [NIV] "***Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favours what you do. Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun – all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labour under the sun.***"

One third to one half of waking life is working.

Enjoying life should be a by-product of our work, as well as living with the wife we love.

Real lasting joy is **not** something you can buy with money, no more than money can buy a happy marriage.

**Real joy is spiritual and not governed by possession of physical goods nor the product of indulging in leisure pursuits.**

**Galatians 5:22** [NIV] "***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,...***"

Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and fruit is the end product of work being performed.

When we consider the physical example of the fruit of any plant there are certain facts which we can use as an analogy to understand spiritual fruits, one of which is joy.

a) The plant works with what it receives from above: rain and sunshine, in conjunction with what it receives from the earth.

b) Fruit is mostly produced on the branches of the plant which have to be joined to the main stem to receive nourishment from the soil.

**John 15:1-4, 8** [NIV] *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. **Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.**” ... “This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

Spiritual nourishment, that produces the fruit of real lasting joy, comes from our relationship with Jesus Christ through our fellowship with the Holy Spirit His representative on earth at this time.

c) The fruit produced is mostly of benefit to other creatures that come in contact with the plant and only what is left over is recycled to nourish the plant in its labour to produce more fruit.

**Lasting joy is the result of giving, not receiving.**

d) There is in most fruits a seed that can reproduce another fruit-giving plant as a result of being digested by the creature that received the fruit as nourishment.

Lift that principle to the spiritual level and what do you have?

Personal evangelism!

The result of giving to others the fruit of joy that was the result of your labour.

**Psalm 104:31** [NIV] *“May the glory of the LORD endure for ever; **may the LORD rejoice in his works**”*

God finds joy in His work.

What is the work that God is doing?

The work of creating. Creating something good, valuable and beautiful out of nothing.

**Genesis 1:31** [NIV] *“**God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning of the sixth day.**”*

God started to work by creating the beautiful and valuable universe and when He had completed it He pronounced it good.

God is now involved in an even greater creation.

He is working on a spiritual creation that will last for eternity.

**1 Corinthians 3:9** [NIV] *“**For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.**”*

The analogies that are given here all involve work being performed in their construction or fruitfulness.

It is through this work that God does that He experiences joy.

## Does more leisure through riches not worked for bring happiness?

**Proverbs 20:21** [NIV] *“An inheritance quickly gained at the beginning will not be blessed at the end.”*

Why does an inheritance not bring lasting joy?

It is a Natural Law, that any wealth not worked for is not appreciated as much wealth gained by hard work and therefore not used as wisely.

I well remember when I was very young that my father helped me to understand the value of work and the joyful fulfilment hard work can bring.

The pocket money I was given was far less than all of my friends and if I wanted more I was told to go and find some paid work to earn it.

Living in the countryside the obvious answer to this was field work at weekends and during school holidays, pea picking, bean picking, strawberry picking, right through the season to blackberry and potato picking; all hard back aching and often dirty work, but it made me appreciate the money I earned.

That hard earned money *“stuck to my palm”* for a long well considered time before I spent it, or it was saved for the future.

**Ecclesiastes 9:9-10** [NIV] *“Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun – all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.”*

God links enjoying life with work and love.

**In God’s eyes no-one is unemployed (unable to work).**

We all have to look for opportunities to work.

Even if we are not paid directly for that work, but are supported by the state because it has mis-managed the economy (not applying God’s statutes relating to work) and there is no paid work for us to do.

The economy that is run in harmony with God’s Laws eradicates unemployment and poverty – (nor have I found any mention of *“retirement”* in God’s Word ! !)

But that is another fascinating subject I may expound in another study booklet.

## Work is God ordained

**Psalms 104:19-24** [NIV] *“The moon marks off the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl. The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens. Then man goes out to his work, to his labour until evening. How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.”*

Working is as natural a part of the created environment as sunlight and darkness.

**Genesis 2:15** [NIV] *“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”*

The first thing that God did after creating man was to place him in a garden and commanded him to work and take care of it.

“Work” [NIV] or “dress” [King James] is the Hebrew word “*abad*” which means work but also by implication to serve as a bond slave all our lives.

“Take care” [NIV] or “keep” [King James] is the Hebrew word “*shamar*” which means to hedge about, guard, protect, observe and preserve.

Work is intended by God to help us to understand the need for caring and to be observant of the needs of others.

**There is no indication that work was intended to be anything but enjoyable.**

**Genesis 3:1-4** [NIV] *“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, You must not eat from any tree in the garden? The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden’, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’ ‘You will not surely die’, the serpent said to the woman.”*

**It is only after Satan’s temptation and Adam and Eve disobeying God’s Commandment that work became toil by God putting a curse on the soil that Adam had to work to feed himself.**

**Genesis 3:17-19** [NIV] *“To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”*

## **God continues to work as an example to us**

**John 4:34** [NIV] *“My food, said Jesus, is to do the will of him who sent me and to **finish his work.**”*

**John 5:17, 36** [NIV] *“My Father is **always at his work** to this very day, and I [ Jesus Christ], too, am working.”*

**John 9:4** [NIV] *“As long as it is day, we **must do the work** of Him who sent Me. Night is coming, when no-one can work.”*

**Proverbs 6:6-8** [NIV] *“Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.”*

Creation (apart from man) is pre-programmed to work, and God intended us to follow the example all around us in His Physical Creation.

This work ethic will then prepare us to join Him in His Spiritual Creation, which also involves fulfilling joyful work.

**Physical work is not an end in itself; as far as God is concerned it is a training ground for future spiritual work that will continue for eternity.**

Read the instructions that Paul gave to Timothy as to how to consider and prepare a man before giving to him the spiritual work of a minister in the church.

**1 Timothy 3:1-8** [NIV] *“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. **He must manage his own family well** and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. **He must also have a good reputation with outsiders**, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.”*

Note they had to qualify by performing well on a physical level in their family and in the church before the responsibilities of a spiritual supervisor was given to them.

Our attitude towards physical work will show God exactly how we would handle spiritual work if He chooses to give such responsibilities to us.

Man has now gone so far from God's way of life he has lost sight of the intended value and purpose of work.

**Ecclesiastes 2:4-11** [NIV] *“I undertook great projects: I built houses for **myself** and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in **my** house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before **me**. I amassed silver and gold for **myself**, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well – the delights of the heart of man. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this **my** wisdom stayed with me. I denied myself nothing **my** eyes desired; I refused **my** heart no pleasure. **My** heart took delight in all **my** work, and this was the reward for all **my** labour. **Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.”***

**Ecclesiastes 2:20-23** *“So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labour under the sun. For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. **This too is meaningless and a great misfortune.** What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labours under the sun? **All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.**”*

The two Hebrew words used here in this passage are very sad when they are associated with attitude to life and our work.

“Vanity” [King James] or “meaningless” [NIV] the Hebrew word “*habel*” indicating something transitory and unsatisfactory and the word “evil” [King James] or “misfortune” [NIV] the Hebrew word “*ra*” meaning wicked, breaking up of all that is good, injurious to others, good for nothing.

These words are used by a man who had lost the understanding of the purpose for work.

The key to understand this seemingly anti-work passage of scripture is to count the number of “I”s and “my”s you find.

Solomon had been greatly blessed by God, much of this was because of the Promises God had made to His Father King David whom God called “*a man after my own heart*”

**Acts 13:22** [NIV] *“After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: I have found **David son of Jesse a man after my own heart**; he will do everything I want him to do.”*

**This great wealth, most of which had come to Solomon without hard labour, was more than he could handle wisely.**

**Ecclesiastes 2:10** [NIV] *“I denied myself nothing my eyes desired”.*

Part of that desire Solomon had was many wives and they caused him to forsake God and follow their gods.

It was this forsaking the true God that led Solomon to become proud and self-centred, working only for his own pleasures and desires, causing work to become a curse.

This is why Solomon expressed such a negative attitude towards work.

**When work becomes an “end in itself” (only for self) it becomes a sin (or curse).**

**Luke 12:16-22** *“And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ “This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich towards God.” Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear.”*

This parable was Jesus’ answer to a man who wanted Him to be arbiter between two people divided over an inheritance, Jesus shows that life and wealth that comes with an inheritance can become a curse if misused.

## **For some work has become a means of exploitation and oppression of others**

**Exodus 1:11-14 [NIV]** *“So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labour, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labour in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labour the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.”*

Pharaoh used work to oppress the Israelites; many powerful people have used work in this way when they control markets and trading.

Some religions in the world have misused work, using the fear of a god to extract wealth from the people, leaving them in a poverty trap.

The poor were forced out of fear to give up their land to the religious leaders to fulfil the heavy tithes and taxes demanded to “secure the salvation of their souls”.

**James 5:4 [NIV]** *“Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.”*

Where the God given Laws of Inheritance and Land Sabbath are **not in force**.

This present society is an example.

This allows some to grow excessively rich on the sweat and toil of others.

Modern writers see the misuse of work in the economy

a) “Small is beautiful” by E. Schumacher (sub-title “Economics as if People Mattered”)

- b) *“Good Work”* by E. Schumacher – In this he addresses the question *“What is the purpose of work?”* – Not totally from a Biblical viewpoint but much of it is in harmony with the mind of God.
- c) *“Economic Power”* by D. Simmons – A study of the Western Capitalist Economy and a blueprint for change – a more radical approach but he gives many points showing the failure of *“big business”* to give an acceptable lifestyle to the mass of the people employed by them.

## **From the beginning Christianity has condemned idleness**

**1 Thessalonians 4:11-12** *“Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”*

Our attitude to work and our performance at work can be part of our preaching the Gospel message.

Christ left us a command as Christians to be a *“light”* and *“salt”* in this world that desperately needs both.

**Matthew 5:13-16** [NIV] *“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

One of the most effective and productive places for us to be *“salt”* and *“light”* is in our place of work.

The way we conduct ourselves in business, giving our employers or customers good value for their money, willingly doing more than our part in the team we work with, and supportive of all the others in our team.

There are endless ways in such an environment that we can use to be *“light”* and *“salt”*.

**1 Timothy 5:13-15** [NIV] *“Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to. So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.”*

### **Idleness can be a tool of Satan to destroy us.**

The sad fact that in today’s society due to a wrong economy, many people find it impossible to find paid work.

Their lack of fulfilling work causes them to find other ways to fill this void in their lives.

Some turn to drink and drugs, which have to be paid for by crime, all of which destroys character and harms other people.

This is aiding Satan in his desired plan to destroy mankind.

### **Christ was a carpenter not a moneylender.**

By this He set a seal of approval on common manual work.

**Acts 18:3** [NIV] *“and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.”*

**Paul** set the example of honest physical labour working as a tentmaker rather than living off tithes of the church (which were his by right due to the job given to him by God).

Christ and Paul in two short statements establish basis for perfect balanced economy.

**2 Thessalonians 3:7-11** [NIV] *“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘If a man will not work, he shall not eat.’ We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies.”*

No work – no eat; note the context is what happens when people are idle, none of it is good.

**Luke 10:7** [NIV] *“Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for **the worker deserves his wages**. Do not move around from house to house.”*

Any worker deserves an honest wage, this includes those who, as in this example, are preaching the Gospel of God to people.

## **Human toil is given a “new value” in the New Testament**

**Romans 14:7-8** [NIV] *“For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, **whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.**”*

We are Christ's servants, we belong to Jesus.

**Acts 20:28** [NIV] *“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the **church of God, which he bought with his own blood.**”*

Jesus Christ purchased us with His poured out Blood.

We are also part of one body in Christ, the way we work will affect other Christians within the same body; always by good or bad example, and sometimes by our ability or inability to help others in need of financial assistance.

**Ephesians 6:5-9** [NIV] *“**Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.** Obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favouritism with him.”*

We are to serve our employers as if we were directly serving Christ, and we are to look on those who work for us as equal in the sight of God who has given life to all mankind.

**Colossians 3:22-24** [NIV] *“**Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.**”*

We are not to be “clock watches” just to win favour with our employers but because of our love for God, responding to Him out of gratitude for what He has done for us.

## By looking at work in this way we become... The Stewards of God's riches.

**1 Corinthians 4:1-2** [NIV] *“So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”*

It is through our attitude to physical day to day work that God can judge if we will be faithful if He gives us responsibilities in His Spiritual Work.

**Matthew 25:14-30** [NIV] *“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’ “The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’ “**Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. “Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”***

The servant with just one talent was **not** willing to work with the limited abilities he had received from God.

What this man lost was the opportunity to be the Steward of Christ.

What is the direction of this stewardship?

What we do with our time and talents given to us by God?

Any talent is gradually lost if it is not used, but increases in quality as it is exercised.

**1 Corinthians 12:1-11** [NIV] *“Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. **There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.** There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given **for the common good.** To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”*

We have all received talents from God; some in the form of special gifts of the spirit all of which are to be used to serve and build up the body of the church as a whole.

**Romans 12:1** [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

This list of gifts and talents are repeated and extended in number in, involving every aspect of our lives.

**Matthew 25:31-40** *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”*

Above is described how we can love our neighbour in the way Christ said we should.

To be able to give food, drink, clothing and hospitality to those in need we have to work to earn the money involved in doing this.

Also we need the outgoing away from self-attitude of mind.

Stewardship is the key to this attitude; if we realise that all we possess is only ours for a short time of stewardship.

**Our bodies, minds, intellect and all our physical possessions all belong to God, and are ours only on loan.**

Loaned to us to see how we use them for self-gratification or for service of others.

**1 Peter 4:10** [NIV] *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.”*

Gifts received of the Holy Spirit are given to us to serve others in various ways, physically or spiritually, as is needed; both as valuable in God's Eyes.

## **The genuineness of our Faith is proved by our work!!**

**James 2:20** [NIV] *“You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?”*

The Greek word translated “deeds” means physical labour, faithfully performed.

**Matthew 16:27** [NIV] *“For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.”*

The Greek word translated “done” means practice or function, what is repeated day by day performance, it is **not** just a one off performance.

**1 Corinthians 3:8-15** [NIV] *“The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labour.”*

God will judge the quality of our work including our attitude towards work.

**Proverbs 22:29** [NIV] *“Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men.”*

The Greek word translated “skilled” also means “diligent”.

Such a person will stand before Kings including “King of Kings” our Saviour Jesus Christ.

## **God is interested in “good works” not just “good thoughts”!!**

**Colossians 1:9-10** [NIV] *“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: **bearing fruit in every good work**, growing in the knowledge of God”*

When we study God’s Word, we imbibe it making it a very part of us, even as our physical food becomes a part of us, this will lead us to perform good works and have the strength to accomplish them.

**Ephesians 2:8-10** [NIV] *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – **not by works**, so that no-one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **to do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

We are saved **not by** good works **but for** good works.

Salvation is **not** something we can earn by good works, it is a gift from God **but** our gratitude for this gift can be expressed in good works.

**2 Thessalonians 2:17** [NIV] *“Encourage your hearts and **strengthen you in every good deed and word.**”*

Encouraged by our works as well as our words.

**Our example is a far more powerful witness than anything we may say.**

**2 Timothy 2:15-16** [NIV] *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, **a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.** Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.”*

Study (labour or toil) in our Bible study to be a qualified workman, **no** profit in words alone.

**Proverbs 14:23** [NIV] *“All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.”*

Christianity is **not** just an intellectual experience of accepting God’s Truth, Christianity is the way we live and a major part of living is our work and attitude towards it.

**Part of our “conversion” is to have a changed attitude towards work.**

**Ephesians 4:28** [NIV] *“He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.”*

The best method to rehabilitate a thief work to give.

**Work (performed in an attitude God intended) = happiness.**

**Greatest fulfilment in life comes from working as a profitable servant of God.**

**Everyone can find a joy filled life right now by following this formula:–**

**“work to give – live to serve”**