

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, July 1, 2017

Work is what we do, but it's not who we are! In Genesis 3 we learn that Adam and all who follow will need to work in order to exist. Some people see this as a curse, but I truly believe it simply sets up the pattern for how we are required to live here on this earth. Frankly, I find work to be good, invigorating and quite fulfilling. I simply see it as a critical part of the Adamic covenant. In Genesis 3:19 Moses conveys *"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."* That may not be a message you wish to hear, but that's the way it is folks. The Bible talks quite a bit on the subject.

The work of our hands can be fulfilling and it can be consuming. There's a time to work and a time to rest. In Genesis 2:2-3 we read *"By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all the work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done."*

God's handiwork in creating all that exists is quite amazing to me. And in our own way, we all desire to create something of value that will last. Once we complete a task, we may well look back at what we've accomplished and see that it is good just as God did. Even a child drawing their first picture senses the accomplishment and pride in what they've drawn even when it may be difficult for their parents to discern just what the picture represents. What's important is the effort and result of that effort. They feel good about what they've accomplished.

As a recovering workaholic I can certainly address this topic of work. Earlier in my life I often became consumed with certain endeavors and lost balance in my life. I still need to watch out for those natural tendencies to get overly focused on the task at hand and need to call on others close to me to hold me accountable to ensure I keep my life in proper balance.

In Ecclesiastes 5:18-20, Solomon concludes that work is a "gift of God" and that work gives us a "gladness of heart" and I imagine we can all relate to his treatise. Solomon continues in Ecclesiastes 9:10 *"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 or wisdom."* There is a certain urgency in these words and we'd all be wise to consider the work God might have us do while we still can.

One of the great challenges we need to face is 'worshipping the work' we do! This can be a huge issue for those in full-time ministry as well as those of us in business. We can become so focused on the work that it can become our god. In Exodus 20:3 the first commandment tells us *"You shall have no other gods before me."* That's pretty straightforward folks!

Our Father in Heaven is a jealous God who wants our obedience and service. He does not want us to make 'our work' (even in His name) our top priority. We need to realize that He deserves our devotion and trust. He constantly engineers circumstances for those who truly love Him and we need to be watching for every opportunity to be in His will.

One of my life verses seems appropriate to share at this time. In Colossians 3:23-24 we're reminded *"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."* Let me close this as we started. Work is what we do, but it's not who we are! God is most concerned with who you are and His relationship with you. Join me in loving God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and loving others as you love yourself.

Passages to Ponder: Proverbs 16:1-3; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 10:31; Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14

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Proverbs 16:1-3 New International Version (NIV)

16 To humans belong the plans of the heart,
but from the LORD comes the proper answer of the tongue.

²All a person's ways seem pure to them,
but motives are weighed by the LORD.

³Commit to the LORD whatever you do,
and he will establish your plans.

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 New International Version (NIV)

¹²If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. ¹⁴If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

1 Corinthians 10:31 New International Version (NIV)

³¹So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Ephesians 4:15-16 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Colossians 3:17 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁷And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-14 New International Version (NIV)

¹²Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. ¹³Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. ¹⁴And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.