

WORKING GOD'S FIELD

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES 5



T. M. MOORE

A REVISION STUDY FROM
THE FELLOWSHIP OF AILBE

Working God's Field

Working God's Field
T. M. Moore
Susie Moore, Editor and Finisher

Copyright, 2017 T. M. and Susie Moore
The Fellowship of Ailbe

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Working God's Field

Contents

Welcome to <i>Working God's Field</i>	4
1 This Way to Glory	5
2 More than Just a Job	7
3 The Work of Stewardship	9
4 The Work of Sanctification	11
5 The Work of the Cross	13
6 The Work of Witness	15
7 Building on the Work of Jesus	17
Questions for Reflection or Discussion	19

Welcome to *Working God's Field*

The Son of Man is at work in the field of the world, sowing and tending to the good seed of the Kingdom of God. He calls us to join Him in His work, each of us in our Personal Mission Field, doing the work we've been given to do.

The work we've been given to do is greater than the job at which we work, and involves us at every moment, in every situation, seeking the Kingdom and glory of God.

We understand, in these secular times, that the world is a wheat field to be cultivated, sowed, and harvested for God's glory. But we need to know what our work is, and to take it up daily with joy.

And that's what we'll be considering in this study of the work we've been given to do.

ReVision studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 This Way to Glory

"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." John 17.4

Working with the Lord

We should be greatly encouraged to realize how broadly, constantly, and excellently God is at work in the field of the world. He has not varied in His methods from the time of Jesus to the present. The Lord is preparing a great harvest for His glory, and, while today a secular religion and worldview predominates worldwide, we should be neither deceived nor discouraged by this situation. The doubters, deniers, and disbelievers of our day are but tares in the Lord's field. He is working despite them, under them, over them, around them, even through them to accomplish His plan to bring glory to Himself.

And His Kingdom is increasing like a growing stone, which nothing can resist, nothing can overthrow, and which ultimately must make of the field of the world a wheat field for harvest to the glory of God (Dan. 2.44, 45; 1 Jn. 2.8).

God calls us to remember, delight in, and pursue His works, and thus to join Him in His work. The Son of Man goes forth daily to tend His field. As He did with the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 10.13-18), the Lord has assigned to each of us a sector of that field – our Personal Mission Field – in which to cultivate His goodness in the land of the living. We must understand the times in which we live, so that we may know what to do in sowing and cultivating our part of the Lord's field.

To glorify God

Understanding our times includes understanding why we are here in these times. We readily concur in the answer to first question of *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*: "What is man's chief end?" "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Of course we are to glorify God; every believer knows and accepts that. God's covenant plan for the ages is to glorify Himself, and He is calling into existence a people who understand that, whatever may be the temper of their times, this is what they must do.

But how? How do we glorify God? By going to church and worshiping with all our might? Partly. By joining a Bible study and sharing together with others over the Word? That could help. By practicing prayer and treating our families nicely and loving our neighbors as ourselves? All that matters as well.

But the real answer to the question of how we may glorify God is to live in our secular age the way Jesus lived in His.

In His great High Priest's prayer to the Father, Jesus acknowledged that He had glorified God during His time on earth. A little later He would tell His disciples, "As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you" (Jn. 20.21). Jesus glorified the Father, and we have been sent to glorify the Father – in the same way that Jesus did.

So how did Jesus glorify the Father?

Working for God's glory

By His work. He says it plainly: Jesus came to earth with work to do, a work uniquely His own, appointed to Him by the Father. He fulfilled that work and, in the process, brought glory to God. By His work Jesus put God boldly and brightly on display for all to see. By His work, Jesus brought near the Kingdom of God, and paved the way, by His death and resurrection, for the Spirit to launch that great work into the field of the world and the framework of history.

Working God's Field

Now Jesus has sent us into the world in precisely the same way. God has given to each one of us a unique calling, a place and people to serve, and a custom-tailored agenda of work to do; and He expects us to do that work to bring glory to Him.

In our work – all our work, whatever our work may be – God can assert His weighty, mysterious, arresting presence, so that the *way* we work and the *amount* of work we do will stand out over and above those who are merely working to get by in life.

Work matters, and not just for earning a living or keeping up appearances. Work matters to God, for He intends to glorify Himself in our work, just as He did in the work of His Son.

No, we don't have the same work that Jesus did; we have the work God has appointed to us, and He is able to use our work to further His work, and through it to show Himself in His glory to the watching world.

Work matters, and the work we've been given to do is greater than the job at which we work. While we'll want to work hard at glorifying God in our jobs, we'll need to be equally earnest and diligent to seek the glory of God in all our work.

But that means, first of all, we have to identify the work we've been given to do, and then to understand just what it takes to glorify God in our work.

For reflection

1. What kind of work is involved in seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness?
2. What do we mean by saying that the work we've been given to do is greater than the job at which we work?
3. What kinds of work are necessary for sowing, cultivating, and tending your Personal Mission Field?

Next steps – Preparation: Have you identified your Personal Mission Field? Watch [this brief video](#), then download the worksheet and map out your sector of the Lord's field.

2 More than Just a Job

Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. Ecclesiastes 2.24

The importance of jobs

The secular worldview, and the materialist economy it promotes, puts a great deal of emphasis on work. More specifically, on *jobs*. Happy days are here again when jobs are plenty and unemployment is low.

Public education and higher education are geared toward preparing students to find a job. Unless they find a job, they won't be able to work. Being jobless will make them a drain on the economy and will strain the resources of secular systems in trying to figure out what to do with people who can't or won't find work.

Life under the sun is a journey of getting and spending, and having a job is crucial to finding one's place in such a life. It's not necessary to *like* one's job, although liking one's job makes life more bearable, since so much of one's life is taken up on the job. For many people, a job is the means for realizing an enjoyable retirement, that as-close-to-heaven-on-earth period in which we no longer have to work, and can enjoy the good from our life of labor. Work is not a necessary evil, but many people play the lottery each week, hoping to hit the jackpot so they can get to retirement ahead of schedule.

Except for the gambling, none of this is necessarily evil. Indeed, with Solomon we could say that work and jobs are gifts from God, and should be received as such. That they are *not*, not even by many Christians, demonstrates the power of the secular worldview.

Part of understanding our times and knowing what to do, therefore, entails getting the Lord's perspective on work and jobs, so that we approach our jobs not *merely* as jobs, but as arenas for working the Lord's field for His glory.

A thing of beauty

A job is a fascinating thing. A job provides a way for a person to engage particular skills in specific tasks according to determined timetables and schedules, for the sake of producing goods or services useful to others. The dizzying array of jobs that makes up a sophisticated economy like that of the United States is a thing of beauty. All those people, skills, tasks, goods, and services, coordinated and collaborating in ways known and unknown, to create the highest standard of living the world has ever seen. Amazing!

These days, when many jobs are becoming iffy or ceasing to exist, Americans are very sensitive to the importance of having and keeping a job, no matter what. But if all we see in our job is a way of making a living, and perhaps finding a measure of personal satisfaction, we've missed the main point of how our job fits into the total scheme of the work we've been given to do. Jobs are important, and in ways more than we may at first recognize.

A job is a thing of beauty, especially when it is engaged under the heavens, rather than under the sun.

Gifts from God

Because where do those skills come from? And the resources to invest those skills in producing goods and services? And the wherewithal to pay for those skills thus applied? Where does the fluid and flow of the economy come from, but from the hand of God, who works even here to bring His goodness to light in land of the living?

Working God's Field

Every job is a gift of God and a means whereby, through His steadfast love and faithfulness, He oversees the meeting of human needs and the satisfying of human wants. This is not to say that every job we might imagine should be regarded as sacred and as coming from God. God does not condone the work that attends such immoral professions as prostitute, hit-man, drug-pusher, purveyor of pornography, and a host of others.

But legitimate jobs that bring *good* to others and provide for the needs of our neighbors, are given by the hand of God. Every good and perfect gift comes down to us from God, including our jobs (Jms. 1.17). All the skills to work our jobs are from Him (1 Cor. 4.7). All the resources we need for working are by His providential provision (Ps. 24.1). All legitimate work reflects the good works of God, and contributes to the good of society.

All this is a gift from God; therefore, we should receive our work as such, and give thanks and praise to God as we take up our jobs each day, that we might fulfill a small but significant role in the *divine* economy, and not merely in the materialist economy of our secular age. When we understand our work this way, as a gift from God, it inspires us to do our work – no matter how menial or sophisticated – with the highest degree of goodness and excellence, as unto the Lord, and not merely for men (Col. 3.23, 24). Seeing work as a gift from God makes us care about co-workers and those who will benefit from our work, and fills us with a sense of gratitude and satisfaction at a job well done.

All legitimate work is a gift, including our jobs, and when we receive work as such, and work it according to the intentions of the Giver, we work with God in the field of the world, and bring Him glory in our jobs, and in all our work.

For reflection

1. Why are work and jobs so important to our secular, materialist age? Are there any other reasons why these might be important, other than getting-and-spending?
2. How would you explain the idea that all legitimate work, and the jobs in which we do that work, are gifts from God?
3. What difference should it make that we see our job as a gift from God that reflects His work in the world?

Next steps – Conversation: Talk with some Christian friends about their jobs. Do they see their jobs as gifts from God?

3 The Work of Stewardship

For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? 1 Corinthians 4.7

Getting some handles on work

It will help us in working our part of the field of the world – our [Personal Mission Field](#) – if we can reduce our work to some basic tasks or responsibilities, which we can improve over time as we labor faithfully, doing the Lord's work in our own. The work we've been given to do is greater than the job at which we work, and all our work matters to God, Who has called us to His Kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2.12).

Since we have been created in Christ Jesus for good works (Eph. 2.8-10), work is a responsibility and calling for all the people of God. In a very real sense, our discipleship is *defined* by the work we do and the fruit we bear in that work (Jn. 15.1-8, 16). Jesus has encouraged us in this, by promising that we will do even greater works than He did, because of the power of His Spirit at work within us (Jn. 14.12; Phil. 2.13).

Christ died and rose again to make us a people *zealous* for good works (Tit. 2.14). We must look to the Scripture to *equip* us for every good work (2 Tim. 3.15-17), so that we will be *ready* for every opportunity to do good work as these come to us day by day (Tit. 3.1). We must be careful to *maintain* good works, and *not grow weary* in them, since by our work we engage God's work in the field of the world, and glorify Him (Tit. 3.8, 14; Gal. 6.9; Matt. 5.13-16).

Thus a *stewardship* has been entrusted to us – of time, skills, relationships, roles, and responsibilities. We must work always to make the best use of the time entrusted to us (Eph. 5.15-17; Ps. 90.12, 16, 17), to develop and employ all the gifts and other resources we have received from God (2 Tim. 1.6), and to strive always to bring glory to God in *all* our work, not just our jobs (1 Cor. 10.31).

Let's look more closely at what this stewardship entails.

Gifts and talents

Scripture teaches that every good and perfect gift comes down to us from our heavenly Father, out of the sheer enormity of His love for us, and the delight He takes in lavishing us with good things (Jms. 1.17). All that we have received is from God, and comes to us as a trust. These good gifts are given to aid us in our work, which is itself a gift of God, as we have seen.

God has given us these many excellent gifts to help us in doing our work, and we are called to be good stewards over them all, using them, in some way, to boast about and honor the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Exercising good stewardship over all the gifts God has given us, and making good use of them, takes time, energy, and care – in other words, work. A work of stewardship is entrusted to us with respect to all the good gifts we receive from the Lord. Like the talents in Jesus' parable, God gives us good and perfect gifts so that we will work hard to use them in bringing honor and glory to His Name (Matt. 25.14-30; Jn. 17.4).

So what's included in this work of stewardship?

A stewardship catalog

Well, first of all, our bodies and the health in which we must preserve them. God is not indifferent to things like what we eat and drink, and how. Indeed, we have a specific instruction from the Apostle Paul to use our

Working God's Field

food and drink as ways of glorifying God (1 Cor. 10.31). We must care for our bodies, seeking always to maximize their readiness for doing good work. The same is true of our souls, and we'll have more to say about this anon.

Next, our material possessions – our home and cars (change that oil every 3,000 miles?), clothes, tools, personal items, computers, televisions, and on and on. God allows us to have these things, and He is not indifferent concerning how we are to use them, or the manner in which we care for them. All these material possessions are but tools and aids to help us in attending to our Personal Mission Field. We must make the most of them to that end.

For example, I have a book in my library entitled, *House as a Mirror of Self*. The author argues that everything about our homes has meaning, and says something about who we are and what's important to us. What does the décor of your house say about your ultimate convictions? The books on your shelves? The use you make of the television? How you keep your yard? The way you use your home to serve others?

Beyond this we have a stewardship of wealth – the money we make. Do we honor the Lord with our money by giving our tithes and offerings, laying up for the future, and refusing to cast the “pearls” of our paycheck before the “swine” paraded before us by advertisers?

We could say much more. However, it should be evident from just these few remarks that we need to take up the work of stewardship as seriously in every area of our lives as we do on our jobs, for in each case the potential for doing good to others and bringing glory to God is real and great. The work we've been given to do in sowing the field of this world is greater than the job at which we work. We know we are accountable on our jobs to do good work. The same is true with all the work we've been given to do, and all the resources, skills, and time available to us for doing our work.

We are stewards of everything God gives us, that we might join Him moment by moment as He works to prepare in the field of the world, a harvest for His glory.

For reflection

1. What would you say are the key components of being a good steward in any area of life?
2. Why do we say that the work we've been given to do is greater than the job at which we work?
3. What are some things you could do to be a better steward of your time?

Next steps – Transformation: Take a look at how you use your time each day. Are you making the most of the time God gives you for working your Personal Mission Field? What's one thing you could begin doing that would improve your stewardship in this area?

4 The Work of Sanctification

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Philippians 2.12, 13

Our primary work

The stewardship of work entrusted to us as co-laborers with the Lord in the field of the world begins in our own souls. God has given us the gift of salvation, but *receiving* this glorious gift is only the beginning of what it means to know Him. Much remains in this life to be unpacked of our salvation, so that we might increase in Jesus and thus fulfill our callings in life.

Solomon's advice to his son is still the part of wisdom today (Prov. 4.20-27):

*My son, give attention to my words;
Incline your ear to my sayings.
Do not let them depart from your eyes;
Keep them in the midst of your heart;
For they are life to those who find them,
And health to all their flesh.
Keep your heart with all diligence,
For out of it spring the issues of life.
Put away from you a deceitful mouth,
And put perverse lips far from you.
Let your eyes look straight ahead,
And your eyelids look right before you.
Ponder the path of your feet,
And let all your ways be established.
Do not turn to the right or the left;
Remove your foot from evil.*

Solomon insists that a life rightly lived depends on a soul dutifully nurtured. Working the Lord's field requires good stewardship of the Word of God (v. 20), learning, keeping, and cherishing it in our *mind*, that we might gain the mind of Christ in all things. To be equipped, ready, and zealous for good works, we must likewise guard our *heart* (vv. 21-23), making sure we desire and cherish only what is pleasing to the Lord. Only if we allow the Word of God to shape our mind and heart will our *conscience* lead us to make walking in God's path the highest priority of our lives.

This work of guarding and nurturing our soul is the work of sanctification, and it is the *primary* work which each believer must embrace and pursue if we hope to work the Lord's field for a harvest of glory.

Growing in the Lord

Growing in the Lord Jesus is not an option for the follower of Christ. Peter commands it (2 Pet. 3.18). Paul chided the Corinthians because they were not growing (1 Cor. 3.1-3), and the writer of Hebrews stung his readers with the charge that they were mere infants when, in fact, they should already be teaching others (Heb. 4.12-14).

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ then you need to be growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, working out your salvation in fear and trembling. Paul is exactly right in saying that we have to *work* at this

Working God's Field

salvation, because it doesn't come automatically or easily. The law of sin within us operates to keep us distracted from and indifferent to growing in the Lord (Rom. 7.21-23). The world is filled with temptations and distractions to gobble up our interest, time, and strength (Jms. 4.4). And the devil himself is working to lead us to find "better" things to do with our time than to work at our salvation (Eph. 6.10-20).

But *work* at our salvation we must, or else admit to the Lord and one another that we are rebellious, disobedient children. As we work out our salvation, we become fitted in words and deeds for all the other work God has called us to in our part of the field of the world.

Means to growth

God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, has provided all the means we need to work out our salvation: The Word of God, prayer, worship, the fellowship of other believers, good books and courses taught by competent writers and instructors. He has even given us His Spirit to dwell within us, Who has exceedingly abundant power to bring to bear on the task of helping us to grow in the Lord (Eph. 3.20).

But we must take up the *work* of growing in the Lord – the work of sanctification – if we would know real progress in Him. We need to set and guard the time necessary for the practice of spiritual disciplines, taking some of our time back from other diversions, and even from sleep, so that we can read and meditate in God's Word and come before Him in prayer.

We need to learn how to study our Bibles and how to improve our prayer lives, and then to work consistently at each of these disciplines. We must work at having the kind of Christian friends who will sharpen us, like iron sharpens iron (Prov. 27.17). And we must work at repenting from all known sin, taking up the life of holiness, and doing good works of love for others (2 Cor. 7.1; Eph. 2.8-10).

This much is certain: we will not be able to do any of our other work as unto the Lord unless we are daily working to improve in our walk with Him. This makes the work of sanctification supremely important. The harder and more conscientious we are about working out our salvation, the more effective we will be at seeing all our work bring honor and glory to the Lord (Jn. 17.4).

For reflection

1. Paul says we must work *out* our salvation, not *for* it. What's the difference?
2. The soul is comprised of heart (affections), mind (thoughts), and conscience (priorities and will), each overlapping and interacting with one another continuously. Why is it important to give attention to each of these in working out our salvation? What does that entail?
3. What is your present approach to working out your salvation? Can you see any areas where you need to improve?

Next steps – Transformation: Identify one way that you might improve the work of sanctification in your life, and begin adding that to your work regimen right away.

5 The Work of the Cross

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Matthew 16.24

For God's glory

God has called us to His Kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2.12). We have not been born again in Christ merely to satisfy some need or longing or sense of wellbeing in our own souls. There is work to do in the field of the Lord. As we have seen, His Kingdom is the world, where the Son of Man is at work, sowing good seed of the Kingdom. Meanwhile, the tares of secularism continue to flourish, but their time shall not be forever.

God has called us into this work, so that we might glorify Him with all the work we do, not just our church work or our jobs. Beginning with exercising good stewardship over our souls, the work we've been given to do will see us preparing, sowing, cultivating, attending to, and harvesting that sector of the Lord's field which is our Personal Mission Field. By understanding the times, and the work God has called us to in these times, we will know what we must do for the Kingdom and glory of God to which we have been called.

The work we've been given to do is greater than the job at which we work. We must certainly honor God with our labor in the marketplace; but we must also seek to bring glory to Him in the stewardship we exercise over all His good and perfect gifts, beginning with the work we do seeking to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

The struggle

The biggest struggle we're going to encounter as we pursue our work across all its many and varied fronts, is the temptation to live for ourselves rather than for others. The narcissism and self-interest of our secular age has leached into the churches, and for many Christians, their faith is merely another means of feeling good about themselves and coping with the pressures of the day. Remember, Jesus glorified God with the *work* He accomplished, and that work was, above all else, a work of self-denial and serving others (Phil. 2.5-11). In taking up the work assigned to Him by the Father, Jesus set aside personal privileges and prerogatives, denied Himself, became a servant to all, and in that role obeyed whatever God gave Him to do, even to the point of death.

And Jesus said that, as the Father had sent Him into the world, so He was sending us. We have been sent to serve others, to set our own selfish interests aside and to work day by day at discovering and meeting the needs of others (cf. Jn. 13.1-15). Like Jesus, we must daily take up our individual crosses, and follow Him in the work of bringing God's grace and Kingdom to the people in our Personal Mission Field.

Wow! We might think, Well hey, if I'm devoting myself all the time to looking out for others' needs, who's going to be looking out for mine?

The Lord, of course, because He knows what you need even before you ask Him, and He has ways of meeting your needs that are more wonderful than you in your cleverness or strength could ever provide (cf. Matt. 6.25-34). Empty yourself in cross-bearing service to others, and He will fill you with Himself, to overflowing (Eph. 4.8-10; Jn. 7.37-39).

Following the example of Jesus

We are to be like Jesus, in that upper room with His disciples, taking up the work that no one else seems willing to do, to meet the needs of those around us. This is the work of the cross – the work of dying to self, laying down your life for others, paying attention to their needs, and doing what you can to help. Jesus said

Working God's Field

He provided the example for us to follow in loving one another through humble deeds of self-denying service (Jn. 13.13-16), beginning with our brothers and sisters in Christ, but extending to all our neighbors.

This work begins in prayer, as we regularly lift the people in our Personal Mission Field before the Lord. It continues with being a good listener (Jms. 1.19), paying attention to the people around us – their words, feelings, body language, and obvious needs. It requires learning how to use your tongue as a means of grace, to build others up in affirming ways (Col. 4.6; Eph. 4.29). The work of the cross means looking for little ways to aid, encourage, and edify others, so that in whatever you do, no matter how menial or small, the love and truth of God are gloriously displayed (1 Cor. 10.31). And it means being persistent and consistent in such efforts, ready and zealous for whatever opportunities for good work the Lord may set before us.

The work of the cross requires ongoing preparation, ready conversation, and self-denying willingness to demonstrate the love of Jesus to the people we meet each day. Thus we are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ, and we transform our sector of the Lord's field by sowing such good Kingdom seeds.

Let us work hard at our sanctification, and to regard all the arenas in which we work as Golgothas where we plant the cross of Jesus, and we will make the most of opportunities for serving, caring, nurturing outreach to others. As put others first, we demonstrate our faith and hope in the Lord, and bring glory to Him in the everyday details of our lives.

Following Jesus means taking up the work of the cross. This is where we will experience full and abundant life in Him (Matt. 16.25).

For reflection

1. How can you tell when the primary focus of your faith is on you, rather than your neighbor?
2. Do you agree that cross-bearing is an appropriate way of thinking about your daily life as a Christian? Explain. What makes this such hard but important work?
3. Preparing well (as in prayer and planning, Ps. 90.12), engaging in conversation, demonstrating Jesus' love, and working for transformation: These are key disciplines for *working* and *cross-bearing* in your Personal Mission Field. How would you assess the state of each of these in your life at this time?

Next steps – Transformation: Identify one way in each of these disciplines that you can improve your work of cross-bearing, beginning today.

6 The Work of Witness

“Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” John 4.35

Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” Matthew 9.37, 38

It's also our work

Work is merely the exertion of energy – spiritual and physical – toward specific objectives. We work at the stewardship of our lives because we want everything we do to glorify God, and because we eagerly want to hear His “Well done” at the end our journey. We work at our sanctification because we know that the stewardship of all our work begins in working hard to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. Cross-bearing as work that shows the love of Jesus to the people in our part of the Lord's field flows naturally from the stewardship of time and opportunities, and a soul overflowing with the power of God's Spirit.

Our work is therefore much larger than the job at which we work. But our job is important work, no matter what it is, because it is an arena for practicing good stewardship and living out the fruit of a soul carefully cultivated and nurtured.

The Apostle Paul referred to the task of evangelizing the lost as “work” (2 Tim. 4.5). There can be little doubt that the Lord intended our work to include consistent sowing of His Word into His field, so that, in and through all our work, the word of the Gospel of the Kingdom accompanies and explains the transformed lives we live before the people around us each day.

A waiting harvest

Jesus said a great harvest of souls is ready to be reaped for the Kingdom of God. He commanded us to lift up our eyes, and to see the many opportunities for bearing witness that await us each day.

The harvest is plentiful, Jesus said. In our secular age, where antipathy toward things spiritual and Christian appears to be on the rise, we might be inclined to doubt the Lord's understanding of our times. Yet His Word does not fail; a plentiful harvest for the Kingdom and glory of God awaits in the field of the world, and in our own Personal Mission Field. All that is lacking is faithful laborers who will take up that work as their own, and go like Jesus to seek and to save the lost (Lk. 19.10).

The work we've been given to includes the work of evangelizing the lost; we must not neglect this important aspect of what God has given us for the purpose of bringing glory to His Name. Pray that God will raise up laborers for the harvest, and pray every day that you will be one of them.

What is involved in the work of evangelism?

The work of evangelism

Evangelizing the lost is a matter of *being* and *speaking*. Jesus said that we must first *be* witnesses before the power of the Spirit will enable us to *proclaim* a convincing message (Acts 1.8). But if we are working hard at our sanctification, at the work of the cross, and at the work of stewardship and our job, it will begin to be clear to the people who see us each day that we live a different kind of life than they do.

Peter says that, when we have established Christ as Lord in our hearts, and are doing faithfully and for His glory all the work He has assigned us, others will notice. They will see our diligence, care, joy, and hope, and

Working God's Field

they will want to understand what makes us different. Out of the context of credible and compelling lives, we will then be able to explain that the hope they see in us issues from the Good News of Christ and His Kingdom (1 Pet. 3.15).

We need to be ready for such opportunities, and this means praying for the people in our Personal Mission Field, demonstrating the love of Christ, and initiating conversations with the people around us, as well as preparing ourselves to tell the Good News meaningfully, personally, and convincingly.

For this we will need to practice our testimony of how God and His grace have worked in our lives. Just as Paul returned to his testimony over and over in Acts and his epistles, explaining the various ways that God had changed his life by grace through faith, so we should continuously review, update, and share our testimony to explain the hope that is within us.

But we must also know the Gospel, and be able to explain how the work of Jesus Christ redeems us from sin and establishes us in a new Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy.

And we'll need to be ready to defend that proclamation against whatever objections, doubts, or questions may confront us.

The work of evangelizing the lost is inseparable from all the work we've been given to do; we must engage it consistently, expecting that God will give us the words we need to enable those He is calling to find their way to Him (Lk. 12.8-12).

Every day the fields are ripe unto the harvest, and every day we go forth, either as faithful laborers for the harvest or as disobedient workers in the field of the Lord.

For reflection

1. Why do we say that the work we've been given to do in the field of the world is greater than the job at which we work?
2. Since every Christian is called to be a witness to Christ, why do so few Christians ever share their faith with the people in their Personal Mission Field?
3. Peter says we must "be ready" to explain the hope that is within us. Are you ready? Explain.

Next steps – Preparation: On one side of a 3x5 card, write out your testimony of how Christ has affected your life. On the other side of the card, write a brief outline of the Gospel as you might share it. Share each of these with a Christian friend, and ask for feedback.

7 Building on the Work of Jesus

"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work." John 9.4

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 1 Corinthians 3.12, 13

The Son of Man is working

The Son of Man goes forth every day into the field of the world, attending to all the work required to ready the Lord's field for the coming harvest. He prepares the soil, sows the good seed of the Kingdom by words and deeds, cares for and feeds and cultivates what He has sown, and prayerfully and attentively watches over His growing crop, lest it be overwhelmed by the tares of the secular world.

And He does that work by His Spirit, according to His Word, in the lives of those He has called to work out their salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2.12, 13). He has appointed to us works of stewardship, sanctification, cross-bearing, witnessing, and more. In all the work we've been given to do, we engage the Son of Man as He goes forth daily, working in God's field.

A day of harvest is coming. But it will not be a day of harvest only, but also a day of reckoning. For on that day, the work we've been given to do in seeking the Kingdom and glory of God will be made manifest, with important consequences.

Judgment of our work

A day is coming, the Scriptures report, when all the work we have done will be put on display for all the world, the angels, the saints departed, and the Lord of glory to review. At that time, it will be clear and visible to all just how grateful we were to the Lord for all His good and perfect gifts, how much we cherished the salvation He freely gave us, and how earnest and devoted we were to the work He had given us to do.

And then we will hear person after person from every age and tribe and tongue rejoicing as King Jesus says to them, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of My Kingdom."

If this day, and this expectation and hope, are not the driving force for every aspect of our lives and work, then it is doubtful we have really understood the Good News of the Kingdom or received the salvation freely offered to us by the King.

That's pretty hard language, I know, but let's face the reality: If we have not embraced Jesus as Lord of every area of our lives, all the work we've been given to do, then we are still living for ourselves, not Him. We are attempting to build on the foundation of His glorious redemptive work an edifice of wood, hay, and straw, and one day that will be eminently and sadly clear for all to see.

Meanwhile, we neglect our calling to seek the Kingdom and glory of God out in the field of the world, and where good seed of the Kingdom might have taken root and begun to thrive, the tares of our secular age are entrenched and flourishing.

But we can look forward to that coming day with hope, and with the anticipation of joy unending to hear the Lord's commendation of our work. We do not work in order to earn our salvation; rather, we work for the Lord in all the ways we've been discussing because we are grateful for what He has given us, and we want everything we are and do to focus on Him in His beauty and majesty and goodness and glory.

Working God's Field

Working God's field

So how can we build on the work of Jesus so as to ensure a joyful outcome on that great and final Day of review? Six quick suggestions.

First, *be always about the work of the Lord* (Jn. 9.4). What could be more important for your time than carrying out the work by which you bring glory and honor to God? And with this, second, *expect the Lord to empower you for abundant good works in everything you do* (Jn. 14.12).

Third, *keep your eye on the eternal horizon, and work always unto the Lord* (Jn. 6.27; Col. 3.23, 24). In other words, work as if that day of review was upon you at every moment. Be eager to please God above all else in all your work.

Fourth, *keep on the path marked out by the Law of God* (1 Jn. 2.1-6; Eph. 2.10). We have been saved to do the good works ordained from of old and set forth in the holy, righteous, and good Law of God. Obey that Law, and our works will never fail to show love for God and our neighbors.

Fifth, *seek out like-minded co-laborers* (1 Cor. 3.5-9). Sharpen, encourage, assist, and challenge one another to do all your work as unto the Lord.

And sixth, *get the rest God wants you to have, especially on the Lord's Day*. We need to be serious about the work by which we glorify God, and we need to be equally serious about the rest He requires.

So let us work God's field for the glory of the Lord, as Jesus did, looking forward each day to the coming day of harvest and glory!

For reflection

1. What are the greatest obstacles to overcome daily in working God's field? How can believers help one another overcome these?
2. We don't work to *earn* our salvation, but to *express* it. Explain.
3. In which of the six areas for improving your work do you most need attention?

Next steps – Preparation: Evaluate yourself in the six suggestions mentioned in this article. See if you can discover one thing that will help you improve in each of these.

Working God's Field

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. How can you see that our work engages the Lord's own work in sowing the field of the world with good seed of the Kingdom?
2. What do we mean by saying that the work we've been given to do is greater than the job at which we work?
3. Why is the work of sanctification primary to *all* the work we've been given to do?
4. What are some ways you intend to improve your work?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the contribute button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.