

WORK MATTERS  
THE KINGDOM ECONOMY 3



T. M. Moore

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

A REVISION STUDY

Work Matters  
The Kingdom Economy Part 3  
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## Welcome to *Work Matters*

What shall we do with the time of our lives, so that we may glorify God in it?

If we want to follow Jesus, we will work.

*Work Matters* is Part 3 in our study of *The Kingdom Economy*. In the Kingdom of God, everyone is working. Some people work at jobs, some at home, some as volunteers, some in their churches. But the work of the Kingdom is much more than this. Being a Christian is hard work – hard, but joyful and fruitful when we do our work – whatever it may be – with gratitude unto the Lord.”

The work we’ve been given to do is greater than the job at which we work, whether we’re paid for those jobs or not. We need to make sure we full understand the work appointed to us, and how we may pursue it in such a way as to glorify God.

In this study we will look broadly at the work to which God calls us as citizens and ambassadors of His Kingdom. God intends to use our work for His glory and for the progress of His Kingdom economy. Our responsibility is to make sure we understand our work, and what it requires, and that we do all our work like Jesus did, in order to honor, celebrate, and show the reality of the living God.

These studies are designed for individual or group use. While you may derive much benefit from studying on your own, that benefit can be greatly enhanced by joining with a friend or a group to read, discuss, share, challenge, and pray for one another.

If you’re in a group, make sure you prepare for each study by reading through the lesson in advance and answering the questions in writing. Take turns leading your group. Let every member share in the privilege and responsibility of facilitating discussions. Group leaders should not feel like they have to “have all the answers.” Their task is simply to lead the group through the readings and questions, and to help everyone participate.

Visit our website, [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org), to subscribe to our free instructional newsletters, including *ReVision*, *Scriptorium*, *The Week*, and *Crosfígell*, featuring insights from Scripture and our Celtic Christian forebears.

T. M. Moore  
Principal

## 1 Road to Glory

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

*How can we glorify God?*

In these last days, God is advancing an economy on earth which stands out in stark contrast to the self-seeking, materialistic, getting-and-spending economy of our secular age. The Kingdom economy of God has as its end the glory of God, by the furthering of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit into all the time, situations, relationships, roles, and responsibilities of human life.

As those who are called to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12), the followers of Jesus Christ receive the gift of time and strive to make the best and wisest use of it, investing the time of their lives with good works of faith and love, so that our time brings a return of glory to God.

Most of us will recognize and readily concur in the answer to the 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.

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

But the real answer to the question of how we may glorify God in this life is to live this life the way Jesus did. Jesus embodied a new economy, a radically different way of living that brought the then and there of eternal life into the here and now of everyday people and events.

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, I also send 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, we should ask, did Jesus glorify the Father?

*Our work can glorify God?*

By His work.

Jesus was sent to earth to work, in a calling uniquely His own, appointed to Him by the Father. He fulfilled that work, as He reported to His Father in prayer, 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 reconciled sinful men with God, and brought the Kingdom of God to living reality in the world of space and time. By His work Jesus challenged the reigning regimen of status, hierarchy, and privilege, commending in its place an ethic of love for God and neighbors. By His work Jesus set loose the power of His Spirit unto righteousness, peace, and joy on earth. By His continuing work at the Father’s right hand, He is making all things new (Rev. 21.5).

The work Jesus did was the leading edge of His witness, and of the witness of the first Christians (Jn. 5.17-23, 36; Acts 10.34-49). Jesus’ work mattered; it was by His work that Jesus glorified God on earth.

Jesus insisted that all who followed Him must do the work of bringing light into darkness, truth to overthrow

the Lie, and love to even the unlovely. Thus they would advance the rule of the Kingdom economy into every area of life (Jn. 9.4, 5). This was the work Jesus did, and, in these last days, He has sent us into the world to continue that work (cf. Acts 1.1-8; Jn. 14.12). This is how the Kingdom economy comes into being on earth as it is in heaven.

As with our Lord Jesus, God has given to each one of us a unique calling, a custom-tailored agenda of work to do, and He expects us to do that work in ways that bring glory to Him and further His Kingdom economy.

In these last days, the time of our lives is entrusted to us daily for the work of bringing light into the darkness in all we do.

In our work – *all* our work, whatever our work may be – God intends to refract His weighty, mysterious, joyful, arresting, good, loving, holy, and transforming 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!*

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 enter into that work and through it to show Himself in His glory to the watching world. And even though that work may seem as small and insignificant as a widow's mite (Lk. 21.1-4), still, we are to seek the glory of God in it – we are to work with all our “mite” in whatever we do for the glory and praise of God (1 Cor. 10.31).

Further, the work we've been given to do in these last days is greater than the job at which we work. Work requires thought, planning, exertion, skill, assessment, improvement, and more. We have been created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph. 2.10), and we must be ready and zealous for them at all times, in every situation and circumstance of our lives (Tit. 2.14, 3.1, 14). All the work of our lives matters to God, and should matter to us for the Kingdom economy the Lord is advancing in these last days.

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. Then we may proceed to understand just what it takes to glorify God in our work.

#### *Questions for reflection*

1. What do we mean by saying the work we've been given to do is greater than the job at which we work? Do you agree?
2. All believers are being called to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12). How does this relate to the work we do?
3. The Kingdom economy comes to light on earth as in heaven through the work of the Kingdom's citizens and ambassadors. What does this mean for you and your walk with and work for the Lord?

*Next steps – Preparation: Have you identified the work to which God is calling you for His Kingdom and glory? Make a list of the things that make-up your “job description.” Now try to match some specific Scriptures to each of these as guidelines for prayer. Begin praying your list daily.*

## 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*

*More important than we know*

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.

Most people get paid for their jobs; however, many – homemakers, church workers, retired folks and others who volunteer – don't get paid, but they take their jobs as seriously as everyone else.

A job is a way of providing for one's needs and contributing to the wellbeing of others. The dizzying array of jobs – paid and unpaid – that make 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 paid jobs are becoming iffy or non-existent, Americans are very sensitive to the importance of having and keeping a job, no matter what. We need a job in order to live, the increasing pace of our entitlement society notwithstanding. But if all we see in our job is a way of making a living, and perhaps finding a small measure of 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 – more than we may at first recognize. Because for the Christian, jobs provide not only a means for personal fulfillment and enrichment, or for contributing to the wellbeing of society, but an arena within which the banner of the Kingdom economy can be unfurled.

*It's all from the Lord*

What is the source of the skills we need to do our jobs? And the resources to apply those skills toward 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? And the time within which to do our appointed work?

Every good and perfect gift comes to us from God, and nothing that we have, or nothing we are able to do, has come to us from any other Source (Jms. 1.17; 1 Cor. 4.7). God has a purpose for *all* the gifts He provides, even the job where we spend so much of our working lives.

The unbelieving world may not acknowledge this truth, but it must not escape the Christian's continual attention. The work we've been given to do is from God, and this is the most important reason why work matters so very much. In our work, whatever our work, we must work for the glory of God and the implementation of His Kingdom economy. Granted, we do this as strangers and aliens (1 Pet. 2.11, 12), struggling to embody a Kingdom not of this world in the midst of an economy of getting-and-spending. And we do not expect completely to succeed in this large endeavor in the here-and-now; nevertheless, our eyes firmly fixed on the then-and-there, we work for the glory of God, knowing the joy of His presence and the promise of His coming.

Though the conditions in which we do our work be ever so hostile to our succeeding, we must follow the example of Jesus and do our jobs and all our work for the glory of God.

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 that we might imagine should be regarded as sacred and as coming from God. God does not condone work that requires, promotes, or condones any actions or practices contrary to His holy and righteous and good Law.

But legitimate jobs – all kinds of jobs that bring good to others, provide for the needs of our neighbors, and honor the dignity and holiness of God – are given by the hand of God, even to those who have no faith in Him (Acts 14.17). All the skills to work are from Him. All the resources and time we need for working are by His provision. All legitimate work contributes to the good of society and enables others to work and provide for their needs.

All these are gifts 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, pursuing and fulfilling them according to His divine standards; for by doing so we carry out part of our calling in the economy of God's Kingdom.

#### *Caring about work*

Understanding our work as a gift from God, can inspire us to do our work – no matter the *kind* of work – with the highest degree of goodness, excellence, and satisfaction. Seeing work as a gift from God, and doing our work as unto the Lord, makes us care about those who will profit from our work, and fills us with a sense of gratitude and fulfillment at a job well done.

Work is a gift, and when we receive it as such and work it according to the merits and intentions of the Giver, we bring glory to God in our jobs, day-in and day-out.

#### *For reflection*

1. Do you consider your job to be a gift from God? Why or why not? How do you maintain consciousness of the fact that your job is a gift from God?
2. What benefits does your job bring to others? How can you see in this a “groove” or “channel” for advancing the Kingdom economy?
3. What are the greatest hindrances you experience in doing all your work as unto the Lord and for His glory? How can Christians help one another to overcome these?

*Next steps – Transformation: What goals are you presently pursuing in your work? How might you re-envision those goals as part of the Kingdom economy? Talk with a Christian friend about these questions.*

### 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*

#### *A stewardship of boasting*

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).

These good gifts include our work, as we have seen. And, like every good gift, we want to take care of those we receive, using them as intended, and with a view to honoring the One Who gave them to us. Work is a form of stewardship, and God requires that all His stewards be faithful in serving Him with the many gifts He provides.

As with our work, our lives are filled with other good and excellent gifts from God, and we are called to be good stewards over them, using them, in some way, to boast about and honor the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and to further His good and holy plan – His economy – for the world.

Exercising good stewardship over all the gifts God has given us 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 serving others and in bringing honor and glory to His Name (Matt. 25.14-30; Jn. 17.4).

But we will need to be good stewards of those gifts for this to be so.

#### *The mindset of a steward*

Stewardship is first of all a frame of mind. Christians understand that we are not our own; we have been bought with a price. Paul puts this eloquently in 1 Corinthians 6.19, 20: "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." You are not your own. Your time is not your own. Your talents, tools, treasure, possessions, and job are not your own. You belong to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ belongs to God (1 Cor. 3.23). Whatever may be your hopes or expectations for all these good and perfect gifts, if they do not line up with God's, you cannot expect to know maximum fruitfulness or pleasure from His investment.

The steward of God's good and perfect gifts knows that it takes work to make those gifts refract the glory God is seeking from them. But we are not likely to take up the work such stewardship requires unless we nurture and live from the mind of Christ, and not our own minds, about the work we've been given to do.

#### *What kind of stewardship?*

The stewardship of our work is a gem with many facets. What's included in this work of stewardship? First, the proper care and use of 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 we eat and drink them. Indeed, we have a specific instruction from the Apostle Paul to use our food and drink as ways of glorifying God (1 Cor. 10.31). Food that does not strengthen our bodies cannot glorify this temple of the Lord; and ways of eating that do not express appreciation for the food we eat and the company among whom we eat it will not honor Him, either. Diet and manners matter as signs that we operate within an economy that seeks to glorify God in all things.

Next come our material possessions – our home and cars, 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 must care for them. 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. The way we keep our homes, maintain our property, and use our treasure and our possessions, sends a signal to God, concerning our gratitude and love, and to the watching world, that in our lives, everything matters as a way of expressing and advancing our deepest convictions.

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 hospitality you show to others? Does the way you regard and use your many material possessions indicate that you serve a King Who provides you with all these things in order to further His rule of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit?

#### *Wealth and time*

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? It should be apparent that we need to take up this aspect of the work of stewardship as seriously as we do the work we accomplish on our jobs, for in each case the potential for doing good to others and bringing glory to God is real and great.

And with all this there is a stewardship of time – making the most of every moment of time to bring honor and glory to the Lord (Eph. 5.15-17; Ps. 90.12, 16, 17). As we have seen, time is a most precious gift, and we must be careful not to squander it on things which do not contribute to the blessing of others and the honor of God.

We are called to be stewards of all the many and varied gifts of God. Clearly, it matters to God that we work hard at our stewardship of His good gifts, so that we may glorify Him in the work we’ve been given to do.

#### *For reflection*

1. We do not want the gifts God has given us, including all the work we do, to be mirrors of ourselves, but of His glory. Explain.
2. “The way we keep our homes, maintain our property, and use our treasure and our possessions, sends a signal to God, concerning our gratitude and love, and to the watching world, that in our lives, everything matters as a way of expressing and advancing our deepest convictions.” Do you agree? Explain.
3. How can prayer help us to develop the mindset of a steward?

*Next steps – Preparation: Write a prayer that you might use each day to prepare you for the work of stewardship that day. Begin praying it regularly. You might follow Psalm 90.12, 16, 17 as a kind of template for writing such a prayer.*

## 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

*Work out your salvation!*

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, and working out your salvation in fear and trembling. And growing in the Lord is hard work, indeed. We will not make progress in the Lord unless we devote some of our Kingdom time to working at becoming more like Jesus, to increase in godliness and holiness (1 Tim. 4.7; 2 Cor. 7.1).

Growth in the Lord can only occur in the time of our lives, but it will not occur unless we devote some of that time to *working* at becoming the new people in Christ He has redeemed and is calling us to be.

Paul is exactly right in saying that we have to “work” at this 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 that can gobble up our interest, time, and strength (Jms. 4.4). And the devil himself is working overtime to lead us to find “better” things to do with our time than to work at our salvation (Eph. 6.10-20).

*The work of working out our salvation*

Salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ is all of grace; no work that we might do can make us acceptable to the Lord. The same is true of our sanctification, which is the formal theological term that describes the process of Christian growth. Sanctification is by grace, through faith, as the Spirit of God works within us to transform us into the image of Jesus Christ.

Thus we do not work *for* our salvation, and we do not work *for* our sanctification, as though it were some reward for good behavior.

But work *at* our salvation we must, or else admit to the Lord and one another that we are rebellious, disobedient children. He has 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). God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, has also 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.

*Work at it!*

But we must take up the work of growing in the Lord – the work of sanctification – if we would know real progress in Him. Seeking the Kingdom and advancing the Kingdom economy of the Lord requires that we work hard to overcome the sin that lingers within us and be transformed increasingly into the image of the Lord (Rom. 12.21; Eph. 4.17-24). Growing in the Lord is the most important aspect of the work we’ve been given to do. Unless we work hard at this, we shall not be able to fulfill God’s purposes for *any* of our work.

Thus, we need to garner 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. And while we may expect to find this work to be satisfying and fruitful, we will also find it to be *work*, requiring devoted and consistent effort on our parts.

We need to learn how to study our Bibles and improve our prayer lives, and then to work consistently to grow in each of these areas. We will be helped in this work by having the kind of Christian friends who will sharpen us, like iron sharpens iron (Prov. 27.17). This work will require constant vigilance on our parts (Eph. 5.15-17), and, when necessary, practicing repentance from all known sin. The work of sanctification is nothing other than taking up the life of holiness, and doing good works of love for others (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 bringing honor and glory to the Lord in all the work we've been given to do (Jn. 17.4), and at using the time of our lives in a manner than coincides aptly with the progress of the Kingdom economy.

*For reflection*

1. Why do you suppose so many Christians find the work of sanctification not to their liking? Why is it so hard for people to make the time for studying Scripture, prayer, and other spiritual disciplines?
2. We need to make time to work out our salvation; however, all the time of our lives should find us involved in this effort. Explain.
3. How can Christians help one another to work hard at the work of sanctification? What would be most helpful to you?

*Next steps – Transformation: If you could make one improvement to enhance your work of sanctification, what would it be? What steps can you take today to implement that improvement?*

## 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*

### *Set to serve?*

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

The gift of time is given to us in the Kingdom economy so that we might devote ourselves, as Jesus did, to doing the work the Father has appointed to us. It was by His work that Jesus glorified the Father, and it is by our works that we may expect to do the same.

The biggest struggle that we're going to encounter in seeking to pursue our work across all its many and varied fronts is the temptation to want to live for ourselves rather than for others and for the Lord. Jesus glorified God with the work He accomplished, and that work was, above all else, a work of serving God by serving others (Phil. 2.5-11). In taking up the work assigned to Him by the Father, Jesus denied Himself, became a servant to all, and in that role obeyed whatever God gave Him to do, even to the point of death.

Jesus came to earth to bring near the Kingdom of God by serving others. And He said that, as the Father had sent Him into the world, so He was sending us (Jn. 20.21).

We have been sent to serve others, to set our own selfish interests aside and to work day by day at bringing the reality of Christ and His Kingdom to others (cf. Jn. 13.1-15; Mk. 10.42-45).

### *Dying to self*

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 conjure or provide (cf. Matt. 6.25-34). He will even use others who are denying themselves and taking up their cross as the means through which He demonstrates His pastoral care for you.

We are to be like Jesus, in that upper room with His disciples, willing to take up the work that no one else seems willing to do, if it will bring the reality of the Kingdom economy near to those around us, for the honor and glory of the Lord.

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. The work of the cross is simply being Jesus to the people around you, ready to speak a word or take up a work that will manifest the hope within you and bring honor and glory to God.

### *The work of the servant*

This work of the cross begins in prayer, as we faithfully bring before the Lord the people to whom He sends us each day in our Personal Mission Fields. In prayer we may prepare for serving others by setting our hearts, minds, and consciences to the work of the cross, and devoting our time and work to the Lord for His

Kingdom (Ps. 90.12, 16, 17).

The work of the cross proceeds by our being good listeners (Jms. 1.19), paying attention to the words, feelings, body language, and obvious needs of others. It means learning how to use our tongue to build others up in affirming ways. The work of the cross means looking for little ways to aid, encourage, and edify others, and it means being consistent at all times by such means. It may even require greater, more costly works of us, but if we are faithful in the small, daily works of cross-bearing, we'll be well prepared for whatever greater sacrifices may be required.

The work of the cross requires ongoing preparation, conversation, and willingness to demonstrate the love of Jesus to the people we meet each day.

The work of serving others embodies the sacrifice of Jesus, declares the new life we have in Him, and touches others with the grace of His Spirit. No wonder Jesus, in calling us to follow Him, demanded that we take up our own cross daily!

The work we do on our jobs, together with our work of stewardship and sanctification, will issue in the kind of serving, caring, nurturing outreach to others that puts them first, exhibits our faith and hope in the Lord, and brings 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 find full and abundant life in Him (Matt. 16.25).

*For reflection*

1. What does it mean for you to be a servant to the people in your family?
2. How would your work at your job be enhanced if you took more of a cross-bearing approach to it?
3. What would you describe as the key skills any servant should master? Why these?

*Next steps – Demonstration: How will you demonstrate the cross-bearing life to the people around you today?*

## 6 The Work of Witness

*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*

### *The work of evangelism*

The Apostle Paul referred to the task of evangelizing the lost as "work" (2 Tim. 4.5). Evangelism is the application of spiritual vision and truth to the task of helping others hear, understand, and respond to the Good News of Christ and His Kingdom.

Here is yet another aspect of the work we've been given to do, and we can be certain that, like all those we have considered thus far, this aspect matters to God as well. There can be little doubt that the Lord intended for our work to include consistent sowing of His Word into the Personal Mission Field He has assigned us, so that, in and through all our work, the word of the Gospel of the Kingdom will accompany and explain the transformed lives we live before the people around us each day.

Jesus said a great harvest of souls is waiting to be reaped for the Kingdom of God. 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 do includes the work of evangelizing the lost; we must not neglect this important aspect of what God has appointed us, for the purpose of blessing our neighbors and bringing glory to His Name.

Pray, friends, that God will raise up laborers for the harvest, and pray every day that you will be one of them.

### *It flows out of the life!*

What is involved in the work of evangelism? Jesus said that we must first *be* witnesses before the power of the Spirit in us will be able to proclaim a convincing message through us (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.

Something about us will stand out as more humble, decent, available, loving, and concerned than most of the people around us. Where Christ rules in the heart, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit are never very far away (Rom. 14.17, 18).

Peter says that, when we have established Christ as Lord in our hearts, and are doing our work in the hope of glorifying Him and living in His glory, others will notice. More than that, they'll experience the touch of God's grace and truth through the work we do with and for them. Then they'll want to understand what makes us different. Out of the context of credible and compelling lives, we will be able to declare the Good News of Christ and His Kingdom (1 Pet. 3.15).

### *Elements of a witness*

For this, we will need to practice our own testimony of how God and His grace have worked in our lives. Just as Paul returned to his testimony over and over, explaining the various ways that God had changed his life by grace through faith, so we should continuously review and update and employ our testimony in giving a reason for the hope that is within us to all who want to know.

We see this in the psalms as well (cf. Ps. 18, 23, 107, etc.). The best place to practice your testimony is in

prayer, giving thanks and praise to God for the work *He* has done in redeeming, saving, and sanctifying you over the years.

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 it will be good for us if we can be ready to defend or further explain that assertion 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 create the opportunities and give us the words we need to enable those He is calling to find their way to Him.

In the Kingdom economy, we talk about what matters to us. And the work of evangelism matters, for it is by this great work, as each of us undertakes it in various ways, that the Kingdom of God breaks into the souls of lost men and women with the hope of glory and the gift of eternal life.

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 this important area of our calling as believers. May the work of evangelism matter as much to us as it does to the Lord – and as it can to our lost neighbors.

*For reflection*

1. Meditate on 1 Corinthians 3.5-9. Salvation is an *event*. Evangelism is a *process*. Explain.
2. Are you confident that, if asked, you could give a reason for the hope that is within you? Do you pray for such opportunities?
3. What can keep you from becoming more consistent and effective in sharing the Good News with others? Meditate on Acts 17.32-34. When you *do* share the Gospel, what kinds of responses might you expect?

*Next steps – Conversation: Today, ask the Lord to give you an opportunity to initiate a conversation about the Gospel. How can you prepare for this?*

## 7 Building on the Work of Jesus

*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

### *Well done?*

A day is coming, the Scriptures advise us, 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 inspect.

The Lord will scrutinize how we have managed our jobs, cared for our possessions, grown in the Lord, served our neighbors, and reached out to the lost. All the work we've been given to do will be brought into the searching light of God and His Word.

At that time, it will be clear and visible to all just how grateful we have been to the Lord for all His good and perfect gifts, how much we have 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 submitted to 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.

### *Work as gratitude*

We can look forward to that day with hope, and with the anticipation of joy unending, to hear the Lord's commendation of our work. But let's be clear: 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 and His beauty, majesty, goodness, and glory.

We take up the work we've been given to do *gratefully*, not *grudgingly*, because we understand, as Jesus did, that it is by our work that we honor, extol, display, celebrate, and advance the Kingdom economy of our Savior and our God.

Thus the work we've been given to do *builds on* the work Jesus did, and invests the time of our lives with Kingdom vision, focus, and strength.

### *Building on the work of Jesus*

So how can we build on the work of Jesus to ensure a joyful outcome on that great and final Day of review?

Five quick suggestions: First, *be always about the work of the Lord* (Jn. 9.4). What could be more important for your time than seeing and prosecuting every aspect of your life as part of God's work, so that you faithfully carry out all the work by which you may bring glory and honor to Him? Whatever occupies the time of your

life that is not the work of the Kingdom has no business being in our time at all. Jesus was *always* about the work of the Lord, and so we should be as well.

Second, *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. Commit your work to the Lord in prayer (Ps. 90.12,16, 17), and review your work each day, giving thanks to God and asking Him to use your work for His glory.

Third, *keep on the path marked out by the Law of God* (Matt. 5.17-19; 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. The better we know that Law, the greater will be the likelihood of our actually carrying out its good works, thus demonstrating the wisdom of God in all we do (Deut. 4.6).

Fourth, *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.

Fifth, *get the rest God wants you to have – each day, and especially on the Lord’s Day*. We will be better prepared to do the work of the Lord throughout the week if we will rest from our work in the Lord’s Presence on His appointed day.

We need to be serious about the work by which we glorify God, and we need to be serious about the rest He requires. So let us work for the glory of the Lord, as Jesus did, looking forward each day to the coming day of commendation and glory!

*For reflection*

1. Suggest some criteria by which you might evaluate your work each day. What will tell you that your work has been “well done”?
2. How confident are you at this time that all the time of your life is being devoted to the work which glorifies God and advances the Kingdom economy? Explain.
3. What does it mean to you to be building on the work of Jesus in the work God has appointed for you?

*Next steps – Preparation: Spend some time thinking about the work you’ve been given to do in the light of this study. Can you identify some “next steps” for ensuring your work will be more likely to glorify God?*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. How would you describe the work God has appointed to you in His Kingdom economy?
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? Do you agree?
3. Why is work such an important part of life in the divine economy?
4. In which of the areas of work discussed in this study do you most need to see improvement?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study? How are you planning to implement that lesson in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*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.

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Thank you.