

Unit III: Fulfilling Our Obligations to God and Society

A Good Day's Work

DEVOTIONAL READING: Ecclesiastes 9:4-10

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Genesis 2:15-25; Exodus 20:9; Nehemiah 6:3;
John 5:17; 9:4; Acts 20:33-35; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; Ephesians 4:28

PRINT PASSAGES: Genesis 2:18; Exodus 20:9; John 5:17; 9:4; Acts 20:33-35;
2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

KEY VERSE

I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20:35, KJV)

.....

“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” (Acts 20:35, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Develop a Christian ethic regarding responsibilities in work, at school, and at home.
- Recognize God's presence in everyday circumstances.
- Advocate for individuals who, despite working, remain unable to meet their basic needs.

*Key Terms

Coveted (Acts 20:33)—Greek: *epithumeó* (ep-ee-thoo-meh'-o): desired, lusted after, or longed for.

Helper (Genesis 2:18)—Hebrew: *ēzer* (ay'-zer): one who aids or supports; “help meet” (KJV).

Labor (Exodus 20:9)—Hebrew: *ābad* (aw-bad'): to serve or work; “labour” (KJV).

Ministered (Acts 20:34)—Greek: *hupēreteō* (hoop-ay-ret-eh'-o): to serve or render assistance; “supplied” (NIV).

Tradition (2 Thessalonians 3:6)—Greek: *paradosis* (par-ad'-os-is): a handing down; established teaching or practice; “teaching” (NIV).

Worketh (John 5:17)—Greek: *ergazomai* (er-gad'-zom-ah-ee): to labor, engage in business, or perform; “am working” (NIV).

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



The Biblical Context

Some may think of work merely as a means of production. It is that, but it is also part of the very character of God. God worked to create the world. He could have assigned the task to other beings, but creation was accomplished through the activity of the Godhead. This matters because humanity, made in the image and likeness of God, reflects this nature—work is basic to human activity. This applies to both men and women. God created woman not simply for companionship but also to be a helper in the shared task of life and labor. While roles may differ, all are called to participate.

The Old Testament affirms God's creative work and His intervention on behalf of His people. The New Testament continues this theme by pointing to the work of God and of Jesus. Work is marked by both energy and urgency. Jesus taught that work must be timely yet purposeful, for opportunities do not last forever. Illness or limitation may prevent some from working, but where possible, work brings dignity to life and glorifies God.

Introduction

Medicaid is a federal program established in 1965 to provide health coverage to low-income individuals aged 19 to 64. It expanded Social Security and now supports millions of families, children, pregnant mothers, childless adults, and those with physical or mental disabilities.

Beginning in June 2026, recipients must work at least eighty hours per month to remain eligible. Earlier, standards were more flexible because many could not work. Supporters argue that the change will preserve the program and curb the misuse of federal funds, while critics warn that it may unfairly burden those who are truly unable to work. Critics caution that it may punish those genuinely unable to meet the new requirement.

For Christians, this raises difficult questions. Scripture teaches, "If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10b, ESV). Yet it also commands, "Open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor" (Deuteronomy 15:11b, ESV). Work is a divine calling, but so is mercy.

How, then, do beliefs in labor and care for the weak fit together? Is it enough to insist on work alone, or must Christians also consider the broader theological and social implications of protecting the vulnerable?

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

A Foundation for Work (*Genesis 2:18; Exodus 20:9*)

KJV

18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

.....

9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work.

NIV

18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

.....

9 “Six days you shall labor and do all your work.”

The Genesis account of Creation reminds us that work has always been part of God’s plan. Adam worked in the Garden of Eden, but God saw that he needed help. Eve served not only as a companion, but also as a partner in the shared tasks of life. This shows that men and women were both meant to work together. Work was never meant to be a lonely or self-centered effort but something that builds community and reflects God’s design.

Exodus 20:9 points to the pattern of work and rest that God Himself established. God worked for six days to bring the world into being, then rested on the seventh day. This set an example for humanity: work honors God, and rest is equally important. Both are part of a healthy, God-centered life.

These verses teach us that work is not simply about making money or producing things. It is a way to reflect God’s creativity and to care for others. Rest, in turn, reminds us that our worth does not come only from what we do but from who we are in God’s sight. Work and Sabbath together help us live in balance with God’s will.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can Christians balance the value of hard work with the importance of rest in today’s busy world? What practices help you and your family maintain a balance between work and personal life?

Knowing Your Purpose (*John 5:17; 9:4*)

KJV

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

.....

4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

NIV

17 In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.”

.....

4 “As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”

When Jesus spoke the words in John 5:17, He was referring to a man who had been blind from birth. Instead of blaming the man or his family for the condition, Jesus said that it was an opportunity for God’s work to be seen. This reminds us that difficulties can be chances for God to reveal His power.

Jesus made two key points. First, *urgency*: “as long as it is day.” Our time on the earth is limited. Opportunities to serve God and others do not last forever. Second, *community*: “we must.” God’s mission is shared work. Each believer has a unique role, and together we fulfill God’s purpose.

Discovering purpose begins with God, the one who calls us. We learn it through prayer, Scripture, wise advice, and sometimes by stepping out in faith. Often, our gifts and direction become clearer as we serve. Jesus’ warning about “night” is a reminder not to put off what God asks of us. The church helps believers find their purpose by teaching, mentoring, and creating opportunities to serve. Purpose is not usually about one dramatic moment but about steady, faithful obedience. Each day offers a chance to do the work of God while it is still day.

Q WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can you recognize when God is guiding you toward a particular task or purpose? What steps can churches take to help people discover and live out their calling?

We Must Help (Acts 20:33-35)

KJV

33 I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel.

34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

NIV

33 “I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing.

34 “You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions.

35 “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

In Acts 20, Paul reflects on his ministry. He reminds the church that he did not preach the Gospel for money or personal gain. Instead, he worked with his own hands to support himself and his companions. His example shows that Christian work is not only about meeting one’s own personal needs but also about caring for others.

Paul connected his teaching to the words of Jesus: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (verse 35). These words, though not found elsewhere in the Gospels, summarize Jesus’ way of

life. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and showed love to the poor. Giving was central to His mission, and Paul urged believers to live the same way.

This passage teaches that work is more than a duty; it becomes an act of worship when it supports generosity. Hard work allows believers to share with the weak and vulnerable, reflecting the love of Christ. In this way, work is not just about providing for us but about joining God's mission to bless others as well.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What does it look like for a church to “help the weak” in practical ways today? How can congregations make generosity a natural part of their ministry?

Avoid Idleness; Work Hard! (*2 Thessalonians 3:6-12*)

KJV

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

NIV

6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.

7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you,

8 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.

9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate.

10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.”

11 We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies.

12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat.

In this passage, Paul addresses the issue of laziness and idleness in the Thessalonian church. Paul rebuked those who had fallen idle, reminding them of the dignity of labor as a part of Christian life. Paul encourages those who fell into idleness to follow the example that he and his fellow companions had given them—saying he worked “night and day” as to not be a burden to the community, providing for themselves as much as they could. Although Paul was entitled to financial support, both he and his fellow laborers worked to set an example and model responsibility to the church.

He illustrates the importance of hard work in the Christian life and having a selfless work ethic, encouraging charity but not enabling laziness. He even sets the standard: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat” (verse 10b). Paul warned the church in Thessalonica against “busybody behavior”—the act of involving oneself in others’ affairs but failing to add value. Paul commanded those who fell into that category to quiet themselves and earn the food they eat.

Q WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What are some ways in which the church may have become “idle”? How can we prevent ourselves from falling into idleness and encourage one another to work hard and earn our dues?

A Closing Thought

When humanity was put out of the Garden of Eden, work carried the weight of a curse, tied to sweat, toil, and struggle. Yet, work was always part of God’s original plan for humanity, because God Himself is a worker, and He created us in His image. Jesus’ statement about working “while it is day” reminds us that life is brief, opportunities are limited, and meaningful work requires focused effort. When Christians know their purpose, their labor does more than provide for their needs; it blesses others and becomes an act of worship.

Your Life

Beyond giving in church offerings, how do you personally bless the poor? Building houses not only provides shelter but also restores dignity and stability to a struggling family. Creating or supporting a senior home can offer safety, companionship, and care to older adults who might otherwise be forgotten. Each of these efforts reflects a commitment to living out the command to “love your neighbor as yourself.”