Discipleship Groups — Level 8
WEEK 5

Wisdom for Living: Business and Work Ethic

Welcome to Level 8 of our discipleship small groups. For this level, we have drawn from the Book of Proverbs and titled this series *Wisdom for Living.*.

> Proverbs 4:7 (NLT) tells us: "*Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do! And whatever else you do, develop good judgment."*

The Book of Proverbs reminds us that God's wisdom was given so that we might know it and live it out. We are at class five, and today we will study what this book teaches us about business and work ethics.

> Proverbs 10:4 (NLT) tells us:*"Lazy people are soon poor; hard workers get rich."*

Some people divide their lives into two parts: the spiritual and the secular. For them, praying, gathering with the church, and reading the Bible are spiritual activities, while working, running a business, buying and selling, or managing money are secular activities.

But there is something very important here: the Bible does not make that distinction. Biblically speaking, money, wealth, business, and work are also connected to our spiritual lives and our relationship with God.

The way we work and manage our resources should honor the Lord.

The Bible teaches that money, in itself, is not evil. The danger lies in loving it and allowing it to take God's place. Jesus spoke frequently about wealth because the way we handle money reveals what is in our hearts. King Solomon became the wealthiest and wisest man of his time. That is why Proverbs offers practical advice and principles regarding money, business, and work ethics.

True prosperity depends not only on how much we possess but also on how we obtain and manage our resources.

Let's look at three practical principles found in the Book of Proverbs.

1. GOD HONORS DILIGENCE

> Proverbs 6:6 (NLT) tells us*: "Take a lesson from the ants, You lazybones. Learn from their ways and become wise!"*

The question here is: what can we learn from an ant? I picture King Solomon observing nature and drawing our attention to this tiny creature. The ant works with consistency, initiative, and

foresight. It does not need someone watching over it or pressuring it to fulfill its responsibilities. It exerts effort in the present and prepares for the future. To me, that is foresight.

So, what does it mean to be diligent? It means working responsibly and making good use of time. A diligent person does not wait for everything to be handed to them; they recognize what needs to be done and do it well.

> Proverbs 14:23 (NLT) tells us: *"Hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads to poverty!"*

My grandfather was a farmer. He taught my dad how to work, how to be diligent, and how to develop a work ethic. As a Christian, my grandfather did something very wise: he read the Bible and applied it to his life. Later, my dad taught me everything he had learned from my grandfather.

I worked in a bivocational capacity for over twenty-five years. I served God as a missionary while working Monday through Friday at my dad's businesses. This experience taught me that a work ethic is the set of values and principles that guides the way we work.

A work ethic includes responsibility, honesty, punctuality, diligence, excellence, respect, and keeping one's word. I learned that, for a Christian, work is not merely a way to earn money; it is also a way to honor God and serve others.

> Colossians 3:23 (NLT) tells us: *"Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people."*

My grandfather and my father taught me that our work reflects our relationship with God and that our Christian testimony is also demonstrated through our work. A person may speak a great deal about Christ, but if they arrive late, work carelessly, lie, or fail to honor their commitments, their conduct contradicts their message. The Bible reminds us that talk alone yields no results. Diligent, responsible, and ethical work bears fruit.

I can testify that working hard enabled me to serve God and bless many people.

Question for reflection: *Does the way I work confirm or contradict what I say about Christ?*

2. EARNING MONEY NEVER JUSTIFIES LOSING ONE'S INTEGRITY

> Proverbs 11:1 (NLT) tells us: *"The Lord detests the use of dishonest scales, but he delights in accurate weights."*

In biblical times, some dishonest merchants tampered with scales to overcharge or deliver less than promised. Today, we may not use those kinds of scales, but we might have modern versions of them:

- Charging for work we didn't do.
- Deceiving a client.
- Lying to make a sale.
- Failing to honor an agreement.
- Taking advantage of someone.
- Withholding important information.

Proverbs 16:8 (NLT) tells us: "Better to have little with righteousness than much with injustice."

How we obtain what we have matters greatly to God. That is why we must ask ourselves: How are we earning that money? Righteously or unrighteously?

In my country, due to the political situation at the time, some government officials demanded payments or bribes to issue purchase orders. I remember they didn't ask for a small amount; they demanded up to seventy percent of the sale. In those circumstances, my father would repeat: "Better to have little with righteousness than much with injustice."

We never agreed to their demands. We preferred to have less and honor God. That decision came at a financial cost, but it protected our integrity and our testimony. Questions for reflection: Is there any gain that could cost us our peace, our integrity, or our fellowship with God?

3. YOUR REPUTATION IS WORTH MORE THAN A QUICK PROFIT

Proverbs 22:1 (NLT) tells us: "Choose a good reputation over great riches; being held in high esteem is better than silver or gold."

Building a good reputation can take years, yet losing it only takes minutes.

No quick profit is worth more than our name, our word, and our testimony. My dad worked very hard for over forty years and came to own five companies. He was unwilling to lose the effort and reputation built over so many years just to gain a dishonest profit.

People used to say of him: "Your dad is someone you can trust. He keeps his word. He is a good Christian, and his testimony is a blessing to me." He was highly regarded by the people and companies for whom he worked and served. As a Christian, he learned to place great value on his reputation. The government pressured him to hand over the companies he had built up over so many years with God's help. Because he refused to pay what they demanded, they threatened to take them away.

My dad decided not to sacrifice his integrity, his reputation, or his testimony, so he closed all the companies. He lost the businesses, but he did not lose his good name. He left an example for our family. He honored God with his life.

Questions for reflection: If someone were to describe the way we work, would they say we are trustworthy people?

CONCLUSION
The book of Proverbs teaches us that work, business, and money are part of our spiritual life. God desires for us to be diligent, to maintain our integrity, and to protect our good name.

True success is the ability to work, prosper, and manage what God places in our hands without compromising our convictions. We might lose an opportunity yet keep our integrity; but if we lose our integrity to seize an opportunity, the price will be too high.

Let us remember these three principles:
- God honors diligence.
- Making money never justifies losing one's integrity; and
- Our reputation is worth more than a quick profit.

GROUP DISCUSSION
Gather in your small group and answer the following questions:
1. What does it mean to work “as for the Lord”?
2. What dishonest practices have become normal in our culture?
3. Can someone be financially successful yet spiritually fail?
4. How can we represent Christ in a work environment that does not share our values?
5. What is worth more: a financial opportunity or our reputation?

CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK
Examine an area of your work, business, or financial management. Ask yourself: Is there anything I need to do differently to better represent Christ?

PRAYER
Lord Jesus, thank You for giving me the ability to work and be productive. God, grant me diligence, creativity, and wisdom. Keep me from compromising my testimony for the sake of money. May my colleagues, employees, customers, and employers see the character of Christ in me.

I ask for Your forgiveness and repent of my failures and mistakes. I repent and ask You to keep me completely away from evil. Amen.
T
his concludes today’s lesson. We hope that everything we have shared proves to be of great benefit to your life. See you in the next lesson.

Blessings!