



Proverbs (Part 4) – Wisdom for Work

Bland Mason – August 24, 2014

My name is Bland Mason. I'm from Boston, and City on a Hill is a bit like Boston. It's a melting pot. We have a guy who plays keys for us who has never actually been in a white church his entire life. Let's just say he ramps it up for us some, which is great. It's good to be with you. I want to thank you all, in particular, for your partnership, if you're a part of this campus. If this is your first time, then, of course, you can join and that would be great.

For those of you that this is your home church, this campus has been a huge, huge blessing to City on a Hill and myself for the last couple of years. You guys have sent multiple teams up a year. Clint was up not long ago with a team. You guys have supported us financially. You've prayed for us. We have probably a dozen people who are part of City on a Hill who were part of this campus at some point.

One of the more recent couples who moved up who were really involved here is Carter and Sarah Stubbs. If any of you knew them, they're a great couple. You guys trained them up. They worked in the welcome ministry, kind of led out in some of that, and now they're doing that exact thing for us. They're ramping up our welcome ministry. So thank you for training them and sending them. Boston is a great city for connections like that. I've had people come up after each service who either knew somebody already up there or somebody who was moving up there soon.

So if you do know anybody, please come see me after the service. I'd love to connect with you and maybe, if they're not in our neighborhood, help them find a gospel-centered church. There are not a lot up there, just to give you a quick clue. I'm going to pray. We'll dive in. In the book of Proverbs today, we're going to talk about a gospel-centered understanding of work, a wise understanding or approach to work. Let's pray.

Jesus, we thank you for your faithfulness, for your Word that speaks. I pray now, Lord, that your Word would speak loudly and clearly, that it would change hearts and lives as you designed it to. I

pray that you'd give us ears to hear, eyes to see, and a heart to receive the truth, and that you might speak far louder and far clearer than I do. In your name we pray, amen.

Does anyone remember a day at work, maybe even recently, where you got up first thing in the morning, and maybe your alarm didn't go off or maybe it was on time, but from the moment you opened your eyes through the entire day it just seemed to be one battle after another? You got up and, whatever happened, you were running late. If you have kids, you were getting your kids up, and they acted like they had never gotten up in the morning before in their lives. They didn't know what clothes or food or brushing their teeth or anything was.

You get out of the house and you're in traffic and there's an accident and stoplights. You get to work late and get the last cup of coffee from the pot. It's that thick stuff at the bottom. Then you kind of turn and focus on work, and work is like warring against you the entire day. By noon you're ready to tap out. You're like, "I want to go home." By the end of the day you close your eyes, you get into bed, and you're just like, "Thank you, God, for this day being over, because that's about the best thing I could say about it."

Then once in a while you have a day where from the moment you open your eyes things seem to be flowing well. You get to work and you're just in the zone. You're like a work ninja. You're knocking stuff out, getting things done. You go home at the end of the day and you're kind of proud. "I can't believe it. I really actually enjoyed my work today. Look at all I got done. None of my coworkers got in my way and annoyed me like they do."

What's interesting, though, is the first type of day is far more often than the second type, isn't it? We remember days that are a lot more like that first one, or at least sort of like that first one, than the second one. It's almost like work is cursed...which it is. We're going to talk about that a little bit more in a moment.

There seems to be a constant frustration with work. Even on your best day there's almost always something that's in the way that bugs you. Is it any wonder you waste time at work because of this? People are incredibly good at this. Around 64 percent of employees visit non-work-related websites every day. If you're a millennial, or roughly 18 to 35, approximately 73 percent of you report spending time on websites that are not *for* work while you are *at* work.

How else do they waste time? There are other ways as well. I'll list some of those in a minute. Why do employees waste time? Here's what the survey said: they're not challenged, they have long hours, there's no incentive to work harder, they're unsatisfied with work, they're just plain bored, or they just get low wages.

If you're an average worker, you will work 80,000 hours in your lifetime. The question is...*Are we stuck?* Is it doomed to be frustrating for good? The answer is *no*, because Scripture speaks to work, and that's what we're going to dig into today: that work is part of God's good plan for our lives, that he has an inherent dignity and value he has placed on work.

Now we're going to be digging around in Proverbs quite a bit, but I'm going to be pulling at some other Scriptures as well to help fill this out. We're going to see where work came from, how it's broken, how we tend to respond (Proverbs lays this out one of two ways), and then how we can learn to work wisely. So let's go through these four.

We do have a couple of books. I'm a big advocate of recommending books. *Every Good Endeavor* by Tim Keller is a great book to check out. Anything Tim Keller writes is phenomenal, but this is one of those as well. A shorter book, a little easier to read, is *The Gospel at Work* by Sebastian Traeger and Greg Gilbert. That's a relatively new book. It goes into all of this. It helps you understand why work is broken, what vocation is, how you can figure out what your vocational calling is in life, and how you can use it to be on mission.

All right, let's dig in. We were created to work. Believe it or not, we were created to work before the fall of mankind. Isn't that crazy? Before we fell into sin, God created work, and it's good. It was part of the created order. What's great is the word that's used for the work God did in Genesis 1 is the exact same word that's used of us when it describes work. The activity God is doing is the same word for our ordinary work.

One commentator said, "God worked for the sheer joy of it. Work could not have a more exalted inauguration." God worked for the joy of it, and I believe that's what he created man to do. We talk about man being created in the image of God, but I believe one of the ways that is is we were created to work. The same word that's applied to God is applied to us in Genesis 2:5, where it says we were created to work the ground.

Then in verses 15-17 of Genesis 2, it says God put man in the garden to work it and keep it. The word *work* there is far more than just the word to till the soil. The word *work* is the idea of bringing to potential. It's seeing something and working on it to see something greater happen. That's why we do things. That's why Home Depot and Lowe's exist. We can't help but see things and want to fix them and improve them.

It's why Donald Trump builds towers in New York. He thinks he's doing it for his name, but he can't help but do it, because God has wired him up to do that. It's why we find satisfaction when we do something like that, when we work. So you couple this call to work with what's called the "cultural mandate" of Genesis 1, where God says, "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth," and you have this interesting picture.

The garden was great. We often think the garden was perfect and there was nothing to do. That's not true. God put man in the garden to work it and keep it. Then he said, "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth." There was something there in the sense that God left some of creation undone. It was undeveloped, and God wanted man to move out and press out across the globe, creating cultures and cities and art and music and technology and all of that as part of our expression of work.

That was going really well up until Genesis 3 when we sinned. What's interesting, if you look at Genesis 3, is both curses God declares on man and woman when he confronts them have to do with work. He tells the man, "Okay, from now on the ground is cursed. It will bring forth thorns and thistles, and from the sweat of your brow you will bring forth bread from the earth." Simple question: What was it like before? I don't know if you've ever thought about that, but evidently you didn't sweat while working the soil before the fall. It was easy, maybe even joyful to do.

Then women... This is not saying women aren't called to work in the same way men are in a lot of ways, but what he said to Eve represents a homeward orientation of the woman in terms of birth being painful. I don't know what birth would have been like before the fall, but it would have been easy. Piece of cake, no sweat. Eve took that on. Now children are difficult. I don't know if any of you know that, but if you've had one for five minutes, you realize they can be quite difficult.

So there's work that has been cursed because of that, and we're frustrated. Not only are we broken in our relationships with God, but now work is broken and the things we work with are broken. That's where things like paper cuts and empty printer cartridges and computer viruses come from. It happened because of the fall.

That's the first idea. *We were created to work, but it's broken.* Because of that, we tend to respond one of two ways. That's the second point. *We tend to respond to work in broken ways.* We tend to either worship rest or worship work. We're on one side or the other. We're either idle or we're idolaters.

Let's talk about *idleness*. Proverbs has a lot to say about idleness. I couldn't even include it all here. Since the day mankind fell into sin, we have been inventing ways to get out of work. We have creative options. My mom said I had an allergic reaction when work happened. I broke out in sweats and hives and had headaches and didn't feel good. When I was a kid, anytime my mom said, "I need your help doing this," I said, "Oh, I don't think I can do it." We now try to avoid work.

In the survey I was mentioning earlier, employees waste time doing several things. One is excessive meetings. Sometimes that's not your fault. You have to go sit for a long time in a stupid meeting that doesn't have any clear agenda or purpose that serves what you are doing, but your boss called you in there, so you have to waste time doing that. Then there are coworker interactions, office politics, and fixing mistakes of others.

As I mentioned, the Internet is huge. Facebook is such a draw by itself, and an average worker spends an hour and a half a week of office time, company time, on Facebook. Let's just confess. We feel that draw. There are 1.1 billion users on Facebook. Every day, 350 million photographs are uploaded to Facebook. Every minute, 100 hours of video are loaded on YouTube.

So when you're at work, you know, what if your friend was on Facebook and they took that quiz of what state they're supposed to live in and posted the results and you missed it? There's that draw. You want to know what state they should live in. Then over here it's like what if they took a video of their dog's birthday party and the dog blew out the candles on the cake? You wanted to see that. We have that draw to the Internet.

Proverbs talks about how we get drawn into those things and the tendency that's in most of us, or all of us in one way or another, by using the word *sluggard*. I don't use that word every day. Maybe you do. It's kind of a weird word, but it's a word picture. You're like, "I don't know what that word means." Well, you don't have to know. Do you know what a slug is? Just take a person and think of them as a slug. That's what the word means.

I love this, personally. I can be very sarcastic, and sarcasm is in the Bible. It's right here, folks. If you have the spiritual gift of sarcasm like I do, here it is. Use it for good, not for evil, because it's a two-edged sword. Look at Proverbs 6:6-11. **"Go to the ant, O sluggard..."** He calls him a *sluggard*. "Get up, drag your rear end out of bed, and go look at the ant."

"...consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest. How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man."

In Proverbs 26, verses 13-15, it says, **"The sluggard says, 'There is a lion in the road! There is a lion in the streets!'"** Pause on that one, because each one of these is interesting. There's not a lion outside. This is, "Well, it looks like it might rain and, you know, lightning sometimes comes when it rains. I could get struck by lightning if I go out there. It's awfully busy out on the streets. It's rush hour. The camels are coming by. I could get run over. There are a lot of drunk camel drivers. I could die out in the streets." The sluggard won't even go out the door.

Then he says, **"As a door turns on its hinges, so does a sluggard on his bed."** It's the picture of a hinge in the bed, and the sluggard is rolling over from side to side. Picture a door in the bed just rolling over. That's the sluggard. **"The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; it wears him out to bring it back to his mouth."**

This is an awesome picture. He's like, "I can't do it." He can't even eat he's so lazy. The picture of the sluggard in Proverbs is a resentful, whining, shirking, unappreciative, and lazy guy. Now I'm sure there were lazy women too. I don't know what the feminine version of sluggard is. "Sluggardess"? It's generally pictured as a male, but there are certainly female sluggards as well.

So that's the one side: idleness. We hate to work. We run from it. We want to rest a lot. On the other side is *idolatry*. This is where we run to work. We worship work. We long to get validation from work. We're workaholics. We have an identity that's wrapped up in work. We want the money, the recognition, the success, the power, or whatever it might be. We long for what work does for us. That's what this type of person, the idolater, does.

In Proverbs 23, verses 4-5, Solomon says, "**Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.**" He's saying that when you fix your eyes... I would say you could substitute success or a degree or a job or a promotion or money. Whatever it is, you could fit it into this. It's largely this idea that you fix your eyes on it and go after it, you get it all of a sudden, and then it disappears.

I think this feeds into two ideas. First is that it can go very quickly. That great promotion can turn into being laid off six months later. That pot of money you got can end up being eaten up with medical bills. If that's your goal, if you are working for what it does for you, you're chasing the wind. In Solomon's time, it would have been completely understood that working seven days a week was not just foolish but sinful. Yet here we are today. We do it all the time. We work a little bit every day.

We can't unplug from email. We can't unplug from the office. We can't unplug from expectations because we're so driven by it. For many of us, we get our hopes and our security and our identity in this. It's idolatry. Solomon says, "Be discerning enough to desist." What does he mean? He means know when to clock out and go home. Know when to turn off your phone. Know when to unplug and relax and chill out, because God has given rest and ordained rest just as much as he has work.

How are you doing on your Sabbath, Christians? I'm not saying we're Sabbatarians, like you have to not work all day Sunday, or whatever. I'm simply saying the principle of the Sabbath is interesting, because God worked six days, just like we work, and then he rested on the seventh day. I believe he set up for us to take regular intentional times of rest as a pattern to remind us of two things.

First, we're not God. We can't work infinitely. We have to stop and let our souls and our bodies rest. On the other side, we need to remember who God is, that God is running the universe. He has it while we're resting. The world will not fall apart. The company will not dissolve. Your customers will be there when you get back. I think this is important no matter who you are. If you're a student, you need to take rhythms of rest from study. You need to unplug and get that as part of your life.

What's interesting is today there's kind of a modern version of both of these. It looks like idolatry initially, but it's sort of idleness. What I mean by that is we're being fed this lie by billion-dollar corporations that the goal of life is to work as hard as you possibly can right now. Make as much money as you possibly can right now so you can save as much as you possibly can so you can stop as soon as you possibly can and not work ever again.

There are people in Dallas who are working diligently. They work 60-hour weeks. It looks like idolatry, and it sort of is, because they're looking at their job going, "This will give me heaven." But their goal is to have enough money when they retire, hopefully by 50 or 55 or 60 at the latest, that they could stop doing anything useful in the world and just play golf the rest of their life. Now I'm not against playing golf, but if you're playing golf seven days a week after you retire, you're using a lot of time and a lot of money that could go for other things.

Now maybe you golf with non-Christians. You're like, "I just play golf with non-Christians. I use it as a missionary field. Hey, I have them for four hours. I'm going to tell them about Jesus." Okay, but that's even work, because what you're doing is intentionally cultivating those people. You're cultivating relationships. Yes, you're having fun doing it. That's okay. But you're using that time, going, "I want to pray for this person. I want to talk to this person. I want to lead them to meet Jesus."

You can be a missionary golfer. Some of you are like, "That sounds awesome." I'm just saying you can work, but it needs to be intentional, not rest, like, "Hey, I just don't do anything for anybody except what I want to do when I want to do it." That's not work. We were created to work, and we were created to work until we die. You're like, "Really?" Yes. Now you don't have to work a full-time job until you die, but you should always be working to fill the earth and subdue it, to cultivate it. We'll talk about some ways you can do that in just a moment.

So we see idleness and we see idolatry in these two ditches, and the root of both is pride. The idle person wants to rest. They take God's good gift of rest and worship it and resist the responsibility of work. The idolater takes the good gift of work, worships it, and then resists the responsibility and call to rest. We are to be in the middle. So what does that look like? We can work wisely. This is our final idea. We're created to work, we've responded in broken ways, but *through Christ we can live and work wisely*. There are three ways here.

The first is *diligence*. We can work with diligence, being thoughtful and faithful in what we're doing. Diligence is a theme throughout Proverbs. You've already seen it in the first proverb we read in Proverbs 6 about the ant. It says, "O sluggard, look at the ant. She's diligent. She works wisely. She works thoughtfully. She works faithfully." This is the balanced position of diligence. It's not worshipping work. It's not working for work's sake. It's working for God's sake.

Notice the ant in Proverbs 6. The ant will rest when winter comes. In other words, she knows there's a period of rest coming. She's working now, preparing for that rest. That's how we should work. Proverbs 12, verse 11, gives us a picture. It says, "**He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgment.**" The phrase *chases fantasies* is from the Hebrew word meaning playing video games. We are to be diligent.

The average video game user is like 34 years old. That's sad. Now listen. I play video games occasionally. I always get slaughtered because I'm not very good at it, but I understand a little mindless entertainment. Video games are not sinful, but when people are spending a couple of hours a day doing it they're not being diligent. Proverbs 10, verses 4-5: "**A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame.**"

Diligence means you and I need to work. We have to work. We must work. It's part of God's ordained plan for us. I'm not talking about you if you're not physically capable of working. This is not a message for you. God understands there are those who can't work. But I believe this Scripture and one we're going to read in a moment teaches that if you can work and you are not working, you're sinning, because you're choosing not to engage in what God has called you to as part of his good plan for your life.

I would say this. I know many of you may be millennials, and the big thing with millennials is finding that career that'll make you happy and fulfilled. That's okay. That's fine. But you can go work at Starbucks in the meantime. Don't sit around in your mom's basement and wait for your dream job to come through. Go get a job.

Here's the thing. God will teach you through diligence in that job about what your future job will be. He can shape your character. He can make you some money. He can help you to learn responsibility. He could teach you a good work ethic. God can shape you as a person in that menial task while you're waiting for the dream career job fulfilling thing to come down. Sometimes that takes a while, but in the meantime don't miss out being diligent.

Sometimes we're required to do things that are not our career choice. I had just started a PhD program, and I was pastoring a seminary-type of church in Kentucky. The church paid me about two-thirds of a full-time salary. It wasn't quite enough. We had just had a baby. My wife was at

home, and we had medical bills from the birth and all of that. We didn't have the means to pay it off because I barely had enough for us to live on.

I was like, "Okay, well, I'm not going to let her go get a job. I could find something temporarily." UPS has a hub in Louisville. I found the hub. I found they were hiring for Christmas that season, the 12:00 to 4:00 a.m. shift, working on the line, sorting boxes as they came in. Something like 200 planes land at Louisville airfield every night between 12:00 and 5:00 a.m. They unload, are reloaded, and take off with different boxes.

During the Christmas season, hundreds and hundreds of thousands of boxes go through there each night, so they have people who have to sort those boxes. It's a good job. They had a tuition reimbursement program for University of Louisville and several other schools around the area, so there were a lot of students and younger people. My boss was a career guy. It was a full-time job for him.

I worked on that line for eight weeks, partially because they were giving a \$500 signing bonus. It was 20 hours a week, and they gave you an extra \$20 a week if you showed up on time and didn't miss any days. In eight weeks I did it. I almost died. I lost 15 pounds, but I did it because I needed to. That was not a career. I was not like, "Oh, I hope UPS will offer me a full-time job." They did, but I did not take that.

I had a vocation: ministry. That was my calling. But I needed to work at UPS for that little while. I ended up making \$18 an hour. This was 10 years ago. It was a good choice to meet the needs of my family. So if you're not working right now but you're physically capable of it, go get a job, *any* job, while you wait for that great dream job or decide to go to school or whatever is coming next for you. Be diligent.

Secondly, we need to *understand our vocation*. The Christian faith is very unique on this, and we've actually lost this for at least a couple hundred years. John Calvin and Martin Luther taught the idea of Christian vocation, that Christians were called and uniquely gifted by God for the good of human beings, for all of mankind, and for God's glory.

God called teachers, equipped teachers, and then taught through teachers. God protected through police and put out fires through firemen and made great coffee through coffee baristas. (I'm telling

you, coffee is of God. I'm going to shake that man or woman's hand, whoever invented it.) God does that for a common good for us.

One of the places in the New Testament this shows up so clearly is 1 Corinthians 7:17, which is where we actually get our idea of a life calling from. The Latin word for calling is where we get our word *vocation*. Your vocation is your calling in life, what God has called you to do. First Corinthians 7:17 says, **"Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him."**

Every person in here is uniquely gifted and called. Now I'm not Dr. Phil. You're not a snowflake and so unique the world can't get by without you. That's not the message. The message is that you are a unique human being and God has wired you up to do things and he wants you to do those for the good of others. You have a vocation. Actually, the truth is there's probably a range of vocations.

We did a community group opening question icebreaker recently. "What other career would you do if you could jump into it fully educated and just doing it?" I chose trauma surgeon. That sounds crazy, right? But I love pressure and I love medicine. I have a lot of doctors and medical students in my church, and I'm always talking to them and hearing stories. I think that would have been a cool career. Could I have been happy doing that? Possibly. But I think God called me to be a pastor.

You may have different things you're interested in. Go explore those. Figure out what your vocation is. There was a young girl who was very interested in becoming a veterinarian, so she got an internship at a veterinarian office. She discovered during that six-month internship she didn't want to be a veterinarian. She decided to go a whole different direction. But she made some money and learned that while she still liked animals, she didn't want to be a veterinarian.

There's value in exploring work and exploring your vocation. God is not going to reveal your vocation in your head absent from work. He often does it through work, through school, through relationships with others. If you want to read more on vocation, you can look up either of the books I gave you.

One of the problems we have in particular as Christians is there's this leftover sacred and secular dichotomy, this idea that what I'm doing right now is somehow greater than anything anybody can do. "Oh, preaching the gospel, being a pastor...he's varsity and we're just all JV being schoolteachers."

We put that on the Scripture, but Scripture does not teach that. Scripture does not teach that what I'm doing somehow gets me cuts in the line to heaven. God has wired you up to do something just as much as he has wired me up to be a pastor and to preach and teach. He wants you to do that, and he wants you to do that for his glory. I'll show you a very simple, practical example of this in Scripture.

Who was the first person in Scripture who was described as being filled with the Spirit of God? Does anybody know? The guesses we'd have would be Joshua, Moses, Noah, David, you know, you name it. It's actually that famous Bible character we've all grown to know and love: Bezalel. Do you remember the story of Bezalel, the song we sung at VBS, "Bezalel, O Bezalel"? No, we've never heard of the guy, but there he is in Exodus 35. He was filled with the Spirit of God.

What was he? Well, he certainly was a priest, right? He did what I did, or he was a prophet and told people the Word of God, or maybe he was one of those kings of Israel who led people and God filled him with his Spirit. No. Do you know what he was? He was a craftsman. He was an artist. He could make beautiful stuff. He did construction and then became a construction executive and actually oversaw the building of the tabernacle. So not only was he making sure all of the things were straight and measured and all that, but he was like, "This should be pretty too." Guys can do that.

If you're a guy and you're like, "I like art," good for you. The first guy in Scripture who was filled with the Spirit of God was like you, and that's good. We need artists. We need people who are like that. There's no distinction in Scripture between the sacred and secular work. There are certain vocations that can't glorify God. There are no Christian heroin dealers, no Christian pimps, no Christian boy bands. There are just certain things God has said he will not glorify his name through.

Finally, we should *work to love others*. We should understand diligence as an approach to work, we should seek out our vocation, figure out what God has wired us up for, and then we should do work day in and day out for love for others, for our community and for those who don't know Jesus. This is where 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4, verses 9-12, fills in and shows us the incentive you and I have.

This is the motivation. This is where millennials miss it, because you want fulfillment in work, so you have a little bit of that idea of vocation, but when you don't want to do it, you're like, "Well, I just don't want to do that. I don't feel like doing that. That's not my vocation." That's okay, because you can do it diligently and to love others. You don't have to only do your vocational calling in order to love others.

This is what Paul is talking about in 1 Thessalonians 4:9. To give you a quick background to help you understand what he's addressing, some of the Thessalonians thought Jesus was going to come back very soon. They were like Paul. If you read some of Paul's letters, Paul is like, "Jesus is coming back today. Don't get married." Then later on he's like, "Well, yeah, he might be a little while. Go ahead." He did. He kind of changed his mind and grew in that.

Some of the Thessalonians thought Jesus was coming back today, so they quit their jobs. They were like, "I'm not coming into work today," and they got lawn chairs and sat out on their front lawn waiting for Jesus. Jesus didn't come that day, so when it came dinnertime, guess whose food they ate? Their Christian brothers and sisters. Then the next day when they sat on the lawn and waited for Jesus, guess whose food they ate? The Christian community was like, "These people should get a job." This is what Paul says, and he ties it to love:

"Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one."

There are three ways your love is expressed through work that he highlights. First is for the common good of culture. This is hard for us to imagine, but in that culture, towns and cities were intricately tied together. People had a group identity. They didn't have the individualistic identity. The American dream did not exist, because in that culture there were limited goods and services. If there was \$1,000 in the whole town and your family had \$10, the only way you could have \$500 is if you took that money from some other family.

So the way a town succeeded was they succeeded together. They worked hard together, and it raised the level of common good in the society among the people. That's what he's saying. You should work for the common good of others, not to be a drain on the community, but to contribute to the community. Tim Keller says you should choose work more for how it helps other people and the community and society and those around you than for profit and personal advancement.

Another way he tells us to love people through work is by being dependent on no one. You need a job to pay your bills. You need a job to buy food. You need a job to live on. If you're capable of working full time and you aren't (I said this earlier and I'll say it again), I think it's a sin not to work. If you're relying on your parents right now and you're capable of working full time but you're not... Unless you're going to school and preparing in that way, but even then I think you should max out your schedule pretty full. I think you should go to school and have a part-time job.

If you're relying on your parents for everything and you're like, "I can't find the full-time dream job I want," I believe you're sinning. Here's simply why: because you're being dependent on your parents. You're using their money. That money could go to help someone who actually can't work, a handicapped person or a vet who has been injured who can't work a job. You're capable of working; you're choosing not to work, so that money is being used.

It could also be used for missions to send people overseas to share the gospel. It could also (this is what I have seen happen) be used for your parents when they get older and they're not capable of working anymore. The money you're siphoning off your parents right now might be the money they need to live on when they're 70 and can't work physically.

I have seen it happen. I know senior adults who have given everything to their kids all along the way, only to get to 70 or 80 years old, they have nothing, and they're barely living off Social Security. They had money, but their kids were like, "I can't work. I can't manage a budget, so I have \$10,000 in credit card debt. Can you pay that off for me?" And Mom and Dad love you.

That's what I'm saying. You need to not be dependent on your parents unless it's necessary. Sometimes it is. I understand that. I understand there are some times you need to go home for a little while because of divorce or some brokenness that has happened in your life or whatever. I understand that. I'm not talking about that. I'm saying if you're sitting at home and you're capable of working but you're not, go work at Starbucks until that dream job opens up. It's okay.

We had a young guy in our church do that. He moved to Boston intentionally to be a Christian on mission. He had an engineering degree. For months he could not find a job, but he did not sit around and live off of his parents. He chose to get a job making coffee, and he made great coffee. It wasn't his favorite job, but he did it well, and he did it for the glory of God, and he paid his bills, and then God opened up an engineering job for him.

I want to help you understand why working menial jobs can be okay on the way to something bigger. Jesus was a carpenter on the way to doing something rather big. Does anybody think he was like, "Well, I'm going to die for the world when I'm 33. I have to find something to do. Oh, I'll just make tables"? Does anybody think it was a throwaway job? No, I believe this was part of Jesus' character, his growth, his maturity, his preparation for his public ministry.

Do you think he made good tables? I think he made great tables. I think people were like, "Man, you should see this table. God made this table." I bet some of them are still around today. Do you think he was wasting time on Facebook? I don't think so. I think he was engaged and worked hard at that. So one way you work to love others is by being dependent on no one.

The final way, he says in verse 12, is to walk properly before outsiders. Work is meant to be a context and a means to testify to the truth of the gospel. That's where a Christian should really get their eyes fixed on work. Whatever you do, you should be doing it with a focus and intentionality and faithfulness and thoughtfulness and diligence that reflect to others as seriousness about your God who saved you.

Christians don't have this reputation, but I would love it if Christians were so well known for working hard and being diligent and faithful that employers started looking for them. You know, there's some website, "christianemployees.com," and they'll post jobs on there. "Christians are awesome. They're on time. They work hard. They love their customers. They're really great office mates. They don't steal office supplies. They're not on Facebook all day. They do the job. They seem to care about others."

Would that be our reputation. It should be, even for those jobs, maybe *especially* for those jobs, that aren't our career option. We need to be faithful because Christ has been faithful. We should work for others because Christ has come and worked for us. We should be willing to serve and humble ourselves because our Savior came and humbled himself on our behalf. This is the gospel. This is the hope we have.

This is why you can go to work tomorrow and deal with your belligerent boss and your belligerent coworkers, because Jesus dealt with you and me. He put up with our stuff; certainly you can put up with those other people's stuff with him living in you. Colossians 3:23-24 says, "**Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive**

the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ." Even when you're serving your jerk boss. We should be honest and hardworking.

I'm just going to throw in a last little bit about missions. Working before others can give you an opportunity. Proverbs 22:29 says, "**Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.**" We should work hard in the areas we're skilled in and do our very best, that God would give us a great sphere of influence for the gospel to stand before kings one day.

In particular, think about where you do work. Some of you have transferrable skills. Some of you could go pack up today and move to another city, a city that needs the gospel, that needs Christians on mission, and you could do your work there. I'm going to tell you a very practical example of how this looks, and then we'll close.

This young couple moved to Boston on purpose for mission. They had great jobs before. They took slightly less great jobs, but they were still good jobs. Very intentionally they had 40-hour-a-week jobs, because they wanted the margin to be on mission with their neighbors and coworkers and do community with the church. They very intentionally did that.

A couple of months ago, the guy told me, "My wife and I were offered jobs in another city. The same company we used to work for asked us to move to this other city. It would increase our household income around \$100,000. We turned it down because we feel called to stay where we are. That job would demand more, and we don't feel called to that city." I thought, "That's weird." The world looks at that and goes, "What?" But wouldn't it be great if the world did look at our career choices, the way we lived our lives, the faithfulness we have when it comes to work? Let me pray.

Jesus, thank you that you have worked on our behalf and come and laid down your life faithfully for us. I pray that we would understand the calling you have on us to work, to embrace work, to not run from it, nor worship it, not to be idle, nor to be an idolater, but to embrace work diligently, to understand and seek to live out our vocation, and then to do it all as an expression of love for others and glory to your name. We pray all this in your beautiful name, amen.