

# The Christian Man

## Session 7: Work: How Should I Think About My Work?

Edited Transcript

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Good morning, men. If you would, please turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter one verse 27. We'll kick it off today with a shout out. We have a new group coming to us called Men That Work. It's a group of four men and they meet on Mondays at 6:00 AM at Mama T's Diner in La Porte, Indiana. Josh Mandeville is their leader and he writes, "Our group is for the local guys that work." I wonder if you would join me in giving a rousing and a warm Man in the Mirror welcome to Men That Work. One, two, three, Hoo-ah!. Welcome, men. We are very glad to have you with us. The series that we're in is The Christian Man. Today, we're going to be talking about work. How should I think about my work?

I was over at one of our leader's churches this week, Laurence, speaking about men, to men and women about men. When I was done, and even when I was speaking, and that is my job. That's my work. I've had other jobs. I worked in the Publix produce department when I was in high school. I love Publix, but I don't like produce. I remember how agonizingly painful it was to go into that job because it was not work that I really enjoyed and found satisfying. I worked for a consumer finance company. Well, I had a job in the army too. Actually, I was more like a slave in the army. Anyway, I had a job there that I really enjoyed. Then, worked in consumer finance as a collection agent for two months before I went to college. I actually enjoyed that. It was interesting. What I enjoyed was that I had a mentor who built into me the integrity thought that there are three kinds of people that are not paying: can't pay, shouldn't pay, won't pay. Then, your job is to figure out which one they are.

There were a lot of people that couldn't pay. There were some people, there was an honest dispute. They shouldn't pay. Then, you had your won't pays. They're just not going to give you the money. Then, you turn them over to somebody else. I've had a number of jobs, but this job that I have now and then development too, real estate development, but now I speak, teach, and write. That's what I do. That's my job. When I finished up speaking, I had a thought go through my mind. It was so meaningful to me I actually texted it to our son, who is in residential real estate. He wrote back and he said, "That's really great." He said, "That sounds right." This is the Big Idea for the day. We're going to actually kick it off here with the Big Idea. This is what I thought after I finished speaking for Laurence's church. **"There is no greater feeling than to believe this is what I'm supposed to be doing right here right now even if it's hard."** There's just no greater feeling than to believe this is what I'm supposed to be doing right here right now even when it's hard. Of course, a lot of times, we have jobs that are hard.

There's a guy named Mike Rowe who has a show called Dirty Jobs. How many of you have ever heard of this? I became aware of him as a person when he appeared on one of the Sunday morning talk shows and he was interviewed. He said something that just was so profound. I have watched this particular news talk show for years and years and years. I record it, then watch it, usually Monday or Tuesday. I've done that for years and years and years. Of all the interviews I've ever heard on this Sunday morning

news talk show, this is the one that I remember most. This one sentence that I'm about to tell you is the one sentence of that one interview that I remember most out of all these years. This is from Mike Rowe. He has this deep resonate voice. He said about men who do dirty jobs, he says he was amazed to discover there was "a level of job satisfaction that was undeniable and, surprisingly, it had to do with the ability to complete a task." Elsewhere in the interview, he talks about how men with these dirty jobs, they always know how they're doing.

After hearing that interview a year and a half ago, I began to watch the people that were doing dirty jobs around me. For example, the bug exterminator that's been exterminating for us for 40 years and the joy that he has in the work that he does. Same guy, 40 years. He loves it just as much today as the day he started. I think what he loves doing is helping people. He's providing a real genuine service. If you've ever had a wife that got all bent out of shape over a bug, you know this is work that really matters. Then, I told you about my saga a year ago of having to replace the septic tank drain field. Well, that process only took a few days to actually do. The work, it took about two months to go through the bureaucracy to get the permission to do it. If you don't think that that's a job that makes a difference, be married to a woman and live in a house without a septic tank for two months. You realize this is a job that really makes a difference. The big idea, there's no greater feeling than to believe this is what I'm supposed to be doing right here right now even when it's hard.

#### **WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?**

Where does this feeling come from? Where does it come from? It comes from what you believe, your beliefs. I'm just going to rattle off a few beliefs. I don't even know if you can keep up with me writing them down. You might want to give it a try.

Belief: What you're doing is real work that makes a real difference, whether that's carrying groceries out to a car, fixing a computer, pounding nails in a roof, practicing law, selling real estate, whatever it is. Belief that there is intrinsic value in the work itself. In other words, when you pull something off the second shelf at Home Depot so that a housewife who can't reach it can get the product that she wants, that there's intrinsic value in that act. In other words, the work that we do, we're not just doing this to earn money to free us up so that we can do the things that we really want to do when we're not working. There's actually intrinsic value in the work itself.

Belief: Every vocation is holy to the Lord. There is no such thing as a holy vocation and a secular vocation. If you had a concordance in your Bible and if you were to look up all the references to the word secular in your Bible, how many do you think you would find? Zero, because the word secular does not appear in the Bible. There is no such thing as a secular job. Every vocation is sacred.

Belief: Work is not just a platform for ministry, it is ministry. In other words, you don't just tolerate the work that you're doing until you reach the lunch break where you can then surround one person. One rabid Christian that talks too much can surround one other person, by the way. You surround somebody at lunch and overwhelm them because you think that the real reason that you're working is so that you can present Jesus to somebody at lunch. No, that's great, but if you haven't done your work well from 9:00 to 12:00, you're not really going to have the opportunity to speak from 12:00 to 1:00. You get that? It's not just a platform for ministry. Work is ministry. The work itself is ministry. We're pursuing where does this feeling come from. This is what I'm supposed to be doing right here right now even if it's hard.

Belief: Every interaction that I have, every interaction that you have is an opportunity to bring glory and honor to Jesus Christ. If you're waiting tables and you have a couple that comes in, you don't know why they're there. They might be there for their anniversary or it might be a weekly date night or maybe they haven't gone out in 20 years. You don't know, but that couple sitting on your station, that is an opportunity for you to bring glory and honor to Jesus Christ by saying, with a smile, "Good evening. It's so nice to have you with us tonight. I'm really glad you're here." You don't ever have to say the word Jesus.

Belief: God doesn't do random. The main thing that's always happening in the world is that God is sovereignly orchestrating all human events, even the seemingly random circumstances of our lives, even the jobs that we can't quite make sense of right now, God is sovereignly orchestrating all human events to bring us into right relationship with him and right relationship with each other. That's what God is doing in the world. The subtitle for the Bible, you've heard me say this before. If there was a subtitle, a good one would be Loving Father Relentlessly Pursues a Relationship With His Children. That's what's going on in the world. He does this through us through the jobs that we have. As a result of that, these jobs that we have, they are not random. That's a belief.

Belief: There is a higher purpose to the work that we're doing. When we are mowing lawns for a living, that we are an ordained lawnmower, that we've been ordained by God to do that. There is intrinsic value, of course, in the mowing of the lawn. Have you ever lived in a neighborhood that somebody didn't mow their lawn? Yeah. If you've ever had, at the end of your lawn being mowed, whether you do it yourself or have somebody do it for you, the sense of satisfaction as a homeowner that brings, I don't know where that comes from. It comes from God, of course. I do know where it comes from. The point is that when you do mow that lawn, there is, in fact, some kind of higher purpose involved.

Belief: Work is a calling. Work is a calling from God. God doesn't just call us to salvation. He also calls us to work. Now, when you believe all these things, then you would come to the conclusion there's no greater feeling than to believe this is what I'm supposed to be doing right here right now even when it's hard. Oh, it is working. It's just working on a delay. We talked about where it comes from, but let's talk about how do we get it.

## **HOW DO WE GET IT?**

How do we get the set of beliefs? Well, we get them from the word of God. I had a really interesting experience this week, Wednesday AM. I don't even know how I ended up here, but I ended up at 1 Corinthians chapter one verse 18. You know how you learn things and then you learn them again at a little deeper level? It's kind of like you keep relearning the same lessons over and over? But each time it's like the screw gets turned another quarter turn into your brain and you have a little bit greater comprehension. You feel a new level of comprehension just sort of spreading across you. Sometimes you say, "Wow." I had that.

I don't even know ... Well, I know I've read it a number of times because I've read through the Bible a number of times, but I don't even really remember reading this verse. As I said, I'm not sure how I got there. 2 Corinthians chapter one verse 18 says, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But to those of us who are being saved, it is the power of God." It really was an ineffable moment. How am I going to be able to find the words to tell you what it meant to me except to say this. The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. We love those who are perishing and we want to help them. This is not some sort of an angry statement, you see. It's more of a statement of

fact. For those of us who are being saved, the message of the cross, it's the power of God. Where's the power for our lives? It's in the message of the cross. Do you get that?

Here's the thing. Because we love those people for whom they see the message of the cross as foolishness, because we love them and we're trying to reconcile the gospel to them, there is a tendency for us to try to reform the gospel in a way that will be palatable to them. In other words, we participate in the foolishness that is not the message of the gospel. I don't think I'm saying that as well as I thought it. It is the message of the cross that is the power of God. That's for our purposes today.

How do we get this? How do we come to this place? We get it from the message of the cross. We get it from the word of God. That is where the power of God is.

When the Sadducees were trying to trick Jesus about who would be married to this woman, they said, "Which of seven brothers would be married to this woman in the resurrection?" which they didn't believe it. He didn't answer the question. Well, he did answer the question. He said here's the problem, Matthew 22 verse 29. He said, "Here is the problem. You do not know the scriptures and you do not know the power of God." How do you come to this place? Where does this feeling come from that this is what I'm supposed to be doing right here right now even when it's hard, and a lot of times it is? It's this sense of calling and these beliefs. Where do they come from? Where do we get them? We get them from the power of God. We get them from the scripture.

We're going to go through these scriptures. You know, there's so many here today that obviously I can't speak about them. I'm just going to go over them with you, but where is the power anyway? Is it in my clever and persuasive speech? Probably not, so let's read the Bible. Genesis chapter one verse 27, you guys are so much fun. "God created man in his image," verse 27. Verse 28, "God blessed them. And he said be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth. Subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Chapter two verse 15, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it." The institution of work, God giving man dominion over the creation. Then, the fall, chapter three verse 17, "Because of the fall, to Adam, he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree ...'" No, no, no, no. An inappropriate pause. That's a different talk for another day.

Today, we're going to this statement, the effect of the fall on the man, "Cursed is the ground because of you. Through painful toil, you will eat of it all the days of your life." There's no greater feeling than to believe this is what I'm supposed to be doing right here right now even if it's hard. This explains why it's hard, because of the fall. By the way, the fall itself is an offense to human reason, but once you accept it, it makes perfect sense of the human condition. You can rail against the fall and it is, it's an offense to reason, but once accepted, it makes perfect sense of the human condition. "It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field by the sweat of your brow. You will eat your food until you return to the ground." It says, "From it, we're taken. From it, you were taken," and so forth. Next verse, I don't think ... I kept adding verses. As you can see, I put a lot of verses on here. Yeah, I did put Psalm eight. Psalm eight verse six, "You made him ruler over the works of your hands. What is man that you're mindful of him?" Is the question that's asked.

The answer is, "You made him ruler over the works of your hands. You put everything under his feet, all the flocks and herds and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas." This is where we get the idea that we have been given dominion and that every vocation is holy to the Lord. Next verse, Ecclesiastes chapter two verse 24. Oh, this is so good. This is

good. This is good this morning. Even I think this is good. Chapter two, Ecclesiastes verse 24, "A man can do nothing better than eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God. For without him, who could eat or find enjoyment?" Chapter three verse 22, "I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work because that is his lot." Chapter five verse 18 and 19, "Then I realized it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him, for this is his lot." What this, "Moreover, when man gives any man a wealth of possessions and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot, and be happy in his work, this is a gift of God."

Then, Matthew 25 verses 14 to 23. It says 33 in there. It should be 23. This is the parable of the talents. Well, this is the kingdom of heaven. It's a parable about the kingdom of heaven and a man goes away on a journey, but he leaves five bags of gold with one man, two bags of gold, two or three, with another guy, and one bag of gold with a third guy. He goes away for a long time. When he comes back, Matthew chapter 25, let's look around verse 22. Matthew chapter 25 verse 21, the guy that was given the five bags of gold, he gained five more. When the master returned, he said, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share in your master's happiness." The man who was given the two bags, was it two or three? I can't remember. Anyway, however many it was, the same thing happened. He doubled the amount of money that he had earned while the master was away. He got the exact same words. It's so interesting, the exact same words, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into your master's happiness." Basically, what we understand from this is that from the lips of Jesus to your ears, "You're in charge till I get back."

Next verse, 1 Corinthians 10:31, whatever you do, whether it's what you eat or you drink, let's look at it. 1 Corinthians chapter 10:31, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." Colossians chapter three verse 22. Colossians chapter three, we're just going from left to right here. Slaves, today, the we apply scripture, we're looking for the principle. Today, we could say employees. "Slaves, obey your earthly masters," or bosses, "in everything." That means in the same way we're to obey the civil authorities. You know, if somebody asks you to do something dishonest or unethical, this does mean to do that. It means you know. "Obey your earthly masters in everything and do it not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart," or with wholeheartedness, "and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all of your heart as working for the Lord, not for men since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ that you are serving."

When you are doing your work, you are actually doing your work as a representative of Jesus Christ. "Yes, may I? How was the meal? May I get you some dessert tonight? It's been such a delight to have you as our guests this evening." 1 Thessalonians 4:11 and 12, "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your hands just as we told you so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody." There's this new thing going on in culture. You know, cultures change. Cultures shift. We're in a certain cultural moment now that's different than the one we were in 20 years ago. It's different than the one we'll be in 10 years from now. When you're looking at culture and doing cultural analysis, it's never A plus B plus C equals D. It's always A plus B and sometimes a little C, not very often D, every now and then, a little E, almost always F equals sometimes you get G. Then, occasionally, H, but every now and then, I too. That's the way cultural analysis goes.

You have to be very careful, but these are a few ruminations from a woman in her mid 30s that works with men as her vocation. She works with me, and she is brilliant. Some of the observations. There are

fewer job opportunities for recent college graduates that have stable pay and benefits. This begins to be a factor in thinking about work. Often, there are large student loans with low-paying jobs being offered to pay them off. People seem to switch career paths multiple times now. That's very different. They're getting married later, having children later. Less responsibility means less pressure and obligation to settle into a good job with benefits. People are renting versus buying, traveling, dating, trying their own self-employment ideas. The struggle with contentment and the whole push to find yourself makes settling into a job more difficult.

There's less pressure to be a breadwinner because women are working. There's a push to find work that is meaningful more so than to find a job that pays well. Ambition looks different, she notes. For many, it's not working. Then, she writes, "Very rarely," she puts very in all caps. "Very rarely have I had a girlfriend share that she was struggling because her husband worked too much or was too fixated on making money and being successful." One mutual friend who's a male said, "I struggle with finding the balance between working too much, but I try to remember what matters most. My wife has never said to me, 'I wish you put more hours in,' or, 'I wish you were homeless with me and the kids.'" There is this kind of thing going on in culture right now.

This next passage is a word to men who maybe are not taking work seriously enough. 2 Thessalonians chapter three verse six and following, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, this is the message of the cross that is foolishness to those who are perishing. But for those of us who are being saved, this is the power of God. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example." Paul says, "You follow our example." "We were not idle when we were with you 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. We did this not because we don't have the right for such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this role. If a man will not work, he shall not eat. We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy. They are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat." Okay, enough said.

Then, James 4:13 to 15 is kind of like the opposite of that. "Do not say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, stay there for a year, carry on business, and make money.'" Why? "You don't even know what's going to happen tomorrow. You are but a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is God's will, we will do this or that.'" By the way, that verse is not saying don't make plans. It's saying the opposite. It's saying make plans, but make them under the submission to God's will. If it is God's will, we will do this or that. That's making plans according to God's will, but it's also not getting carried away with the flip side of being idle. That is over-ambition. There are lots of other verses, but those are the ones we're going to look at today.

You know what? We've run out of time. It's too bad because I had a really good finish to the talk. Big Idea, **"There's no greater feeling than to believe this is what I'm supposed to be doing right here right now even if it's hard."**

### **WHAT IF YOU DON'T HAVE IT?**

That last little section is what if you don't have it. Well, I've given you what you need to have it here today in terms of the beliefs that a Christian has. It's a prescription. The Bible, I've given you God's

prescription for how to be able to say, "This is what I'm supposed to be doing right here right now even when it's hard," through these scriptures. This is the power of God. This is how you get it. Did you know there was a study done in 2017? It's a Canadian study. New York Times has been writing about it and some others. They discovered that out of all prescriptions given by doctors, that 31.3% of them never get filled. That's not all. Now, this is from the, if I can find it. It was really a cool thing. I hope I can find it.

Bear with me because this is going to be worth it if I can find it, if I brought it. It doesn't look like I brought it. Oh, I did. Here it is. Cool. In the United States, they call this medication nonadherence. Of course they did. People don't take their pills. Medication nonadherence. A review of the Annals of Internal Medicine estimates that a lack of adherence causes nearly 125,000 deaths a year, 10% of hospitalizations, and about somewhere between 100 and \$250 billion a year. People know what to do and they don't do it. What if you don't have it? Just read these scriptures and remember what we say here all the time. A Bible, a small group, and serving someone else will solve 90% of your problems.

If you don't have it, you've got a group there. Start talking about it. You've got the Bible verses. Read them. Go serve somebody. This will help resolve not having this feeling. There's no greater feeling than to believe this is what I'm supposed to be doing right here right now even if it's hard. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for the subject of work. Gosh, Lord, half of our waking hours are spent at work. Yet, so many men, even Christian men, Lord, they're working in the dark because they don't understand your theology of work. I pray, Father, that you would somehow just take the things that we already know and make them come alive in our brains and take the things that we didn't know before this morning and just seal them in our brains and don't allow them to just land on the rocky soil and have the birds come and take them away. Lord, let them take root in our brains. We ask this in your name, Jesus. Amen.