

Thoughts on Work & Busyness

Medical Students Christian Fellowship

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updatemeprn

Non HCWs: woohoo, long weekend bro, time to party.

Me, a healthcare hero, rounding 2 of those days with no extra pay:



Outline

1. Work is part of the original creation – it was meant to be good
2. But work became toilsome after the fall
3. Even if toilsome, we work as unto God, and be a blessing unto others
4. But beware the motivations behind our work
5. Finally, have the discipline to rest in God

#1. Work is part of the original creation

⁷ the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. ⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. ¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

¹⁹ Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

(Genesis 2:7-8, 15, 19)

#1. Work is part of the original creation – it was meant to be good

- Work was part of the God's perfect creation before the fall.
- Characteristics of work in Gen 2:
 - Man works in the image of God, who first performed the works of creation.
 - Enjoyment and work are intertwined.
 - Work is a form of stewardship over God's creation
- We see traces of work's intrinsic goodness from time to time.
- Healthcare is a particular privilege – to steward over God's creation.

#2. But work became toilsome after the fall

- ¹⁷ “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’
cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
- ¹⁸ **thorns and thistles** it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
- ¹⁹ **By the sweat of your face** you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

(Genesis 3:17-19)

#2. But work became toilsome after the fall

- Realities of work in a broken world
 - 'Cursed', no longer productive.
 - Unpleasant, with suffering.
 - Ultimately futile – may not add up to anything of lasting value.
- True that many aspects of work in healthcare are toilsome
 - Unproductive – physical & emotional exhaustion, many things to do that do not actually make a difference.
 - Unpleasant – e.g. dealing with difficult patients/families.
 - Futility – inability to change outcome in many diseases.

#3. Even if toilsome, we work as unto God

²² **Bondservants**, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, **fearing the Lord**. ²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, **as for the Lord and not for men**, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

(Col 3:22-24)

#3. Even if toilsome, we work as unto God

³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

(Matthew 25:37-40)

#3. Even if toilsome, we work as unto God

What does it mean in practice to work as unto God?

- Basic responsibility, honesty & diligence
- Clinical competency.
- In healthcare, many opportunities to be a blessing to others
- It's OK to do the non-glamorous, menial tasks
- It's OK if patients & bosses don't appreciate us

#4. But beware the motivations why we work



“Work is toilsome”
“Just do the minimum to survive”

Highly motivated
Wants to go somewhere

#4. But beware the motivations why we work

¹³ Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit” — ¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

(James 4:13-17)

#4. But beware the motivations why we work

- Reflections on failing PACES exam:
 - Medicine was part of my identity
 - I valued being in control

“You will say that these are very small sins; and doubtless, like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. But do remember, the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the Enemy. It does not matter how small the sins are provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one - the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.”

- C S Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

#4. But beware the motivations why we work

- Many idols to beware of!
 - Career success
 - Power / Fame / Prestige
 - Financial
 - Leisure
 - Relationships
- Some of these things are not intrinsically bad pursuits – can go both ways. Subtle & can be more dangerous.

#5. Have the discipline to rest in God

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. ⁴⁰ But **Martha was distracted with much serving**. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that **my sister has left me to serve alone?** Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "**Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things,** ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

(Luke 10:38-42)

#5. Have the discipline to rest in God

Cautionary tales

- Too busy & exhausted → loss of spiritual disciplines
- Weekend rounds / call → stop attending church
- Many other distractions → fall away from Christ.

Transition from student to work particularly dangerous.

#5. Have the discipline to rest in God

- Rest is found in God, not in AL or 'slack posting'
 - The Good shepherd leads you to green pastures & still waters (Psalm 23:2)
 - "Come to me all ye who are weary and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28).
- Maintaining spiritual disciplines takes effort
- Working life reveals what you truly value.
- Importance of accountability & fellowship

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3. Even if toilsome, we work as unto God, and be a blessing unto others
4. But beware the motivations behind our work - idols lurk
5. Finally, have the discipline to rest in God

Discussion Questions

1. Examine our present attitude towards current schoolwork and responsibilities. Are these enjoyable and meaningful or toilsome? How do you respond to the aspects that you do not like?
2. What are the motivations why you work? Any potential idols that you would be careful of?
3. On a spiritual level, how do you cope with busy-ness?