

San Juan church of Christ

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What Does God's Word Say About... Work Ethics and Family

In last week's article we explained that work ethics are heavily influenced by Scripture. For instance, Proverbs says that a lazy person becomes poor, "But the hand of the diligent makes rich" (Proverbs 10:4). We should not make excuses for not working (Proverbs 22:13), and to sleep too much (Proverbs 6:9-11), or be a person who has no ambition in life (Proverbs 13:4). These lead to poverty, destitution, and failure. But if we learn from the industrious ant, "Consider her ways and be wise," you will avoid physical failure (Proverb 6:6-11).

Most of the teaching on work ethics focuses on laziness and the importance of hard work. The problem is that many of us have not found the balance between being slothful and being a workaholic. We are motivated by Scripture to work, but we do not allow ourselves to be taught by Scripture to not "weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens" (Proverbs 23:4-5).

When work consumes our thinking, our time, our energy, and displaces time with our families, they will suffer the consequences. Even God [worship, time for Bible study, prayer, evangelism, etc] becomes displaced because we "have" to work. When personal identity, self-worth and self-image are consumed by work, then our very families and time spent with them will suffer. We strive to have the latest devices, the largest homes in the neighborhood with the most updated appliances, the newest vehicles on the road, that our time has to be consumed with procuring the means to afford paying for these things.

We wonder why we have children who are disobedient and disrespectful and why the divorce rate has increased considerably. When work is more important than time spent with family these will be the consequences. Perhaps James says it best in Scripture when he asked the question, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have... You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel (James 4:1-2).

Worldly happiness can be perceived as freedom of worry when we have an abundance of material things in this life. Paul suffered, had abundance, was hungry, was full, yet was content because his life was not dictated by physical things (Phil. 4:11-13). God calls on us to be content with what has been given to us. If we practiced this in our lives we would naturally have more time to spend with our spouse and children. The Psalmist said "When you shall eat of the fruit of YOUR hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house, your children like olive plants around your TABLE" (Psm. 128:2-3). Families are so busy today that having their meals together is a rare occurrence. When was the last time you prayed with your family at the dinner table? When was the last time you communicated with your wife and children around the family table?

We have examples in Scripture about eating together. "Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart" (Acts 2:46). When Jesus fed the five thousand He "ordered the people to sit down on the grass." He gave us the example of praying before a meal when He "blessed the food" (Matt. 14:19). When we sit down and have our meals together, we communicate with each other. "When he [Paul] had gone back up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak" (Acts 20:11). When Paul encouraged sailors to take "some food" he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and "he broke it and began to eat." While they ate Paul encouraged them (Acts 27:34-36). Are we having our meals together, praying as a family before our meals, and encouraging family members as we have our meals together? The question we need to ask ourselves is "Are we spending so much time working that we neglect spending valuable time with our family?"

Send any comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to:
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