

God is obviously able to feed us daily bread as He did with providing manna in the wilderness for the Israelites; but He chooses for us to be part of the system of providing the daily bread.

II. We were called to do our work well

In Colossians 3:23 we read these words from the apostle Paul:

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters..."

J.D. Greear states it like this:

*"Too many Christians begrudge their work when they ought to revel in the fact that God is using them, in whatever small part, to fulfill a greater purpose."*²

Tim Keller wrote:

*"If the point of work is to serve and exalt ourselves, then our work inevitably becomes less about the work and more about us. Our aggressiveness will eventually become abuse, our drive will become burnout, and our self-sufficiency will become self-loathing. But if the purpose of work is to serve and exalt something beyond ourselves, then we actually have a better reason to deploy our talent, ambition and entrepreneurial vigor."*³

Wherever we are doing this work we are bringing glory to God because He placed us there at this time to do the work.

We should find joy in doing our work to the best of our given ability.

*"Then the LORD said to Moses,
"See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri,
the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah,
and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom,
with understanding, with knowledge
and with all kinds of skills—
to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver
and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in
wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts.
Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of
the tribe of Dan, to help him."*

Exodus 31:1-6a

This is the first recorded event where someone was filled with the Spirit of God in the Bible. They were not filled by the Spirit to preach, evangelize or baptize - they were filled to do their trades for God. They were given a gift, and being faithful with that gift where God wanted them, was their act of worship to Father.

When you or a loved one is dealing with cancer and has to have surgery done to remove the tumor, the biggest gift the surgeon can give you is to do the surgery as completely and safely as their training and experience prepared them to do. At that point you are likely not too concerned with their spiritual walk. You are concerned about how they do their God given task.

III. The Place Where We Work Is a Mission Field

In Matthew 28:18-20 we read these final words of Jesus to His disciples, and by extension ourselves:

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"

NOTES

² Greear, J.D. (27 Feb 2017). What Makes Work "Christian?". <https://jdgrear.com/what-makes-work-christian/>

³ Keller, Timothy. (01 July 2014). Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work. Penguin Books.

J.D. Greear states it like this:

"This assignment, the Great Commission, is given to every Christian, and it centers on one thing: making disciples.... How do you make disciples? You need to 'go.' Well, technically, you already are going. The verb in the Greek literally means 'as you are going.' It assumes you're headed somewhere already. As you go through life. As you go to work. As you go to school. As you go to the coffee shop. Everywhere you go, there are people who need Jesus."⁴

Michael Green summarizes the conclusion of historians that the explosive growth of Christianity in the ancient world,

"...was in reality accomplished by means of informal missionaries, who shared their faith in homes and wine shops, on walks, and around market stalls....they did it naturally and enthusiastically."⁵

Simply doing our work well brings glory to God and serves our community with wisdom; and that contributes to the flourishing of our city, and places the wisdom of God on display, which is so important for our witness to the Gospel.

IV. How Do We Know Our Purpose?

"God has a very personal purpose for you. It starts by realizing that he's given you particular stewardship over part of his creation.

God's purpose for you is about serving others, making disciples of them, and sharing the story of Jesus with them. He wants to be glorified through you. That's why everything you do must be done with excellence. The ultimate center of all that happens on earth is to give glory to God. His purpose is for you to surrender your dreams, job, tablets, and gifts to him to fulfill that purpose. That's what he has called you to do." - J.D. Greear

He gave each and every one of us different gifts for a reason. Tim Keller⁷ used a principle called the three A's to help and differentiate to a degree:

Achievement

These will be those areas where you are doing well. What have you achieved and what are you good at? (See the SHAPE series from last year for more detail on that).⁶

Affirmation

What have others told you that you are good at? Listen to those close to you that love you. As Christians we should share with those close to us if we see specific giftings in them.

Affinity

What do you enjoy doing? What makes you feel energized when you do it? What is it that makes you say, 'I was made for this?'

"Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank."
Proverbs 22:29

May you find out God's work for you and may you do it well to bring Glory to Him and serve those you come in contact with.

NOTES

⁴ Greear, J.D. & Schmidt, T. (05 Dec 2023). 12 Truths & a Lie: Answers to Life's Biggest Questions. K-Love Books.

⁵ Green, Michael. (17 May 2004). Evangelism in the Early Church. Eerdmans.

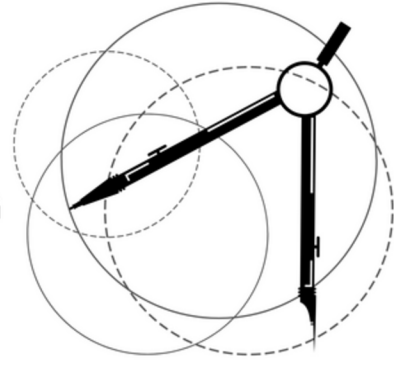
⁶ <https://www.summitdrive.com/series/shape/>

⁷ Keller, Tim. Multiple references from sermons and books.

PROVERBS

SKILL IN THE ART OF LIVING

Discussion



Reflection

1. How do you tend to look at your daily work? Is it just a means to an end or is it a key part of your ministry?
2. We can see that God values good work and that He fills us with His Spirit to do it. How does that change the way that you do your daily work? Does it help to reframe the way we think of the workplace?
3. How does the quote from J.D. Greear (above) help us to look at the Great Commission as it pertains to all of us?
4. Spend some time looking at the three A's by Tim Keller: Ability, Affirmation and Affinity. Do these help guide you in the path you are supposed to go?
5. Remember the example of the Whippet - We are all made differently to bring glory to God and serve others. How can we do that this week, month, or year with what we have been given?

Prayer:

Take some time to thank God for giving us the opportunity to serve him and others through our daily work, whatever it is. Ask for strength to do it with joy and excellence, as Paul mentions in Colossians 3.

APPENDIX: HOW TO USE PROVERBS

This summer, our hope as a church is to steep ourselves in the wisdom of Proverbs. But this book invites a different approach than most others. The Book of Proverbs isn't meant to be speed-read—it's a book to sit with, to meditate on, to 'chew the cud,' as the rabbis would say.

- Chapters 1–9 serve as the introduction. They give us the book's purpose, a guiding epigraph (1:7), and ten speeches from a father to a son about wisdom. This section works well with a 'chapter-a-day' reading rhythm.
- Chapters 10–30 contain collections of short, poetic couplets. These proverbs are often loosely connected but are mostly designed to stand alone—ideal for slow, focused meditation and memorization.

GENERAL GOALS FOR READING THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Go Slow	Stop when something grabs your attention. Sit with it. If it takes three years to get through the book, that's perfectly fine.
Memorize Individual Proverbs	These sayings are written poetically so we can remember and apply them. Like the phrase "fail to plan and you plan to fail"—it sticks because of the way it's worded.
Read in Multiple Translations/Versions	English versions vary in how they handle the poetry. When meditating on a proverb, read it in several translations. While the King James Version isn't always clearest elsewhere, it often preserves the poetic force of Proverbs well, thanks to its translators' classical training.
Be Biased Toward Action	Proverbs are meant to be lived. The goal of meditation is obedience. If all you do this summer is live out one proverb, that's a win.

STRATEGIES FOR INTERNALIZING PROVERBS

Rewrite Proverbs in a Journal.	Use a general journal or a dedicated wisdom notebook. Rewriting helps with memorization and makes the proverb more personally accessible. You might even blend a few translations into a version that sticks best for you.
Put Them in Front of Your Eyes	Use sticky notes or other visible reminders. Place proverbs on your fridge, your desk, your mirror—anywhere you'll see them often.
Practice Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading)	<p>Read: Slowly read a chapter or section of Proverbs several times. Look for a verse that 'leaps off the page.'</p> <p>Meditate: Reflect on that proverb. What is it saying? Have you seen this truth in your life? Why might God be highlighting it now?</p> <p>Pray: Talk to God about what you're noticing. Ask for wisdom and strength to live it out.</p> <p>Contemplate: Spend a few quiet moments in God's presence, letting the proverb stick to your soul.</p>