

In All Labour There Is Profit

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This Labour Day week, it's good for us to reflect on the value of work and the blessing it is to be able to earn our living, contribute to society and grow in our understanding of our fellow human beings. It's ironic that on Labour Day, most Canadian workers (not all by any means) are not labouring at their regular paid employment. Those given the day off appreciate an extra day to rest from their routine labours . . . even if that time is used in other labour-intensive activities: mowing the lawn, cutting firewood or painting a room.

The Bible says; "In all labour there is profit."¹ Labour takes many forms and so does profit. Farmers, fishermen, loggers and carpenters know what it is to use their hands and strain their muscles to produce a usable and saleable product. Their daily tasks are—of course—now made easier or more efficient by the use of modern technology; still, they function largely in the physical world, moving things, pounding, shaping, cutting, watering, separating, etc. Others make their living in what has now become a digital world, working with numbers and words. Lawyers and accountants, salespeople and politicians could fall into this class. While not exerting as much physical energy as the first group, they are still working and still producing something of value: a satisfactory court judgment, a balance sheet, access to food and clothing and laws that benefit our citizens.

Of course, all these jobs can be done badly. Laziness and greed can lead to poor quality products. The Bible calls on us to use honest weights and measures. A carpenter who takes shortcuts or uses inferior materials or a farmer who fails to harvest at the perfect time may sell a product that is disappointing to the buyer and a blot on the producer's reputation. Likewise, an accountant who tries to "cook the books," a salesperson who uses false advertising, or a politician who crafts an unjust law for personal gain are all guilty of abusing the principle of "an honest day's pay for an honest day's work."

Until recently, the "work ethic" has been an integral part of our material success in the Western world, along with personal freedom, strong family values and respect for private property. Within this framework, those who labour diligently have been able to enjoy a lifestyle free from the fear of want. Those who consistently earn a paycheque have been able to pay their rent or their mortgage, purchase nutritious food, save for a rainy day and even purchase occasional luxury items—newer appliances, entertainment or clothes for special occasions.

The Bible encourages hard work and says that "the labourer is worthy of his (or her) wages."² Lately, however, some have come to view work as an evil thing . . . to be avoided if possible. They lobby for equal outcomes for families and individuals regardless of effort. They call for a UBI (Universal Basic Income)³ that would guarantee a living wage to every adult, whether the person is working, looking for work, going to school, or none of the above. Such policies would surely fail and would ruin not only our civilization and culture but would seriously damage the very persons they purport to help.

Work itself is not a curse; it is a blessing. Work is beneficial to the individual performing it. God has designed us to work with our hands and with our minds. In work, we learn to solve problems. In work, we learn to communicate well and to get along with others. Through work we learn about the world around us, principles of physics and chemistry. Work has been the driving force behind most inventions, as men and women have looked for easier, more efficient, safer or more productive ways to perform a task. The screw, the lever, the vacuum cleaner and the tractor all came about through the ingenuity of a person wanting to do more and to do it more quickly. And every invention itself involves work: first of the mind and secondly of the hands that fashion the new tool.

The Bible says that, "He who does not work should not eat."⁴ At first glance, that may seem a little harsh, but God here is prescribing an approach that will benefit people, not harm them. When He created Adam and Eve, He gave them work to do because work is good for us. We are made in the image of God. God works and He invites us, His children, to work and create and produce . . . and to enjoy the reward of our labours. Government policies designed to eliminate the need for or the motivation for individuals to work will cause much more harm to those individuals than the good for which they were intended.

A time-worn adage says that "idle hands are the devil's workshop." The problems we see in Canadian cities and cities around the world are the product of idle hands. Tent cities are growing because it's easier (lazier) to collect welfare and live in a tent than to find a job and pay rent. When people do not work a regular job, they have more time to experiment with drugs; once they are hooked on drugs, they need money. The easiest source of money is crime: theft, prostitution, government handouts. Once on the dole and strung out on drugs, their intellectual journey is derailed. They don't have to get up on time because they don't need to be at work on time. They don't need to be coherent or communicate effectively to please a boss or a customer. They don't need to be clean. They don't need to care for their children. This is not a happy and satisfying lifestyle. This is degradation. Both the drugs and the lifestyle of dependence are addictive.

Many other Canadians who do have steady employment do not fully understand the value of their work. They live for quitting time, the weekend and retirement. Rest is good and rest is essential. But we also ought to fully enjoy our work. God says that we should do our work as unto Him, not as unto an earthly boss.⁵ As ambassadors of Christ, we in the CHP want to please God in all we do. We thank Him for the privilege of this work He has entrusted to us and ask Him for His guidance, that our efforts would be effective in modelling His principles in our families, in our work and in our roles as citizens of Canada.

Footnotes

¹ www.bible.com/bible/1/pro.14.23

² www.bible.com/bible/1/ti.5.18

³ www.lifesitenews.com/news/canadian-senators-debate-universal-basic-income-legislation/

⁴ www.bible.com/bible/1/2th.3.10

⁵ www.bible.com/bible/1/col.3.23

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