



## NG Study Guide: Eph. 6:5-9 “Reflecting Jesus in work” [2.4.18]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

### The Study

**Thesis:** The problem with work has less to do with our ability to save money for retirement, paying off debt, benefits, feeling under appreciated by our employer, but has everything to do with a wrong perspective and understanding. Paul wants us to see there is a different way to approach work. He wants us to see that there is a greater purpose and motivation at work underneath an employee and employer’s relationship. In this section, we discover what a Spirit-filled perspective on work looks like. It will bring true purpose and meaning to work, the way God intended it to be. What does Christ-centered work look like?

### Christ-centered work is worship [5 & 7]

God requires of us that we make our jobs, our careers, and our studies to be worship to Him. We tend to keep the focus on a very natural and horizontal perspective, but the reality is underneath all of that our work should be Christ-centered worship. Ultimately, our work should be for Christ and not man.

Before the fall, man was created to work because he was created in the image of the the first worker, God. Genesis 2:15 says, “**Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.**” It was part of God’s good and perfect design that we should work.

For the Christian we must understand that everything we do ought to be worship to Christ [1 Corinthians 10:31]. This gives us a greater purpose for why we work. So then our providing or financial provisions turn into praise.

### **Christ-centered work is servanthood [5-7]:**

Paul says that we are called to “obey” [5], which means continuous submission to one’s earthly master or employer, the only exception being in regards to a command that involves clear disobedience of God’s word. The worker should not just understand what they are asked to do, but do it with “fear and trembling” and with “sincerity in heart” as to Christ [5]. This means that we do it with a heart that is honest, upright, undivided, respectful and genuinely committed to do our very best.

Christ is the greatest servant of all. He “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” [Matt. 20:28]. We are ultimately, doing it for Christ, so therefore our obedience, our fear and trembling, our sincerity of heart should all be directed as service to Christ [7].

### **Christ-centered work is rewarded [8]**

This can arguably be one of the greatest incentives of all. Since all of our work is for Christ, because He is over all employers and master of all, Christ will be the one who gives the final payroll. Nothing will ever go unnoticed by God.

A Roman soldier could allow his wages to accumulate with his employer until the end of his service. His meals, his shelter and his clothes would all be paid for. He would save money by not cashing in until the end and get a bigger sum of money. Paul had a similar view on life. It would be better to wait until the day the Master comes and gives everything that was earned at the end of life [Rev. 22:12].

The greatest reward that makes doing our very best with whatever work God has given to us. Greater than retirement. Greater than monetary comfort. Greater than getting what is fair. We ultimately, get Christ for eternity. That we may hear the words “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

### **Christ-centered work is for the true Master [9]**

Everything that was commanded for the employee goes for the employer. There should be mutual honor and respect from employers to their employees, based on their common allegiance to the Lord. This was a revolutionary thought that would have shaken the culture. It makes sense for the employee to respect, serve, honor their employer. But for the employer? Very uncommon. So likewise, the Spirit-filled employer should use their authority and power with justice and grace, never putting people under threats, never abusive or inconsiderate.

It turns out that this isn’t just good for the soul and worship to God. This is good business management. Experts say that the greatest key to productivity is happy employees. The belief for years has been that money was the source of employee happiness and retention. While there is no question that money is important, it does not buy employee happiness. While employees want to be compensated for their efforts, they also want to be challenged and treated with respect. The greatest masters are those who serve [Matt.20:26-27].

Again the motivation, underneath all of this is understanding who it is for. The true Master is Christ and He see’s both the master and the slave as equal. Doesn’t matter if you are CEO of a company. God is not impressed with power, or accomplishments, but is impressed by your service to Him and to the needs of your employees (fellow brother/sister in Christ).

### **Study Guide Qs**

***Q1. What are some wrong perspectives when it comes to work?***

**Q2. What are some of the obstacles to making work worship? How should that change and shape the way we work?**

**Q3. Why is submission difficult within the work place?**

**Q4. How would you like to apply this lesson in your life?**

**“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)**

**1. Read 1 Peter 2:18-19. What should our reaction be to an unreasonable employer? Our Ephesians passage deals with a Christian employer, but what if our employer is a non-christian?**

**2. For more practical principles for work check out this article “12 Basic Principles for Faith and Work” [www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/12-basic-principles-for-faith-and-work/](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/12-basic-principles-for-faith-and-work/)**

**Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:**

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?

3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

**For employees: Accomplish all the tasks that your employer gives you by going above and beyond. Also, ask your employer how they think you are doing as an employee and how you can grow? For employers: Ask your employees what it is like working for you and if there is anything you can do to grow.**

**Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:**

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

### **Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

### **Leader Notes:**

1. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
2. **Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
3. **The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
4. **Every time you meet consider asking:**
  - a. **What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.