



This article is part three in a seven-part series focusing on key blessings that God gave to humanity in his original creative plan. As we learn to be wiser stewards of these blessings, it will lead to a healthier lifestyle. These articles are not intended to replace medical advice from your doctor.

Rather, it is to provide a biblical framework for healthy decisions.

I give you work

"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."(Genesis 2:15)

A 2016 survey conducted by Pew Research discovered that less than half of those surveyed found great satisfaction in their careers.¹ Are you someone who views work as a blessing, or a curse? Do you wake up with fresh excitement to meet the challenges of your work day or do you hit the snooze button repeatedly dreading the tasks that await you?

In his perfect creation, God granted the first humans the blessing of work. They found joy and complete satisfaction in their work. Tending to all the plants and trees, naming the animals and whatever responsibilities God assigned to Adam and Eve were a great delight. But the blessing of work was soon overshadowed by the curse of sin. **"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return"** (Genesis 3:17-19). Yet thousands of years after the fall into sin, King Solomon spoke of the blessings of work when he declared, **"That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil - this is the gift of God"** (Ecclesiastes 3:13). Indeed, it is a gift from God when we are able to discover satisfaction in all our work!

Perhaps part of our challenge with discovering satisfaction in work is that we view work simply as a means to an end. We work to earn an income and we equate the value of our work based on the size of the paycheck. Such a view, however, can only lead to disappointment. Working with the sole motivation of earning money is to wring out all true meaning from God's gift of work. **"What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? All their days their work is grief and pain; even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless."** (Ecclesiastes 3:22-23)

¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2016/10/06/3-how-americans-view-their-jobs/>

True joy and value can be discovered in work when we are able to see it not only as a *gift from God* but also a *gift that we offer to God*. The Apostle Paul wrote, **“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God”** (1 Corinthians 10:31). The architect who uses his God-given talents to design buildings is able to glorify God through use of those talents. A stay-at-home mother who patiently responds to a toddler’s temper tantrum is able to glorify God as she raises her family in a home saturated with Christ’s love and forgiveness. The custodian who works through the late hours of the night is able to clean to the glory of God. When we recognize that Jesus worked selflessly and tirelessly to win our salvation, when we rejoice in his completed work at the cross and his triumphant statement, **“It is finished!”** then we are motivated to work for a higher purpose. We are able to devote ourselves fully to the work of the Lord knowing that because of Christ’s resurrection victory, our labor is never in vain! (consider 1 Corinthians 15:58)

Regardless of your occupation, as a Christian you can find true value in your work when you fulfill your tasks to serve others and to glorify God. Such a perspective gives a sense of responsibility, fulfillment and joy as work is done for others, rather than simply to earn a paycheck.

For many individuals, hard work has added physical benefits as their manual labor keeps their cardiovascular system strong and provides them with an opportunity to strengthen their muscles through daily tasks. Throughout the history of the world, the majority of occupations involved physical labor. However, with scientific and technological advances, there has been a dramatic decrease in the percentage of jobs that require physical labor. In fact, the American Heart Association now estimates that 80% of jobs in the US are predominantly sedentary.² Therefore, the majority of Americans need to allocate time for exercise or rigorous physical activity.

Many health experts recommend a minimum of 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity physical activity (a minimum of 75 minutes per week of vigorous physical activity).³ For individuals with a crowded schedule, it may seem next to impossible to reserve this much time for exercise. If you struggle to budget time for physical activity, here are a few helpful tips for your consideration:

1. Find a physical activity that you enjoy. If you start jogging or lifting weights and despise every minute of it, you will likely look for any excuse to stop. However, if you enjoy biking or swimming you will likely continue once you have established a routine.
2. Add it to your calendar! If you simply try to squeeze a workout into your day without intentionally adding it to your schedule, it will always remain an aspirational goal rather than materialize into a reality.
3. Consider multi-tasking. Some people enjoy being able to “get into the zone” while they exercise. But others may enjoy pursuing multiple activities at the same time. Perhaps you can listen to an educational podcast while working out. Or consider bringing your Bible along and reading it between sets at the gym. (this may also open the door for witnessing opportunities!)

² <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1161/JAHA.117.007735>

³ https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/Physical_Activity_Guidelines_2nd_edition.pdf#page=56

4. Consider pursuing an outdoor activity. While treadmills and gyms may provide plenty of opportunities for exercise indoors, there are additional benefits of being outdoors. A brisk midday walk can provide ample Vitamin-D on a sunny day. The fresh outdoor air can stimulate the brain and lift your mood. A hike through the woods may lead to greater appreciation of God's artistic and creative power. Working in the garden can provide physical activity and lead to a healthier diet with fresh produce.



5. Find people who are willing to join you for your physical activity. A friend who joins you for a daily walk or who meets you at the gym will help serve as an accountability partner. Parents may find that they get plenty of exercise practicing sports with their children. This may provide them with a chance to bond with their children while exercising. Joining a basketball team or a running club can provide a chance to form new friendships in addition to physical activity. Competitive sports can also provide the excitement and challenge of attaining new goals.

Prior to the curse of sin, work was an opportunity for Adam and Eve to worship God. As they cared for his creation, they brought glory to the Creator. Though the gift of work is now impacted by the curse of sin, it still remains an opportunity for the believer to worship God. Whether working hard in one's vocation or exercising for physical/emotional well-being, such labor is a chance to praise the Creator, glorify the Savior and celebrate the Spirit who dwells in our hearts through faith. And so we pray, **“Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love. Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee.”** (Christian Worship #469 stanza 2)