



## The Purpose of Work

Did you ever consider that God created work and labor for a specific purpose?

As the Apostle Paul laid out godly counsel to the Ephesian believers about how to rightly live as the body of Christ, he included the following admonition:

***He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.***

[Eph 4:28](#)

On the surface this seems pretty obvious, especially for a self-professing Christian. Stealing is clearly sin and one that is specifically prohibited by God, even as far back as the Ten Commandments ([Exodus 20:15](#)). Continuing to live as a thief, especially after claiming Christ as Savior, is in flagrant violation of God's law.

Paul's instruction becomes more striking with the last half of the sentence in [v28](#): "***so that he will have something to share with one who has need.***"

We might assume the core purpose of working is to provide for ourselves and our family, gain wealth, have nice things, save for retirement, etc., but what Paul says appears to stand in contrast to that belief.

The word rendered 'labor' in this verse is the Greek [kopiaō](#) and means to *diligently toil and work hard*. As I searched for its use in the New Testament, a theme began to appear. Let's take a look:

***In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*** [Acts 20:35](#)

***Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.*** [Rom 16:6](#)



***...you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors. [1 Cor 16:16](#)***

***I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain. [Galatians 4:11](#)***

***We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. [Col 1:28-29](#)***

***For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. [1Tim 4:10](#)***

There are many more examples, and in the context of each we see a Biblical principle unfolding. God created work for us to do in order that we would bless others. While the labors of our hands do indeed bless us, primarily when we are paid for our service, we must also labor for the benefit of others. Our work cannot be inwardly focused, only helping ourselves and fulfilling our selfish desires. Just like the apostles and disciples who served in the early New Testament church, we have a responsibility and obligation to labor and strive for the sake of others, especially fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who are in need. In this labor we bear the fruit of our salvation and the work God is doing in us.

As usual, the truths of Scripture fly in the face of societal norms which tell us to work hard to satisfy our worldly needs and pleasures. And what a powerful temptation this is, especially in a rich and exceedingly fortunate nation like ours! However, the rewards and blessings of laboring in the service of fellow Christians who are in need, both spiritually and physically, far outweigh anything that pallets of money could ever buy.

Let the apostle's words be an encouragement to each of us today to "***set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth,***" ([Col 3:2](#)) and "***whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father,***" ([Col 3:17](#)).

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