

A photograph of a person's legs from the knees down, wearing blue and white striped slip-on shoes. They are sitting on a pink and white striped blanket outdoors. To the left of the person's feet is a vintage camera in a brown leather case, and next to it is a brown leather camera case. The background consists of green grass and small yellow and pink flowers. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

SESSION

4

LIFE REFLECTED



**WHAT WORK
ARE YOU MOST
PROUD OF?**

?



THE POINT

ALL WORK IS A REFLECTION OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST.

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

GIVEN A LIFE OF 80 YEARS, THE AVERAGE PERSON SPENDS 25 YEARS SLEEPING, 10.3 YEARS WORKING, 9.1 YEARS WATCHING TV, AND 3.7 YEARS EATING.¹

As a young child, you probably remember being asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” People probably still ask you this question. Do you remember how you answered. Many would respond:

- **I want to be a doctor.**
- **I want to be an artist.**
- **I want to be a baseball player.**

How did you answer?

There’s one subtle word in the question that’s very important. Notice we ask, what do you want to be, not what do you want to do. In our culture, it’s very easy for our whole lives to be wrapped up in our activities. The things we do sometimes define who we are.

This is highly unstable ground. For instance, when a pitcher throws a perfect game, he feels great about who he is. But when he inevitably loses, his self worth plummets. For many students, grades matter more than anything, and a less than perfect test score is failure.

But for the Christian, our identity is to be firmly rooted in Jesus. Our activities don’t define us. Rather, they are opportunities that allow us to share the goodness of God. Our identity is not defined by what we do, but by who we are in Jesus. This perspective makes all the difference in the things we do.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

▶ COLOSSIANS 3:22–4:1

²²Slaves, obey your human masters in everything. Don't work only while being watched, as people-pleasers, but work wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord.

²³Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people,

²⁴knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ.

²⁵For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong he has done, and there is no favoritism.

¹Masters, deal with your slaves justly and fairly, since you know that you too have a Master in heaven.



THE SETTING

A few years after the Colossian church was started, false teachers introduced ideas that simply weren't true and that became harmful to the church. They said that because God is good and all other matter is evil, Jesus (a person with a material body) couldn't be God. Colossians was written to teach the truth about Jesus: He is fully God and fully man. It was also written to help the church understand how to root our identity in Jesus and live for His glory.

► COLOSSIANS 3:22

Slavery is an ugly and evil part of human history. In Paul's day, slavery was not necessarily seen as abuse. It was simply the way many people found work. In numerous circumstances, a slave was much better off than a free person, and slaves were frequently educated, highly skilled workers. This is not meant to excuse the practice, but to point out that slavery in the Roman world was very different from what occurred in America.

Of course, not all slaves had it so good. Many slaves hated their conditions and wanted freedom.

► Describe a time you felt forced to do things you didn't want to do.

Paul was not opposed to freeing slaves or to slaves working to become free. He simply remained focused on the mission he had been given. For the Christian, any work, whether forced or not, is an opportunity to demonstrate Christlike character. After all, slaves worked not for their masters, but for Jesus.

Today, we don't serve masters, but bosses, parents, coaches, and teachers. And though we work for them, we ultimately work for Jesus. Therefore, we should give our all, working wholeheartedly with obedience, integrity, and dependability.

"Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you."
—St. Ignatius Loyola

Prayer is essential, that's for sure. But many times we pray, then sit back expecting to watch God work. The truth is God would often have us provide answers to our own prayers by working hard and with a Christlike attitude. What things are you praying for that you may also need to work at? Describe how you are going to start working for God's glory in those things.

**HOW CAN WE
MAINTAIN A
CHRISTLIKE
ATTITUDE, EVEN
IN WORK WE
DON'T ENJOY?**

?

► COLOSSIANS 3:23-25

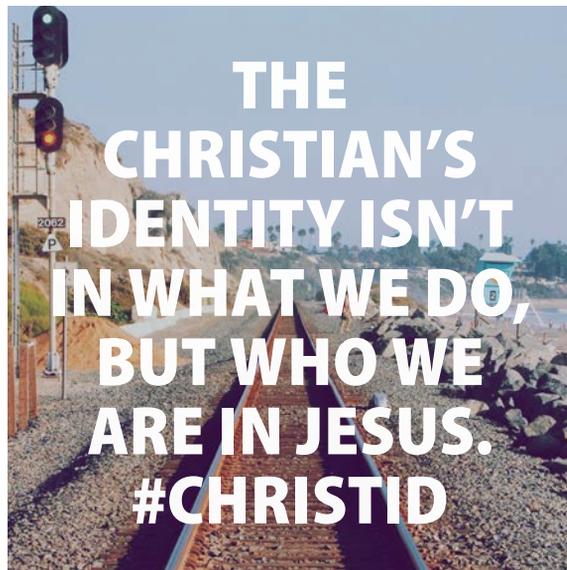


Many of the things we enjoy and the ones that bring about the biggest rewards often take a lot of work. List one thing that fits into this category, and describe what you enjoyed so much about it.

However, new things aren't new for long, and you may have found your initial enthusiasm quickly wearing off. The activity that was recently exciting becomes boring. What brought great joy becomes a bit of a grind. These are the moments true Christian character comes out.

If the activities we are devoted to are pursued primarily for personal happiness, when they become tough, we complain, sulk, or quit. But the follower of Jesus understands that working hard and with a great attitude in everything we do stands out like water in the desert.

Most people work for the rewards (e.g., the pay, the way it makes us feel, or to please others). At times this isn't quite the motivation we need. But God has promised to reward those who work for Him, and this changes things completely. So remember, when eight dollars an hour or pleasing your teachers isn't enough motivation, God is pleased and offers eternal reward for those who work for His glory.



HOW ARE THE THINGS YOU WORK AT AN OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE GOD?





ACTION POINT

List three roles in which you operate (e.g., student, musician, athlete) and describe how these relate to your identity.

Role	Influence on my personal identity	As seen through my identity in Christ

WHAT STEPS MIGHT HELP YOU FOCUS ON CHRIST AS YOU WORK?



► COLOSSIANS 4:1

In all organizations, there's a pecking order with different levels of authority and a variety of tasks and responsibilities. Think about your school administrators or even the football team. Each has a leader that is responsible for the well-being of the entire team.

Describe a situation in which you are:

► **Under authority**

► **In authority over others**

In Paul's day, though some slaves were treated well, many were not. Scripture emphasizes that it's not only important for workers to work for the Lord, but bosses are to treat those under their authority in a completely fair way. In fact, those who lead others are to look to their Master in heaven as the ultimate example of ruling.

Just as God teaches, the master is to teach his workers. As God is kind, masters are to be kind—and patient, and generous, and serving.

Due to the pecking order that naturally and necessarily occurs, some people are tempted to think of themselves as higher, even better than others. But because our identity is in Jesus, let us use the grace He's given us to serve others.

ACTION POINT



As many as 46 million people in our world live in oppressive slavery, and many of those are children.³ Slaves are often treated as inhuman and are forced to work against their will.

As servants of Jesus, we are certainly expected to work hard. But not because we're forced to do so. God desires that we do our very best because we want to.

Do you work hard because you want to or because you feel forced? Think about two areas of your life that require hard work. Consider your attitude in those areas and list how you can focus on working for Christ.





LIVE IT OUT

**“READ THE BIBLE. WORK HARD AND HONESTLY.
AND DON’T COMPLAIN.”⁴ — BILLY GRAHAM**

BIBLE READING PLAN



DAY 1
COLOSSIANS 1:1-14

DAY 2
COLOSSIANS 1:15-29

DAY 3
COLOSSIANS 2:1-7

DAY 4
COLOSSIANS 2:8-23

DAY 5
COLOSSIANS 3:1-11

DAY 6
COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

DAY 7
COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1

▶ CHRIST

Many times, we find ourselves in circumstances that we absolutely enjoy. At others, we can’t imagine anything worse, and there’s nothing we can do to change it. Paul understands this, and teaches that even in hard times, we’re to recognize that God looks at our hearts. Therefore it’s important to have a great attitude, no matter the circumstances.

▶ **List two situations in which you are currently struggling to have a great attitude. What’s wrong with the way you currently view the situation? How can you see it differently in order to honor God?**

	SITUATION #1	SITUATION #2
CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCE		
CURRENT ATTITUDE		
IMPROVED PERSPECTIVE		



► COMMUNITY

To help us live well during difficult circumstances, God calls us to encourage one another. List two friends you know who are currently facing tough situations. Write down their names, as well as three things you will do to encourage them this week.

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►

► CULTURE

The Bible is clear about the ways we should think and behave in situations that are challenging. What does culture say about the attitudes we should have when we face difficult circumstances? Discuss this as a group.