

## **Your Job and Your Work**

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### **Day One**

I wonder: Do you know anyone who is out of a job? And another question: Do you know anyone who is out of work? You may be thinking, *you just asked the same question.*

Those are two different questions because your job and your work are not the same things. We tend to get those terms confused, but they are not interchangeable terms. I want to point out the differences between our job and our work.

Let's begin with some very basic definitions: Your job is what you do day-in and day-out usually to bring in income, sometimes not. It is the duties you perform, most often for an employer, for which you expect to receive money or some form of compensation.

A company achieves its goals by hiring people to do jobs that are pre-designed, with job descriptions that are pre-written, without consideration of the person who will fill it.

Your work, on the other hand, is what God has designed you to do. It is your purpose for being here, what you are uniquely created for. It is distinctly linked to the gifts, talents, and assets you have been given by God. Your work is for the purpose of bringing glory to God and giving you fulfillment as well. While many people may have identical jobs, no two people have the same work, because each of us has a unique plan for our lives.

I wonder how many Christians really know the difference between their job and their work because when this is not clear to us, we can encounter many difficulties.

For example, one of our most common mistakes is to expect a job to fulfill us. We prepare for it, work hard to get a good job, try hard for promotions and pay raises, and then reality sets in. We realize they call it work because it's work! Not always so fulfilling; not so fun; not so rewarding.

If you see your job as your work, still hoping it will bring meaning and purpose to your life, you may be experiencing some frustration, some disappointment, even some despair and hopelessness because that job—that career you worked so hard to get—doesn't live up to your expectations.

Do you know anyone who has been utterly shattered because they lost their job? Or a retiree who fell apart with no job to go to everyday? That's because their jobs defined them, and once their job went away, they didn't know who they were. They didn't have any work to do.

We need a biblical perspective of our jobs, don't we?

### **Day Two**

Let me ask you: As a Christian, is it essential for you to have a job that is personally fulfilling? Is that your right? Should we assume something is missing or wrong in our lives just because our job isn't what we hoped and expected it to be?

Have you come to the point of acknowledging that your job is not fulfilling, and you've worked long enough to know no job is going to be the exciting adventure you hoped it would be? The good news is your job may never be all you want it to be, but your life can be purposeful and fulfilling when you know the work God has given you to do, and that will fill your life with meaningful and important activity.

Let's consider some significant differences in your job and your work:

1. Your job may employ none of your gifts; your work employs all your gifts.

Now, first, do you know what your gifts are? All Christ-followers have at least one spiritual gift, and many times several. Romans 12 is a good starting place to learn about these gifts, and there are many good helps on this topic. If you don't know what your gifts are, start a research program and ask God to show you.

The really neat thing about our gifts is what we've been gifted to do, we love to do, and it doesn't come hard for us. God is an incredibly smart manager of his human resources. He knows if I love to do what I have to do, I'm going to do it much better.

It's a joy to exercise your gifts, isn't it? Now, that doesn't mean you never grow tired or weary or don't want to run away once in a while. But a few days away from doing my work, and I'm restless. I'm ready to go back.

If you told me I could never use the gifts God has given me, I would feel empty. Life would be tasteless. My gifts are the activities that bring meaning and joy to my life.

Your job may employ your gifts, and if so, that is a blessing. If not, you still have work to do that is very meaningful. You just need to have a clear understanding, based on God's Word, of the difference in your job and your work.

### Day Three

What is the difference between your job and your work? Your work will give you an opportunity to exercise the gifts you have—the abilities God has given you, whereas your job may not use your gifts. The use of our gifts always brings fulfillment and joy into our lives.

Another difference is:

2. Your job will result in income; your work may never result in income.

Most people go to their jobs each day primarily because they get paid to do it. I'm not saying you can't enjoy doing your job and that there aren't other motivational factors involved. But there are very few who would continue going to their job each day without compensation.

Your work may never pay you a dollar, but it will pay benefits that cannot be valued in earthly terms. When you are doing your work, what God has called you to do, you're putting deposits in God's heavenly bank, where thieves can't steal it, and rust cannot destroy it. Your work certainly brings compensation, but it's deposited in a different bank and held as a long-term investment.

In our society where people are valued by the size of their salaries and bank accounts, this is a totally different perspective for a Christian, and one we have to adjust to. It's one of those areas where we must fight not to allow the world to shove us into its mold or way of thinking.

3. There is always someone else who can do your job; there is no one else who can do your work.

If you called your employer tomorrow and said, "I'm not coming back; you won't see me again," guess what? They would survive. It might cause some temporary problems, but somebody soon would move into your role, learn your job and do it.

However, you are indispensable when it comes to your work. If you don't do the work God has called you to do, it will go undone. How do you know God has work for you to do? Because of Ephesians 2:10.

*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).*

God has a to-do list just for you, and if you miss it, you'll miss the abundant joy of doing the work God planned for you to do.

## Day Four

Does your job cause you a lot of frustration? Do you often feel you're just spinning your wheels or running on a treadmill, getting nowhere in your daily job? I'm talking about the differences between your job and your work. And one major difference is:

4. Your job may sometimes produce frustration; your work will most often produce fruit.

Jobs carry no guarantee of inner tranquility or accomplishment. You can work as hard as possible and never feel like you've done a whole lot. You may never get appropriate recognition for the job you do, and indeed others may take credit for what you have done. You may discover the harder you work at your job, the more frustrating it is. Often our jobs bring a great deal of frustration into our lives, for all kinds of reasons.

On the other hand, your work will energize you because you know you're doing something eternally significant. Your work will bring satisfaction. You will be rewarded for your work and receive recognition from the ultimate manager, God your Father. You surely can grow weary in doing your work, but you won't grow weary of the work God has planned for you to do.

5. Your job will end in retirement; your work will not end until death.

Jobs come to an end. Either you retire or you walk away from the job, or the job is eliminated. Work, however, has no termination age. As long as life remains, there is work to be done, and it gives substance and value to every day at any age. Your work most likely will take some turns and changes as you progress through life, but there is always work to do.

You may be thinking, "You mean, I can't expect to find a job I really love?" No, you can educate yourself and look for a job using your talents and strengths, and you can do your work while you're doing your job. God plans for all of us to be lights in a dark world, so part of your work may be to shine the light and love of Jesus right there on your job.

Also, God often uses our jobs to prepare us to do his work. The skills and experience I gained in my job have become a tool in God's plan to touch lives in ways I could not have done without that job.

Tomorrow I'll talk about the great benefit that comes to us when we understand the difference between our jobs and our work.

## Day Five

I am examining the difference between your job and your work when you are indeed a Christ-follower. Understanding the difference is the key to finding joy and purpose for your life.

When you know what work God has planned for you to do, that job doesn't have the hold on you it used to. The frustrations don't get to you like they used to. You run into a problem, deal with it as best you can with God's help, but you always know: "Hey, this is just a job."

Also, your priorities are much clearer when you understand the difference in your work and your job. You make better decisions about what to do and how you spend your time. Then you can prioritize your life so you have time to do your work.

Please keep in your mind the ever-present vision of standing before Jesus to give an account of how you've used your time here on earth. We're told in 1 Corinthians 3 that our work will be shown for what it is at the Day of Judgment. And we will have either wood, hay, or straw, or we'll have gold, silver, and costly stones. And they will be tested by fire, to see which ones last.

Now, wood, hay, and straw take up a lot more space than gold, silver and costly stones, right? And we get fooled sometimes by volume. A million dollars could buy a bunch of wood, hay and straw, and it would take up a great deal of space. You'd have to notice it. But if you bought a million dollars worth of gold, silver and costly stones, you could hold them in your hand or at most a small bag. You might not notice it because it wouldn't take up much room.

If we don't understand the difference, we might opt for the wood, hay, and straw because it looks bigger. But that stuff goes up real fast when you strike a match to it; whereas the gold and silver and costly stones will survive any fire you put them through.

Do you get the picture here? You don't want to spend your life doing things that eventually won't matter. Don't let volume fool you; don't let appearances deceive you. Make sure you know what your work is, what God wants you to do, and then do it with all your heart, mind, and soul. That's gold, silver, and costly stones, and they will endure to eternity.