

The Diligent Worker

I. Introduction

God's word has a lot to say about diligence and those that work diligently. The beginning text for our study is 2 Tim: 2:3-7 "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that goes to war entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strives for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that labors must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say; and the Lord give the understanding in all things."

Our text begins by emphasizing endurance through hardships. It implies that sacrifice will be required. Endurance usually conveys the idea of strength and bearing up under some burden, but it is closely coupled with diligence. One cannot endure if they are not diligent in how they approach their task and apply themselves. Our text goes further and provides advice on maintaining one's focus. The soldier must focus on the tasks associated with the battle at hand in order to succeed. If the soldier allows the affairs of this life to be a distraction, his personal safety and that of his comrades is at risk. The third major point from this passage is that we must strive lawfully. The athlete will not receive the prize if it is determined that the rules of the competition have been violated. Likewise, those seeking eternal life must abide by God's laws in order to be rewarded.

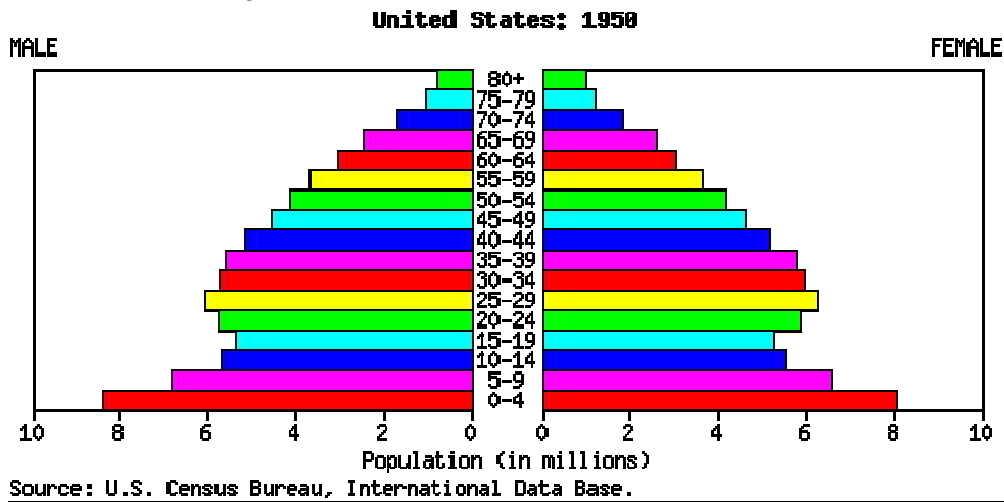
We are presented with examples who worked diligently their entire lives to further the cause of Christ. In this session, we will look at the expectations of diligent workers in their secular endeavors and spiritual pursuits. We will close by reviewing some of the examples in the scriptures.

II. The Secular Worker

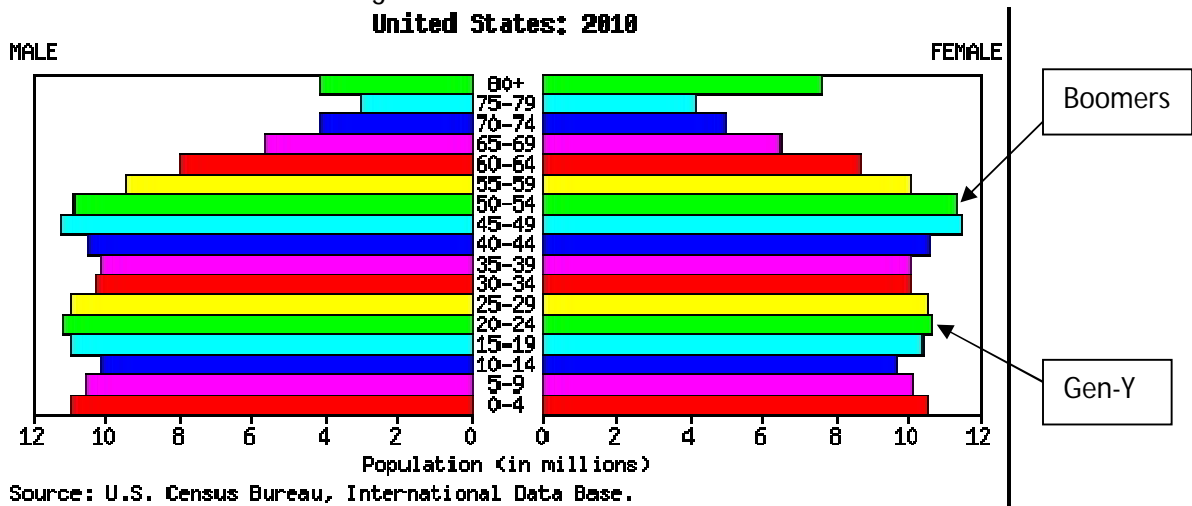
Each of you will require a means of support. God's word teaches that if one will not work he should not eat. Today's society has skewed this understanding with a network of social programs to support those that do not work without differentiating between those that cannot work and those that will not work. This is an area where Christians must recognize their responsibilities and fulfill them.

The current work environment presents challenges for all age groups but specifically your age group. Throughout the world there is currently a disproportionate percentage of unemployment for ages 15-24. This has been aggravated by recent economic downturns. In Spain 40% of the youth from age 15-24 are unemployed. In the United States 18.5% as of July 2009 were unemployed compared to a national average of 9%. One might think that there should be more unemployed youth compared to the national average since many are in school; however, these statistics are already adjusted to reflect only those that are actively looking for work. As a result, each of you will need to help your employer realize greater value from your services.

Societal norms shift over time as do populations. After World War II, the United States experienced significant economic prosperity which was accompanied by an above-average birthrate. The term *Baby Boomers* was coined to reflect this generation of individuals that migrated into the work force in the 1960s and 1970s.



This generation started having its own children, often later in life. These children are now referred to as the Echo generation or Generation-Y.



What does this mean for you? Each of you is the product of your teaching and socialization. Baby Boomers were the children of the "Greatest Generation" (i.e., those that survived WW1, The Great Depression, and WW2). They grew up in an age of industrialization and technical advancement. Boomers' children had benefits that they never imagined; and, generally, these benefits were made readily available to them. Child labor laws and education requirements delay the entry of today's youth into the workforce compared to the entry of those that were part of the Greatest Generation and even the Boomer Generation. Today's youth learn later in life what is expected in the work environment and what is expected from them. Generation-Y is technologically advanced with increased use and familiarity with communications, media, and digital technologies. Generation-Y enters the workforce known as the "Trophy Kid" generation

which implies that most have been rewarded based on participation without regard for merit. As a result, an expectation has been internalized by many that they should be rewarded for showing up rather than excelling. Luke 17:7 discusses this basic point through the master-servant relationship. "And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'?⁸ But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'?⁹ Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.¹⁰ So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"

All workers are expected to perform. The secular worker must perform in order for his employer to be profitable. The employer and employee must have similar goals and expectations in order for the relationship to be mutually beneficial. Any misalignment in these expectations generates friction between the two.

God's word has much to say about work and how one is to work. It talks about the plight of those that choose not to work. Solomon's admonitions in the book of Proverbs are where we will start.

A. Must not be slothful

1. Pr. 18:9 "He who is slothful in his work is a brother to him who is a great destroyer".
2. Pr. 26:13-16 "The lazy *man* says, 'There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!' ¹⁴ As a door turns on its hinges, so *does* the lazy *man* on his bed. ¹⁵ The lazy *man* buries his hand in the bowl; it wearies him to bring it back to his mouth. ¹⁶ The lazy *man* is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly."
3. Pr. 24:30-34 "I went by the field of the lazy *man*, and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; ³¹ And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; its surface was covered with nettles; its stone wall was broken down. ³² When I saw *it*, I considered *it* well; I looked on *it* and received instruction: ³³ A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest; ³⁴ So shall your poverty come *like* a prowler, and your need like an armed man."

B. Must be active and timely

1. Pr. 10:4-5 "He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. ⁵ He who gathers in summer *is* a wise son; He who sleeps in harvest *is* a son who causes shame."
2. Rom. 12:11 "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

C. Choose companions wisely

1. Pr. 12:11 "He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, but he who follows frivolity *is* devoid of understanding."

D. Honest

1. Eph. 4:28 "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need."
2. 1 Thess. 4:11-12 "That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, ¹² that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and *that* you may lack nothing."

E. Provide for his own

1. 2 Thess. 3:10-12 "For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. ¹¹ For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. ¹² Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread."

F. Do So With Excellence

1. Eccl. 9:10 "Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with your might; for *there is* no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going."

III. The Spiritual Worker

A. Expectations of all Christians

1. Steps to Becoming a Christian

- a. **Hear the word to generate faith** – Rom. 10:17 "So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
- b. **Believe** – Mark 16:16 "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."
- c. **Repent** – Luke 13:3 "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."
- d. **Confess** – Rom. 10:9-10 "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
- e. **Be Baptized** – Acts 2:38 "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."

2. Steps to Growing as Christians

- a. In order for us to grow as Christians, we must encounter and deal with certain things. For us to do this properly, we must study so that decisions are made based on God's teaching and not emotion. 2 Tim. 2:15 "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
- b. We must have confidence in the things that we have learned and continue to build on that knowledge base. 2 Tim. 3:12-17 "Yes,

and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. ¹³ But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, ¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

¹⁶ All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

- c. Hebrews 3:12-13 "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; ¹³ but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

3. Steps to Remaining Christians

- a. Phil. 4: 8 "...think on these things"
 - Honest
 - Just
 - Pure
 - Lovely
 - Good Report
 - Virtuous and Praiseworthy
- b. 1 Cor. 15:58 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."
- c. 2 Cor. 5:7 "For we walk by faith, not by sight."
- d. Work with confidence. 1 Cor. 10:13 "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*."
- e. Be prepared. 1 Pet. 3:15-16 "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed."

B. Specific Spiritual Vocations

Ephesians 4:11 "And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers."

1. Elders

- a. Character traits
 - Vigilant
 - Sober
 - Good behavior
 - Hospitable
 - Not greedy or covetous
 - Patient
- b. Abilities
 - Apt to teach
 - Rules well his own house
- c. Reputation
 - Blameless
 - Not given to wine
 - Not a novice
 - Good report of those outside the Lord's body
- d. Expectations
 - Be shepherds
 - Must rule
 - Treated with honor
 - Must desire the work

2. Deacons

- a. Service the needs of the saints as designated by the elders

3. Evangelists

- a. Truthfully and consistent with the apostles' doctrine and teaching. 1 Pet. 4:11 "If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."
- b. Fervently with passion for the truth. Acts 18:24-27 "Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man *and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. ²⁵ This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more

accurately. ²⁷ And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace."

- c. Speak and reprove with authority. Titus 1:13-14 "This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth." Titus 2:15 "Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you."
- d. Ready always. 2 Tim. 4:2 "Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching."

4. Teachers

- a. 1 Tim. 4:16 "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."
- b. 2 Tim. 2:2 "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

IV. Examples found in the scriptures

- A. Genesis 10 – Noah toiled many years to build the ark without any evidence other than God's word that a flood was coming.
- B. Genesis 39 – Joseph was acquired by Potiphar to serve as a slave. The Lord was with Joseph, and he prospered in Potiphar's house. As a result, Joseph found grace in Potiphar's sight and was made overseer of the house. "He left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well-favored." Similarly, Joseph served the keeper of the prison faithfully to the point that he committed all the prisoners to Joseph's hand. "The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made to prosper."
- C. Jeroboam was recognized for his industriousness. 1 Kings 11:28 "The man Jeroboam *was* a mighty man of valor; and Solomon, seeing that the young man was industrious, made him the officer over all the labor force of the house of Joseph."
- D. Nehemiah was a diligent worker. He conducted himself in a way that commanded respect; otherwise, the king would have never had the necessary respect for him to grant his request to rebuild the walls. Nehemiah inspired the people and drove them to work diligently such that the walls were rebuilt in 52 days.
- E. Paul served faithfully until his death. He endured many trials. 2 Cor. 11:24-28 "From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of

robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren;²⁷ in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.”

V. Conclusion

The requirements for the diligent worker are clearly outlined in the Parable of the Talents, Mt. 25:14-30. The expectation is that each individual will apply the talents that he possesses to the best of his ability. The multi-talent servants worked and increased their talents. The single-talent servant chose to do nothing because of fear. The master makes it abundantly clear that the latter is unacceptable. The reward for the servants was drastically different. Those who worked on the master’s behalf were asked to enter into the joy of the Lord. Those who do nothing will be relegated to outer darkness.

The diligent worker is one that applies the talents that God has bestowed on him to the best of his ability. His abilities bring responsibilities that he cannot shirk. The secular worker may be rewarded for his performance; however, his ultimate reward will be realized in heaven. The spiritual worker is worthy of honor but must realize that his responsibility is not to self but to Christ his head. One should find the life of a Christian rewarding; however, if this is not possible due to persecution, his final reward is heaven.