

Work and Personal Responsibility

Chapter 27

Work Is an Eternal Principle

- What experiences have you had that have shown you the importance of work?

Our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have shown us by Their examples and teachings that work is important in heaven and on earth. God worked to create the heavens and the earth. He caused the seas to gather in one place and the dry land to appear. He caused grass, herbs, and trees to grow on the land. He created the sun, the moon, and the stars. He created every living thing in the sea or on the land. Then He placed Adam and Eve on the earth to take care of it and to have dominion over all living things. (See Genesis 1:1–28.)

Jesus said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17). He also said, “I must work the works of him that sent me” (John 9:4).

We Are Commanded to Work

Work has been the way of life on earth since Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden. The Lord said to Adam, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Genesis 3:19). Adam and Eve worked in the fields so they could provide for their own needs and the needs of their children (see Moses 5:1).

The Lord said to the people of Israel, “Six days shalt thou labour” (Exodus 20:9).

For teachers: Try to help each class member or family member participate during the lesson. Individuals may help by setting up chairs, offering the opening or closing prayer, writing on the board, reading scriptures aloud, answering questions, sharing testimony, or summarizing the lesson.



In the early days of the restored Church, the Lord told the Latter-day Saints, “Now, I, the Lord, am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are idlers among them” (D&C 68:31).

A prophet of God has said, “Work is to be reenthroned as the ruling principle of the lives of our Church membership” (Heber J. Grant, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Heber J. Grant* [2002], 115).

Family Responsibility

- What are some responsibilities that fathers, mothers, and children have to maintain a home? What can family members do to share in the work?

Parents work together to provide for the physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being of their family. They should never expect anyone to take care of this responsibility for them. The Apostle Paul wrote, “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith” (1 Timothy 5:8).

Couples should seek inspiration from the Lord and follow the counsel of the prophets when establishing individual responsibilities. Creating a home where principles of the gospel are taught daily and where love and order abound is as important as providing the basic necessities of food and clothing.

Children should do their part in the work of the family. It is necessary for children to have work assignments to fit their abilities. They need to be praised for their successes. Good work attitudes, habits, and skills are learned through successful experiences in the home.

Sometimes people encounter hardships when trying to provide for their families. Chronic illness, the loss of a spouse, or the addition of an elderly parent can add to the responsibilities in a home. Our Heavenly Father remembers the families in these situations and gives them the strength to carry out their duties. He will always bless them if they ask Him in faith.

We Can Enjoy Our Work

- How does our attitude affect our work?
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To some people work is a drudgery. To others it is an exciting part of life. One way to enjoy life's fullest benefits is to learn to love work.

Not all of us can choose the kind of work we do. Some of us labor for long hours for the bare necessities. It is difficult to enjoy such work. Yet the happiest people have learned to enjoy their work, whatever it is.

We can help one another in our work. The heaviest load becomes lighter when someone shares it.

Our attitude toward work is very important. The following story shows how one man saw beyond his daily labor. A traveler passed a stone quarry and saw three men working. He asked each man what he was doing. Each man's answer revealed a different attitude toward the same job. "I am cutting stone," the first man answered. The second replied, "I am earning three gold pieces per day." The third man smiled and said, "I am helping to build a house of God."

In any honest work we can serve God. King Benjamin, a Nephite prophet, said, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17). If our work provides only enough for necessities for ourselves or our families, we are still helping some of God's children.

- How can we improve our attitude about work?

God Condemns Idleness

The Lord is not pleased with those who are lazy or idle. He said, "The idler shall not have place in the church, except he repent and mend his ways" (D&C 75:29). He also commanded, "Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer" (D&C 42:42).

From the earliest days of the Church, the prophets have taught Latter-day Saints to be independent and self-sustaining and to avoid idleness. True Latter-day Saints will not voluntarily shift from themselves the burden of their own support. So long as they are able, they will supply themselves and their families with the necessities of life.

As far as they are able, all Church members should accept the responsibility to care for their relatives who are unable to provide for themselves.

- How does idleness affect an individual? a family? a community?

Work, Recreation, and Rest

- Why is it important to keep a balance in life between work, recreation, and rest?

We should each find the proper balance between work, recreation, and rest. There is an old saying: “Doing nothing is the hardest work of all, because one can never stop to rest.” Without work, rest and relaxation have no meaning.

Not only is it pleasant and necessary to rest, but we are commanded to rest on the Sabbath day (see Exodus 20:10; D&C 59:9–12). This day of rest after each six days of labor brings refreshment for the days that follow. The Lord also promises the “fulness of the earth” to those who observe the Sabbath day (see D&C 59:16–20; see also chapter 24 in this book).

On other days of the week, in addition to working, we may spend time to improve our talents and enjoy our hobbies, recreation, or other activities that will refresh us.

- What can we do to keep a good balance between work, recreation, and rest? How can parents help their children maintain this balance?

The Blessings of Work

- What are some blessings that come from honest work?

God revealed to Adam, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Genesis 3:19). In addition to being a temporal law, this was a law for the salvation of Adam’s soul. There is no real division between spiritual, mental, and physical work. Work is essential to each of us for growth, character development, and many satisfactions that the idle never know.

President David O. McKay said, “Let us realize that the privilege to work is a gift, that the power to work is a blessing, that the love of work is success” (*Pathways to Happiness* [1957], 381).

“Men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25). Work is a key to full joy in the plan of God. If we are righteous, we will return to live with our Heavenly Father, and we will have work to do. As we become like Him, our work will become like His work. His work is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

Additional Scriptures

- Moses 4:23–25 (Adam told that he would work all his life for his food)
- D&C 56:16–17 (God warns the rich and poor against greed, envy, and laziness)
- D&C 58:26–29 (men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause)
- Matthew 25:14–30 (parable of the talents)
- Ephesians 4:28 (steal no more but rather labor)
- 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12 (work with your own hands)
- 2 Nephi 5:17 (Nephi taught his people to work and be industrious)