

**“Your Work Matters to God”**  
**Steve Slack June 14-15, 2008**  
**Colossians 3:15-4:1**

Enslavement to Christ brings freedom to work for God.

Is God concerned about what we consider work/jobs/occupations? Does He really care about what happens Monday through Friday? (Student/stay at home mom or dad/retired.) Or is He only concerned with where I am on Saturday night or Sunday morning worshipping “in God’s house?”

The 2007 film, “Amazing Grace,” the story of the life of William Wilberforce as a member of parliament in Great Britain, answers this question. Early in the movie William is a young man and a new member of parliament and he is a Christian—he is opposed to the slave trade in Great Britain but he is struggling to figure out exactly how his faith and his work go together. One evening William is eating supper with a group of abolitionists who want him to understand the evils and destruction of the slave trade. Then William has a conversation with a friend and a colleague about his faith and his work in parliament. What will he choose to do? We know this tension, don’t we? If we’ve committed our lives to Jesus Christ and we trust Him for transformation and leadership in our lives – we’ll regularly find ourselves asking the same questions. “Where does living a life of worship and service to God begin and end?” “How do I live with Jesus Christ in my life in the ‘real world’?” “Can I work and live as a Christian at work without someone thinking I’m a Jesus freak or a nut case?” “I might lose my job!” “How do I live for Jesus, Monday through Friday from 8-5?” Part of the difficulty is we’ve believed some myths that are often endorsed and encouraged by the church.

#1 – God is more interested in our souls than in our bodies. Both soul and body belong to God.

#2 – Eternity is more important than today. Eternity lasts longer and is more glorious but not more important.

#3 – Christians participate in the culture ONLY to tell others about Jesus. We ARE to tell others about Jesus but it goes well beyond that.

We hear about problems with the American working population and with difficult employers. Employers are concerned about finding skilled, honest, competent, hard-working employees—while employees and labor unions speak out for more pay, fair treatment, better working conditions, more benefits, perks, and more time off. Employees don’t feel valued and employers feel taken advantage of.

When Paul wrote the book of Colossians, he wrote to a city experiencing an economic downturn and crisis—employment issues of their own. The main highway had been

rerouted through another area (Kellogg going through Newton not Wichita) and trade and commerce were suffering. Undoubtedly, unemployment was on the rise and wages and benefits were declining. There was also a faith crisis Colossae. False and unhealthy teachings had crept into the church. The false teachings were mainly 2 things: (1) carryover of Jewish legalism from the Old Testament law – all of the rules and regulations of Judaism had to be followed by Christians as well and (2) God can only be known through knowledge of him with our minds and all things good are spiritual and all physical and material things are inherently evil—this false teaching was taken to the extreme declaring that Jesus was a spiritual being only and did not possess a physical body when he lived here on the earth. In their way of thinking, Jesus could not have possessed a physical body since all physical matter is evil.

Paul knows that what the Colossian Christians believe about Jesus makes a huge difference. And Paul knows that what we believe and accept about Jesus will make a difference in every area of our lives. So when Paul writes the book of Colossians he includes in the first chapter a very specific description of who Jesus is. He says, “Jesus is the image of the invisible God—He is before all things and in Him all things hold together—He’s the head of His body, the Church.”

**JESUS IS IT!**

Then in chapter 2 verse 9, Paul writes; “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form and you have been given fullness in Christ who is the head over every power and authority.” This is a key verse for the Colossians who were hearing that Jesus didn’t even have a real body – and the Colossians needed to hear they had been given fullness in Christ through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Since Jesus lived, worked, and served here on earth with a real body then perhaps God IS more concerned about how we live, work, and serve here also if we plan on following Jesus.

Let’s spend a few minutes looking at several verses that come toward the end of the book of Colossians. Nearly without fail, Paul concludes the letters he writes with practical advice on how to live out the Christian life - theology is not simply to be understood or believed – but more importantly lived out. So open your Bibles to Colossians 3:15-4:1. Paul paints a picture of several specific situations here doesn’t he? When the peace of Jesus Christ rules your life—this is what it means to be married, this is what it looks like to be a child and a parent. When the word of Christ lives in you Paul says, (person of Jesus Christ – full revelation of Jesus Himself – not Bible verses) this is what it looks like to live as a slave (employee) and a master (employer). When your work matters to God you find freedom to work hard with sincerity. Followers of Jesus Christ should be the best employees and employers period. In fact, you will not be the kind of worker or boss God desires apart from giving your life fully to Jesus Christ and following Him completely.

Remember Paul is writing this to slaves who were treated like property because they were property - and he says obey, work hard, be cooperative in every way - possess the best character and integrity of any employee. Then Paul really explains the how and the why.

The Office 1 of 3

“Your Work Matters to God.” Colossians 3:15 -4:1

Jesus is working in and through you. When the peace, the truth, and the person of Jesus Christ resides and is in control of our lives, He is actually working through us all the time, wherever we are, and whatever we do. Honestly, why does your work matter to God? For Christians God's Only Son He sacrificed on the cross is living in and through our lives 24/7 so that God is seen in everything we do and say. If you believe in Jesus Christ your life and your body no longer belong to you - they belong to God - he paid for your life with the blood of His Son - honor God with the way we live every day and in every way - that's what the Holy Spirit seeks to do in and through us constantly - live a life that is pleasing to God - the miracle of the resurrection means transformed lives here and now - it is the Spirit of Jesus Christ living in us ensuring we do bring honor and glory to God in every way - this is not just in heaven after we die - NOW!!!!

God is your employer. Paul says do all of your work as if you're working for God - not for men because that's in fact what you are doing. Actually Jesus is working in and through your life to continually bring honor and glory to God. We become the vessels God uses to continue to tell the truth to the world about who He is and what He is like. We have the added benefit of salvation and the ability to live a transformed life with true purpose and meaning. Paul says, of course your work matters to God. Because of Jesus it's His work for His benefit in and through your life and there's not a better use for your life. It's what we're created for in the first place.

You trust God in all circumstances. Sometimes we find ourselves in very difficult circumstances at work and in life in general. Remember, Paul is writing to slaves here in these verses. Trust God Paul says because you have the confidence that you are going to receive an inheritance from the Lord; heaven. And Paul says God sees every injustice and every wrong in every situation doesn't He? And God is just and He will not show any favoritism; he is completely trustworthy. We must see work as a means to an end and an end in and of itself. Work is another opportunity to trust God completely and demonstrate that Jesus Christ lives in us and is in charge of our lives. Paul says, God is to be trusted.

Above a paycheck. We love money way too much. Paul is addressing these verses to slaves who work hard and who are paid little or nothing at all. For all of us, one day, a paycheck is not going to mean that much and neither will all of the things a paycheck may purchase. Trust in me he says.

Above a career. We idolize careers way too much. Your career is going to end one day but living your life for God because of Jesus Christ will endure; there's no retiring from living for Jesus. In fact living for Jesus lasts forever and it begins now. Don't trust your career to make the kind of difference only Jesus can make. Trust God completely and then watch Him use our work in a way ONLY He can. Paul also says God is to be trusted.

Above personal happiness. Now this one is a real problem for us in America. We tend to think everything should result in our happiness. Defined in a very self-centered way

(marriage, parenting, education, friendship, and our work and careers). God does not call us to be happy He calls us to be faithful to Him and to demonstrate His character and truth in everything we are and everything we do. Hear me on this, I'm not saying that God loves miserable marriages, painful college experiences, and work environments that destroy people. I am saying that we have elevated a sense of personal happiness in all situations above faithfulness to God and just because we're not happy all of the time does not mean we're somehow missing what God wants us to do and who He intends for us to become. It is not about you and me, it is about Him!

In Romans Paul uses Old Testament imagery to describe what our lives are supposed to look like; all of life including our work. Read Romans 12:1 "Therefore, I urge you brothers in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."

What you do is a living sacrifice is just as important as what I do. Preaching a sermon is a part of my job this weekend but it is not more spiritual than your job. In fact, what you're doing right now is not any less spiritual than what I am doing right now if our entire lives every day are to be living sacrifices before God. I struggled with preaching and not being able to "worship" in the past because I was too focused on the message. I'm beginning to understand and grow to believe that sermon preparation all week long is also worship and not just the delivery of the sermon or the worship service itself. Living a life of worship in all we do and in our work because it matters to God.

Later on in the movie "Amazing Grace" Wilberforce decided to work for both God and parliament at the same time.

Wilberforce took on parliament almost single-handedly, eventually eliminating slavery in the United Kingdom. God used him to change the world. Before Wilberforce could free anyone else from slavery he had to be set free from his own chains by Jesus Christ.

What about you and me; are our chains gone? Have you been set free in Jesus Christ so that you may live and work for him 24/7? A life of sacrifice and worship to God. Like Wilberforce, God wants to use us to change the world and God can do anything!