Liberty University
DigitalCommons@Liberty University

December 2009 2009

12-2009

Scholar's view: The Wonder of Work

Liberty University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lj_2009_dec

Recommended Citation
Liberty University, "Scholar's view: The Wonder of Work" (2009). *December 2009*. Paper 1.
http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lj_2009_dec/1

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2009 at DigitalCommons@Liberty University. It has been accepted for inclusion in December 2009 by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Liberty University. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunication@liberty.edu.

Scholar's view: The wonder of work

December 01, 2009 ¦ Dr. Karen Swallow Prior

From time to time, I hear someone characterize work as a result of the Fall of man. But this is a great error: for, indeed, we were created to work. Through work we reflect the image of God in us, and we love our neighbors.

Even before the Fall, God assigned work to man: Adam was charged with the task of naming the animals and, with Eve, being stewards of the earth. Work was thus part of God's original plan for mankind. Once Adam and Eve disobeyed, their labor was cursed with pain and impediments. But work itself was not the curse. Work was, from the very beginning, good.

We can see the goodness of work in God's pleasure in His own work. After accomplishing the work of creation, God looked upon it and saw that it was good. Being made in God's image, then, human beings are likewise created to work, and we reflect the image of God in us in working and in taking pleasure in that work.

In addition to reflecting the image of God in us, work is a means for us to love others. As Dr. Gene Edward Veith, cultural editor of World Magazine, shared last year during a faculty chapel at Liberty University, work is the means by which God calls us to serve our neighbors. God chooses to use us and our work to meet the needs of people, whether those needs are physical, intellectual, emotional, or spiritual.

It is a wondrous thing to witness good work well done: a caring nurse soothing an ailing patient, a gifted minister teaching the Word to his congregation, a nimble athlete making the winning score, a dusty gardener admiring a rare bloom, a busy mother patiently teaching her child to tie his shoe, a gifted pianist dancing her fingers across the keyboard. Upon being asked why she wrote, the Christian author Flannery O'Connor humbly answered, "Because I'm good at it." O'Connor knew that she was doing the work God had equipped her to do best and that in so doing she was fulfilling her calling.

Clearly the better our work is, the better we serve our neighbors and reflect God's image in us. Because God created each of us with specific gifts and talents, we serve God and people best when our work draws upon those God-given abilities, when we are doing — as I like to say — what we were created to do. We find ourselves most satisfied, in fact, when we fulfill our Maker's unique design for each of us.

Of course, not all people are able to do the work they are passionate about or most gifted to do. Other principles must sometimes take precedence: providing for one's family, fulfilling obligations, or overcoming difficult economic circumstances. Yet honest, good work that may not be self-fulfilling nevertheless reflects the image of God and often serves others.

Through work we worship and glorify God. And this is why work is good and why it should always be done well.

Dr. Karen Swallow Prior is Chair of the Department of English and Modern Languages at Liberty University.