

BIBLE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

By Robert C. Veil, Jr.

Question: It troubles me that so many people in our country are looking for ways to get out of working, and be supported by the government. Doesn't the Bible teach that we should work?

Answer: While there are certainly occasions where people need support due to sickness, disability or other unavoidable circumstances, the Bible teaches that Christians are to be hard workers, supporting themselves and their families as much as possible. This "Christian work ethic" is taught in several passages.

One of the most familiar is the following: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat," (2 Thess. 3:10). In that passage, Paul was dealing with some who had quit working, and were becoming busybodies, (3:11). They were under the misconception that Jesus was coming again very soon, and that secular employment should therefore be abandoned. Paul corrects this notion in chapter 2, explaining that we do not know when the Lord is coming again, and that we should live out our lives in patience and faithfulness.

Christians should work conscientiously. We are taught to "labor" in occupations that are "good" so that we will be able to give to those in need, (Eph. 4:28). Christians should not be frivolous spenders. They should be good savers. They should "lay by in store" (1 Cor. 16:1-2) and give generously to the work of the Lord.

Another principle from Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians is that Christians should work "with quietness" and "eat their own bread," (2 Thess. 3:12). That is, Christians on the job are steady and dependable. They "mind their

own business” and are not into office gossip or tattling. To work with “quietness” suggests a focus and dedication to one’s own job.

It is not wrong to accept charity when it is really needed. But too many people at Thessalonica were looking for the “easy” way in life, willing to let others pay. That is not the way of Christ. Paul made it clear that, although he had the right to be supported financially by them as a gospel preacher, (3:9), he was more interested in giving them an example of honest work and dedication. That is an excellent example for us all!

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