

Principles of Economic Liberty ~ Session 2: Ordered Liberty

The Bible encourages its readers — especially those who believe in the God of the Bible — to engage in responsible work. Such work brings benefits, not just to an individual and his or her family, but also society at large. Through their labors, productive workers help to maintain societal order and cohesiveness. In fact, engaging in responsible work is part of God's intention for the members of the human race. Here are seven passages where work is directly commended or indirectly affirmed.

- **Genesis 2:15:** Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.
Key principle: God assigned work even before humanity fell into sin.
- **Deuteronomy 8:11-20** ¹¹ “Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, ¹² lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; ¹³ and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; ¹⁴ when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; ¹⁵ who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock ¹⁶ who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end— ¹⁷ then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’ ¹⁸ **“And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.”** ¹⁹ Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the Lord your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. ²⁰ As the nations which the Lord destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the Lord your God.
Key verse: verse 18; **Key principle:** God enables people to acquire wealth. Laborers have a duty to remember, acknowledge, and obey Him as they engage in productive work and enjoy its fruits.
- **Psalms 128:1-2** ¹ Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways. ² When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.
Key principle: Genuine satisfaction from work belongs to the man or woman who lives for God, and not primarily because of acquiring wealth.
- **Romans 12:9-13** ⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³ distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.
Key principle: God expects His people to be diligent in their endeavors (see v. 11), including productive work.
- **Colossians 3:23-25** ²³ And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵ But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.
Key principle: All people are responsible to God for their actions; in particular, we as believers work primarily for the Lord. He deserves our best.
- **1 Thessalonians 4:9-12** ⁹ But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; ¹⁰ and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; ¹¹ 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.
Key principle: Believers are to mind their own business, in part by working to provide for themselves and their families rather than allowing themselves or family members to become burdens to other individuals or to society. By taking care of their own, Christians help maintain order in society and present to the world a positive witness for Christ.
- **1 Timothy 5:8** But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.
Key principle: Providing for one's own family is not just a personal and practical responsibility; it's also a spiritual one.