

HOW TO WORK LIKE JESUS

Romans 12:11

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Today we're going to talk about a four-letter word called work. If you're a student, then your job right now is school.
2. Why talk about work? You will spend roughly one-third of your life at work. If you are going to be a successful Christian, then you better learn how to be a Christian at work.
3. We're studying the book of Romans, and right now we are in Romans 12, and Romans 12 is all about how to become more like Jesus.
4. If you spend one-third of your life at work, then you need to learn how to work like Jesus. How should we act like Jesus at work? How can we think about work like Jesus?
5. Before Jesus became a preacher, for the first thirty years of his life he was a carpenter. Unfortunately, there aren't any Bible stories about how Jesus worked as a carpenter. But there are plenty of passages in the Bible that inform us about how to work in a Christlike way. We're going to look at one of those verses today in Romans 12.

II. TEXT

1. **Romans 12:11** Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent in the Spirit; serve the Lord.
2. In this verse we can find three ways to work like Jesus.

III. THREE WAYS TO WORK LIKE JESUS

1. Don't be lazy.

- i. **Romans 12:11** Do not lack diligence in zeal
- ii. The NLT says, "Never be lazy."
- iii. What is laziness? Laziness means disinclined to activity or exertion: not energetic or vigorous (Merriam-Webster).
- iv. The Bible calls the lazy person the slacker, the sluggard, the sloth, the idle, the lazybones.
- v. To work like Christ, you can't be lazy.
- vi. **What are the traits of lazy people?**
 1. They are dumber than insects.

- a. **Proverbs 6:6-8** “Go to the ant, you slacker! Observe its ways and become wise. Without leader, administrator, or ruler, it prepares its provisions in summer; it gathers its food during harvest.”
 - b. Why are they dumb? Because they are only hurting themselves and the ones who love and depend on them.
 - c. They are dumb because they hate work, but work is not evil. Work is not a consequence of the fall. God put Adam and Eve to work in the garden before sin entered the picture, which tells us that we were created to work. Not only is work necessary to pay the bills and provide for your family, but work is necessary to live a full and meaningful life. We were created to work.
 - d. Work is how God provides for you. God wants to provide for you. He promises to provide for you. But how does He do that? He’s probably not going to drop food from the sky. He’s probably not going to send the president of the bank to your front door with a bag full of cash. Hub City Ford is probably not going to call you up and say, “Hey, the Lord just told us to give you a brand new F-150.” The way the Lord provides for you is through work. As you work hard, God is able to keep His promise to provide for you. He works through you to take care of you and your family. By avoiding work, the lazy person is preventing the Lord from taking care of them.
2. They love to sleep.
- a. **Proverbs 6:9** How long will you stay in bed, you slacker? When will you get up from your sleep?
 - b. **Proverbs 26:14** A door turns on its hinges, and a slacker, on his bed.
3. They are as bad as vandals.

- a. **Proverbs 18:9** “The who is lazy in his work is brother to a vandal.”
 - b. A vandal is someone who destroys things; one who damages property.
 - c. A vandal is worse than a thief. A thief takes your stuff, while a vandal just destroys your stuff. He doesn’t want your stuff he doesn’t want you to have it. Or he just takes pleasure in destroying things.
 - d. And a lazy person is worse than a vandal. Why? Because God has given them so much potential, so many opportunities, and so many gifts, and they just throw it all away.
- 4. They refuse to work.
 - a. **Proverbs 21:25** “A slacker’s craving will kill him because his hands refuse to work.”
 - b. They refuse to get a job. You can offer them a job, an easy job, a high paying job, a job with great hours and benefits, but they will turn it down. They don’t want to work.
- 5. They don’t work hard.
 - a. **Proverbs 18:9** “The one who is lazy in his work is brother to a vandal.”
 - b. You might say, “I’m not lazy because I have a job.” Sometimes lazy people will do some work, but they do just enough to get by and no more. They don’t work hard. They may work, but they are lazy in their work.
 - c. What’s the lazy student’s motto? “Cs get degrees.” If is C is the best you can do, then fine. That’s not laziness. Laziness is when you could get As, but you settle for Cs.
- 6. They can’t be helped.
 - a. **Proverbs 19:24** The slacker buries his hand in the bowl; he doesn’t even bring it back to his mouth!

- b. The picture here is of someone who has been given food, but they are too lazy to feed themselves.
 - c. In other words, you can't help a lazy person out of poverty because they aren't willing to help themselves. You can give them a job, and they'll lose it; they won't show up, or they'll be so worthless that they'll get fired. You can give them a house or a car, but they won't take care of it, and it will quickly deteriorate and turn to ruin. No matter what you do to help them they will stay poor because their problem is not a lack of opportunity, it's not their environment, it's not their circumstances, it's not the economy, it's laziness. Until they change, they will stay poor.
- 7. They look for short-cuts.
 - a. **Proverbs 21:5** "Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty."
 - b. What's the opposite of hard work? Hasty shortcuts.
 - c. Instead of getting a normal job and working hard, lazy people look for short-cuts – gambling, the lottery, stealing, cheating, get-rich-quick schemes, and work-from-home gimmicks.
 - d. They often jump from one business venture to the next, never sticking with anything for very long because they are looking for the overnight success that will make them rich with minimal time and effort.
- 8. They are full of excuses.
 - a. **Proverbs 22:13** The slacker says, "There's a lion outside! I'll be killed in the public square!"
 - b. The lazy person is full of excuses for not working. They don't feel good. They are not strong enough. They are not healthy enough. It's too hot outside. It's too cold outside. They don't have the right equipment. They don't have the right opportunities.

9. They are too arrogant to take advice.
 - a. **Proverbs 26:16** "In his eyes, a slacker is wiser than seven who can answer sensibly."
 - b. This is a reason you can't help a lazy person. Laziness and pride go hand in hand. You can try to talk to a lazy person, you can try to educate them, you can try to warn them, you can try to give them advice, but they won't listen because they already know it all.
10. They mooch off others.
 - a. If lazy people don't work, how do they survive? They mooch off others – family, friends, church, government, etc. They could be working, but they would rather mooch.
 - b. The New Testament had a problem with this. The churches were taught to support the needy among them. But some lazy people took advantage of this generosity and decided to live on charity rather than work to provide for themselves.
 - c. The Bible condemns this mooching mentality.
 - d. **2 Thessalonians 3:6-9** 6 Now we command you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from every brother or sister who is idle and does not live according to the tradition received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you should imitate us: We were not idle among you; 8 we did not eat anyone's food free of charge; instead, we labored and toiled, working night and day, so that we would not be a burden to any of you.
 - e. Instead of mooching, you should work hard to provide for yourself, and hopefully, have enough left over to share with those who can't work.
- vii. The Bible has several warnings for the lazy.
 1. It leads to poverty (Pr 10:4).
 2. It leads to disgrace / loss of respect and reputation (Pr 10:5).

- 3. It leads to hardship (Pr 15:19).
- 4. It leads to unemployment (Pr 10:26).
- viii. But the worst thing about laziness is that it is not Christlike.
- ix. When you study the example of Christ, you see a man who worked tirelessly. He was always working, always moving, always serving, always helping, always teaching. He worked long days. He woke up early, when it was still dark, so He would have time for prayer (Mk 1:24). One passage says that He and His disciples were so busy that they didn't even have time to eat (Mk 6:31-32). After Jesus fed five thousand people, instead of going home for a nap, he went up on a mountainside to pray (Mt 14:23). Jesus knew that His time was limited, and every second should be used to work for the Lord.
- x. A father was scolding his teenage son for being lazy. "You ought to be ashamed," he said. "When Lincoln was your age, he was busy building rail fences. You won't even do your homework." "Sure," said the boy, "and when Lincoln was your age, he was president of the United States."
- xi. We've all been lazy at one point or another, I'm sure. Nobody is perfect in this area. But to work in a Christlike manner, we need to avoid laziness.

2. Be enthusiastic.

- i. **Romans 12:11** Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent in the Spirit
- ii. The word "fervent" literally means to boil. It was used of water or metals heated so hot that they boiled. So this phrase means you need to boil in your spirit. In other words, you need to bring an attitude of passion and enthusiasm to your work.
- iii. I like the word enthusiasm. It means intensity of feeling; excited interest or eagerness (Wiktionary).
- iv. I think Paul was talking about working with fervency of spirit and enthusiasm in Colossians 3:23.
- v. **Colossians 3:23** "Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people"

- vi. The opposite of enthusiasm is apathy. It is carelessness. It is indifference. It is disinterest. That's not how Christians should approach their work.
- vii. Of all people, Christians should be the most enthusiastic about their work. Why? The Greek word for enthusiasm is *entheos*; it is a combination word. *En* means within, and *theos* means God. Enthusiasm literally means "God in, or God within." Christians are the only people on planet earth who actually have God within us, motivating us, energizing us, comforting us, convicting us. Of all people, Christians should be the most enthusiastic about work and school because we actually do have God within us. Christians should be the hardest working employees; they hardest working students; the hardest working teammates.
- viii. So, what does it look like to be enthusiastic at work? Here are **ten ways to work with enthusiasm**.
 - 1. Show up when you're supposed to.
 - a. Don't be absent when you're supposed to be present. People are depending on you.
 - 2. Be prompt. Be on time.
 - a. If the start time is at 7 am, then be there at 7 am. In fact, be there five minutes early.
 - 3. Do quality work.
 - a. Lazy people do sloppy work. They turn in work that is half-way done. They do just enough to get by; just enough to avoid getting terminated. Enthusiastic workers are the opposite. Go above and beyond. Exceed expectations. Pursue excellence. Do quality work – whether it is sweeping the floor, or painting a wall, or flipping burgers –do the job right. Do the job well.
 - b. **Brian Tracy** "Success in life is in direct proportion to what you do after you do what you are expected to do."
 - 4. Pursue quality even when the boss isn't watching.

- a. **Ephesians 6:6** Don't work only while being watched, as people-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, do God's will from your heart.
- 5. Work with a good attitude.
 - a. **Ephesians 6:7** Serve with a good attitude, as to the Lord and not to people
 - b. Put a smile on your face and avoid complaining and grumbling. Cheerfulness goes a long way.
- 6. Work fast.
 - a. Lazy people are called sloths because they move slow.
 - b. Be enthusiastic and work fast. Put some pep in your step.
 - c. The faster you work, the more energy you will have, and the more you can accomplish.
- 7. Take the initiative.
 - a. Proverbs talks about the ants who work hard even though they don't have someone bossing them around (Pr 6:6-8). That's called initiative.
 - b. If you see something that needs to be done, do it before you are asked to.
- 8. Be an early riser.
 - a. Enthusiastic people are eager to get the day started.
 - b. Throughout history, successful people have been early risers. Jesus started His day when it was still dark (Mk 1:35). The Proverbs 31 woman was an early riser (Pr 31:15). The earlier you rise, the more work can get done in the day.
 - c. **Ben Franklin** "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise."
- 9. Avoid procrastination (Pr 6:8).
 - a. You can't turn in quality work if you wait until the last minute.

- b. **Abraham Lincoln** "The leading rule for the lawyer, as for the man of every other calling, is diligence. Leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today."

10. Master your craft (Pr 22:29).

- a. When it comes to your work, don't settle for average; don't settle for mediocre. Strive to be the best you can be. Whatever your job is, strive to master it.
- ix. How do you bring a spirit of enthusiasm to your work every day? And how do you work with enthusiasm when your work isn't fun? That brings us to the last point.

3. Serve the Lord.

- i. Let's face it. Sometimes we have to do work that is boring, or unpleasant. Sometimes we have to work hard for very little reward. Sometimes we have to work with and for difficult people. How do we resist laziness and work with enthusiasm in those situations?
- ii. **Romans 12:11** Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent in the Spirit; serve the Lord.
- iii. When you do your work (or school work), work for the Lord. Serve the Lord.
- iv. Don't just work to earn a paycheck, or provide for your family, or pay the bills. Don't just study hard to get a degree, or to earn a scholarship, or to get into graduate school. Work for the Lord.
- v. **Colossians 3:23** "Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people"
- vi. In other words, when you work or study, act like God is your boss, your professor, your customer. Work to please Him. Work to glorify Him. Work to honor Him.
- vii. Did you know that work is how God advertises for Himself.
- viii. **Mark Driscoll** "Your work is your witness."
- ix. Another person said, "The purpose of your life at work (or school) is to show how God is at work in your life."
- x. Your effort, your attitude, and your ethics at work show others the difference that Jesus has made in your life. How you work shows others the superiority of Christianity. The way you work

will give Christianity a good name or a bad name. It will attract people to Christianity or push them away. God's plan is that it will win them over.

- xi. In the French Revolution in the 1700s a French officer saw the writing on the wall, so he took all of his wealth and possessions and left them in the care of a Jewish Banker, who did not give him a receipt. During the Revolution, the revolutionaries confiscated all of the possessions of the Jewish banker except for the French officer's wealth, which he had buried in his back yard. After the revolution the banker dug up the treasures, used them to make a profit, and earned back all of his wealth. Then he sought out the French officer and paid him back to the last penny. The officer asked him the reason for his honesty. The Jewish banker said it was because his name was involved. The French officer went out and told all of his friends that he had found an honest banker, and the man prospered. The banker's name was Moses Rothschild. His family became the most famous of all European banking families, dominating the banking industry for over two-hundred years. Moses Rothschild was passionate about his own name; his own reputation. And that's not a bad thing. But as Christians we need to be just as passionate about God's name and His reputation. God wants us to work in a way that will enhance His reputation.
- xii. In Toronto the word got out that many of the car mechanics in town were ripping people off. So a reporter from the Toronto Newspaper removed the spark plug wire from his car, and then took the car in to several mechanics in town. They all wanted to charge him \$400 to put on a spark plug wire. They assumed he didn't know it was a simple fix. This happened over and over again until he found a mechanic named Fred. He opened the hood and listened. He said, "I think I know what's wrong." He reached down and said, "This is all that's wrong; this wire's off." He put it back and didn't charge anything. When the reporter asked him why he didn't charge anything the mechanic said, "I'm a Christian, and I believe that I am supposed to do everything I

do to glorify God. I'm not a preacher or a missionary, but I am a mechanic, so I'm going to do it honestly, and skillfully, and do it to the glory of God." The next day the front page of the Toronto Newspaper had the headline, "Fred. Christian Mechanic. Honest to the Glory of God." None of the preachers in Toronto that Sunday made as big of an impact for Christ as Fred the mechanic.

- xiii. How you work is more important than where you work, or what kind of work you do. The world is looking at you. Be a good advertisement for God. Work for God. Study for God. Serve the Lord.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. As a Christian, your goal is to become like Jesus.
2. Since a huge chunk of your life will be spent at work and school, then you need to learn how to work like Jesus; to imitate Jesus at work.
3. How? Don't be lazy. Be enthusiastic. And serve the Lord.