

## **How To Become A Worthy Laborer** **1 Corinthians 3:5-17**

### **Introduction:**

1. This is Labor Day weekend. This is a holiday set aside to honor the working class in our society. I think that's a great idea!
2. Work is a biblical principle, and the concept of work was instituted by God before Adam and Eve ever fell into sin. There are great benefits and rewards that come to us through laboring (a feeling of worth, money to meet our needs, keeps us busy and out of trouble, etc.).
3. But did you know that the most important work that we will ever do is the labor that we accomplish for God? What a pity that so many people (including believers) spend very little of their time on this earth laboring in God's service.
  - We get so enamored with this life that we forget there is a life to come.
4. In eternity, all of us will stand before God and will give an account for our lives. If we have labored for God in a worthy manner, God says we will receive a reward from His hand. vs. 14
5. So the question is, "How can we be laborers for God who will one day be worthy of a reward?" Our text gives us a clear and concise answer.

### **First, by building our lives on the right foundation**

1. What is the right foundation? (vs. 11) The right foundation is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If we do not possess this, then any labor we do for God is in vain. Look at what Paul says at the end of verse 10 right before this.
2. You cannot build if you don't have a foundation. If you try, everything will eventually crumble.
3. This is where many people get confused. They labor for God, hoping that if they do enough good works they will be accepted by God. But this is absolutely futile. Ephesians 2:8-9
4. When we believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and place our faith and trust in Christ alone, God saves us. We become His children, and we are accepted by God. Now a foundation has been laid in our life.
5. We now labor for God **because** we are saved, **because** we are now God's children, **because** we have a relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ.
  - I don't do things for Deniece to become her husband. I do things for her because I **am** her husband.
6. So without this foundation, our works and labor for God mean absolutely nothing. Matthew 7:22-23

### **Second, by cooperating with our fellow laborers**

1. The Corinthians had a serious problem in their church. People in the church were choosing up sides and trying to pit leaders against each other. vs. 4
2. The apostle Paul rebuked them for their divisive spirit, and reminded them in verses 5-8:
  - We are all laboring for the same cause. We're on the same team.

- We are all laborers together – each has a part, but it is God who gives the increase.
  - God’s plan is for us all to labor together as one. cf. 1:10
3. Do you think the problems that plagued the Corinthian church can happen today? Can believers in the same church become envious and jealous of each other and become adversarial?
  4. People can become very territorial (it’s **my** ministry), and become consumed with who gets more attention and who gets more limelight. Leaders and those doing ministry can become self-absorbed and lack a cooperative spirit with other people in other ministries.
  5. If we develop this kind of attitude, we will not be found worthy laborers, and will not receive rewards from the Lord when we stand before Him.

### **Third, by keeping our motives pure**

1. Look at verses 12-13. There are two different sets of materials we can use to build our lives.
  - Gold, silver, and precious stones
  - Wood, hay, and stubble
2. Which would you rather build with?
3. He uses this analogy because, one day, our labor for God will be put through the fires of judgment.
  - If our works consisted of wood, hay, and stubble, they will be burned up, and we will have nothing. If our works were gold, silver, and precious stones, they will be brought through the fire, and we will receive a reward. vs. 14-15
4. At the end of verse 13, we learn, “...*the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.*”
5. So God will see perfectly what kind of work it is. God observes not only what we do, but He sees into our hearts while we are doing it. He knows what is in our heart, and why we are doing it.
6. If our heart and motives are not pure, no matter what our labor may have been, it is going to burn up. It is a good idea to constantly search your heart and ask yourself, “Why am I doing what I do for God?”
  - “Am I doing it to please the pastor, my spouse, my parents, my youth pastor, other believers, etc.?”
  - “Am I doing it to be noticed and because I like the attention and praise I receive?”
  - “Am I doing it because I like the feeling of power it gives me?”
  - “Am I doing it because nobody else will do it and I feel obligated?”
7. Or, am I doing it out of pure love for my Savior, Jesus Christ?
8. If we are one day to be found worthy of a reward, our motives must be pure.

### **Fourth, by maintaining a holy walk with God**

1. Verses 16-17 are quite instructive for the believer. Our bodies are the temple of God. God’s Spirit dwells inside of us. Therefore, we should keep our bodies holy, morally pure, and clean.

2. What good is it to labor for God if we are living filthy lives? What good it is to serve God on Sunday, but live impure lives during the week?
  - **Illustration:** I have dirt and grime all over my clothes, mud on my shoes, and I come into the house and begin to vacuum the carpet for Deniece.
3. No matter how much we labor for God, if our lives contradict what we say we believe, our service will receive no reward before the Lord.
4. This doesn't mean we are going to live perfect lives. Nobody has ever done that except for Jesus Christ. But it means that we are sincerely endeavoring to live a holy life and making sure that our walk on Monday matches our talk on Sunday.

**In Conclusion:**

1. What an honor to stand before our Lord and Savior and receive a reward! But that won't happen by accident. It will be because of choices we have made and priorities we have established.
2. How about you? Will you receive a reward? Are you laboring for the Savior? Verse 8 sums it up.