



## THE WORK AND THE LIFE

### QUEST LESSON D-9

The Problem: Does God expect everyone to work for Him? Is there a specific plan for the life of every Christian? If so, how do we know the divine plan for our lives? Since the Lord rarely speaks audibly to a person, telling him where to go and what to do, how can we determine what His will might be?

One of the great workers for Christ in the nineteenth century was Dr. T. J. Barnardo. As a young Irish medical student at London Hospital in 1866, he had plenty of opportunity to see the destitution on the streets of London's east end. Barnardo wanted to complete his medical degree and then go to China as a missionary. He succeeded in completing his degree but never went to China. Why?

The east end of London in the 1860s was a shockingly dismal place. It was the London of Charles Dickens, and there were plenty of Oliver Twists and plenty of Mr. Fagins walking the dirty streets and inhabiting the filthy lodging houses. The people were very uneducated, and economic conditions were deplorable. According to a reliable estimate, there were in the vicinity of 30,000 homeless and destitute children under 16 years of age in London in 1876.

Tom Barnardo saw the need and began working as a missionary right there while he was studying medicine. He and other medical students began a night school for the homeless children and youth in an old dilapidated shed in Hope Place Stepney. Then in 1870, with the donations of sympathetic people, he began his first home for destitute boys. At first, he limited the number of boys he took in. But when one little fellow, for whom he did not have room, died of exposure and lack of food, Barnardo put a huge sign in front of his home which read: "No Destitute Child Ever Refused Admission."

At the time of his death, Dr. Barnardo had admitted nearly 60,000 children to his homes and had emigrated more than 20,000 others to Canada. He had given help in some form or another to 250,000 needy children and youth. He had established 35 homes in England, 2 in Canada, and had opened close to 80 centers of different kinds designed to cater for the needs of youth.

Why didn't Tom Barnardo go as a missionary to China? The answer is obvious. He found a mission field right at his front door where the need was enormous, and in which his talents could be most effectively used. He was known as the "father of nobody's children."

But how can we know where we fit in God's great plan? We may not feel called to do full-time work for the church, like the minister or missionary. Does God have a work for us also? How do we find out what it is?

We have the Bible to speak to us as we pray; we have the direct conviction of the Holy Spirit to our hearts; and we have the providential leadings of the Lord, by which He controls and directs the circumstances of our lives. Of course, we have some decisions to make. We must use our minds to accept and interpret God's messages to us. We cannot expect Him to force us into the right kind of service. Our wills are to be involved in choosing that which His Spirit has made known to be His will. Jesus said that His will was to do the will of the One who sent Him (John 4:34). And our will must be to follow the specific plan that Christ has for our individual lives.

What does the Bible have to say about Christian service? We shall turn its sacred pages and discover.

## Objectives

First, we learn that the spirit of service pervades all.

Second, we are reminded that Christ's life was one of tireless, unselfish service.

Third, it becomes very clear that those who are fully surrendered to the Lord want to serve Him by serving their fellow human beings.

Fourth, there are wonderful blessings involved in working for Christ. Some of those blessings are given in the here and now, and some are reserved for the hereafter.

Fifth, every person has his calling. God does not only call preachers and missionaries. He calls every person to a specific task in life, and that task is to be performed in a spirit of Christian love and dedication.

### I. The Spirit Of Service Pervades Heaven

The Bible indicates that heaven is a place of harmony and orderly service. There is no discontent on anyone's part with the task he has been given to perform. And heaven's great concern is to provide soul-saving service for fallen humanity.

#### The Word

1. How can we be sure that God's great concern is to serve and save lost mankind? John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4-5.
2. What constant protection does God provide for His people? 2 Chronicles 16:9; Psalm 34:7; 91:4.
3. What assurance of divine guidance is given to the believer? Psalm 32:8.
4. What work for us is performed by heaven's angels? Hebrews 1:14; Psalm 91:11-12.

Explanation: No greater love could have been manifested by our heavenly Father than His giving Christ to die for our sins. That is a service of infinite value! And God's labor for each human soul, convicting and transforming hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit, is of eternal significance to every one of us. Divine protection and guidance are provided for all those who are committed to Christ. They may suffer, and things may not always go according to their plans, but they have the assurance that nothing can frustrate the will of God for their lives as long as they are surrendered to Him. (See Romans 8:28-39). God overrules the trials, the calamities, illness, and even death, to bring to pass his will to save us and others who come within the sphere of our influence. Heaven's angels are commissioned to minister to mankind. They are the constant protectors and guides of those in whose hearts Christ dwells.

Relevance: The best example of service we have in Scripture comes from the Lord Himself. God wants a universe where His created beings are always happy, willingly using their talents in unselfish ministry for others.

### II. Christ's Life On Earth Was One Of Service

To know Christ is to know the Father. The attitudes and work of Jesus while here on earth perfectly represented those of the Father. Jesus Christ is the supreme Deity, equal with the Father in authority and power (Colossians 2:9). To know One is to know the Other.

#### The Word

5. What was the purpose of Christ's life on earth? Matthew 20:28.
6. How did Jesus' life emphasize that service, not rulership, should be our aim in life? Luke 22:24-27.
7. What example of humble service did Jesus provide? John 13:4-5, 12-17.
8. What did Paul mean when he urged believers to have the mind of Christ? Philippians 2:5-8.

Explanation: Jesus emphasized that He had not come to rule or to be ministered to, but to provide soul-saving service. He adopted the role of a humble servant of God and man. His act of washing the feet of His disciples was a classic illustration of His willingness to serve. His healing and teaching ministry kept ever before the people the love and concern of God for the problems of their everyday lives. When Paul urges us to have the mind of Christ, he is reiterating Christ's instruction that we view ourselves as servants, not as rulers. There is no place in the Christian Church for authoritarian rule. God's people are to stand together, under the direction and leadership of Jesus, without the crippling influence of political power and control. There are many different functions given by God to His people, but each worker is to respect the gift of the other, and to allow him to fulfill his role according to the will of God. (See 1 Corinthians 12).

Relevance: The Lord has a special work for you to do. It may be a humble task that will not bring you a high position or fame, but it is the work that you are best equipped to perform. Your greatest happiness is in following the Lord's plan for your life, fulfilling His purpose in the work that you do. And there is great satisfaction in the role of an unpretentious servant whose one great concern is to bring happiness and blessing to other lives.

### III. Christ's Servants Want To Serve

The service we are asked to render to others is not only to relieve physical and material suffering. That is part of it. But the Lord wants us also to be concerned for people's soul salvation. We are in this world to prepare for the heavenly Kingdom, and a vital part of our work for Christ is leading others to the Savior.

#### The Word

9. What story did Jesus tell to illustrate that loving service for those in need should be a joy to the Christian? Luke 10:30-37.
10. How concerned should we be about the burdens and trials of others? Galatians 6:2, 9-10.
11. What special responsibility is given to all those who love Christ? John 21:15-17; Matthew 28:19-20.
12. How did the Apostle Paul identify with others so that he could win them to Christ? 1 Corinthians 9:18-23.

Explanation: The parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates the care that God has for all mankind, irrespective of race or culture. The despised Samaritan was more Christlike than the members of the chosen race, who imagined that they were especially holy in God's sight. Jesus would have us work for people without prejudice or pride because He died for all. We are to bear one another's burdens and to relieve human need whenever it is possible for us to do so.

Our special work is to lead souls to Christ, gently teaching them that the way of the cross is the way of salvation. Jesus wants us to know His Word so well that we will be able to explain to others "all things" that He has commanded us. In the process, we will need to learn, as Paul did, how to identify with all classes of humanity. To be able to relate to the rich and poor, black and white, educated and uneducated, without any discomfort or air of superiority or inferiority, is a God-given talent. This is the challenge we face in our work for others.

Relevance: Kindness is difficult to resist. Jesus wants others to find Him because of our love and concern for them. We endeavor to help them in a practical way, not just so that they will accept our religious faith, but because we are genuinely concerned about relieving their suffering. But in the process, we will have opportunities to lead them to Jesus. Our work is not just an attempt to relieve social and physical ills, even though that is an important part of our work. Our great burden is to see other souls find the Lord so that they too can enjoy the blessings of forgiveness and spiritual power.

### IV. The Blessings Of Working For Christ

There are wonderful blessings in the here and now and also in the hereafter for the one who willingly takes up the work that Christ lays upon Him.

## The Word

13. When will the Lord give rewards to those who show kindness and mercy to the suffering? Luke 14:12-14.
14. What commendation will Christ give to His faithful servants as He invites them into His eternal Kingdom? Matthew 25:34-40.
15. What special reward is there for the person who leads others to Christ? Daniel 12:3; 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20.
16. What rewards are there in this life for the one who renders faithful service? Mark 10:28-30; Luke 6:38; Isaiah 58:6-11.

Explanation: The privilege of hearing Jesus' commendation when He comes the second time, and of being given a place in His heavenly Kingdom is the reward of faithfulness. Our service is not given primarily because we want the reward, nor do we imagine that we earn heaven by our good works. The point is that the love of Christ in our hearts is the supreme motivation for our efforts on His behalf and for those whom He is endeavoring to save. Works reveal faith. Living faith in Christ always results in gracious service for others (James 2:14-18). And the supreme blessing of seeing them transformed by grace now, and of eventually sharing the eternal Kingdom with them, is a truly thrilling reward.

Not all the blessings of service are given at the end of time. There are many things that the worker for Jesus experiences in his life. Jesus pointed out that He will pour out special blessings both materially and spiritually for the one who gives himself faithfully to the work of the Lord. There is inward joy and unequaled satisfaction in accepting the particular tasks that God gives to us. Isaiah put it inspiringly when he wrote of the blessings of service: "...Then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not" (Isaiah 58:10-11).

Relevance: Christian service is the natural response of the born-again Christian. Because he loves Christ and loves his fellow human beings, he wants to do all he can to bring joy and salvation to those around him. In the home and on the throne he disseminates blessings and happiness. To relieve suffering, to work with the Spirit in saving a soul from sin, this is the work that Jesus has given to every one of us.

### V. Every Person Has His Calling

God gives to every person his or her work in life. Every job well done is a valuable service to God and humanity. Not only are ministers and missionaries called by the Holy Spirit for their special labors, but guidance is provided so that every believing Christian can know that his trade or profession is that which heaven has chosen for him.

## The Word

17. What does the Bible teach in regard to each person working in his own calling? 1 Corinthians 7:20, 24.
18. What instruction are we given in regard to working for a livelihood? 1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.
19. How did Paul support himself while preaching the Gospel? 1 Thessalonians 2:9; Acts 18:3; 20:34.
20. Whatever our particular calling in life, what is the special task given by God to all of us? Acts 1:8; 22:15.

Explanation: Paul urged that every person should do the best work he can in the particular line of work given to him. Dissatisfaction with one's work can lead to social unrest and confusion. The Bible warns us against that. For 30 years, Christ accepted His humble lot as a carpenter in Nazareth. When the Holy Spirit calls a carpenter to do another work and carry on a wider ministry, He will open the door and arrange circumstances so that he can respond.

It is clear from the Bible's teaching on the subject that each person is to work as he is able and not just rely on others for support. We are to "work with our own hands" (1 Thessalonians 4:11), and if anyone won't work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). There can be no doubt that the second coming of the Lord is near, but that provides no one with the excuse to refrain from productive work. While carrying on his preaching in the cities around the Mediterranean

world, the Apostle Paul supported himself financially by working as a tent-maker. He was determined not to be a financial burden to the new converts whom he had won to Christ.

Whatever our trade, profession, or occupation, we are to work as witnesses for Christ. The joy of presenting the Gospel to others is not reserved for preachers. Every believer is called to use all the talents that the Lord has given him to share the heavenly gift with those who do not know Christ. The way we live as we carry on our daily earning work, the kindness we show to our work associates, as well as the way we speak the message whenever the opportunity presents itself are all aspects of being witnesses for Christ.

Relevance: Has your heart thrilled as the Holy Spirit has given you life in Christ? Then you must share that experience with others. "For thou shalt be his witnesses unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard" (Acts 22:15). The Bible stresses over and over again that our willingness to tell others of God's love is a vital part of His program of saving the world from sin. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). With tact born of your relationship with Christ, you can present the message of the Word simply and clearly to those around you. There are many waiting anxiously to discover more of the love of God. Show them, tell them, teach them, and you will have many souls to present to Jesus in that day when He comes to claim his own.

Are you ready to join us in committing yourself to working for the Lord Jesus Christ?

#### Review Questions

1. True or False
  - a. Angels don't have to work.
  - b. Only preachers should give Bible studies.
  - c. Our primary reason for doing Christ's work is not the reward.
  - d. God calls plumbers, nurses, and teachers as well as ministers and missionaries.
2. Discuss: If we are not satisfied with the work we are doing, is it wrong to try to improve our education so that we can do something more satisfying? Does God call a person to a different kind of work at different times of life?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, Chapter 9.