



DISCUSSION STARTER: What was your first job? Did you like or dislike it? Why?

JANUARY DISCUSSION FOCUS: The book of Proverbs is all about learning to live skillfully in the real world – friendships, money, marriage, speech, sex, parenting, and work. Proverbs touches practically on all these subjects. In the end, however, Proverbs reminds us that we need God in order to live skillfully, and it demonstrates to us that there is no area of our lives that God doesn't desire to redeem and restore through Jesus Christ. For the next five weeks we'll seek our Lord Jesus Christ in the book of Proverbs, and we'll ask him to transform our work, our parenting, our use of money, our marriages, and our friendships, and we'll ask him to teach us exactly how to live skillfully in all these areas.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: *Work* is fact of life. That's not a bad thing. God created human beings in his own image to be workers. The problem? Sin makes work hard. On one level, our work always works against us. Creation is cursed because of human sin. Computers crash. Unexpected issues arise. The company decides to go in a different direction after you've already logged countless hours on a particular project. On a far deeper level, we are usually tempted to respond to work in one of two ways – we either avoid work (as slackers) or we sink ourselves so deeply into our work that it becomes our identity and we become idolaters who worship career, success, power, wealth, or the approval of others. In light of these realities, there's no question then that we need God's help if we're to learn how to *work* in a way that honors him.

Read **Proverbs 6:6-11**. Consider the following questions in response:

- Why do ants work so diligently? What can these tiny creatures teach you about God's purpose for you, as one created in his image?
 - When your group is close to finishing this question (sometimes it gets quiet, sometimes your group leader will give a signal that it is time to move on), conclude with this:
 - First, IN ADVANCE think of a person who is diligent in his/her pursuit of unbelievers.
 - Then, ask your group, "Can I share a quick testimony of someone I know who demonstrates or lives out the ant's work ethic?"
 - Share no more than a 3-minute testimony of this person you know. Share how they have been spiritually faithful and obedient to the work of ministry (perhaps in the workplace or in witnessing, etc.). Use their name when talking about them.
 - Describe how has this person's character and motivation is likened to the ant described in Proverbs.
- What can you learn from the sluggard about your own sinful tendency to avoid work?
 - BE HONEST and focus your answer on how you tend to be sluggish and sinful in your work as a seed leader, a faithful witness, and a servant to believers and unbelievers.
 - Talk about a time when you stopped ministering to a person, because the work was hard or time consuming and it was just easier to avoid the mission rather than embrace it.
 - Confess your sin and then share how you will repent, i.e. how you will go back to that person or refresh your commitment to minister to them. Ask your group to check back with you next week and hold you accountable. Be specific using names.
- Laziness can affect every area of your life. As you think about your work (and/or the rest of your life, including the important relationships in your life), where might you need to own up to your sin: "I'm just trying to get by. I'm full of excuses. I don't take any initiative. I never finish anything I start."
 - Gently remind your group that part of our work is to be faithful witnesses of Jesus, not only to our own group, but also to outsiders through service and mission. Ask your group where they need to confess sin for being lazy, full of excuses or for not taking initiative. Get specific.

Covenant as a group to get real about mission and service in 2010. The best way to get started is to schedule a date 4 weeks from now. Over the next two weeks, discuss ways you will serve. There are many ideas, resources and places to serve on the seed website. Or contact your seed coach (not everyone has one yet) and we can visit your group to cast a vision particular to your CG or email mercy@sojournchurch.com for ideas.

- One author defines *work* like this: “Work is any set of tasks to be performed in pursuit of a particular goal.” Why is this a good and helpful definition of work?
 - Remind your group that our ultimate goal should be the same as God’s ultimate goal: to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ (Ephesians 1:10). This applies inside the church and outside to all unbelievers and all things.
- In light of this definition, consider your own work. Whether you’re a stay-at-home mom or a corporate executive, you’re a worker. The question is: “*Why do you do what you do?*” Think about it for moment, and be honest. **What’s your goal?**
 - The Westminster Confession states that the chief end of man (= Goal) is to love God and enjoy him forever. Share your Goal. Not your little goals, but, share your ultimate Goal in life and why you desire to work toward it (i.e. our goal is to 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Luke 10:27).
- Read Colossians 3:23-24. According to the apostle Paul, what *should* be your goal as a worker?
 - Share an example of when you worked hard for the Lord and not for man. What was the outcome? Share how your witness brought glory and honor to God.
 - Remind your group that serving others is a means of serving Christ.
- Think about your work again for a moment. How might it benefit you practically to begin to think about your work this way? How might it benefit those around you – whether in your home or your workplace – if you begin think about your work this way?
 - Given that we are to work for the Lord with the Goal of loving God *and* neighbor – share how this would change the way you work toward your relationships with your unbelieving co-workers and neighbors. Be as specific as possible – details count.
- What practical steps can you take this week toward being a more diligent and God-glorifying worker? Write them down.
- How can members of your Community Group encourage you and hold you accountable to follow through, in faith, on these steps? **Specifically ask one other person in your group, someone you trust, to hold you accountable the next time you meet. You can do this during group time in front of everyone or after during prayer time.**

PRAYING THE MISSION FORWARD AS A FAMILY: People in our culture work (or don’t work) for a variety of reasons – financial security, the approval of others, in order to buy stuff. Regardless, Christians are to engage in work for radically different reasons – *Is the glory of God your aim in your work? Is the good of others your aim, or are you simply concerned about your own well-being.* Confess before the Lord the various ways you have not lived skillfully in regard to your work, and ask him to grant you a new perspective on your work this week so that you begin to do your work differently.