

Employed By God

"Do you consider yourself as part of the workforce?" "Do you see yourself as retired from the work force?" These were two of the questions put to me on Tuesday night as I sat in the 'hot seat' while five other men asked me any personal question they liked.

How do we define work? When we see a road works sign saying, "Men at work" and all you see is people standing around seemingly doing nothing, it makes you wonder what is meant by 'work.' Should the exchange of money determine what is and what is not work? Our society says, "Yes." Centrelink says, "Yes." This is a very narrow concept of work and can be quite demeaning for those not earning an income as a result of the tasks they undertake.

The Oxford Concise Dictionary defines work as: (1) the expenditure of energy, striving, application of effort or exertion to a purpose. (2) Task to be undertaken. To have one's work cut out is to have a difficult job, it is to have as much as one can do. (3) The thing done by work, an achievement, thing made; book or piece of literary or musical composition. (4) Workmanship refers to a person's relative skill in undertaking a task. Note: none of these uses of the word 'work' refers to a monetary reward for an activity.

The first use of the word 'work' in the Bible refers to God having completed and resting from the task of creating the heavens and the earth (Genesis 2:2). Jesus explains: "My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work" (John 4:34). Jesus goes on to advise us, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life . . ." (John 6:27). At the end of his life, Jesus could say, "I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do" (John 17:4).

Is being full time in Christian ministry an actual job? Am I actually working? John the Baptist's preaching is described as 'work' (Acts 13:41). The Holy Spirit said to the church leadership at Antioch, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul (Paul), for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2). Paul describes his life's activity and those of his colleagues as 'work for God' and the 'work of the Lord' (Romans 15:17; 1 Corinthians 16:10).

Yes, I am very much a participant in the work force! God says to each of us: "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not a waste of time" 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Are you actually working for God?