

WISDOM UNIVERSITY

PROVERBS 11:1-8

WORK THAT PLEASURES GOD



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

"I'm just a plumber. I'm just a painter. I'm just a home-maker. I'm just a secretary." I've lost count of the number of times I've heard Christians say this over the years. When I've asked "Why do you say 'just'?" they usually say something like, "Well I'm not in Christian work. I'm not a pastor or a missionary. I don't work for the church or a Christian organization."

It's not that you're unhappy in what you do. You like what you do. You feel useful. You like serving people in your home, in your workplace, or in your community. It's work, but you don't see it as Christian work. Christian work is leading Bible studies, helping the poor, evangelizing, teaching your kids about the Lord. That's Christian work. That's the kind of work God notices and God praises. But that's not your work or your workplace. If only I could do Christian work, then I would have a higher purpose, and then I'd receive higher praise.

In Proverbs 11:1, Solomon helps every Christian to see a much higher point in their work and receive a much higher praise for their work. Let's use this passage to reconnect our work with worship and our labor with the Lord. In doing so, we'll discover a higher purpose in our work and higher praise for our work. The **purpose** is **God tests us in our daily work**. The **praise** is **God delights in our daily work**. That will get you out of bed in the morning won't it?

CONTEXT

- **Preparation for Wisdom** (Proverbs 1:1-7)
 - **Principles of Wisdom** (Proverbs 1:8-9:18)
 - **Practice of Wisdom** (Proverbs 10:1-31-31)
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- Chapter 10: 1-16 Leaving a Legacy that Lasts (an honest life)
 - Chapter 10:17-32 Life-Work Balance
 - Chapter 11: 1-8 An Honest Day's Work

We decided not to study every Proverb in a verse-by-verse commentary. We also decided not to study single Proverbs detached from their context. Instead we decided to zoom in on single Proverbs but also step back to show how they connect with and summarize the surrounding Proverbs.



1. GOD TESTS US IN OUR DAILY WORK

A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight (1)

The Picture

What's a false balance? If you walked through the markets of Solomon's time, you would see that most merchants had a set of scales at their stall. Somebody would come along and say, "I'd like three stones of grain please." The grain merchant would then open his pouch pick out a stone with a '3' etched on it, put that on one side of the scale, and then pour out grain on the other side until the scales balanced. "There you go, "Three stones of grain. That will be thirty shekels please."

When the customer left, the grain merchant smiled to himself because when he made his weight bag, he deliberately chose lighter stones than he should have, so that he would get paid for three stones of grain but was only giving two stones of grain.

As he went home, the grain merchant stopped off at the salt stall and asked the salt merchant for a stone of salt. The grain merchant insisted he use his own weights for the scales, and put a stone on one side and the salt merchant filled up the other side until the scales balanced. The salt merchant thought he had poured out more salt than usual, but the scale had balanced, so it must be right. As the grain merchant walked away, he had an evil smile on his face because although his stone had a '1' etched on it, it was actually heavier than that, meaning that he got more than he paid for.

It was a common practice in these days for merchants to have a bag of lighter stones for selling, and heavier stones for buying, which meant they got richer and others got poorer. We can find repeated references to this corrupt practice in the Bible (Deut. 25:13; Proverbs 16:11; 20:10, 23; Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16; Micah 6:10-11; Hos 12:7; Amos 8:5). Interestingly, after the Reformation, this verse was inscribed across the entrances of some markets in European cities

Solomon was referring to this practice when he said, "Dishonest scales are an abomination to the Lord but a just weight is his delight." In other words, "God is walking through the dusty markets watching and weighing the weighers, noting honesty and dishonesty, delighting in the honest but denouncing the dishonest.

The Principle

We can extract a timeless principle here to apply in our own time. The timeless principle is that **God is in our workplace, watching and weighing our actions, noting honesty and dishonesty, delighting in the honest but denouncing the dishonest.**



The Principle

Let's apply the first part of that timeless principle: **God is in our workplace, watching and weighing our actions, noting honesty and dishonesty.** This gives our work a purpose higher than making money or getting promotion.

APPLICATION

God is in our workplace: He's in our garage, our office, our factory, our store, our home office, our online business, our home, our building site.

God is watching and weighing our actions: Work is the place we spend most of our time and therefore God is extremely interested in what we do there. It's the main place that God tests our morals, our values, our beliefs. He weighs our actions, decisions, transactions, and deals.

God is noting honesty and dishonesty: We don't use false weights today but we can still behave falsely or truthfully in our everyday dealings. We can charge too much for something, sell something that isn't worth the money, drive too hard a bargain, fail to pay our bills, engage in false advertising, cheat in quantity or quality, take advantage of people, steal from our employer, make false expense claims, spend time on personal matters while at work, and so on. God sees it all and notes it all. God doesn't test our work by our profits but by our purity.

GOD TESTS OUR WORK BY OUR MORALS
NOT BY OUR MONEY.



How does God respond to what he sees?



2. GOD DELIGHTS IN OUR DAILY WORK

A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight (1)

The Picture

Although the grain merchant can't see God, Solomon tells us how God is responding to his business dealings. "Dishonest scales are an abomination to the Lord but a just weight is his delight." As God walks from stall to stall, when he sees an honest and fair transaction, he is delighted. When he sees dishonest and corrupt dealings he abominates it.

The Principle

We already established the principle: God delights in the honest but denounces the dishonest. These are really strong words. Delight is the same word God uses of his pleasure in his Son (Isa. 42:1), and in those who pray to him and fear him (Ps. 147:11). It's a '10' on the scale of pleasure and happiness. Abomination is a '10' on the scale of anger, disgust, repudiation.

The Practice

What's the point? And where's the praise? Here's the highest purpose (for God) and the highest praise (from God).

APPLICATION

This changes your work without changing your work. You don't need to do extraordinary acts of Christian service, or endure extraordinary suffering for Christ's sake. An honest day's work delights the Lord. God is waiting to rejoice in you as you raise your kids, teach students, plumb pipes, wire houses, plant vegetables, fix cars, etc. Your job might look mundane, boring, pointless to some, but not to you.

Faith is needed to believe this. God is not going to whisper this in your ear as you work. No, you have to exercise faith. Can I suggest that at the end of an honest day's work, you just stop and say, "God is delighted in me!" So banish forever the idea that the only worthwhile work is Christian work. Here is high praise! No one else may praise you but God does.

We also need to take the warning that is twinned with the comfort here. You may commend yourself for how clever you are in your deceit. Others may commend you. Your boss may even commend you. But God condemns you. So, you always lose more than you gain. God is outraged at dishonesty. In vv. 2-8 God continues to praise the upright and condemn the corrupt and proud. There's security in honesty and danger in dishonesty.

We will all be weighed in the balances one day (Prov. 16:2; Dan. 5:27). These will be perfect divine balances. What will you put in them? On one side is God's weighty law. What will you put on the other side? You are dealing with someone who cannot be conned. Place the perfect work of Christ in the balance. He's the only one ever weighed and not found wanting.

HONEST WORK FOR GOD
GETS HEARTY PRAISE FROM GOD.



CONCLUSION



PRAYER: Help me to find purpose and praise in my work by working for your purpose and by receiving your praise.

FURTHER STUDY

Online Articles

- [The Legacy I want to Leave](#) by John Piper
- [Consider Your Legacy](#) by Tim Challies
- [Five Essentials to Leaving a Legacy that Will Outlive You](#)

Books

- [Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work](#) by Tim Keller
- [The Gospel at Work: How the Gospel Gives New Purpose and Meaning to Our Jobs](#)

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you work and for whom do you work?
2. What is a false balance or what are false weights in today's culture?
3. How can you increase a sense of God's presence in your workplace?
4. How can you increase your sense of God's delight in your work?
5. What other related lessons to this are in verses 2-8?
6. How did this verse look in Christ's life on earth? What difference did it make to his carpenter's work and his cross work?

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