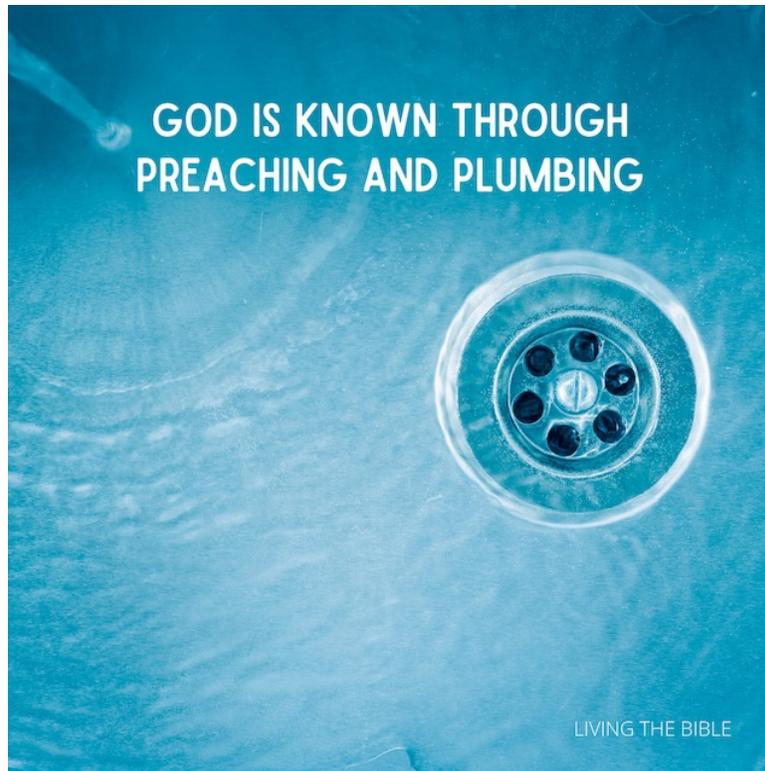


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# THE BEAUTY AND DIGNITY OF MANUAL LABOR

EXODUS 31:1-11



Many people look down on manual labor and the trades today. So-called 'head-work' is elevated and 'hand-work' is devalued. It's then a small step from demeaning manual work to demeaning manual workers. Manual workers often feel they and their work are not valued in our culture.

If our culture doesn't value manual work, it's easy to think that God doesn't value manual work, that such work is not so worthy or useful in God's eyes. But, in Exodus 31:1-11, God helps us to re-assess the dignity, value, and spirituality of manual work, with many positive spiritual consequences.

## LEARNING

### MANUAL LABOR IS THE GIFT OF GOD

God had instructed Moses how to make the Tabernacle. Moses had written it down and drawn up the plans. But what now? They had to actually make it. Moses had been educated in elite Egyptian schools and was equipped to write books and organize a nation. But he didn't have manual skills.

That's when God stepped in and said to Moses. **"See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft...And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you"** (2-6).

God called and equipped Bezalel, no less than he called Moses. God traced all manual skills to his calling, his gifting, and his Spirit. Does that not change the way you view yourself and your work?

MANUAL WORK IS SPIRITUAL WORK

Why does God give manual skills?

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## MANUAL LABOR GLORIFIES GOD

If you're tempted to look down on manual work, remember, God was the first manual laborer. He made Adam from dust, and Eve from a male rib. He made things out of things. Also, the first job God created was gardening. Bezalel is the first person Scripture records as being filled with the Spirit, and it's to help him make stuff. Oh, yes, and remember that the Son of God was a carpenter for most of his life, a job to which he was divinely called and for which he was divinely gifted.

As the vast variety of manual skills are used, we see God's varied skills, and abilities through them. We also see God's massive mind. Verse three says that when God gave his Spirit, he also gave intelligence, knowledge, and craftsmanship. In other words, manual work is knowledge work too.

Manual skills also reveal God's beauty. Although a large part of the Tabernacle's design was about daily practicalities, some of God's design choices were simply about beauty. Moses' preaching and Bezalel's cutting, nailing, and lifting resulted in God being better known and honored.

GOD IS KNOWN THROUGH  
PREACHING AND PLUMBING

LOVING

If God has gifted you with manual skills, it's because he sees a need for you to meet that no one else can meet. If he's given you Bezalel-type gifts, don't try to be a Moses. And if you have Moses-type gifts, encourage and value the Bezalels. The Church and the world both need all of God's gifts.

Thank God for these gifts and by his Spirit put them to work to glorify him today by mirroring his skills, intelligence, beauty, and excellence in all that you do. If we do our God-given work, with God's help, and for God's glory, we are worshipping him in, through, and with our work.

LIVING

Lift up manual work to lift up God in your mind, heart, and daily work.

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