



THE WORK AND THE LIFE

Course 5, *Real Christian Living*, Lesson 9

The Problem: *Discovering God's Plan for Our Lives*. Does God expect everyone to work for Him? Is there a specific plan for every Christian's life? If so, how do we discern His will? Since the Lord rarely speaks audibly, directing us in clear-cut commands, how do we determine the path He wants us to follow?

One of the great workers for Christ in the nineteenth century was Dr. T. J. Barnardo, a young Irish medical student in London. While pursuing his degree in 1866, Barnardo planned to go to China as a missionary once his studies were complete. But something changed his course forever. London's East End in the 1860s was a place of deep poverty and despair—the London described in the works of Charles Dickens, filled with struggling youth, crime, and filth. Thousands of homeless and destitute children wandered the streets, with little hope for survival. As Barnardo witnessed this suffering firsthand, he felt called to act. While still studying medicine, he and other students began a night school for homeless children, using a run-down shed in Stepney. In 1870, with the support of generous donors, he opened his first home for destitute boys.

At first, he set a limit on the number of boys he could take in—until a heartbreaking event changed his mind. One little boy, turned away due to lack of space, died of exposure and starvation. In response, Barnardo placed a large sign in front of his home: "No Destitute Child Ever Refused Admission." By the time of his death, Barnardo's lifework had helped over 250,000 children. He had founded 35 homes in England and 2 in Canada, along with nearly 80 centers dedicated to youth welfare. Instead of going to China, Barnardo realized that his mission field was right in front of him—where the need was most urgent, and his talents were best used. Known as the "father of nobody's children", he left a lasting impact on generations of impoverished youth.

Where do we fit in God's plan? Not everyone is called to full-time ministry, serving as pastors or missionaries. But does that mean God has no work for us to do? Absolutely not! Every believer has a specific place in His plan—the challenge is discovering where we fit.

We may expect God to speak audibly or give direct signs, but instead, He often leads through His Word, prayer, the Holy Spirit's conviction, and providential circumstances. Our choices matter—He will not force us into a life of service. Instead, He invites us to actively seek His will, aligning our desires with His purpose (John 4:34).

As we explore Christian service, let's turn to the Bible and discover what God calls us to do.

Objectives:

- I. We recognize that the spirit of service pervades heaven itself, as angels and heavenly beings are fully devoted to God's will and minister to humanity.
- II. We reflect on Christ's tireless, unselfish service as the ultimate example for us to follow.
- III. We understand how full surrender to the Lord inspires a deep desire to serve Him through serving others.
- IV. We embrace the blessings of working for Christ—some experienced in this life, others awaiting us in eternity.
- V. We affirm that God calls every believer to a unique purpose, not just pastors and missionaries, but all who seek to serve in love and dedication.

I. THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE PERVADES HEAVEN

Heaven is a place of perfect harmony and dedicated service. Every being joyfully fulfills their God-given role, with no discontent or resistance. At the heart of heaven's mission is a profound commitment to the salvation of humanity—offering divine assistance and guidance to lead souls toward redemption.

The Word:

1. How do we know that God's greatest 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; Psalm 91:4*
3. What assurance of divine guidance is given to the believer? *Psalm 32:8*
4. How do heaven's angels serve and assist us? *Hebrews 1:14; Psalm 91:11-12*

Explanation: No love could be greater or more selfless than the love our heavenly Father displayed in giving Christ to die for our sins—an act of infinite value beyond human comprehension. But God's work did not end at the cross. His labor for each soul continues daily, as He convicts, transforms, and renews hearts and minds through the power of the Holy Spirit. For those committed to Christ, divine protection and guidance are assured. Though suffering and setbacks may come, God's sovereign will cannot be frustrated. Nothing—not trials, calamities, illness, or even death—can hinder His purpose to save and restore both us and those within our sphere of influence (Romans 8:28-39).

Furthermore, heaven's angels are commissioned as ministering spirits, constantly watching over and guiding those in whose hearts Christ dwells. Their presence offers comfort, protection, and divine assistance, reinforcing the truth that we are never alone in the journey of faith.

Relevance: The greatest example of service in Scripture comes from God Himself. His desire is for a universe filled with joy—where His created beings willingly and selflessly use their talents to bless and uplift others. When we embrace this calling, we reflect the heart of our Creator, living out the very purpose for which we were designed.

II. CHRIST'S LIFE ON EARTH WAS ONE OF TIRELESS, UNSELFISH SERVICE

To know Christ is to know the Father, for Jesus perfectly embodied His character, love, and purpose. His attitudes, actions, and work on earth were a complete reflection of the Father's will. As the supreme Deity, Christ is fully equal with the Father in authority and power (Colossians 2:9). To know One is to know the Other, for they are united in divine nature, truth, and mission.

The Word:

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

Explanation: Jesus made it clear that His mission was not to rule, nor to be served, but to offer soul-saving service. He fully embraced the role of a humble servant, demonstrating His willingness to serve both God and humanity. One of the most powerful illustrations of this was when He washed His disciples' feet, showing that true leadership is rooted in humility and love.

His ministry of healing and teaching constantly reflected God's deep concern for the struggles of everyday life. When Paul urges believers to have the mind of Christ, he is echoing this profound lesson—we are called to serve, not to seek power. In the Christian Church, authoritarian rule has no place. Instead, God's people stand together, under Christ's leadership, free from the burdens of political control.

God assigns unique functions to His people (1 Corinthians 12), yet every worker is meant to respect the gifts of others, allowing them to fulfill their God-given calling without interference. When we embrace Christ's mindset, we shift from self-seeking to self-giving, reflecting His heart in all we do.

Relevance: God has a specific work for you—one that may not bring position or fame, but is perfectly suited to your gifts. True fulfillment is found not in earthly recognition, but in obedience to His calling. When you follow His plan, you will experience deep satisfaction, knowing that your service is bringing joy and blessing to others. A life dedicated to humble, unselfish ministry mirrors the very heart of Christ—transforming both your own life and those you serve.

III. A HEART SURRENDERED TO CHRIST DESIRES TO SERVE

The service God calls us to extends beyond meeting physical and material needs—it includes a far greater mission. While relieving suffering is important, the Lord also desires us to care for the eternal salvation of others. Our time in this world is a preparation for the heavenly Kingdom, and one of the most vital aspects of our work for Christ is guiding souls to the Savior.

The Word:

5. 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
6. How concerned should we be about the burdens and trials of others? Galatians 6:2, 9-10
7. What special responsibility is given to all those who love Christ? John 21:15-17; Matthew 28:19-20
8. 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 beautifully illustrates God's unwavering care for all people, regardless of race or background. In this story, the despised Samaritan demonstrated greater Christlike compassion than the religious leaders who prided themselves on their supposed holiness. Through this example, Jesus teaches us to serve others without bias or pride, for His sacrifice was made for everyone. As followers of Christ, we are called to bear one another's burdens, offering relief whenever possible—not only through physical care but through spiritual guidance as well.

Our most profound calling is to lead others to Jesus, gently guiding them toward the way of the cross, which alone leads to salvation. Christ desires us to know His Word intimately, so we can effectively share His teachings and help others discover His truth. Like Paul, we must learn to connect with all people—whether rich or poor, educated or uneducated, from every culture and background. To serve without superiority or inferiority is a God-given ability—one we must develop as we work to uplift and support others.

Relevance: Kindness has an undeniable power. People are often drawn to Christ not through arguments, but through the genuine love and concern shown by His followers. When we serve without hidden motives, simply desiring to relieve suffering, we open doors for spiritual transformation. While addressing social and physical needs is an essential part of Christian service, our deepest burden must be to guide others into a relationship with Christ, so they too may experience the joy of forgiveness and the strength of His Spirit.

IV. THE BLESSINGS OF WORKING FOR CHRIST

There are wonderful blessings both in this life and in eternity for those who willingly embrace the work that Christ entrusts to them.

The Word:

9. When will the Lord honor those who show kindness and mercy to the suffering? Luke 14:12-14
10. What commendation will Christ give to His faithful servants as He invites them into His eternal Kingdom? Matthew 25:34-40
11. What special honor is there for the person who leads others to Christ? Daniel 12:3; 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20
12. What blessings does God provide in this life for those who serve Him faithfully? Mark 10:28-30; Luke 6:38; Isaiah 58:6-11

Explanation: One of the greatest privileges we will ever know is hearing Jesus' words of commendation when He returns, and being welcomed into His eternal Kingdom—the reward of a life lived in faithfulness. Yet, we do not serve for the sake of reward, nor do we believe that our good works earn our place in heaven. Instead, our service is a natural outpouring of the love of Christ within us, compelling us to work on His behalf and for the salvation of those He seeks to redeem. True faith manifests in action—it is more than belief; it is living, transformative, always producing gracious service toward others (James 2:14-18). One of the greatest blessings of faithful service is seeing hearts changed by grace now, knowing that one day we will share eternity together with those we helped lead to Christ.

God's blessings in Christian service are not reserved solely for the future. Jesus promised material and spiritual favor for those who dedicate themselves faithfully to His work. The joy and fulfillment found in accepting the tasks He assigns are incomparable.

Relevance: Christian service is not a duty—it is a response. When a born-again believer is filled with love for Christ and love for others, they naturally desire to bring joy and salvation to those around them. Whether in daily interactions, family life, or leadership roles, their influence spreads blessings. To relieve suffering, to partner with the Spirit in leading others to salvation—this is the work Christ has entrusted to every believer. It is a calling that transforms lives, both now and for eternity.

V. GOD CALLS EVERY BELIEVER TO A UNIQUE PURPOSE

God assigns every individual a unique calling in life, and every task performed with excellence serves both Him and humanity. Ministers and missionaries are called by the Holy Spirit for their sacred work, but God also provides guidance to every believer, affirming that their trade or profession is part of His divine plan. Whether serving in ministry or fulfilling responsibilities in other fields, every role is an opportunity to glorify Him through faithful service.

The Word:

13. What does the Bible teach about fulfilling one's God-given calling in life? 1 Corinthians 7:20, 24
14. What instruction are we given in regard to working for a livelihood? 1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12
15. How did Paul support himself while preaching the Gospel? 1 Thessalonians 2:9; Acts 18:3; 20:34
16. 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 believers to wholeheartedly embrace the work assigned to them, recognizing that dissatisfaction can lead to instability and unrest. The Bible cautions against such discontent, encouraging individuals to honor their responsibilities with diligence and purpose. For 30 years, Christ humbly accepted His role as a carpenter in Nazareth, demonstrating that every occupation, no matter how simple, has value in God's plan. When the Holy Spirit calls someone

to step into a new ministry, He will open the necessary doors and guide their path—just as He has done throughout history.

The Bible is clear: each person is to labor as they are able, rather than depend solely on others for support. Although the Lord's return is near, that does not exempt believers from responsible and productive work. Scripture emphasizes this principle:

- *"Work with your own hands"* 1 Thessalonians 4:11.
- *"If anyone will not work, neither shall they eat"* 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

Paul himself, while tirelessly preaching across the Mediterranean, supported himself as a tentmaker, refusing to be a financial burden on the new converts he disciplined.

Whatever our trade, profession, or occupation, we are called to be witnesses for Christ. Sharing the Gospel is not reserved for ministers alone—every believer has the opportunity and responsibility to reflect Christ's love in their daily interactions. We witness through:

- The way we work with integrity.
- The kindness we show our colleagues.
- The words we speak when opportunities arise.

By fulfilling our God-given roles, we spread His light both in word and in action, making every task an opportunity to glorify Him.

Relevance: Has your heart been filled with joy as the Holy Spirit has brought new life in Christ? If so, that experience is too powerful to keep to yourself—you must share it with others! *for you will be his witness to all the world of what you have seen and heard" Acts 22:15.* The Bible repeatedly emphasizes that our willingness to share God's love is a vital part of His plan to redeem the world. *"because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" Romans 10:9.*

With wisdom and grace, nurtured by your relationship with Christ, you can present His message clearly and with compassion to those around you. Many are longing to understand God's love—waiting for someone to show them, tell them, and teach them. When Christ returns to claim His own, what joy it will be to present before Him the souls you have helped lead to salvation!

Will you commit yourself to sharing His love and working for the Lord Jesus Christ?

Review Questions

1. True or False
 - a. Angels don't have to work.
 - b. Only ministers 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: Could seeking further education or training to pursue more fulfilling work be part of God's plan for personal growth? How does God guide individuals to different roles at various stages of life, and what factors help us discern His calling in these transitions?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, [Steps to Christ](#), Chapter 9.