**Study Series: A Long Obedience in the Same Direction**

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**Lesson Title: “Work” (pp. 6-14)**

September 6, 2020 Session 01

**The main point of this lesson is:** Work is neither a master to be served nor a villain to be avoided.

**Focus on this goal:** To help adults do their work to the glory of God.

**Key Bible Passage:** Psalm 127

**To the Leader:** The Latin phrase referenced in Step 4 is quoted by Beth Moore on page 86 of the Bible study “Stepping Up.” She pulled it from James M. Boice. Psalms, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 1117.

**Before the Session**

**Display** a poster on which you have written: Foot, Bicycle, Automobile, Airplane, Star Trek Transporter. (Step 1)

During the Session

**Step 1. Introduction / Discussion Starter**

**Draw attention** to the poster and **invite adults** to indicate which modes of transportation they have used.

**Ask** which mode they would prefer if they needed to get from Alaska to Florida.

**Ask:**

1. Which mode of transportation best illustrates the discipleship journey?
2. Which mode of transportation best illustrates how people want to approach discipleship?

**Declare** people want everything in a hurry, including holiness.

**State:** When it comes to becoming more like Jesus, there is no instant transportation or transformation. Discipleship is a long obedience in the same direction.

**Ask adults** if they listen to music when they’re on a long trip and why.

**Declare** God has given His people music to sustain us on our lifelong faith-journey.

**Use** the Introduction (p. 5) to briefly **explain** the Songs of Ascents.

**Note** this study will examine the last eight of those psalms.

**Point out** the title for Session 1 (p. 6).

**Ask:** Should the concept of work be included in a study about Christian discipleship? Why?

**Read** the Day One margin/pull quote (p. 7).

**Explain** the writer used Psalm 127 to examine the right and wrong way to work.

**Invite a volunteer to read** The Message version of Psalm 127 printed in Day One (p. 6).

**Step 2. Day One – “If GOD Doesn’t Build the House”**

**Declare** the Tower of Babel illustrates the wrong way to work.

**Discuss** Day One, activity 1 (p. 7).

**Request adults underline** the Day One statement (p. 7) beginning “One of the tasks ….”

**Assert** taking Revelation 2:5 out of context might lead to thinking one must work to earn salvation.

**Request a volunteer read** Revelation 2:1-5.

**Determine** the problem of the church at Ephesus.

**Declare:** The problem isn’t the working; it’s the motive behind the working. When we “work like the devil,” we labor to make a name for ourselves. When our efforts are motivated by our love for Christ, we do our work, whatever it is, to the glory of God.

**Step 3. Day Two – Babel or Buddhist**

**Use** Day Two remarks (p. 9) **to compare** Western culture to Babel.

**Discuss** Day Two, activity 1 (p. 8).

**Examine** why we must heed that warning if we are going to avoid the sin of Babel.

**State** some people go the opposite extreme of Babel and approach work with an Eastern culture attitude (p. 9).

**Explore** how the Buddha attitude can be reflected by believers.

**Briefly explain** the situation in Thessalonica. (**If time permits**, **read and discuss** 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13.)

**Invite a volunteer to read** the last paragraph of Day Two (p. 9).

**Step 4. Day Three – In the Beginning God Worked**

**Guide the group** to determine the reality about work implied in Psalm 127:1.

**Read** the Day Three paragraph (p. 10) beginning “We live in a universe ….”

**Discuss** Day Three, activity 1 (p. 10).

**Explore** how God’s gift of work becomes a curse in many believers’ lives.

**Request adults identify** from Day Three (p. 11) the Latin phrase and its meaning believers must guard against.

**State** another Latin phrase Christians need to remember is Nisi Dominus Frustra, taken from the first phrase of Psalm 127, which means “Without the Lord, frustration.”

**Ask:** How have you discovered that trying to do anything without the Lord leads to anxiety or frustration?

**Discuss** Day Three, activity 2 (p. 11).

**Step 5. Day Four – Effortless Work, Part 1**

**Request a volunteer read** Psalm 127:3-5.

**Ask:** Was Solomon still talking about work or transitioning to talk about children? Explain your reasoning.

**Add to the discussion** with remarks from the second paragraph of Day Four (p. 12).

**Examine** how Jesus produced sons and daughters by working with the Father.

**Call for responses** to Day Four, activity 1 (p. 12).

**Invite a volunteer to read** the Day Four margin/pull quote (p. 12).

**Urge adults** to silently reflect on Day Four, activity 2 (p. 13).

**Step 6. Day Five – Effortless Work, Part 2**

**Stress** the author declared we make a difference in this life, not by working our fingers to the bone, but by creating relationships.

**Point out** the title for Day Five is “Effortless Work.”

**Ask:** Would you say building relationships is effortless work? Explain.

**Discuss** Day Five, activity 1 (p. 14).

**Inquire:**

1. How can we remain in Jesus?
2. How can remaining in Jesus empower us to develop relationships?

**Explore** specific ways adults can build relationships in their daily work.

**Read** the last paragraph of Day Five (p. 14).

**Discuss** Day Five, activity 2 (p. 14).

**Step 7. Live Out the Lesson**

**Invite volunteers to share** what they have learned from Psalm 127 about wrong and right ways to work.

**Ask:** What have you gained from Psalm 127 that can sustain you as you work with God in a long walk of obedience?

**Close in prayer**, asking God to help participants have a right attitude and approach to work.