



# THE DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS

ABAD

## The Importance of Work

The Hebrew root word "abad" (ah-bad) עָבַד is a verb that can be translated in many ways, including "work". It is used over 289 times in the Old Testament. This word helps to connect an important concept for modern people: our work is more than a menial task to be performed. It can be a way in which we serve and worship God.

In Genesis 2:15, we see the first usage of this word in Scripture: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." This usage of the word denotes labor or cultivation. Adam was designed by God to do something in the Garden of Eden, and it wasn't just about standing around or relaxing. Adam was acting as a good steward of God's creation when he fulfilled his role in creation, and he brought honor and glory to God by doing so.

The fact that Adam was given a job before he was given a wife is also interesting. It shows that work is an important part of God's plan for our lives, even in a perfect world. How does this view challenge your assumptions? What is your view of work?

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## Abad as Worship

Although the root word abad is first used in Scripture to signify work, it is also used in another way to refer to worship. For example, in Exodus 8:1, God instructs Moses to say to Pharaoh, "Let my people go, so that they may worship (abad) me." This usage of the word connects the act of work and worship.

In the very beginning, Adam's ability to live out his function in God's perfect creation was an act of worship to God. His obedient life, unmarked by sin, honored and gave glory to God. For the nation of Israel, their ability to live and function as a nation set apart, instructed in the Law of God, and obeying his commands also gave God honor and glory. This was an active role of worship.

In other words, our work can be a form of worship when we do it for God's glory and according to his will. When we work with excellence, integrity, and compassion, seeking obedience and casting off sin by living in the redemptive power of the Gospel, we are reflecting the character of God. We are also showing the world that we are his people and that He is our Lord.

## Abad as Service

A third way that the root word abad is used is as service. Joshua boldly declares in the end of the Book of Joshua, "Now fear the Lord and serve (abad) him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve (abad) the Lord. But if serving (abad) the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve (abad), whether the gods your ancestors served (abad) beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve (abad) the Lord." Joshua 24:14-15

# “But as for me and my household, we will serve (abad) the Lord.”

## New Testament Parallels

The Hebrew root word abad, meaning “to work,” “to serve,” or “to worship,” is only used in the Old Testament. However, the New Testament contains many parallels. For example, Paul writes in Colossians 3:23-24:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

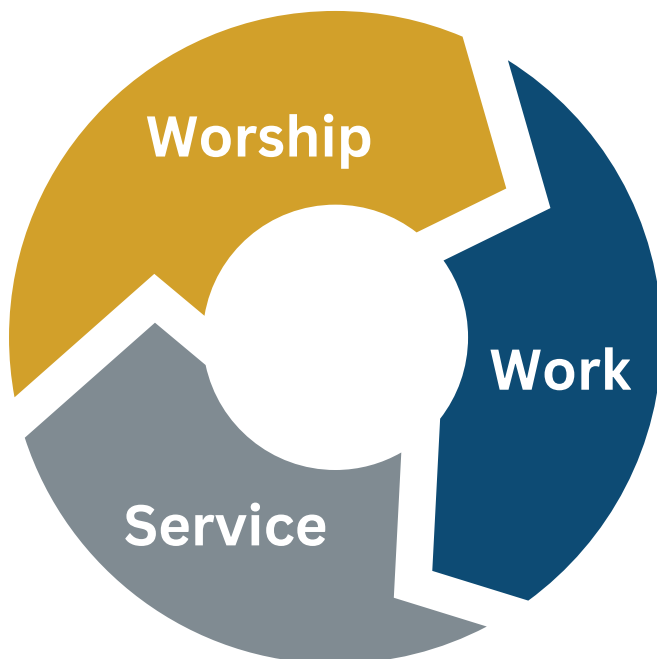
These verses instruct servants to remember that their work and service are connected to God. Paul also emphasizes that our work should be done “with all your heart.” This connection transcends the individual relationship between a master and servant or a boss and employee; it extends to our relationship with God.

Have you ever viewed your work as an opportunity to serve God? How might that way of thinking change your work experience?

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In Paul's letter to the Romans, we see an additional piece of context between what we do with our bodies and our worship of God. In Romans 12:1-2, he says: Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Once again we see this connection between work, service, and worship. It should be pointed out that this classification of work extends beyond vocational work and can be applied to all work that is performed and which can be viewed as service and worship to God.