

## Dear Bob,

I'm 16 years old. I have been a Christian since I was 14. Everyone keeps telling me "do this" and "don't do that." I can hardly keep track of it all. I'm supposed to read my Bible, obey God, witness — and 10,000 other things! What's really the purpose of my Christian life? — Steve

## Dear Steve,

The most basic question of the Christian life is one that many people can't answer. We may know all the facts about Jonah, David and Goliath, and Paul. But we don't seem to come up with the right answer for the most important question of all.

## What is the ultimate purpose of my Christian life?

In Romans 8:29, we get a glimpse of the answer to this question: *For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son ...*

In simple terms, God intends for you and me to be like His Son, Jesus Christ. As a Christian teen, you can become more and more like Jesus Christ in everything you do. Striving to be like Him doesn't make you any less of a person. In fact — it makes you more of who you were meant to be!

Think about each person you spend time with at school, home, or church. Consider every situation you encounter in your day-to-day living. Each experience is an opportunity to become more like Jesus (or less like Him). This happens step-by-step as you make the Word of God real in your life. When you focus your attitudes and actions on what would please Him, you become more like Jesus.

The more exciting part is knowing that you can be like Jesus in a special way — as no one else who has ever lived. God doesn't want Christians to look like they all came from the same mold. He made each of us unique. So, even though we develop the same Christlike characteristics, we'll all be different in our own way!

After Jesus returned to heaven about 2,000 years ago, the people of Antioch carefully observed His followers. The more they watched day by day, the more they were reminded of Jesus! The name Christian came from people seeing that those first-century followers of Jesus were like Him. They were Christlike! That's what God has in mind for you and me, too. Our purpose is that when others see us — they have also seen Jesus.

Bob

# Pathway

PERSONAL CHRISTIAN GROWTH SERIES

Set aside a special time each day to go through a *Pathway* study. Even if you miss a day or two, don't skip those studies. Begin again where you left off! Each daily study is designed to take only 10-12 minutes, or longer ... it's up to you! Be honest with yourself. This is a private time just between you and God.

## Introduction — *Part-time Jobs*

Part-time jobs include more than working at a fast-food restaurant! Perhaps you mow lawns, baby-sit, houseclean, or type term papers. Does the Bible have anything to say about how you should perform your job? It sure does! The way you work can be a positive Christian witness to those around you. What you do today may determine your future vocation or ministry. So, whether you're employed right now or not, this *Pathway* study is for you!

## DAY ONE — Part-time Jobs

**Prayer:** The way a person handles his or her job is important to God. Ask the Lord to help you please Him in everything you do today.

**Today's verse:** *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ... (Eccl. 9:10a).*

## Why Work?

"Julie?" She heard the voice behind her. "Julie, wait up ..."

It was Lisa. "Did you get the job? When do you start? How much does it pay?" All these questions and more came tumbling from Lisa's lips.

"Yes, I got the job," Julie answered proudly. "I start Monday and earn a dollar over minimum wage. The work is easy, the hours are great, and ... there's the cutest guy working in the kitchen!"

From Julie's brief description, list four reasons why you think she took this job as a waitress.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

As you look over your list, notice that all Julie's reasons for choosing the job pertained to the present. None had to do with the future, such as:

Learning a skill she can use later

Deciding if she likes this type of work

Saving money for college

And, Julie wasn't thinking about reasons that only Christians might consider, such as:

Meeting people she could tell about Christ

Choosing a healthy atmosphere where she could honor Christ

Have you ever thought of all these considerations for getting a part-time job?

Yes  Just a little  No

**A Look in the Book:** Earning money is nearly always the major reason for teens getting a job. But you still have a responsibility to do your best!

Julie is determined to be the best waitress possible. Ephesians 6:5 offers instruction to servants, which can apply to employees as well. What does this verse say a good servant or worker should do? *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.*

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Verses 6 and 7 tell how an employee should obey his or her boss. *Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.* Write how you should follow an employer's instructions.

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Julie will be working as a waitress in a coffee shop. Specifically, what do you think she should do to follow the teachings of Ephesians 6:5?

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Did you think of Julie listening carefully when the boss gives instructions? How about always starting work on time, being polite to customers and other employees, and dressing neatly?

Being obedient on the job can cover many areas. Think about a job you now have. It might be either at an office or restaurant, baby-sitting, lawn mowing, or helping at home. How can you follow Ephesians 6:5 in your situation?

## DAY TWO — Part-time Jobs

**Prayer:** Laziness in our lives is something which God dislikes — and which most other people dislike as well. Ask the Lord to help you be ambitious, especially as it relates to the work and jobs you do today.

**Today's verse:** And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men (Col. 3:23).

### Sitting Down on the Job?

The sign in the kitchen of the fast-food restaurant was big and bold. It read, "If you've got time to lean, you've got time to clean."

Although Chad saw that sign every day, it took on new meaning one afternoon. The manager pointed to it, saying, "If you had ever read this, you'd know why I'm firing you. You're just plain lazy."

Chad had lost another after-school job. It was his third in six months. He'd soon be out of money again.

Why couldn't Chad keep a job? His dad said he had a lazy streak when it came to work. Around the house, he had to be constantly reminded to take out the trash, wash the car, or cut the grass. Sometimes Chad's laziness affected his school work. Yet people seemed to like Chad. "So why does it matter?" he reasoned.

Chad's youth director said that it did matter. It mattered to God. "Chad," he told him privately, "you better face up to the fact that you're really lazy!"

Do people think you are lazy? Here's a checklist one Illinois employer compiled which helps teens to evaluate themselves. Check which statements apply to you.

- 1. I seldom seek ways to be more efficient in my schoolwork or on the job.
- 2. I refuse to work unscheduled hours, or I complain when my parents ask me for extra help.
- 3. I complain or pout when asked to do a job I don't like.
- 4. If I'm done with my work, I feel my time is my own. I don't look for anything else to do.
- 5. I don't see any importance in studying certain subjects at school or doing what my parents or boss ask.
- 6. I can't wait for my work shift to end or school to get out for the day.

Did you check three or more items on the list? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

If so, you might have a serious problem keeping a job.

**A Look in the Book:** The Bible says much about laziness. To see for yourself, read each verse below. Then write in your own words what characterizes a lazy person's life, or how his life will look to others. (Note that laziness is often referred to as slothfulness in the Bible.)

1. Proverbs 15:19: *The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.*

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2. Proverbs 18:9: *He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.*

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3. Proverbs 24:30-31: *I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.*

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Laziness on the job can get you into a lot of trouble. On the other hand, an ambitious and enthusiastic attitude can be a shining Christian testimony.

Chad's story is typical of many teens. But it doesn't have to be? A lazy attitude about work is curable with help from the Lord Jesus.



### DAY THREE — Part-time Jobs

**Prayer:** *The way you work can be a positive Christian witness to those around you. Ask the Lord to make you see each job as an opportunity to show that people can depend on you.*

**Today's verse:** ... *study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands ... (1 Thess. 4:11).*

## What's Your Style?

Have you ever found yourself facing a job you didn't want to do? Rob had to paint a wooden fence which encircled the ranch home where he lived with his parents. Rob's family saw it as an average-sized fence. But Rob put painting this fence in the same category as carving the presidents' faces on Mount Rushmore.

Although Rob knew he should obey his dad, he used every excuse in the book to get out of the work. Each night his dad came home from work and said, "Robert, paint that fence!"

Rob painted a little every now and then. Yet, it took all summer for him to finally finish the job.

**A Look in the Book:** Read James 4:17 and write it in your own words below: *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*

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What does James 4:17 say to Rob about his attitude of indifference concerning painting the fence?

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Now, let's look at this same subject from a somewhat different angle. Grab your Bible and read Matthew 25:14-30.

What did the man with five talents do? \_\_\_\_\_

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What did the man with two talents do? \_\_\_\_\_

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How did the master describe the work of the man with five talents and the man with two talents?

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In this parable, "talent" refers to a very large amount of money. The master seemed equally pleased with what the man with five talents and the man with two talents had done to increase their investments. He knew they had both worked faithfully. But the man with one talent had only buried his talent. He didn't even try to make it earn more money. What two words did the master use to describe him?

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How do you think God wants you to accomplish your work? Be specific in your thoughts. Think of something you must do today and write how God would want you to perform it.

Job or responsibility: \_\_\_\_\_

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How I should do it: \_\_\_\_\_

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Now, look back at what you've written. You have a decision to make. Will you, or won't you, do this task in a way to please God?

Yes  Maybe  Probably not

Your attitudes about work say a lot about the real you!

**DAY FOUR — Part-time Jobs**

**Prayer:** Thank the Lord for opportunities to train for future work. Ask for His help to be faithful in the areas of responsibility He's given you right now.

**Today's verse ...** *Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things ... (Matt. 25:21).*

**Thinking Ahead!**

A job can become more important to you when you realize it's part of God's plan for your future. Today, let's look at how a person's job skills might be applied to future employment or Christian service. Listed below are responsibilities Julie has to perform at the fast-food restaurant. For each task, an example is given of an occupation or responsibility where that skill would be helpful. Write another example for each one.

Greet people pleasantly

Example: Public relations manager

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Count change accurately

Example: Church treasurer

\_\_\_\_\_

Keep everything tidy

Example: Homemaker

\_\_\_\_\_

Your list might include anything from being President of the United States to being a banker to being a missionary nurse. Everything you learn to do well will help prepare you to perform something else in the days to come.

**On My Own:** Talk with two adults and record their answers to the following questions.

What did you learn on your first part-time job?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did you use that training in a later job?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**A Look in the Book:** Read Proverbs 22:6 and write it below in your own words. *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

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\_\_\_\_\_

Your parents are told to train you while you're young. As you learn and grow, you should be thankful for your training. It will benefit you the rest of your life. If you've received good training and instruction, be grateful! If you haven't, you can do what a man named Ken did.

As a child and teenager, Ken didn't learn good manners or how to do many things well. His parents didn't care about teaching him. But one day during his senior year of high school, he decided that things didn't have to stay this way. Ken committed himself to learn one new thing each week. Today, as a businessman, Ken is successful and respected by many people.

Yesterday you read Matthew 25:14-30. You learned that the master said to each faithful servant, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." But the master said something else, too. Read Matthew 25:21: *His lord said unto him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."*

Now write below what would happen because the servant had been faithful over a few things. This can apply to you, too!

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Have you always thought of a part-time or summer job as just a way to earn money?



## DAY FIVE — Part-time Jobs

**Hiding It in My Heart:** This simple Bible verse has an important message. Memorize it today.

With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men (Eph. 6:7).

**Prayer:** Ask Him to help you act wisely when you must disagree with a boss or co-worker. Ask God to help you always glorify Him.

**Today's verse...** *We ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).*

## A Christian's Place in the Work Place

Mark became a Christian about six months after he began working at the Super Gas Station. What he was now being asked to do wasn't new to him. Yet for the first, Mark's Christian values were in conflict with his employer's orders.

A customer had just come in and said there was something wrong with her right rear wheel.

Mark put the car on a hoist and found the problem. A stone had worked itself up under the hubcap and was making a banging noise as the wheel revolved.

"Hmm," said the boss. "We can make money on this! Clean up the outside of the wheel, put some greasy finger marks on the whitewall, and we'll charge the lady for repacking the bearing." With that, he left the garage.

This could be a tough one, but what should Mark do? After each choice, write if you agree, disagree, or aren't sure.

1. Mark should tell his boss, "No way. It's not honest." \_\_\_\_\_
2. Mark should do as he's told and let his boss take the responsibility. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Mark should tell the customer she's being cheated. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Mark should file a complaint with the Better Business Bureau. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Mark should explain to the boss that this goes against his new convictions as a Christian. \_\_\_\_\_

The answer isn't easy, is it? Mark has a responsibility to the customer, to his employer, to himself, and most of all, to the Lord.

**On My Own:** Ask one or both of your parents what they think Mark should do. Ask if they've ever been in a similar situation where a boss asked them to go against their convictions. How did they handle it?

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**A Look in the Book:** In order to evaluate your solution to Mark's problem, let's look at what the Bible says. What do these verses teach?

1. Ephesians 5:15-17: *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*

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2. Colossians 3:17: *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.*

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First Peter 2:18-20 teaches us to obey our employers. *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*

If you get into trouble for goofing around, it's your own fault. But if you get into trouble because you followed your Christian beliefs, this is commendable before God!

After you've talked to your parents about Mark's situation and read and considered the Bible verses, answer the following:

1. Did I think about Mark's Christian witness to his boss?

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2. Could Mark honor the Lord in my decision?

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3. Would Mark unnecessarily put his job on the line?

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4. Would Mark come off as argumentative, know-it-all, or disrespectful?

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5. Would Mark compromise his values or integrity?

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## DAY SIX — Part-time Jobs

**Prayer:** Sometimes it's not easy to think about the future. Everyday life seems complicated enough! Talk to God about your apprehensions and fears, and about pleasing Him for the rest of your life.

**Today's verse:** *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus ... (Col. 3:17).*

## What the Boss Wants

This week, you've been considering part-time jobs as training for the future. You've learned how to make a job successful. Now, let's look at part-time jobs from the employer's viewpoint.

The way you perform the little jobs will determine how far you climb!

**A Look in the Book:** Employers want teen employees who are willing to learn the business, are nice to get along with, and on whom they can depend. But what about the Bible? What does God say about putting effort into a job?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:11: *And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.*

Paul was writing to instruct and encourage the people in Thessalonica. From this verse, what is one important thing Paul wants them to know?

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The Thessalonians were told to stick to their work. Evidently, not everyone paid attention the first time. When Paul wrote again to the Thessalonians, he had more to say on the same subject. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12: *For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.*

1. According to verse 10, what should happen to a person who is not willing to do his job?

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"No work, no food." Today this would mean, "No work, no pay."

2. What should an employee NOT do (verse 11)?

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3. If someone is a "busybody" — talking when he should be working — what two things would you advise him or her to do?

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The way you do the "little jobs" often determines how far you'll climb! At a baby-sitting job, this may mean planning special little projects for the kids. Or, you might bring a treat. For each job below, write one little extra you might perform that wouldn't necessarily be expected of you.

Discount store cashier: \_\_\_\_\_

Mowing lawns: \_\_\_\_\_

Laundry service: \_\_\_\_\_

Why Am I Really Here?

When others see Jesus in you, they'll want to know Him, too!