

— weekly —
**STUDY
GUIDE**

WORK MATTERS

WEEK 6 // *Working in Babylon*

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Introduction

Welcome to week six of the Work Matters study. Last week we learned that a balanced approach to work and rest is vital to the Christian life. This week we seek to find the answer to the question: How do I honor God with my work in a non-Christian environment? As you begin, prepare your mind to receive the lesson God wants to communicate to you this week.

In this guide you will find questions for your own personal study along with questions to discuss at a Bible study, neighborhood gathering, or at the dinner table with family and friends. Enjoy!

Personal Study

For years, the Israelites had ignored God's warnings. He told them that if they obeyed His commands and devoted themselves to Him, He would pour out His blessings upon them. But if they chose to reject Him and indulge in wickedness, He would remove His favor from them. He gave them multiple chances to turn their hearts back towards Him, but stubbornly they refused. Consequently, He used the wicked Babylonian empire to grab their attention. The result: Jerusalem was ransacked and destroyed, and the Israelites became prisoners of war living in a foreign land.

READ

Read Daniel 1 and consider the questions below.

CONSIDER

- Imagine how it felt for the handful of young Israelite men to be chosen by the king. What thoughts or feelings do you think were going through their minds? What would excite them? What would concern them?

Personal Study Continued...

- What challenges did living in a drastically different culture present them? What temptations do you think they were facing?

- Are you surprised by the way they rejected the king's royal food and drink? Why do you think they did that? How do you respond when placed in an environment that doesn't share your same values? Do you stand strong or cave into the cultural pressure?

READ

Read Daniel 3 and consider the questions below.

CONSIDER

- We often run into people with wicked motivations inside and outside of the workplace. What can we learn from the responses (or lack thereof) of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to the men that were out to destroy them?

- In the workplace, people are sometimes willing to do just about anything to climb the ladder of success. How have you found this to be true? As Christ-followers, how should we respond when we find ourselves in environments like this?

PRAY

Spend a few minutes telling God about the people that test your Christian values the most. If you have a tendency to give into the pressures of these environments, confess your need for God's help and strength. If He has already given you the strength to stand courageously strong, praise Him for His empowering presence in your life.

Group Study

ICE BREAKER

Have each person in the group describe a time when they were pleasantly surprised by the way someone approached their work. (Example: A flight attendant that made the safety information fun and entertaining.)

Previously, we learned this key truth about work:

- We were made to worship God throughout our work day, not worship our work.

DISCUSS

- What new insights or questions about work came to your mind over the last week?
- What obstacles are impeding your ability to find a healthy balance of work and rest? What can we do to overcome these challenges?
- What can we proactively do to instill healthy balance in our lives?

The Bible calls us, as God's people, to be "set apart" from the rest of the world. This includes the way we approach our work. The way we conduct ourselves should be visibly different than that of our contemporaries.

READ

Read Matthew 5:13-16 and discuss the questions below.

DISCUSS

- Think about your current work. How does this section of scripture apply to your situation?
- What fears or other emotions keep us from boldly make choices that are counter-cultural?
- What is it about the way you approach your work that "sets you apart?"

READ

Read Daniel 6 and discuss the questions below.

DISCUSS

- What were the positive and negative results of Daniel's courageous stance for God in Babylon?
- What positive and/or negative outcomes could result from boldly living out your faith at work?
- The Christian worker is called to live out virtues such as honesty, integrity, compassion, and generosity, while the workplace often values profits, cost cutting, power, and influence. In what ways is being a Christian worker in America like being an Israelite in Babylon?

PRAY

Close your time together by asking God to show you ways to be a "city on a hill" even in the harshest environments. Invite the Holy Spirit to fill you with courage and boldness. Lastly, pray that God would use you to draw the people in your "Babylon" to His mercy and grace.