



"Don't handicap your children by making their lives easy."
—Robert A. Heinlein

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Where Is My Rolls Royce? (Part One)

Many of the evangelists on television are of the "name it and claim it" variety, preaching what is called the "Prosperity Gospel." The following verses are among their favorites:

- [Matthew 7:7](#): "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."
- [Matthew 21:22](#): "And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."
- [John 14:13](#): "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

They also like to quote [John 15:7](#), 16; 16:23-24; [I John 3:22](#); [5:15](#); and [Psalm 37:4](#), among others. These scriptures *seem* to say that all one needs to do is ask [God](#) in prayer for whatever the heart desires, and He will grant it like a genie rubbed from his lamp. Many thousands of people, seeing these biblical promises, have asked God for health, wealth, and luxuries galore, but to no avail. We can imagine them saying, "So, God, what's the problem? I've been waiting—patiently, of course—for my new Rolls Royce."

Indeed, there is a problem. Such people are taking these verses at face-value without the necessary elucidation and clarification of the rest of Scripture—the rest of the story. One of those clarifying verses is [I John 5:14](#): "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." The apostle John essentially says that God does not even consider prayers that defy His will. [James 4:3](#) explains further: "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures."

Rather than thinking of things to ask God for, we need to spend some time filling our minds and hearts with His thoughts, teachings, and purposes; searching the Scripture to learn what His will is, as the Bereans did ([Acts 17:11](#)). The apostle Paul counsels us in [Ephesians 5:17](#), "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (see also [Ephesians 3:17-19](#)).

With a more converted mind, we will ask Him for things according to His will because His desires will have become our desires. In fact, we will no longer desire the petty things we once requested in prayer because, as we search the Bible for understanding, God will reveal true spiritual treasures to us and enrich our lives with them. We can then apply [Matthew 7:7](#) as [Jesus](#) intended and receive the *spiritual* blessings that He will readily bestow.

All the "ask and you shall receive" scriptures were written primarily for our spiritual benefit—and perhaps not even secondarily for our creature comforts. To ask in Christ's name is to ask as though Christ Himself were asking, so we should ask God only for what Christ Himself would request in our place. Would the Jesus we see in the gospels ask for an infusion of riches, a significantly bigger house, a luxury automobile, or a promotion to CEO with all its perks?

There is nothing wrong with improving one's quality of life, but God wants to guide us in the effort, not to do it for us.

"But wait!" some might ask. "Aren't we supposed to be content with what God has given to us?" Absolutely! Notice the last phrase in [Luke 3:14](#), where John the Baptist advises soldiers about how to [repent](#): "be content with your

wages" (see also [Philippians 4:11](#); [Hebrews 13:5](#)). But this is not to say that we should remain in a minimum wage job. What God wants to see is *growth*.

So, if God has provided such an entry-level job, we need to work hard at it and learn something from it so that we can earn a promotion to a better position. Why would God—or any employer, for that matter—provide an opportunity to a person for which he or she is not qualified?

Have we ever heard someone who is just scraping by excuse his situation by saying something like, "God hasn't given me wealth because He knows it wouldn't be in my best interests," or "God gave me this job," or worst of all, "It's not in His will for my situation to improve"? In my high school years, the choir director in the Baptist church I attended possessed the highest I.Q. ever recorded at the university he had attended. He was fluent in several languages, understood the highest forms of math, and knew music theory. Yet, with all that potential, he worked for the school district as a tutor for students too ill or injured to leave the house. When asked why he did not find a better position, he responded, "This is where God wants me." How did he know? Or was it perhaps an excuse not to put forth the effort to improve himself?

We need to give God His due: He wants His people to have an abundant, fulfilled life ([John 10:10](#); [Deuteronomy 29:9](#); [II Chronicles 26:5](#); etc.), well-appointed with fine things and an inheritance for the grandchildren ([Proverbs 13:22](#)), with extra laid aside for widows, orphans, and the needy ([James 1:27](#); [Mark 14:7](#)). None of this can be accomplished on the meager pay from a minimum-wage job.

However, God's focus, His will and purpose, is on our spiritual development; He is far less concerned about how we earn our living, whether as an attorney or dog catcher. He can use whatever situation we find ourselves in to transform our character into the image of His Son's. What He does care about is effort. Through [Moses](#), He writes in [Deuteronomy 30:9](#), within a prophecy yet to be fulfilled: "The LORD your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand." Note the word "work." Even when they have returned to God and life is grand, His people will still have to work for abundance. The Bible is replete with promises, both spiritual and physical, but almost all of them require something from us.

The Almighty Himself does not laze around heaven. He works constantly, as does His Son ([John 5:17](#)). He expects the same from us, whatever our age or situation. Even the concept of "retirement" cannot be found in Scripture.

How we earn a living is largely our decision. We can make wise choices early in life that allow us to be comfortable in our dotage, or we can spend our youth foolishly, taking the easy, undisciplined way, and perhaps end up depending on others or the government for our upkeep and beseeching God to give us that for which we should have worked. Solomon advises, "Work hard, and you will be a leader; be lazy, and you will end up a slave" ([Proverbs 12:24](#), *Contemporary English Version*, Copyright © 1995 American Bible Society. All rights reserved).

The Bible lays out some general guidelines about what kind of work in we should do, which we will consider in Part Two.

- Mike Fuhrer

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[God's Creation and Our Works](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

As Joseph reconciled with his brothers, he had matured into the understanding that God had manipulated and engineered the whole series of events (family jealousies, slavery, and famine) for the eventual physical salvation of his family. Like Joseph, we need to realize that God—not ourselves—is the Creator, forming us into what He wants us to become. Every part of the spiritual body is individually crafted by the Master Creator. God gifts us to be able to do things to the end that (1) we should give God the glory for bringing us this far, and (2) no flesh should glory or try to put others in debt for their service to the spiritual body.

From the Archives: Featured Article

Ecclesiastes and Christian Living (Part Two): Works

by John W. Ritenbaugh

In his masterwork, the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon frequently touches on the subject of work due to its central place in both human and divine life. John Ritenbaugh explains that God works all the time—in fact, it is the first thing we see God doing in His Book—and we must follow His example to become skilled in living as He does.

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