

# Lessons for a Dishwasher

Understanding the value of labor and its reward was an early discovery for me. Even before entering high school, the desire to earn money – and what was required to get it – manifested itself in mowing some yards of neighbors. It was hard work, because the only equipment available was the family’s push mower with a cutting cylinder. Some grasses, such as Bermuda, took more energy than others. The effort was worth it, because it provided some spending money.



My first “real” job came as a senior in high school when I took a part-time job as a dishwasher in a restaurant located adjacent to the campus of Tennessee Tech in Cookeville, Tennessee. Getting a paycheck, although it wasn’t much back then, was an exhilarating feeling, knowing that I was being rewarded for work I had done. And it taught me some valuable lessons, including:

- **Discipline.** Arranging events in my life around school and the job took some willpower over other attractions that might draw a high schooler away from commitments.
- **Attendance and punctuality.** An employer has a rightful expectation that those who work for the organization should show up and be on time as scheduled. For me, the job was a privilege extended to me, and I owed the restaurant no less than to be there and on time.
- **An honest amount of work for the wages paid.** That meant no goofing off, no slack performance. If there was a slowdown in responsibilities assigned, find something else to do that was meaningful.
- **The value of what money can provide.** The very first paycheck I received I used to make a down payment on a wristwatch for my mother, who had never owned one. I had heard her say once that someday she’d like to have a Bulova – and that’s what I bought her. I will never forget the surprise and the joy on her face, although I detected a tear or two in her eyes.

Certainly, there are many benefits that work brings, including making a living, well-being (research shows that physical and mental health are adversely affected by lack of work), self-esteem and the sense of being connected to something larger than oneself.

As we approach Labor Day 2018, we have been called and gifted for a very important work, taking care of God’s frail and infirm children. And we should give thanks for the benefits – including the peace, joy and contentment derived from serving them and Him.

*In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty (Proverbs 14:23 NKJV).*