

GOOD WORK AND ECONOMIES

SDG 8

PROMOTE SUSTAINED, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, FULL AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL

8



- Sustain economic growth in accordance with national circumstances. Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation.
- Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.
- Eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and end child labour.
- Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers and those in precarious employment.



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Income is essential for survival. At the most basic level, we work to earn income so we can afford the universal necessities of food, water and shelter. Money also provides the opportunity to save, invest, loan and trade. Most people have a legal obligation to pay the government a portion of their income in taxes. People of faith are also expected to give a portion of their income to God and charity.

However, almost everyone wants more. I was born and raised in the USA. I confess I was greedy from a young age. I always bothered my parents for the latest toy that my friends had. But it was not enough - there was always something else I wanted. One toy car isn't as good as two toy cars! Unfortunately, we do not easily grow out of our childish desires. It is easy to desire more and more - not for the good of all people, but because we are driven by selfishness. At its most extreme, this selfish ambition

results in corruption, illegal trading, trafficking of people, exploiting the environment and so on. Greed is aggressive, contagious and a catalyst for injustice.

The eighth SDG is a commitment by the leaders of 193 countries to ensure decent work and sustainable economic growth for all people. This is a goal that Christians should support. Work and economic growth are good and gifts from God.

Many of today's global injustices are rooted in unequal access to fair, inclusive employment and economic growth. This forces many into unsafe jobs that prohibit growth and safety, such as trafficking, criminal activity, illegal trade and forced labour.

Two statistics highlight this global problem:

- According to the International Labour Organization, more than 204 million people were unemployed in 2015.¹
- Roughly half the world's

population still lives on the equivalent of approximately US\$2 a day. And in too many places, having a job does not guarantee the ability to escape from poverty.²

SDG 8 is a well-rounded goal that addresses many components, such as:

- Efforts towards quality job creation;
- Sustainable economic productivity and technological innovations;
- Lessening environmental impact;
- Encouraging fair practices in banking and investing;
- Creation of more small and medium enterprises;
- Instilling policies that eradicate forced labour, human trafficking, illegal trade and other criminal activities;
- Responsible money practices.

There are many issues crammed into this one SDG, but such an all-encompassing goal is required to tackle the power of greed in our world today.

1 <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sdgooverview/post-2015-development-agenda/goal-8.html>

2 <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/economic-growth/>



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

- In Genesis 41:34-36 we see that God is pleased by working for a common purpose and the benefits of a good economy: ““Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.””
- Proverbs 22:16 reminds us of the importance of a well-structured, just economy: ‘One who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and one who gives gifts to the rich - both come to poverty.’
- In the same book we also find advice on the right attitude towards our work. Proverbs 16:2-3 says: ‘All a person’s ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord.’
- 1 Timothy 6:10 tells us to place the emphasis of our work and economies on God, not money: ‘For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.’

WHAT SHOULD WE PRAY FOR?

- Give thanks for the innovations that allow our economies to develop and often for jobs to improve. We have made breakthroughs in industry through skills and talents that God has given.
- For an end to all forms of abuse in the workplace: exploitation, forced labour and unfair practices. May God work in the lives of the people who carry out the abuse. May those who have been abused find a way out - towards peace and decent work.
- For improvements in conditions and the quality of life of all people, to ensure that nobody is left behind.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Avoid buying products, including clothes and food, that have been produced using exploitative practices such as forced or badly-paid labour. Shop ethically where you can.
- Support The Salvation Army's 'Others' enterprise (www.tradeforhope.com). It aims to create employment, putting the profits back into growing this business and creating further jobs - nurturing sustainability and independence.
- Look into The Salvation Army's Accountability Movement (www.salvationarmy.org/accountability). Consider how accountable you are to God and your fellow human beings in your employment or the way you run your business.
- Get involved in programmes that develop skills training, mentoring and support. These things can help people to get good work and support themselves.