**LABOR OR SERVICE?**

(I know Labor Day is behind us this year, but I love this explanation of one of the 10 Commandments:)

“Six days thou shalt labor, and do all thy work.” [*Deut 5:13*](http://www.icr.org/bible/Deuteronomy/5/13?utm_source=phplist12114&utm_medium=email&utm_content=HTML&utm_campaign=September+1+-+Labor+or+Service%3F)  
  
The term “*labor*” to many seems to connote drudgery or routine, repetitive, demeaning toil. As used here in the fourth of God’s Ten Commandments, however, the Hebrew word abadmeans rather to “*serve*” and is so translated 214 times in the King James. Only one other time is it translated “*labor*,” and that is in the first rendering of the commandments [Exo 20:9](http://www.icr.org/bible/Exodus/20/9?utm_source=phplist12114&utm_medium=email&utm_content=HTML&utm_campaign=September+1+-+Labor+or+Service%3F). Thus, the command could well be read: “*Six days shalt thou*serve.”  
  
Furthermore, the word for “*work*” (Hebrew melakah) does not denote servile labor but “*deputyship*” or “*stewardship*.” The one whom we are to serve or act as deputy for, of course, is God Himself when we do our work. In the ultimate and very real sense, **the Lord is our employer**, and we serve Him, not man. Therefore, “*whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men*” [Col 3:23](http://www.icr.org/bible/Colossians/3/23?utm_source=phplist12114&utm_medium=email&utm_content=HTML&utm_campaign=September+1+-+Labor+or+Service%3F). Every honest occupation, if carried out for the Lord’s sake and to His glory, is “*divine service*.” And every Christian who holds this perspective on his or her work (be it preaching, bookkeeping, homemaking, or whatever) is in the Christian ministry—for “*ministry*” simply means “*service*.”  
  
Note also that God has ordained not a four-day or five day workweek. “*Six days thou shalt labor, and do all thy work*,” He says, thus commemorating the six days in which He worked in the beginning, “*for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth*” [Exo 31:17](http://www.icr.org/bible/Exodus/31/17?utm_source=phplist12114&utm_medium=email&utm_content=HTML&utm_campaign=September+1+-+Labor+or+Service%3F).  
  
One day, the Lord willing, we shall hear Him say, “*Well done, thou good and faithful servant:...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*” [Mat 25:21](http://www.icr.org/bible/Matthew/25/21?utm_source=phplist12114&utm_medium=email&utm_content=HTML&utm_campaign=September+1+-+Labor+or+Service%3F). Then, throughout the ages to come, “*his servants shall serve him,*” [Rev 22:3](http://www.icr.org/bible/Revelation/22/3?utm_source=phplist12114&utm_medium=email&utm_content=HTML&utm_campaign=September+1+-+Labor+or+Service%3F), with everlasting joy. HMM. ICR. 9.1.25