

Lesson Seven

The Fruits Of Labor

LESSON IDEA

Keeping what we earn is one of the most essential incentives to work and produce. The right to enjoy the fruits of our labor can only exist in an atmosphere of freedom.

VISUAL AID

None recommended for this lesson.

IN EARLIER LESSONS, we discussed the importance of individualism and creativity — of being free to develop our talents, use our ability, and work toward our desired goals. This evening, let's discuss how rewards for accomplishments encourage even greater achievements.

There are many different ways to motivate people to accomplish their goals. Let us see if we can determine which ones are most effective and most compatible with freedom.

Imagine, for instance, that you own a large plot of land replete with boulders and trees. You prefer to clear that land so that you can plow it and begin growing crops. But the job is too big for one person. How can you entice others to help you?

One approach would be to explain the importance of the project to neighbors and ask them to help you clear the land. You could appeal to their kindness and generosity, and because many people enjoy helping others, some of them would probably come over on a Saturday morning and help you clear the field. Such willingness on their part to render assistance, without expecting something in return, is called altruism.

Another approach would be to force others to assist you. This would probably require a rifle or whip, or some other harsh way to enforce your demands. Although none of those who are coerced to help you would like it, this tactic has actually been used in many nations throughout human history. It is called *slavery*.

BUT THERE is a third approach, which would be fair to all involved and would help others as much as it would help you. Do you know what it is? [Encourage discussion,

until someone answers, "pay them."]

That's right. The best approach would be to hire others to do the work for you. This way, you would be helping them to earn a living by creating jobs for them. At the same time, you will have your field cleared so that you can grow crops.

If you only appealed to their altruism by asking them to do the work for free, some might help you for awhile. But what do you think would happen if you asked them to plow the field, plant the crops, do the weeding and watering, and harvest the crops, without receiving anything in return? Do you think they would continue to provide the help you need? [Ask each family member what would probably happen if the owner continued to rely on this method.]

Being rewarded for the work one does is called receiving the fruits of one's labor. And it is an incentive that will motivate almost everyone to work harder, produce more, and be more creative. Why do you think it is important to reward people fairly for the work they do?

It may surprise you to learn that there are some who do not agree that people should be able to receive and enjoy the fruits of their own labor. They argue that, because people have different skills and abilities, some will receive more than others, which they claim is unfair. They urge that everyone be paid equally, no matter what and how much work they do.

Perhaps the best-known expression of this viewpoint is the statement attributed to Karl Marx: "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." What do you think this means? [Discuss this concept, until you are sure everyone understands it in principle.]

To many people, this deceitful slogan sounds like a marvelous way to live. Imagine everyone working as hard as they can, at whatever they do best, with everyone sharing equally in the results. There is one serious problem however: *it doesn't work*. To explain why, let us look at what would happen if the Marxist principle were tried in your school.

