

**phrases & terms:** \*\*sth = something; sb = somebody.

work ethic = values and attitudes about your job

job commitment = commitment/loyalty to your job

pay off = have good results; be worth your effort

be born dirt poor = be born into an extremely poor family

die filthy rich = become extremely wealthy before you die

hear sb/sth loud and clear = understand the message perfectly ***I hear you loud and clear!***

earn a living = make/earn money through work for your daily living expenses

play a significant role in sth = have an important function/part in sth

personal significance = a person's importance/value/influence in this world

their self-esteem = their self-worth; their self-respect

a/the means to an end = the method/way you use to achieve a goal

Baby Boomers = people born between 1946 and 1964 (a period when many babies were born)

pension = money you get after you retire because you were loyal to the company (or government office) for a long time

overtime = time worked above the normal amount; pay for such time (often 1.5 your normal wage)

a necessary evil = something you must do (even though you don't like it) so you can achieve a goal

feel/be defined by your work = your opinion of yourself and/or other people's opinion of you is based on what job you do

intrinsic motivation = internal/personal desire to do something; what pushes you from inside yourself

extrinsic motivation = external pressure to do sth; pressure to do sth because of other people or the situation

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Americans' traditional work ethic considers job commitment and achievements as extremely important. Self-made men and women demonstrate that hard work can pay off in the US, a country where you can be born dirt poor and die filthy rich. For generations, the message many American children have heard loud and clear is about the importance of having a job and earning a living. We are taught to expect *an honest day's pay for an honest day's work*; in other words, we should always study and work hard, if we expect a reward. Work, after all, plays a significant role in people's lives: providing important things like food, clothing, shelter, educational opportunities, family fun, personal significance and self-esteem. Many people don't enjoy their work, but that's OK if it is a means to an end. However, times are changing. Baby Boomers are usually willing to work long hours to make more money, and to stay loyal so they can earn a pension. But today's young adults are increasingly motivated by fun or fulfillment. Some reject overtime and company loyalty, saying that they earn enough to do what they see as fun. Others reject the idea that a job is a necessary evil, seeking fulfillment through their work regardless of paycheck amount. Like it or not, Americans often feel defined by their jobs. One of the first questions Americans ask in small talk is: "What do you *do* (for a living)?" That's one reason why COVID-19 layoffs cause deep psychological pain. Most Americans *want* to work. They may choose a career due to intrinsic motivation or extrinsic motivation; they can also lose their jobs due to a pandemic or unforeseen crisis. But most Americans know that they need to *earn* a paycheck, and most value what having a job can mean to them.

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### Questions:

1. Which does the traditional American work ethic value most: hard work, getting rich, or being happy at work? Explain your answer.
2. What different attitudes do some young people have, according to the paragraph? (hint: fun/fulfillment)
3. What does a job mean to you personally? (a means to an end, a necessary evil, path to fulfillment, source of self-esteem, etc). Ask each other questions until you can understand what they mean.
4. Work ethic also includes the values that guide people in how well they do their work and their attitudes toward their work. Describe 2-3 values in your own work ethic. Also, why are those values important to you?
5. The Bible's account of Creation says <sup>Gen 2:15</sup> "The Lord God took the first man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." Scholars say this means that *rewarding work* has always been an expected part of God's design for the people He created. A few verses later, the Bible says that people disobeyed God and work became a *painful toil* instead of a rewarding pleasure. (See Gen 3:17) Do you think of work as expected, painful, rewarding, or something else?
6. In your job or studies, what are 1-2 of your intrinsic motivations and 1-2 of your extrinsic motivations? Explain.
7. What do you base your personal significance on? Why?
8. Respect from other people (= other people respect you) and self-respect (= you respect yourself) are both important. However, which one is more important to you? Why? Also, can you have one without the other? Why or why not?

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Americans' traditional work ethic considers job commitment and achievements as extremely important. Successful men and women demonstrate that hard work can pay off in the US, even for people who were born dirt poor. For generations, American children have been taught that earning a living is important. We are taught to always study and work hard, if we expect a reward. Work, after all, plays a significant role in people's lives: providing important things like food, clothing, shelter, educational opportunities, family fun, personal significance and self-esteem. Many people don't enjoy their work, but that's OK if it is a means to an end. However, times are changing. Baby Boomers were willing to work long hours to make more money. But some young adults reject overtime, saying that they earn enough to do what they see as fun. Others seek *fulfillment* through their work regardless of paycheck amount. Like it or not, Americans often feel defined by their jobs. One of the first questions Americans ask in small talk is: "What do you *do* (for a living)?" That's one reason why COVID-19 layoffs cause deep psychological pain. Most Americans *want* to work. Most Americans also know that they need to *earn* a paycheck, and most value what having a job can mean to them.

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1. Which does the traditional American work ethic value most: hard work, getting rich, or being happy at work? Explain your answer.
2. What different attitudes do some young people have, according to the paragraph? (hint: fun/fulfillment)
3. What does a job mean to you personally? (a means to an end, path to fulfillment, source of self-esteem, etc). Ask each other questions until you can understand what they mean.
4. The Bible says that God put "the first people" in a garden and told them "to work it and keep it." (Gen 2:15) Therefore, scholars say that *rewarding work* is an expected part of God's design. But the Bible later says that after people disobeyed God, work became a *painful toil* instead of a rewarding pleasure. (See Gen 3:17) Do you think of work as expected, painful, rewarding, or something else?
5. Work ethic also includes the values that guide people in how well they do their work and their attitudes toward their work. Describe 2-3 values in your own work ethic. Also, why are those values important to you?
6. What do you base your personal significance on? Why?
7. How can you get and keep self-esteem? Explain.

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These lessons were created or adapted by the staff of International Friendship Ministries, P.O. Box 12504, Columbia SC 29211; ifmusa.org; info@ifmusa.org. IFM is grateful to Kathy Williams for most of the original work. Some lessons were adapted from EFLsuccess.com (with permission). IFM makes these lessons available to our participants, but this does not imply our consent for others to publish these lessons online or in print without permission.

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