

**TEEN CHALLENGE INTERNATIONAL**  
**—WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM—**

*Originally written for use in Teen Challenge centers in the USA.*

The world-wide mission of Teen Challenge is to evangelize people who have life-controlling problems and initiate the discipleship process to the point where the student can function as a Christian in society applying spiritually motivated Biblical principles to relationships in the family, the local church, chosen vocation, and the community; and to help people become mentally sound, emotionally balanced, socially adjusted, physically well, and spiritually alive.

At Teen Challenge, one significant means of fulfilling that mission is our Work Experience Program, which is a series of short-term, supervised work assignments that students perform during their time at the Center. During the course of this Program, Teen Challenge staff members interact with students in the process of reforming and maturing their character, overcoming sinful habitual patterns of behavior, and adopting a productive livelihood.

The principal benefits derived by students are not compensation and in-kind benefits, but (1) awareness of sin and the need for regeneration, repentance, forgiveness, restoration, (2) freedom from reliance on controlled substances, (3) learning the value of and respect for authority, (4) developing habit patterns of regular schedule, work responsibility, and performance accountability that all are foundational to being a productive and responsible citizen.

Although the work assignments may provide Teen Challenge with some offsetting revenue, any contributions or other funds received from beneficiaries of the work assignments are used exclusively to help cover the cost of staffing and operating the Work Experience Program and as well as other expenses associated with a student's Teen Challenge Program.

**Biblical Basis for Work Experience Program**

Teen Challenge's Work Experience Program derives its inspiration from our belief in the Holy Scriptures, which views work as one of the central purposes for human existence. In the beginning, God worked, and placed man, who was created in His image, on the earth to "...Fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28 NIV). Work was a principal means of reflecting God's image even before the fall by applying labor, skill, and creativity to make productive and fruitful and latent resources of the earth. After the fall, work did not become bad, only more challenging and difficult (Genesis 3:17-19). God designed work to be redemptive, allowing us to enter the joy of co-laboring with Him (1 Thessalonians 3:2).

Work is the dominant enterprise of most healthy people in sound societies. Through the illumination and renewing of the mind by the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, communion with God, the encouragement of fellow Christians, and God's grace, one may capture a vision of work as the blessing that God originally intended for man.

**The Bible is filled with exhortations and illustrations concerning work**

Diligent, hard work is associated with prosperity (Proverbs 10:4; 14:23), serving people in high rank (Proverbs 22:29), satisfaction in life (Ecclesiastes 2:24), and reaping eternal rewards (Colossians 3:23-24).

The Apostle Paul writes in his letters of the example he and others set working with their own hands to provide for themselves and those who labored with them (1 Corinthians 4:12). He encourages his readers to not be dependent on anyone, but, if possible, to work with their hands to provide for their own needs (Titus 3:14). Above all, Paul exhorts his readers to do everything as though God was the supervisor (Colossians 3:23).

Hard work is the fruit of a repentant lifestyle (Ephesians 4:28) and wins the respect of the local community (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12). Where one has led a less than wholesome lifestyle involving anti-social behavior, there is further moral imperative to “make up for” the wrongs done by providing for oneself, and to have enough to give to those in need, through hard work (Ephesians 4:28).

One of the primary objectives of the Teen Challenge program is to encourage students to live in repentance from a self-destructive lifestyle. Participating in work assignments, therefore, is one means by which students may practice and develop the godly habit of a repentant lifestyle prior to their return to society.

In contrast, laziness is associated with poverty (Proverbs 10:4), destructiveness (Proverbs 18:9), and sinfulness (2 Thessalonians 3:6-8). One is considered worse than an unbeliever if he does not work hard and provide for his dependents (1 Timothy 3:1, 4-5; 5:8). Christians must avoid fellowship with “...every brother who is idle” (2 Thessalonians 3:6 NIV). If an individual “...will not work, he shall not eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10 NIV).

**Practical Application and Experience**

The experience of Teen Challenge confirms these Biblical pronouncements, as we have found that work assignments often help surface unbiblical attitudes towards work, authority, God, and occasionally, racism, dishonesty, and disorganization, and reveal (at least in part) why students may have misused alcohol and/or other substances to cope with their failures. In exposing and addressing sinful attitudes, work assignments also provide Teen Challenge staff the opportunity to teach students the benefits and blessings of mature Christian character, in making the best of the same circumstances and honoring God in the process.

Work assignments also prepare students to live a productive life after they complete the Teen Challenge program. Students learn specific principles regarding a healthy work ethic such as:

1. Punctuality
2. Cheerfulness and willingness regarding work
3. Submission to authority
4. Collegiality and collaboration with fellow co-workers

5. Completing tasks and experiencing the satisfaction of work well done
6. Dealing with and overcoming failure
7. Taking initiative and seeding greater responsibility
8. Understanding the correlation between job production and future wages
9. Desire greater knowledge and skills within one's line of work

### **Accomplishing Our Mission**

In summary, the Work Experience Program permits Teen Challenge staff members to discern and disciple the character and behavior of our students. The Program also trains and equips our students to apply first-hand the lessons they are learning from staff members, as they seek to undertake a new drug-free, mentally sound, emotionally balanced, socially adjusted, physically well, and spiritually alive lifestyle upon their graduation from Teen Challenge.

**Scriptures on Work**

(Scripture from the New International Version)

*Proverbs 10:4* – Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.

*Proverbs 14:23* – All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

*Proverbs 18:9* – One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys.

*Proverbs 22:29* – Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men.

*Proverbs 24:30-34* – I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; 31 thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. 32 I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: 33 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest--34 and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

*Ecclesiastes 2:24* – A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God...

*1 Corinthians 4:12-13* – We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; 13 when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.

*2 Corinthians 6:4-10* – Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; 5 in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; 6 in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; 7 in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; 8 through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; 9 known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; 10 sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

*Ephesians 4:28* – He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

*Colossians 3:23* – Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men...

*1 Thessalonians 4:11-12* – Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

*2 Thessalonians 3:6-10* – In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

*Titus 3:14* – Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.

**TEEN CHALLENGE**  
**STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT**  
**REGARDING WORK ASSIGNMENTS**

**Statement of Student**

1. I understand that if I am admitted as a student I will be required to participate in the Teen Challenge Work Experience Program (work assignments).
2. I acknowledge that I have read and fully agree with Teen Challenge's description of its Work Experience Program (work assignments); which, addresses the importance of my work assignments in helping to build in me the Biblical values of a good work ethic and the character of a responsible, upright individual.
3. I understand that if I am admitted to Teen Challenge as a student I will be performing work assignments not as an employee; but, solely for my benefit to further my spiritual growth, maturity, character development, recovery from controlled substances and a preparedness to go back into the work place.
4. Accordingly, by signing this **Agreement**, I am not applying for a position of employment with Teen Challenge, and if admitted as a student into the program, I understand I will not receive any compensation or in-kind benefits in exchange for the performance of my work assignments.
5. I further understand that if I fail to perform my assigned work related tasks, Teen Challenge may revoke my status and privileges as a student. Because, performance of work assignments are a consideration for the receipt of such status and benefits, as each student's participation in the Work Experience Program (work assignments), is a necessary and vital part of the recovery process.

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Teen Challenge Student Signature

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Date

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Name (print)

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Teen Challenge Staff Signature

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Date

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Name (print)