

Introduction

God has a lot to say about work. The Bible begins by telling you about God's work. Not only do we see that God worked, but we see the quality of His work. **God's work was good.** At the end of each day, it says that God saw that it was good. After He made the light, He saw that it was good.

(Gen 1:4) "God saw that the light was good..."

After He made the dry land and the seas, He saw it was good.

(Gen 1:10) "God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good."

After He made the vegetation, He saw that it was good.

(Gen 1:12) "The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good."

After He made the days and nights, He saw that it was good.

(Gen 1:18) "and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good."

After God made the fish and the birds, He saw that it was good.

(Gen 1:21) "God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good."

After God made the animals, insects, and reptiles, He saw that it was good.

(Gen 1:25) "God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good."

Then, after completing all His work, He saw that all He had made was very good.

(Gen 1:31) "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."

After He completed His work, He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done."

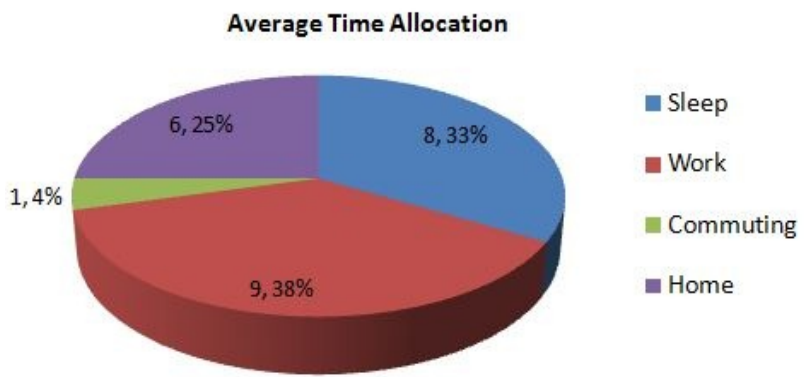
(Gen 2:1-2) "Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. {2} By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done."

It is interesting that God starts by not only telling us that He is the Creator and owner of all things. He also talks about His work. God wants us to learn and apply principles about work.

Solomon wrote extensively about work. Nearly every chapter of Ecclesiastes has instructions about work, and a large percentage of Proverbs is about work.

- Working hard. (Pr 14:23, 18:9, 21:25, Ec 5:12)
- Working diligently. (Pr 10:4, 12:24)
- Working wisely, and prioritizing our work. (Pr 24:27, Ec 4:9)
- Working at the appropriate times. (Ec 4:6, Pr 6:6-9, 20:4)
- Working skillfully. (Pr 22:29, Ec 2:24)
- Working honestly. (Pr 13:11)
- Committing our work to the Lord. (Pr 16:3)
- Planning our work. (Pr 16:1, 16:3)
- Enjoying the fruit of our work. (Pr 31:31, Ec 2:11, 3:13, 5:18-19, 9:7-9)

Why does God say so much about our work? It is an important part of our life. If we say that the average person works eight hours a day, and sleeps eight hours a day, then half of his awake time is spent at work. Then, if we add an hour for lunch at work, and an hour for commuting to and from work, then he actually spends more time at work than at home during the week. The work place is a very large part of our lives. **We spend the most time with our families and the people at work.**



Paul has been writing about how to live a new life. We are to put off the old self and we are to put on the new self. We are to lay aside anger, wrath, immorality and other sins. We are to consider our earthly members as dead to sin. We are to put on love, compassion, kindness, patience, and gentleness. How do we do that? We clothe ourselves with the Spirit of God. We are to set our minds on things above. We are to let the word of God richly dwell inside of us. We are to speak to one another with hymns and psalms, and spiritual songs. We are to sing and make melody in our hearts.

In Galatians 5:16, Paul says that if we walk by the Spirit, we will not carry out the desires of the flesh. If we clothe ourselves with the Spirit of God and set our mind on the Spirit, we will be able to put off the old self and live the new life that God wants for each of us. Spiritual transformation begins in our lives, but it is to have a ripple effect in all of our relationships.

(Gal 5:16) “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

God wants this renewed way of life to impact our family life. We saw last week how husbands, wives, children, and parents are all given some ways that they can live this new life. God wants transformed families. We saw that Abraham was not the perfect husband. In his earlier years, before they had children, he was more interested in saving his own neck than laying his life down for his wife. I bring this up because Abraham was not born mature. He grew in his faith.

10 Live A New Work Life (Col 3:22-25)

In Romans 4:20 we find that Abraham did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith. This passage is speaking about the promise of God to make him a father of many nations. Abraham is the father of our faith. But, he was not born as a faith giant. He grew strong in his faith. Ladies, there is hope for your man. He is not the man today that he can be tomorrow. Men, there is hope for the bride of your youth. She can grow strong in her faith and character. She can become a submissive wife that honors you. We must keep seeking the Lord in our lives. We must lay aside the old self and put on the new self. As we are renewed and transformed, our marriages and families will also be transformed. We are works in progress.

(Rom 4:20) “yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,”

In our passage today, Paul talks about living a transformed life in the workplace. Some scholars view these next few verses as part of the preceding verses about the family. Many families had slaves, and they believe this is the context of these verses.

Before we get into the nitty gritty of the message, let me say a few comments about slavery. At the time that Paul wrote this to the Colossians, slavery was a common thing. Historians and theologians have identified about nine different ways that people could become slaves. You could be born a slave. You could become a voluntary slave. A slave may have done this because his master gave him a slave wife and he did not want to leave her. The most common reason for slavery was financial bondage. When a person was not able to meet their financial obligations, he became a slave to the person that he owed money to. A certain time period could be established for the person to work off their debt.

Slavery was not the way it was in our early American history, where people were taken by force from their homes, families, and countries and then sold as slaves in a foreign land. That kind of slavery violated people’s rights. The slavery in Paul’s day was generally caused by poor stewardship.

People today do not become slaves when they cannot meet their financial obligations. They simply declare bankruptcy. They re-establish their credit and then carry on with their lives. Even though we do not have the same master-slave relationships, we can use this passage to make applications of our work relationships, which are generally employee-employer.

In this passage Paul deals with the attitude and work habits of the slaves or bondservants, and their masters. We can apply these same principles to the marketplace today, with employees and employers. Paul first addresses the attitude and work habits of the slave or employee, and then he shifts his focus to the master or employer. The overall message to both the master and the slave is that their work is unto the Lord. I have entitled it, “Live A New Work Life.”

1. The responsibilities of slaves
 - A. Do their work as unto the Lord.
 - B. Do their work with the right attitude.
2. The responsibilities of masters
 - A. Treat slaves with justice and fairness.
 - B. Treat them as unto the Lord.

10 Live A New Work Life (Col 3:22-25)

(Col 3:22-25) “Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. {23} Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, {24} knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. {25} For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality. {4:1} Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.”

1. The responsibilities of slaves

A. Do your work as unto the Lord.

In verse 23, he says that whatever we do, do our work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men. He goes on to say that it is the Lord Christ whom you serve. In the same way that women are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord, slaves are to do their work as unto the Lord.

(Col 3:23-24) “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, {24} knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.”

When I prepare messages every week, I do it as unto the Lord. When I pray for you and for the needs of this congregation, I do it as unto the Lord. I am a bondsman of the Lord. In 1995 the Lord told me that “this is the last page of this chapter of your life.” He was telling me that 1996 would be my last year playing golf. In 1996, the Holy Spirit spoke to me one night and told me to put my ear to His post. I knew what the Lord was asking me to do. He was asking me to be His bondservant. Everything that I do, whether at church or in the market place is for the Lord. It is the Lord Christ that I serve. That should be the same for each one of you. Each of us is to serve the Lord.

Recently, someone said they were having a hard time keeping their priorities right. Their work was consuming them, and they were struggling with their spiritual life. I told the person to do his work as unto the Lord. Whatever you do, whether it is selling products, servicing products, manufacturing products, managing, or teaching, our work should be done unto the Lord. Our work should bring glory and honor to God. Our work should be pleasing to God.

In Romans 12:1, Paul urges us to present our bodies as living and holy sacrifices, acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service of worship. When you present your life to God as a living sacrifice, everything that you do is part of your spiritual service of worship. Our work life should be a pleasing and acceptable sacrifice to the Lord.

(Rom 12:1) “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”

B. Do your work with the right heart attitude.

Paul tells slaves to do their work with the right heart attitude. He addresses their attentiveness, their obedience, their sincerity, and their reverence. These are all attitudes of the heart.

Paul instructs slaves to obey their masters. Last week we look at Paul's instructions to children to obey their parents. The word was *hupakouo*, which means to listen under or to listen attentively. The proof of our understanding is our obedience, which is why it is translated as obey. **Slaves need to listen attentively and carefully follow instructions.** If an employee does not understand something that he is being asked to do, he should ask questions to clarify the instructions. Someone with the right heart attitude listens carefully and with understanding. Someone that does not have the right heart attitude will not listen as attentively. He has a motive of pleasing externally. He will get the job done, but it may not be with a smile on the inside.

Paul also addresses heart issues. He tells slaves to have the right attitude in their heart. What is the right heart attitude? **Slaves are to obey with sincerity of heart.** Slaves are to obey their masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart.

(Col 3:22) "Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord."

When someone does something with sincerity of heart, there is usually a difference in the quality of the work. Someone who is sincere, pays attention to details. Someone with sincerity goes the extra mile to make sure that the work is done properly. He is not just going through the motions, he is doing it with sincerity.

The King James says with singleness of heart. The Greek word for sincerity is *haplotes*, which means single or singleness. A servant is not to be double-minded. A servant cannot have two masters. Scripture is very clear that we cannot serve two masters, either in the spiritual or the natural.

G572. *haplotes*, hap-lot'-ace; from G573; singleness, i.e. (subj.) sincerity (without dissimulation or self-seeking), or (obj.) generosity (copious bestowal):--bountifulness, liberal (-ity), simplicity, singleness.

James deals with those who are double-minded. He says that their ways are unstable. In the context of the passage, they will also not receive the things that they are asking from God. A few chapters later James gives the remedy for those who are double-minded. He says to repent. He says to cleanse our hand, and purify our hearts. We purify our hearts by putting off the old self and putting on the new self. We replace the old thoughts with God's thoughts. We must fill our minds with truth.

(James 1:8) "being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

(James 4:8) "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

Slaves are to do their work to please the Lord. When we work for someone else, we are doing our work unto the Lord. We are not just trying to please our employer. We should be trying to please the Lord. Our employer may not see our heart attitude, but God sees our motives. He sees what the motive of our heart is. Our motive should be to please the Lord.

Slaves are to obey their masters, fearing the Lord. There should be a reverence of the Lord in our work. When we fear the Lord, we will do our work with integrity. We will do our work with an

10 Live A New Work Life (Col 3:22-25)

understanding that we will give account to the Lord for what we do. Paul goes on to say that it is from the Lord, and not from men that we will receive the reward of the inheritance. God is the one that will reward us for our work. Therefore, we are to do our work with reverence and fear.

(Col 3:22-24) "Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. {23} Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, {24} knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."

Paul not only tells slaves to do their work with sincerity of heart, but in verse 23 he tells them to do their work heartily. **Slaves are to do their work with all their heart.** Our heart is the seat of our mind. Our mind must be on our work. We cannot just go through the motions; we need to be focused and think about what we are doing.

Our heart is also the seat of our emotions. We need to be excited about our work. I see people get up early to go fishing or hunting. That's easy because they are excited about that. Well, we need to be excited about our work. We need to be passionate about the things that we do. We need to find the things in life that excite us and that we are passionate about. It is no problem to motivate workers who are passionate about what they are doing. It is a terrible problem to have people doing things that they are not excited and passionate about. An excited, motivated, and passionate worker is a very valuable person in any organization.

One year I was paired with Charlie Moritz at the Bing Crosby Pebble Beach Pro-Am. It is now called the AT&T Classic. Charlie was the CEO of Dun & Bradstreet. We had a good time together, and he invited my family to stay with him at the Westchester Classic in Rye, New York. I asked him if his house was big enough for our clan, and he just smiled and nodded yes. He had a four-acre estate with a guest house, pool house, and large mansion. He had plenty of room for our family. He even let the PGA Tour have the Bible study at his house that week.

Charlie and I had a conversation one night about employees. I asked him what he looked for when he was interviewing and hiring a new employee. He told me that he did not look at what the person knew, but at the motives and ambitions of the person. He wanted to know what made the person tick. He was really looking for what was in the heart of the person. He said if someone was passionate and excited about what they do, the person would work hard. The person could be taught things that they did not know, but it was difficult to inspire and get someone passionate about their work. Charlie was looking for people that would do their work heartily, just as Paul exhorts us to work.

In Ecclesiastes 9:10, Solomon tells us to do whatever our hand finds to do with all our might. He is telling us the same thing as Paul, that we need to do our work with all our heart, with all that is within us. It does not matter whether we are making \$7.25 an hour or \$200.00 an hour, our work needs to be done with all our might. Solomon says whatever your hand finds to do. If we are going to do something, it needs to be done with our hearts and with all our might. We must give it our best effort. If we work like this, people will want us to work for them.

(Ecclesiastes 9:10) "Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going."

10 Live A New Work Life (Col 3:22-25)

Paul concludes his instructions to slaves by telling them that it is the Lord who will reward them for their work. Our work is to be done unto the Lord, not for men. And it is the Lord who will ultimately reward us, not men. He says, “knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.” He goes on to say that if a slave does wrong, he will also receive the consequences for that wrong. People are rewarded and people also receive consequences for their work. The Lord may use the employer to reward or render consequences, but ultimately it is from the Lord.

(Col 3:24-25) “knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. {25} For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.”

When a person works, he needs to be paid. The scripture is clear that the hard working farmer ought to be the first to receive part of the produce. We are not to muzzle an ox while he is threshing. A laborer is worthy of his wages. There are numerous scriptures telling us to pay our laborers. We are warned against holding back the wages of our workers. Therefore, when someone goes to work for an employer, he should not expect to do his work for free and just wait for God to pay him his wages. God pays us our wages through our employer. He may also give us some other bonuses and rewards through other means, but our primary income will be through our employer. We should give thanks to the Lord for our provision, knowing that everything ultimately comes from Him.

When you go to work for someone, you should be paid fairly for your work. Do not accept lower pay and just trust God to reward you. You should negotiate a fair wage and then you should be paid for your work. I have seen Christians accept much lower wages than they should, and then say that they are just trusting God. I have seen this to be true, particularly among pastors and those earning their living by the gospel. No, they are being taken advantage of. Churches are some of the worst offenders for taking advantage of their pastors, associate pastors, and youth pastors.

In Paul’s letter to Timothy, he tells churches to give double honor to those who work hard at preaching and teaching. Pastors who do a good job preaching and teaching need to be well paid so that their needs are met. Some pastors have set up the church so that they control the money that comes in. Why? They do not want to be taken advantage of and be paid poorly. This is a result of churches taking advantage of their pastors. Unfortunately, there are some pastors who take advantage of their churches by taking large salaries. If the churches had a proper government, a Senior Pastor would not be able to do this. Having a team of pastors rather than a King Pastor is the Biblical model, and the most sound model. A presbytery or team of pastors provides the necessary accountability that churches and pastors need.

(1 Tim 5:17-18) “The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. {18} For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

2. The responsibilities of masters

A. Treat slaves with justice and fairness.

Now Paul turns his attention to the master. He gives balanced teachings. He addresses the wives and then he addresses husbands. He addresses children and he addresses fathers or parents. He addresses slaves and he addresses masters. In any relationship, there are two sides and both parties must be making their best efforts. It is difficult for an employee to continue working at a job where he is unappreciated, or treated poorly.

(Col 4:1) “Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.”

Paul continues by telling masters to grant their slaves justice and fairness. Even though this verse is in chapter 4, I believe that it is a continuation of the preceding thought. I do not believe the chapter break should have been put here. I believe that chapter four should have begun with verse 2. Remember, verse and chapter numbers were not in the original manuscripts; they were added by the translators. They are very helpful tools, but they are not part of the inspired text.

Paul says for masters to grant their slaves justice and fairness. The Greek word for grant is *parecho* (Strong's G3930), which means to furnish, present, offer, or grant. A master or an employer must provide the right work environment. He must furnish the right work conditions.

I had an owner one time who scheduled staff meetings at 4:30 on Friday afternoons. Our staff started work at 7:00 a.m. Most workers arrived between 6:30 and 6:45. By Friday afternoon at 4:30, they had already put in 45-50 hours. It was not time to start a meeting. It was not just or fair to make these salaried employees start a meeting at 4:30. The meeting should have been scheduled for 2:00 and they should have been allowed to go home after the meeting. The owner did not grant his employees a work environment that was just and fair.

At Murchison Drilling Schools, our Training Administrator is on salary, and works from 8:30 until 4:30. On the first day of each class, which begins at 7:00, I ask her to come in at 6:30. She helps get students situated in class, makes copies of their passports, and welcomes them to our school. Because I do not want to take advantage of her, I let her go home at 3:00 on Friday afternoons.

When my instructors conduct training at other locations, they frequently travel on week-ends. I give them comp time, which means they can take some additional days off to make up for the week-ends they have given up. We want to be fair to our employees.

B. Treat them as unto the Lord.

Paul tells masters that they should grant their slaves justice and fairness, knowing that they have a Master in heaven. In other words, they need to keep in mind that the Lord is over them and watching the way that they are treating their servants. They should treat them as unto the Lord or as if it were the Lord they were ruling over.

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(Col 4:1) “Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.”

I am reminded of a couple of different teachings that Jesus gave His disciples. In Matthew 25, we have the account of judgment and the separating the sheep from the goats. The righteous are blessed and the Lord tells them that they fed Him when He was hungry and gave Him something to drink when He was thirsty. They visited Him when He was sick and when He was in prison. They respond by saying, “Lord, when did we see You sick, or in prison?” He replies, “to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.” We must treat people the way that we would treat the Lord, because ultimately it is unto the Lord.

(Matt 25:40) “The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'”

In Matthew 18, He spoke to them about forgiveness. He gave a story of a slave that was forgiven his debt, but then he did not forgive someone who owed him a smaller debt. Then, He said our Heavenly Father will also do the same to us if we do not forgive our brother from our heart. We should treat people the way that the Lord has treated us. He has given us mercy and forgiveness. He has treated us justly and fairly. We need to keep this principle in mind in how we treat others.

(Mat 18:32-35) “Then summoning him, his lord *said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. {33} 'Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' {34} "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. {35} "My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

Conclusion

Paul spoke about slaves and masters. I see the application of this today in the work arena. Employees should gain understanding of what is being asked of them and carry it out faithfully. Employees should do their work as unto the Lord, not for men. Employees should do their work with all their heart and with sincerity of heart.

Employers need to treat people fairly and with equality. They need to keep in mind that the Lord is watching the way that they are treating their employees. Therefore, they should treat them the way that they would want the Lord to treat them.

The transformation and new life that we are to experience from laying aside the old self and putting on the new self is to affect every relationship in our lives. It should affect our marriage. It should affect our relationship with our children. It should affect our relationship with those we work for and those that work for us.

Next week, our missions team will be sharing with our congregation. In two more weeks, we will be looking at how this new life we are to be living is to affect our other relationships. Paul instructs us to conduct ourselves with wisdom towards outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. God wants this transformation to go beyond ourselves, our families, and our relationships at work. He wants us to reach out to the outsiders. We are to be the salt of the earth.

10 Live A New Work Life (Col 3:22-25)

(Col 4:5) “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.”

This morning, we have our monthly time of prayer. If you have a personal prayer request this morning, let me know and I will be glad to pray with you. If you have a more general prayer request, let Larry know and he can make sure that we pray for it this morning.

We have microphones located in the aisles. Please use one of the microphones when you pray so that we can all hear and agree with you in prayer. I am now turning the meeting over to Larry to facilitate.

Introduction (Gal 5:16, Rom 4:20, Col 3:22-25)

- God's work was _____. (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31, 2:1-2)
- Solomon wrote extensively about _____.
 - Working hard. (Pr 14:23, 18:9, 21:25, Ec 5:12)
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 - Committing our work to the Lord. (Pr 16:3)
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 - Enjoying the fruit of our work. (Pr 31:31, Ec 2:11, 3:13, 5:18-19, 9:7-9)
 - Working honestly. (Pr 13:11)
- We spend the most _____ with our families and the people at work.

1. The responsibilities of slaves (Col 3:22-24)

- A. Do your work as unto the _____. (Col 3:23-24, Rom 12:1)
- B. Do your work with the right heart _____.
- Slaves need to listen _____ and carefully follow instructions.
 - Slaves are to obey with _____ of heart. (Col 3:22, Jam 1:8, 4:8)
 - Slaves are to do their work to _____ the Lord.
 - Slaves are to obey their masters, _____ the Lord. (Col 3:22-24)
 - Slaves are to do their work with all their _____. (Eccl 9:10)

2. The responsibilities of masters

- A. Treat slaves with _____ and _____. (Col 4:1)
- B. Treat them as unto the _____. (Col 4:1, Matt 25:40, 18:32-35)

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