

## ***Work Hard***

*Extend pity to no man because he has to work. If he is worth his salt, he will work. I envy the man who has work worth doing and does it well. There never has been devised, and there never will be devised, any law which will enable a man to succeed save by the exercise of those qualities which have always been the prerequisites of success, the qualities of hard work, of keen intelligence, of unflinching will.—Theodore Roosevelt*

Work is the most basic input for achieving prosperity. Human effort is required to produce something that wasn't there before. Imagine for a moment that you are the victim of a plane crash in a remote wilderness area. Suddenly you find yourself in a hostile environment and all the material things that you have come to rely upon have been stripped away. You have no food, no water, no shelter, and no tools. Enter human labor. By doing work, you can immediately begin to change your circumstances.

One of the first steps you will need to take is to find or build shelter. This idea might seem surprising, since most people might name food as the first priority. Actually, food is further down the list—people can survive for weeks without any food at all. But if it is cold or raining or you are in the middle of an open area in the hot sun, the danger of becoming too cold or too hot is the most immediate threat.

So, you begin working to find or build a shelter. If you can't find a cave or other covered area, you might start collecting logs and branches to build a simple lean-to. After this task is accomplished, or in the middle of it if you become thirsty, you can proceed to look for a nearby source of water. Then you might start looking for food—plants that could be collected or small animals that could be hunted. Later, you could build a fire (assuming you had been trained in primitive fire-making methods).

If your stay in this wilderness area were extended for a considerable time, you would have already provided yourself with basic necessities at the very outset. You could then continue to exert yourself to provide even more creature comforts: perhaps a better shelter, a flint knife and other tools, a system to channel water closer to your camp, etc.

After finally being rescued, many of these surpluses that you had produced with your labor probably wouldn't mean very much to you anymore. They would have little value back in the civilized world. But the idea that you can use your labor to

gradually improve your circumstances works in any environment, whether it be a wilderness or an urban metropolis. The only difference is the starting point.

Most people don't start out as homeless on the street, although the same principle will work even in this scenario. But if you have shelter (perhaps a small apartment or house), water, and food—and this is all your paycheck will cover, the pathway forward is very obvious. You will need to work more.

As the additional funds come in there may be other comforts that you would like to purchase, such as a television set or better clothing. But you must be very careful here. It is possible to spend all of your surplus on additional creature comforts without ever fundamentally changing your circumstances. You may have new tennis shoes, a flat screen TV, and an iPhone, but you will still be bound to using the majority of your funds just to pay the rent and buy groceries. There will be no security and no reserves for an emergency (such as if you get sick or have an accident and must remain in bed for a few weeks). It will be far better to use the additional money coming in to build up a reserve fund in case you need it.

Nevertheless, all of us will naturally want to improve our overall circumstances—have a nicer place to live, wear nicer clothes, eat better food, and even have time and money for leisure and entertainment. Depending on the type of job you have, just working more won't make this possible—there are only 24 hours in a day and it will be necessary to use a good chunk of it to rest. The only way we will be able to increase our income at this point will be to further develop the skills that we can offer to the job market.