

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WORK HARD?

Work smarter, not harder.

Yeah, right.



Eric Geiger recently published a blog: [3 Leadership Clichés I Never Use](#). He included this cliché—Work smarter, not harder—as a cliché that “overstates intelligence and thus minimizes grit, persistence, and work ethic.” Sure, work smart, but you’re still going to have to work hard.

So I’ve been pondering one question over the past week: **What does it mean to work hard?**

In the not-too-distant past, our ancestors worked long, hard hours. They worked 12+ hours a day, six days a week. The fortunate ones may have only worked ten-hour days.

In 1926, Henry Ford did something radical. He only required his employees to work five days a week, a total of 40 hours—and he didn’t reduce their pay. This seems so commonplace today—in fact, we treat the 40-hour work week as something we’re entitled to—but that was big stuff back then. Other companies followed suit, and in 1940, the 40-hour work week became law.

We began working less hours, but productivity went up. Hmmm.

I’ll vouch for that. I typically work 9-10 hours a day, but I notice that after about 10 hours, my mind

gets mushy and my thinking devolves to the intellectual depth of a tuna fish sandwich. Or even worse: reality TV.

Working harder does not equate longer hours. Or harder hours.

Working hard is striving for excellence. And we don’t reach excellence unless we’re persistent.

Musicians get this.

“How do you get to Carnegie Hall?”
“Practice.”



Pablo Cassals was considered one of the world’s best cellists. Even into his 80s, he practiced 4-5 hours a day. When someone asked him why he would do that at his age, he said, “Because I think I am making progress.”

Our world has potential Pablo Cassals we will never hear from because the desire for excellence is replaced by binge watching on Netflix and hours of Pokemon Go.

Followers of Christ have a mandate to strive for excellence.

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord” ([Col. 3:23](#)).

I want to please Christ in everything I do—including the quality of my work. And if I am not submitting my best work—if I am not striving for excellence—can I say I am truly pleasing Him?

Be excellent.