

Work without Christ is Meaningless

Series: Finding the Meaning of Life

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Introduction: Tonight we continue in our series called “Finding the Meaning of Life”.

Thus far we have seen that you can have all the knowledge and human wisdom this world can offer and it won't satisfy you. Satisfying all your curiosities will not satisfy you. What if I had all my curiosities satisfied—nope. Tomorrow you'll have another one. You'll always be hungry.

What about pleasure. What if I had a wife that would satisfy me in the bedroom? What if I had all the best food and never went hungry? What if I could actually live all my dreams, build what ever I wanted, vacation where ever I wanted. Nope that won't satisfy. Solomon partied and banqueted more than any one on earth and it didn't satisfy him.

Tonight we are going to try another experiment. What about work? Can I be happy if I make the goal of my life work? Will work make me happy? Will job security and a dream job make me happy.

Guess what the answer is? NO WAY.

There's a guy here tonight. At one time in his life, his job was his life. He neglected everything so that he could be a success at work and provide for his family. But he wasn't happy. He had to give up that idol of work and something else there, someone else there. He had to make Christ his joy, and now, this man is satisfied. If you don't believe this man's story, then let me tell you another story. It's Solomon's story.

Solomon says that *work will never satisfy you*. I know you believe me, but let's listen to Solomon.

A. **Proposition:** Work will not ultimately satisfy you.

Ecclesiastes 2:11, “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.”

So here we have Solomon's summary statement of the rest of the chapter: he was the king—every thing he imagined he built. He put his heart and soul into working and imagining and not just having one business, but a hundred. And at the end of the day, he got no deep satisfaction or meaning from all his work.

We can work and work, but what are we doing it for? Wisdom? Wealth? Pleasure? Why do you work? At the end of the day, any reason for working that is found “under the sun” is worthless. It’s going to leave you empty and aching.

The New Testament says it this way, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26).

B. Power to prove the proposition: Solomon had all the power and money to prove this proposition.

You can’t outdo Solomon. **Verse 12**, “And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what *can* the man *do* that cometh after the king? *even* that which hath been already done.” He has all the wisdom to prove that work cannot satisfy you. Now sit back and watch him prove it. Solomon’s first point is so obvious, but most people miss it.

I. You must not mechanically go through work. You need to go through work and all of life with your eyes open. Look at **verse 13**, “Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.”

You spend a lot of time at work. Keep your head on straight. Do it for the glory of God. Whether you are talking about your daily schedule at work, and all you do there, or the media contact you have with browsing the internet, watching the TV or the time you spend with family, church life—don’t ever park your brain at the door. His philosophy is simply this, “It’s better to have you eyes opened than your eyes shut.” I don’t think anyone wants to argue with that. I never met the guy who’s like, “Man, blind people, they got it going on. Us sighted people, we’re the ones who are all messed up.” Philosophically, he’s going, “***You can not afford to not pay attention to your life.*** You can coast on a lot of things; don’t coast on this one.”

II. Getting your Dream Job is NOT the answer. 14 The wise man’s eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that **one event** [DEATH] happeneth to them all. 15 Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also *is* vanity. 16 For *there is* no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now *is* in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise *man*? as the fool. 17 Therefore I hated life; because the **work** that is wrought under the sun *is* grievous unto me: for all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

Solomon’s “work” literally means his daily responsibilities. He had the best job in the world. He was the center of his own universe as king. He tried to get fulfillment and satisfaction out of his work. All the result of Solomon’s exercise of his wisdom—his fantastic palace and gardens and building projects—he realized putting his hope in those things are **vain**, because they do not prepare him for death.

A. ***The best DREAM JOB cannot prepare you for death.*** Verse 14, “I myself perceived also that one event [DEATH] happeneth to them all.” Whether you are rich or poor, you are going to die. Wise or foolish, death is coming. Your dream job will not change that. Verse 16, “how dieth the wise man? as the fool”. You can get your dream job, but listen to me, one day you are going to die. Whether you are picking up garbage, or you are the President of the United States, you are going to die. How is your dream job going to help you then. Your job is not your Savior. Jesus Christ is.

So there are people that try to make work the very purpose of their life. That’s never going to satisfy you. It’s not enough to satisfy anyone’s soul. Some people work for work itself. But ultimately, it’s going to get old. It will not satisfy no matter how many dream jobs you have.

B. ***The best DREAM JOB cannot satisfy you.*** Your best dream job will never fulfill you for the long term. It may tantalize you for a year or so, but it will leave you empty. Verse 17, “Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”

Your dream job is not going to satisfy you. It can’t. Go ahead and dream. Say, if only I could work the dayshift, then everything would be better. WRONG. If only I could work the night shift, then all would be better. WRONG. If only I had that promotion life would be better. WRONG. If only I had my own business, I would be happy. WRONG. If only I wasn’t unemployed, then I would really be happy. WRONG AGAIN. If only, if only... Wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong.

Happiness comes from Christ, not from your dream job. There is NO DREAM JOB. It’s a sham. It’s a vain imagination. It doesn’t exist. It cannot satisfy no matter how great it is.

Transition: But maybe you say, “Ok, I’ll never be totally satisfied working, but I’m going to work my head off trying to get rich. My fantastic paycheck will make me happy”. Wrong again. Here’s point 3...

III. **If your goal for working is your paycheck, you’re going to be depressed.** Check out verses 18-23, “Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. 19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity. 20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. 21 For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil. 22 For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he

hath laboured under the sun? 23 For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.”

If your goal is a paycheck you are going to be depressed. Why?

A. First, because time is ticking, and your paycheck will not always be yours. Verse 18, “Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.” You get all this money, and then you die and leave it to someone else.

1. Your paycheck cannot satisfy you because you can't take it with you. Remember what Job said in **Job 1:21** And said, “Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither”.
 - **Proverbs 23:5**, “Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not [will not last]? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.”
 - **1 John 2:17**, “the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever”.

Paul told Timothy in **1 Timothy 6:7**, “For we brought nothing into *this* world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”The only thing that will satisfy the human soul is something eternal.

2. There was a song that was popular when I was growing up that said, “I will always love you.” You never hear songs like “I will love will sometimes love you”. People don't want things that last only a short time. Their dream is to have something forever.
3. How do fairy tales end? And they all lived “happily ever after”. Why is that a fairy tale? Because it's not true. No one lives happily ever after unless they know Christ. Why? Because “it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment”.

If your goal is a paycheck you are going to be depressed. Why?

B. Because fantastic wealth as a result of work will not satisfy you.

Verse 19-23, “And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise *man* or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This *is* also vanity. 20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. 21 For there is a man whose labour *is* in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it *for* his portion. This also *is* vanity and a great evil. 22 For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? 23 For all his days

are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.”

It will only depress you. You know why? Because once you achieve it, it can only bring you bitterness and “vexation of spirit”. What you thought would satisfy you leaves you empty. What’s the goal of work? Is it to be fantastically rich? Being fantastically rich will not help your soul.

Transition: Now don’t go to your employer tomorrow and say, “Here’s my letter of resignation—my pastor says work’s bad”. I will not back you up if you do that!

IV. The Only Way to find Satisfaction in Work is to Make God the Focus of Your Work. Verse 24-26, “There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it [enjoyment of work] was from the hand of God. 25 For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I? 26 For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.”

1. Work occupies a lot of our life. Some might make the great mistake of separating their work from their worship of God. We need to understand how everything we do, especially our work, is our worship to God. In other words, worship is not just on Sundays and Wednesdays, but it is us valuing and honoring and adoring God every minute of every day. We serve Jesus Christ at church, at home, at work, and at play. Everything we do is worship, especially all the time we spend at work.
2. Solomon says that there is nothing better in life than to be able to sit down and enjoy one’s labor, and yet he says, “I have discovered that that enjoyment is the grant of God.” Verse 24, “This also I saw, that it [enjoyment of work] was from the hand of God.
3. Work is only eternally satisfying if it is done for the Lord. **Colossians 3:23**, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men”. Some young Christians are idealistic. They think that if they could only be in ministry then all would be well. Every job you do is ministry. You are doing it for the Lord!
4. God commands us to work quietly and faithfully. **1 Thessalonians 4:11**, “And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; 12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing”.
5. God created work before the fall. **Genesis 2:15**, “And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.”

6. If you separate your work from your purpose of living, that is, “to glorify God and to enjoy him forever”. If your purpose of working is separated from glorifying God, you are going to be one miserable soul. **Verse 26**, “God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.”

The “sinner”—the unbeliever—is going to get only one thing ultimately from his work—“to the sinner he [GOD] giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.”

Conclusion: 99% of all conflict comes from what I'm about to say. The majority of human beings believe that people and circumstances exist to make me happy. So, when they're not happy, who's to blame? People and circumstances. So if you do not ascribe enjoyment as belonging to Christ and Christ alone, you almost ensure that your reality will be filled with bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness. Here's how it plays itself out over and over and over again. A man and he's got a wife and he's got children and he's got a decent job and he's got a nice house but something's still gnawing at his soul. So, what could it be? “It can't be that something's wrong with me. It has to be someone who's supposed to be making me happy is not making me happy.” So they begin to look for imperfection in the circle that's around them, and they'll always find it. So then, this is the game that we start playing...

- I'd be happier if I were married.
- I'm married... “Well, I'd be happier if my wife would have more sex with me.
- I'd be happier if I had a bigger house.
- I'd be happier if they would honor me at work. They don't appreciate me there. They don't respect me here.”

And everything becomes about what everyone else is doing because you're asking people to fill a void that they can never fill. And this is Solomon's big argument.

Only Christ can satisfy. Work cannot satisfy!!