

A Wise Perspective on Work

Do you find joy and satisfaction in your work? Or do you consider work a necessary evil? Many of us spend huge portions of our life working, sometimes doing paid work, other times unpaid. You might say that work is a common theme in each of our lives. It's also a common theme in the book of Ecclesiastes. In his writings, the Teacher repeatedly comes to the conclusion that work, labor, and toil are meaningless. But is it really that simple? If we carefully study the Teacher's conclusions, we'll discover some insightful wisdom about work and our identity, about why our motivation for work matters, about work/life balance, and about the secret for finding joy and satisfaction in our work.

AWARENESS Before listening reflect on what you already know or understand about topics we'll cover in the episode.

- How do you feel about work?
- Does your work inform your identity a little or a lot? Why?



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE: [A Wise Perspective on Work](#)

READ [Ecclesiastes 4:4-8, 5:10-15, 9:7-10](#)

REFLECTION After listening, consider the following questions:

- Recall some of the reasons—both negative and positive—that the Teacher identifies as motivations for work. Then reflect: What motivates you to work? Has your motivation always been the same or has it changed over time or in different circumstances?
- How does it make you feel to know God approves of your work? How would you like to “relax into the grace of God” and enjoy life more, knowing God is satisfied with your work and you don't need to work to earn his favor? Is it important for us as Christians to value a healthy work/life balance? Why?
- How has God called and gifted you to the work you do? Share details of your story and why you feel this way. If you do not feel called and gifted by God to do the work you're doing, why not? Are there other tasks or non-paid work in your life that you do feel called to?
- Can you think of an example of undramatic ways you've seen good happen because a person is doing their job well?

RELATED PASSAGES for further study

[Matthew 6:19-21](#), [1 Timothy 6:17-19](#), [1 Corinthians 10:31-33](#), [Ephesians 2:8-10](#)

CONCLUSION

Consider how your work can be done to God's glory. Think about how it makes a difference in the lives of others. How do you, or can you, find joy and satisfaction in your work? How might you, through your work, be the answer to someone else's prayer?

Reflect on the words of the following prayer from St. Francis of Assisi and consider how this prayer can help you maintain a proper motivation and right perspective for your work. How can it help you give glory to God with your work?

Peace Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

Close your time of reflection in prayer. Feel free to use some or all of the Prayer of St. Francis in your prayer, along with your own words.

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Printed on July 26, 2025