

Labor of Love

Scripture Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-14

Solomon despairingly tells us, in Ecclesiastes 1:8, “all things are full of labor.” In the context of the whole book of Ecclesiastes, he is telling us that man can never satisfy himself. He works and he works. Then he wants and he wants. Nothing is ever quite enough. Earthly things just don’t last. Before we were born, people labored, died and left their things to the next generation. We will labor, die and leave everything to the next generation after us. Solomon is telling us that, under the sun, it is vain to seek total satisfaction from material accomplishments and possessions. At the same time he also tells us that good and honest labor, along with taking care of our human relationships, is very satisfying when we keep God and eternity in view (Ecclesiastes 2:24; 3:9-14,22; 7:13-14; 9:7-10; 11:9-10; 12:13-14).

Ecclesiastes starts with the frustration that life is full of endless repeating cycles. Man can not break the pattern of living, laboring, then dying and losing everything (Read chapter one.) Our Scripture reading (Ecclesiastes 3:1-14) puts it in a different light: God has made beautiful seasons in our life. Our lives will be fruitful and meaningful as we include God in our thoughts, plans and deeds.

Here are some positive thoughts about labor. Let’s look at the benefits and provide a few godly reasons to enjoy labor.

We were made in God’s image.

When we make things and do labor we are following the example of God (Genesis 2:1-3,15; Exodus 20:8-11 cp. John 5:16-17; 9:4; 14:8-12; 20:21).

Hard, honest labor makes rest and recreation sweet.

One problem with laziness is that you can’t take a break (Exodus 20:8-11 cp. Mark 2:27; Ecclesiastes 5:12).

Labor is conducive to humility.

Working to physically survive helps us remember that we are dust - life is fragile (Genesis 3:19; II Thessalonians 3:10,12). Through laboring we can develop a servant’s heart – greatly valued by God (Galatians 5:13; Hebrews 6:10; I Peter 5:5).

Labor promotes reverence and gratitude for God, His creation and His provision.

As we labor we sense a connection with God's order in his creation. We depend on God's earth and His ecosystems to survive. We should be grateful for food and shelter; for strength to labor and for the labors of others (Psalm 103:1-5; 104:10-24; 107:31-43; Acts 17:27-28; Romans 11:36).

Labor brings satisfaction & sufficiency.

When we provide for ourselves we are able to be content and have a sense of being prepared (Proverbs 6:6-11; 24:3-4,27,30-34; 27:23-27; 31:10-22).

Labors enable us to give to others.

Life is not all about us. We are put on this earth to serve; to make a difference in the lives of others (Acts 20:35; Ephesians 4:28 cp. Romans 12:13).

Honest labor provides a testimony to others.

See Matthew 5:14-16; Romans 12:11,17. Paul was careful to set an example by laboring with his own hands (Acts 20:31-35; II Thessalonians 3:6-8). Idleness leads us to temptation and sin (II Thessalonians 3:11).

Labor can yield a heavenly reward.

Both earthly and spiritual labors will reap eternal dividends (Romans 12:11; I Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:17; Matthew 6:19-34; Hebrews 6:10; Revelation 14:13).

If you are weary of your own efforts to be good and of laboring to earn God's acceptance, come to Christ. He has paid the price that secures your forgiveness and allows you to have entrance into God's forever family. When Christ is your personal Lord and Savior, the good works that God wants will come through Christ, who indwells the true believer.

See Isaiah 64:6; 53:4-6; Romans 3:20-24; John 6:26-29; Matthew 11:28-30; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:8-10.