



Love or Hate Work: Ecclesiastes 2-3

Intro

Today's passage was written by someone who was super successful, but at the same time hated his life. It comes from a 3000-year-old memoir, which is part of both Hebrew and Christian Bibles. Today we look at a portion where the writer, who calls himself "the Teacher, the king in Jerusalem," reflects on the rewards and frustrations of work.

Opening Discussion

Think about your parents' careers. How outwardly successful were they? How much did they inwardly enjoy life? What do you think they found rewarding or frustrating?

Now think about your own experiences of work, including school and jobs. What has been most rewarding and what has been most frustrating about them? How do you feel about your current career path?

Observe and Interpret

We are going to see what the "Teacher" says about the rewards and frustrations of his own career. Half of us are going to look for things he found frustrating, and half will look for things he found rewarding. Underline quotes to show as examples. Now read the passage to yourself.

What did the Teacher find frustrating about his work? What did he find rewarding?

If the Teacher were to give us career advice, what do you think he would say?

Ecclesiastes is a brutally honest book, and most of it takes a raw, human perspective without mentioning God much. This passage is one of the few that does reference God quite a bit. Read the passage a second time and notice what the Teacher says about God.

Invitation to Faith

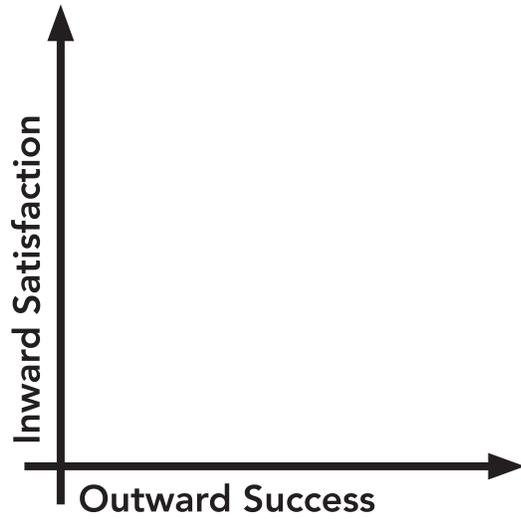
The Teacher asserts that everything is meaningless without God. But when Jesus came, he said, "I came that they might have life, and have it to the full." Meaning and love are not found on the treadmill of success, but actually in making Jesus the center of our lives and giving ourselves away like he did. What would it take for you to stop living for yourself right now and to start following Jesus?

Respond

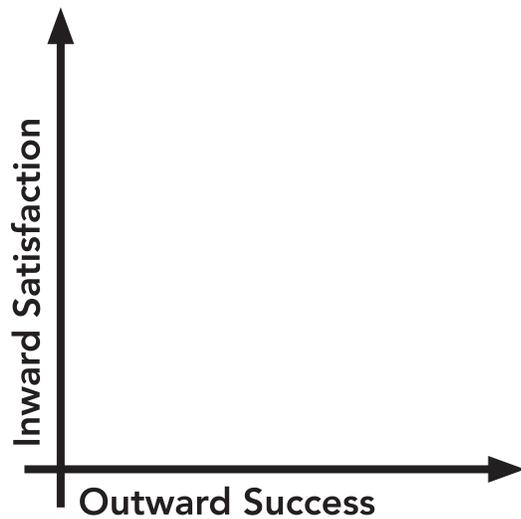


Love or Hate Work: Opening Discussion

Your Parents



You





Ecclesiastes 2:4-25

^{2:4} I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. ⁵ I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. ⁶ I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. ⁷ I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. ⁸ I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well—the delights of a man's heart. ⁹ I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. ¹⁰ I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. ¹¹ Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun... ¹⁷ So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. ¹⁸ I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me... ²⁰ So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun... ²² What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? ²³ All their days their work is grief and pain; even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless. ²⁴ A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, ²⁵ for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?

Ecc. 3:9-22

^{3:9} What do workers gain from their toil? ¹⁰ I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. ¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. ¹² I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. ¹³ That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. ¹⁴ I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him... ²² So I saw that there is nothing better for a person than to enjoy their work, because that is their lot. For who can bring them to see what will happen after them?



Your Future - GiG Guide: Session 2

Faith vs Worry: Matthew 6

Intro

For many of us in college, our future career can be a source of worry or anxiety. In this passage Jesus tells us where worry comes from, and how to overcome it. It is a part of one of Jesus' most famous teachings, called the "Sermon on the Mount."

Discussion Exercise

How do you feel about your future career? Optimistic? Worried?

Observe and interpret - Read 6:19-24

What three analogies does Jesus use? What point do you think he is trying to make with each analogy?

Apply

Do you agree or disagree with Jesus' points? Do any of Jesus' points speak to your own worries about the future?

Observe - Read 6:25-34

Jesus says three times, "Do not worry." He also gives specific reasons you should not worry, or specific ways to overcome worry. Go back through and underline each of these reasons in the text.

Interpret and Apply

Look back at the reasons you have listed. Do any of these speak to your own worries about the future?

Invitation to Faith

What would it mean for you to trust God with your future? Your whole life? Jesus' invitation is to let go of worries about your future and He will take care of you. Could you do that right now?

Respond

Pick your favorite quote from this passage and write it on this paper with these markers. Take a picture of it and make it your phone wallpaper for the week.



Faith vs Worry: Opening Discussion

When I think about my future career, I...

...have never been more optimistic.

...feel pretty relaxed and set.

...can't complain but have a few questions.

...get a bit unsettled.

...can't sleep at night.



Matthew 6: 19-34

^{6:19} "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ²² The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! ²⁴ No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. ²⁵ Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.



Jesus Interrupting: Luke 5

Opening Discussion

Who or what has most influenced your current career direction?

Intro

Most of Jesus' followers weren't even looking to become his followers. He just interrupted them. This story, from early in a biography of Jesus' life, is an example of that. Some background: 1) If you want a crowd to hear you on a beach, you'd want to speak from a boat, the acoustics act sort of like an amphitheater. 2) Fishermen at that time usually fished overnight, where the dark and quiet made catches more likely.

Observe

Read the passage, and follow the theme of the nets through the story. Where are the nets at the beginning? What happens to them next? Where do they end up?

Interpret

Let's go back and follow the nets through the story, and ask how Jesus is affecting the nets' owners at each point. How do you think they felt at each point?

Washing the nets. How is Jesus affecting their career at this point? It seems like not so much. How do you think the owners feel about him?

Nets getting dragged back into the boat so Jesus could preach: How do the owners feel about him now?

Nets being taken out into deep water and let down to fish again: How do the nets' owners feel?

Nets breaking with astounding catch of fish: How do the owners feel now? (Some background about Simon's "sinful man" response: In Jewish religion, God's things were not supposed to be touched by common people due to our contamination by sin. So the miracle made Simon feel like he was somehow in the presence of God.)

Leaving the nets?

Apply

Where is God in your life right now? In the background? Stepping in? Blessing with success? Asking you to change direction?



Invitation to Faith

Let's create space to respond to God. We are a community that is striving to create space for us all to respond to God, just like those fishermen. Like them, Jesus invites us into a relationship with him, and into a story that is bigger than ourselves, which was ultimately made possible by what he did on the cross. At the cross, all the power of sin and death died with Jesus; all the debts owed have been paid. And because Jesus rose again, we can start over. A new life centered around Him is possible. Is that something you want? If you are ready to start a relationship with Jesus for the first time or if you want to come back to him and join his community in pursuing his purposes in the world, I would like to invite you to pray this prayer with me.

"God, I believe Jesus is your Son, the Savior of the world. I believe He died on the cross for me and took away all my sins, paying the cost for all of us. I believe in my heart that you raised Jesus from the dead and that He is alive today. I ask that you forgive me for the wrongs that I have done. I receive your forgiveness into my life. By faith I receive Jesus as King over every part of my life. Change me; make me the person you want me to be. I commit to be a member of Your family on earth, pursuing your purposes and mission for the world. I give You my heart; I give You my life; I want to know You more! In Jesus' name, Amen."

It's important to tell others about this new faith decision. Who do you want to tell? (If you are not ready, what do you think it would take for you to begin this kind of relationship with Jesus?)



Jesus Interrupting: Opening Discussion

What influences your current career path?





Luke 5: 1-11

^{5:1} One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. ² He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. ³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." ⁵ Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." ⁶ When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷ So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. ⁸ When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" ⁹ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰ and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." ¹¹ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.