

The Gift of Work

"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." Genesis 2:15-17

We are designed to physically and spiritually work; to tend, cultivate and preserve.

¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children..." Genesis 3:16

"To Adam he said... 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.' " Genesis 3:17

Toil is work removed of God's provision, favor and blessing.

²⁰ Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, ²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. ²² For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering..." Romans 8:20-23 (NLT)

There is a Biblical & Realistic difference between work and toil. (Eccl. 2:10-11; 22-23)

Toil is meaningless. (Eccl. 4:1-8)

The fruit of toil is oppression, exploitation, loneliness, and misery. (Prov.24:30-34)

Work is meaningful.

"Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, ¹²so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody." 1Thess. 4:11-12

Our lives and work should be attractive to outsiders.

We are all spiritually called, in Christ, to work to bring God glory.

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Eph. 2:10

"But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you" 1Peter 2:9 (MSG)

We are externally called to a vocation, in order to tend, cultivate and preserve God's creation.

"And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father." Col. 3:17 (NLT)

"Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him." 1Cor 7:20

Small Group Questions

1. What does it mean to tend, cultivate and preserve? Can you think of a time in your own "work" where you have done that?
2. What do you think are the Biblical and realistic differences between work and toil?
3. What does a life look like when someone ends up toiling? Do you see things like oppression, exploitation, loneliness and/or misery when people toil?
4. Read 1 Thess. 4:11-12. What does this verse have to do with our discussion of rest and margin, and in particular, our work?
5. We talked about being called in two ways - spiritually and externally. How would you describe them both, and specifically, what do you believe you are externally called to?