



IN SEARCH OF THE DREAM JOB

Work can be disappointing - should we expect more or is this as good as it gets?

Work is a subject that is commonly complained about. Whether it's a matter of stress, boredom, mismatched skills, unjust treatment, feeling undervalued, lack of motivation, or a range of things in between, there are regular disconnections between how it is and how we believe it should be. So, should we keep trying to find the perfect job, or is there no such thing?



THINGS TO DO/QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

TO BEGIN...

- If you could choose to do any job at all as a long term work option, what would you choose to do?
- What would be your 2-3 biggest reasons or motivations for choosing to do this job?

1. FALLING APART IN THE GARDEN

In the Garden of Eden, God provided a structure of **purpose**, **freedom**, and **limitation** to give shape to human living (Genesis 2:15-17). But before too long, the first people went beyond the boundaries in search of *more* than what God had given them. As a result, the trust relationship with God was broken, a healthy balance was lost, and everything started to unravel and fall apart. One of those things was *work*.

Read Genesis 3:17-19 (see text box)

- From this passage, what do you notice about any consequences of this 'falling apart' for the worker and for the work itself?

In the Book of Ecclesiastes, the Teacher makes numerous straight-talking observations about work and life.

Read Ecclesiastes 2 (see text box on the next page for extracts to read)

- How does the Teacher describe what the doing of the work is like for the worker?
- What does the Teacher say about how the worker feels about the results and value of the work done?
- Can you relate to any of these reflections or experiences of the Teacher? What is your experience of work?

To Adam, (God) said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." - Genesis 3:17-19

- Given the verses we've looked at in Genesis and Ecclesiastes, do you think there could be any type of work you could do that would not involve at least some toil and meaninglessness?

ECCLESIASTES 2

"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 labour, 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..."

20 "So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labour under the sun. 21 For a person may labour with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. 22 What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labour 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?"

- Ecclesiastes 2:4-25

"Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them. 21 Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you--although if you can gain your freedom, do so. 22 For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave. 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings." 1

- 1 Corinthians 7:20-23

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

- Colossians 3:23-24

2. REDEEMING WORK

If the effect of the Fall on our work is so wide-ranging, how does the redeeming work of God change things? There are numerous ways, but here we will consider three things:

Our value to God is not tied to what we do for work (1 Corinthians 7:20-23 see text box). In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul tells them their job will not change their status and value with God. He says if they want to and are able to change, then that's fine, but he is adamant: that will make no change to their status in God's eyes.

God is the Lord and ultimate authority over every aspect of our lives, including our work.

Whatever the work, we are to do it as an expression of our love and service to God. He is our audience, our chief reference point, our boss (Colossians 3:23-24, 1 Cor 7:22-23 see text box). God rarely eliminates difficulties, but instead calls us to faithfulness *in* the troubles. Success and meaning can be found in focusing on him in the work and following his lead.

Enjoyment is a gift from God (Ecclesiastes 2:24-25, 3:13, 5:19, 6:2). Ecclesiastes reminds us that enjoyment from work doesn't automatically come with the type of work we do. It is a gift from God. And sometimes the gift is there, but we just don't take advantage of it.

CHOOSE ONE OF THESE IDEAS AND CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- Given the ongoing presence of 'fallen-ness' in work, how might this idea help me live with contentment and meaning within the 'mixed bag' of my actual work situation?
- What practical things can I do to help me see my work differently and do my work in a way that pleases God?



THOUGHT TO FINISH

Work in a fallen world will to some degree be frustrating, unjust, tiresome, and lacking meaning and value. But the Good News changes things. Jesus didn't avoid tough things. Rather, he confronted opposition and painful death and came out the other side alive. So too we can find meaning, order, and beauty out of the brokenness of our work. One day, God will restore a rightness to everything, but until then, our best chance of finding a dream job will be to follow the lead of the Dream-Maker.