

# Old Testament Survey

## *Ecclesiastes*

Does anything mean anything?





## Main Point

**Point your work life towards God, and let God change your work life**



**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. I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me.**

Ecclesiastes 2: 17-18 NIV



**And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun.**

Ecclesiastes 2: 19-20 NIV



**For a person may labor 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.**

Ecclesiastes 2: 21 NIV



## The Future

- ❑ Someone else may lose what he worked for
  - ❑ Exercise no control over what they have
- ❑ Next generation didn't work for what they'll get
  - ❑ Inherit possessions but not work ethic





**What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? All their days their work is grief and pain; even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless.**

Ecclesiastes 2: 22-23 NIV



## The Present

- ❑ What comes of work right now
- ❑ Grief, pain, and sleepless nights
- ❑ Work beats people up



**And I saw that all toil and all achievement  
spring from one person's envy of another. This  
too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.  
Fools fold their hands and ruin themselves.  
Better one handful with tranquility than two  
handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.**

Ecclesiastes 4: 4-6 NIV



## Why Work

- ❑ Comes from a place of envy
- ❑ Try to work hard just to be better than someone
- ❑ Work isn't about the work



## Our Perspective On Work

**“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)**



# Our Perspective On Work

Don't see God as your boss, but as an investor in your work



## The Results of Our Work

**“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.”** (Matthew 6:19-20)



## The Results of Our Work

- ❑ All of our stuff is temporal
- ❑ Store up God's gladness in what you do
- ❑ It is in how we act
- ❑ God invested his grace, kindness, and compassion in us





## When Work Beats us Down

**“Then Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls’” (Matthew 11:28-30)**



## When Work Beats us Down

- ❑ Look at what Jesus provides
  - ❑ Rest, reprieve, relief
  - ❑ His yoke
- ❑ Give over stress and grief to Him
  - ❑ Let Him lighten the load



## When Work Beats us Down

**Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4: 6-7 NLT)**



## When Work Beats us Down

- ❑ Pray right away
- ❑ Take in the peace of Jesus



## Why Work

**The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Genesis 2: 15)**



## Why Work

- ❑ We were created to care for what God created
- ❑ God gave you your work as an opportunity
- ❑ Invest in what God created like He invested in you



## Closing

- ❑ We are created to work
- ❑ Think about seeing work through the lens of Jesus
- ❑ Then see your new attitude about work



## Audio file

[Ecclesiastes Work Audio 1.mp3](#)

## Transcript

My favorite job. I won't say being a pastor either, since Julie didn't say it. I loved being a barista and managing a coffee shop. I did that for about 7 years before we had kids. It was a lot of fun. Talk with everybody. Monday mornings were actually the best people you don't want to get up like I do because nobody came that early except for like the three old guys that we would just talk about the Packers for like an hour and. That was the first hour and a half of my work day. So we drink our coffee like I wasn't working. I like all the people I got to know but it was. Fun, I enjoyed it. It was a good job. Why am I talking about work today? That's kind of a contentious topic. Sometimes for people, well it's because we're going to talk about work today and the responsibilities that come with our work. If you haven't been with us the last few weeks we've been in Ecclesiastes where our writer is a very as we talked about. That's half empty. Kind of guy pessimistic guy and what he's doing is he's on the search for meaning why we titled the series. Does anything mean anything? He is just looking for the filling of the doughnut we keep bringing that back, right? He's biting into it and wants to find meaning. Somewhere so today he in essence talks about work he uses. You'll hear the word, toil, he tries to find meaning in his toil. That word varies in meaning. It's used a bunch in the Bible. It's used throughout Ecclesiastes in a few different ways. In general, it would be like a labor or exertion or a struggle. Also again used in the context of just your job. What you do. Today I want you to think of it a little bit as like your daily responsibilities. What do you have to do and that could be your actual job. Could be parenting, doing things around the house, but kind of the the daily responsibilities that require a mental, physical and emotional exertion and kind of work. Not necessarily just your eight to five. Grind it out kind of job. But your daily responsibilities and what happens with those? And why do we put ourselves through this kind of work? So I think what's important with work and what we're gonna talk about today is perspective and how perspective changes things so much. Sam put this first picture up that we have what's happening in this picture. Somebody tell me? Someone's falling off a Cliff, right? That's what we're seeing here? Go to the next picture. Now what's happening? Someone's maybe jumping to someone else. It's the same picture we're just looking at it from a different perspective. Changing how we look at it. The angle, the orientation of the picture, which is like the position of something. Or the direction of something. The way something is pointed. That's how we're going to think about work today that we want to point your work life towards. God's not out, so not thinking about work as being this outward thing, but point our work life towards God and then let God change your work life. We all have different ways we think about work. Many of us. It's up here we go again. Or I have to go back to it's back to the grind? Some of you might say, man, I love what I do. In either case, this applies because we can either. Hey God's going to help me see work and maybe a better way or if I already love it. God's going to enhance what work can be like for me, that's what we're going to try to get at today, so we're going. To look at it from the perspective of God. Before we get to our own jobs, we got to see what our writer has to say. Many of you know where this is going. It's probably not going to be Uber positive, but we're going to do it anyway, so we're going to read Ecclesiastes 2. We're going to start with 17 through 21. It'll be up here also in your Bibles. On the table. There should be bookmarks in Ecclesiastes 2, so we're going



to start. With two 17 through 21. Let's see what our writer has to. 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. I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish, yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil. Into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun, for a person may labor with wisdom, knowledge, and skill. And must leave all they own to another who is not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great Miss Fortune. He starts off by saying, so I hated life. What a way to start. Right? Work means nothing. I hate it. So again, he gives us his findings right away. He does not leave us in suspense. He's like, Yep, tried it with work. Nope, that was terrible. He calls it grievous. It's a burden or it's a weight he is upset about it and he gives us a few reasons why and the main one starting off is he's upset about what happens with what he works for. Kind of what the results of his work or what comes from it. What is in essence, you know bequeath they're left in succession? He comes from a kingly line, right? So there is succession in kingly lions. We even have this things we leave to people's heirs or family members and he's like wait a minute. I have to leave everything I work for to someone else. I don't know what they're going to do with. And the first one is he's like whoever comes next may lose everything I worked for may have no responsibility for it, and they're just gonna lose it. There's a story in kings and in chronicles in the Old Testament of Rehoboam, who is Solomon's son Solomon dies. So everything is left to his son and they're the people of Israel who say to rail bone, hey, your dad left this heavy burden this heavy. Joke on us. You could ease it and we'll be your servant. Now this sounds like a good thing. So Rainbow meets with his elders, the wise people and they say, yeah, do that. That would be a good idea. But then he goes and meets with his friends. You know, in essence, like his frat boys, what do we do? He's they're like no, no, no go the other way, make it harder, make it more difficult, increase it. That's what he does, and eventually it doesn't go well. God takes the Kingdom so he loses it all. He lost everything Solomon worked for. He didn't show any wisdom by listening to the elders which Solomon had and then lost everything Solomon had built. Second part that bothers him about this. Is the people that come after him didn't have to work for what he's leaving behind, so he talks about? There's a person that works really hard, right? Maybe they learn a lot about a skill they become really good at, something we can look at that person and say, wow, they built themselves up. They learned they worked and they got it. They did well, they worked hard and earned everything they have. Well now they leave it to someone that doesn't understand what all that work means. Doesn't understand what it is to work hard for that. Maybe they inherit the lifestyle. Well, or the value of the material possession, but not the value of the work for it or the work ethic or what any of it means. There is a phrase going around, I believe in Hollywood circles and not Uber up on my pop culture, but give it a go. They're calling it nepo babies. Anybody heard this before? Yeah, what is comes from nepotism? So it's all all all of the. Is basically you got celebrities that now have kids that people are saying you're getting all these advantages because of your parents and you don't work for it, so they're saying you're getting auditions for shows or record deals or any of this type of stuff and you didn't work for it, and they're trying to fight back saying, yeah, it was a foot in the door and then we had to work either side, but it's kind of like this. People are seeing them saying you didn't have to work for it. You don't know what it's like to work for it and build your way up. That's kind of what our writer is getting at here is that they didn't have to work for it, so he's really troubled by the future of his work. Because he doesn't know what's going to happen to it, and the people that inherit it. Don't have to work for it, that's the first part. Let's keep going Ecclesiastes 22 and 23. Now he's gonna get a little more concerned about the beginning, about like

what's going on right now. So he says this. What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun all their days? Their work is grief. And pain, even at night. Their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless, so he's looking. That what comes from our work right here? Right now. He's saying we can work hard labor. We can give off the strivings of the heart, right? This is emotional intellectual struggle. He's like we do this. We work hard. What are we getting? It's like, please let this be something good. Finally from a writer. Well, his response. We get grief and pain and sleepless nights. That's what he says. Grief work is frustrating. He's like it doesn't go how we would want it to go. Makes it go. Ah, like you want to go downstairs and do a couple of rounds on the punching bag. You're so frustrated? He says he gets. This could be physical or. Emotional in this day, a lot of it was physical labor that people did working fields, working farms with animals, and they're just physically beat up. I haven't had to work. Much like in land, I didn't grow up on a farm, but Brad talked about working at a summer camp. I did that for a summer and I had to bail hay one day and it was one of the hardest, most labor intensive things I had to do. I was in the barn. It's probably like 110 degrees in the barn and I'm stacking bail after bail and the arms are just so cut up that it burned to shower later cause they're so cut up it's that pain that difficulty from it. And then he's saying emotional pain can come beats us down. Things that that happen at work that can make you feel bad for other people. Bad about yourself or just knock you down. It's hard. And then he talks about sleepless nights is what he's getting at that when work doesn't really get left at work, it follows you home in some way. And I know this happens. It's happened to many of us, maybe losing sleep over the stress or the heart and mind can't can't rest. Whatever happened that day is taking effect at night. It's in essence, you can't. Kind of clean off the work life when you get home. Think about it like this. Got to do a cooking metaphor, right? So if I make it take a bowl, I like to make my own salad dressing at home for me and Stacy with my salads. Main ingredients vinegar oil. Throw some mustard in there and some salad. Vinegar is a big part of it, right? So it's got this kind of acidic kind of taste that will feel like it's biting you a little bit. So I make that that goes in salad, but imagine not wiping out. Bowl, and now I make cookies in that bowl. Well now the cookies are going to get some of that acidic vinegary taste on them. I don't want that, but when you can't wipe it out they merging together. That's what happening here when he's saying there's sleepless nights because we can't separate the two. So it's really hard. So he's saying work is meaningless. First off, because I. Have to leave everything to somebody and I don't what's going to happen. And second, because it just beats me up. So now a valid question to ask is OK. Work sounds terrible, why? Why do we work? We're gonna jump ahead to Ecclesiastes 4. Our writer likes to bring up the same topic in multiple spots or Ecclesiastes, so he kind of talks about this Ecclesiastes 4 four through 6. I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another. This too is meaningless. A chasing after the wind fools fold their hands and ruin. Themselves better one handful with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil chasing after the wind. He gets at the motivation behind work. He sees it coming from like rivalry and envy and competition, and this is not a good, healthy, good-natured competition. This is bad competition. The wanting to only be better than someone. For the sake of just being better than them. Wanting to work so hard that you have more than someone else, even if you don't need it now, he's not negating hard work for the people that need to work really hard. He's not getting it. That what he's getting at is knocking people that are working so much or becoming in essence, workaholics. Just to be better than someone else, that they're not really gaining anything for it, or that they're jealous of someone and they just want to be better. It's all about envy. He talks about it as chasing the wind, basically saying you'll never catch it. You're chasing after the wind, and if you think you do, maybe that windows down you think you catch it. It starts up again. This is this unhealthy competitiveness, hyper

competitiveness envy leading to have to be better than someone. 'cause I'm a very competitive person by nature. When I was younger especially, I had some unhealthy competitive just as people have brought up with this chili cook off. Julie mentioned my second place thing. Here's the deal. Here's how competitive I am. I would rather get third place than second because second makes me feel like I was that close to winning? And yes, four years in a row I placed second. I stopped entering that cook off and I started judging. It's a whole thing we can talk about. It later anyway, I'm back this year. But when I was younger, I was a soccer player. If you see me now. I'm not a big guy. I made varsity soccer as a sophomore. I went about 5-4 maybe 120 pounds. My jersey hung down past my knees because it was so big and I'm up against a lot of dudes that. Had eight inches and 75 pounds on me. I was a little bit envious that these guys were so big and strong and stuff and I'm this tiny little guy so I let it get to me. Sometimes in a good way and a lot of times in a very unhealthy way. And I tell these stories probably good thing. My wife's not here. She rolls her eyes at these, but I had to look for this vantage to be better than that. So I remember up against this one guy. And he's like this and we needed to go out for a ball in the air together. So I stepped on his foot and I jumped off his foot so he can't jump. And then I won the ball and I did the dumbest thing. I looked at him and I'm like what now? Well, you can. Maybe take a guess about 2 minutes later we're going down the other end. What happened to me and I got crunched to the ground and it took me 5 minutes to get up. That's unhealthy competition from envy, right? It wasn't that I just wanted my team to win. It was like I got to be better than this guy because he's much bigger than me. It's unhealthy. It led to bad things, that's. What our writer is getting at work. When we just we do it as competition in an unhealthy way. It's not good. So he sees work in all these tough ways. He's like man, the future of my work. Well, that's terrible because what's gonna happen with my stuff? The present, it just beats me up. Most people only work because they're envious or jealous and want to be better. So what can we do with this? We need a better perspective. We have to see it in the light of our relationship with God, so that's what we're going to try to do now when I say we want to change our perspective on work, I fully understand it is way easier said than done. We can talk about it, but putting it into practice and having that perspective is difficult. But let's see if we can get started. So it's a verse kind of to jump off. I really like. Colossians 3 here I'm gonna read Colossians 3:23 and 24 says 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. So what he talks about here are human masters. He brings that up in the context of this. Paul is writing this letter to the Colossians and this is a section on the household and how things go in the home. The owning of slaves was common practice in that day. We've kind of talked about it a little bit before, so what he's saying is to the slaves, hey. You're not working for those human masters, and you would be saying to us, you're not working for those bosses at your job, but you're working for God and work willingly. Work with all your heart. So should we see God as our boss? I don't love to see it that way. I like it a little bit differently. Think about God as more of an investor than your boss. He's given us something he's invested in us and wants us to put it to use and see it grow in us and then grow in others. So when we get this feeling that we're always working and doesn't matter. And what are we doing? Well we do have a bigger purpose. It's like you hear these stories of new college grads that come out and I want to make a difference. I want my work to mean something well. It can for us as Christians when we work for God, see his investment in us grow like we talked about. We have to start by pointing work towards him. And 1st. So how do we do that within the three ways that our writer looked at work? Let's start with that. The results of our work, so what happens with our work? What we work for? What does it mean? It's easy to think about work is like kind of these physical things or these right here and

now. Type of what did I create? 8 Let's read Matthew 6:19 through 20 to get a little thoughts on that. It says do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where Moss and vermin destroy where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where Moss and vermin do not destroy where thieves do not break in and steal. This is a passage from. The Sermon on the Mount. Today, think about it like this. Don't worry about the future of your stuff. The results of what you've worked for. As Jesus would say, it's all temporary. It can all be destroyed, be stolen, lose value, anything. OK? So if that's the case, are we just working for nothing? No, I don't think that's the case. Like Jesus said, store for yourself treasures in heaven, work for the gladness that God has in what you do. The things that please. God when we work for God in this way that can't be destroyed, his gladness, his joy in us. Living for him, working that way for him doesn't go away. And that's in how we act. How do we act towards others, our customers, our clients? Our students, our kids showing love, kindness and grace when we work with them. For the bosses we work for for anything like that, God's pleasure and gladness. About us doing that can't go away now. You might say, OK, that's all well and good. The people in my life don't deserve any of that. You may well be right, and I get that feeling, but guess what? We got all of those things. We don't deserve them either. God invested in us with his grace and compassion and kindness and he does it every day. I need it every day. You need it every day and he gives it so he wants us to invest it in others as well. So the results of our work. Aren't the stories we tell or the products we make or the lessons we teach, but the spreading of God's love, kindness and compassion and grace that is the result of our work. That's the fruit of our work, so that's how we can look at the result. OK, So what about when work beats us down? Many of you have probably come home from a day at work and you just feel spent. You just want to flop on the couch and. Be done, I get it. Many people have probably lost sleep over work or been restless after getting home from work. I get that too. Maybe you have a hard time leaving work at work and as a parent or a caregiver you may not get that opportunity because the kids are always there or who you care for. Might always be there. So what do we do? Let's look at Matthew 11:28 through 30. Says then Jesus said, come to me, all you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Jesus says, I will give you rest. This is relief reprieve. It's not necessarily just sleep. The relief and reprieve he gives us that relief from the crazy stress we get. He says his yoke, the yoke meaning something that will balance a burden or make something easier to carry. And Jesus saying my yoke is easy because he's gentle, he's. Humble, and that's about coming into a relationship with him is how we get that yoke. It's not a series of obligations or tasks or meetings that should have been emails or something like that that comes from our jobs. It's just getting into a relationship with God and it's giving over our stress and our grief from work to God. During the day when it starts to beat you down, when the kids are family, feel like they're impossible to deal with, lighten the load with Jesus. That's part of his investment in us. He gives us the. And then, if you're having that hard time separating work and home, and you just need to let it go, one of my favorite passages of Scripture, Philippians 4:6 and seven, says do not worry about anything. Instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need. Thank him for all he has done and you'll experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. Pray about it. It may not instantly make it go away. I'm not saying that's what happens, but when we say pray about it, I'm saying give it to him. Don't just say, hey God, make this go away say God take it. Because guys, that's strong ask him to actually take it and then receive his piece. This is a piece that does not make sense. It's one we can't comprehend because it's providing comfort and an assurance in the midst of chaos and craziness. And we can't get it anywhere else but from God.

Nobody can do it, but he's invested that kind of peace into us. We have it so we can take it and it's there. So that's the results of our work. When work beats us down. OK. But why? Why are we still? Working, you said work doesn't mean anything. OK, we're not really working for our bosses. We're trying to have Jesus as our investor so we can all just quit our jobs, right? That's what I'm gonna tell you. Right? Sounds great, I'm not telling you that. Sorry you're all about to write your two weeks. I did. Didn't say that it's great as that would be. We can all just hang out all. The time right not gonna happen. We were created to work. We actually were created to work Genesis 2:15. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. Part of the creation. Creative created to where God created everything. And then said work and care for it. So we're supposed to work what God gave and created. He wants us to care for. We weren't created to sit around and do nothing. Yes, Sabbath, rest and resting is a thing Sabbath if we go back the Old Testament one day a week, not all 7. OK, so we are created to work so we work for God. Look what he's invested into your life. And work to care for that. Maybe he gave you the opportunity for the job that you have, whether you love it or not, but he can provide income, something to live on. Maybe the relationships you have with coworkers or bosses or clients or anything. There's an opportunity there so care for that as God gave it to. You it could be that God has you working in a place where you get to use a passion. You have a passion. That God gave. You he gave you that, so use it. Well for God, invest it back in. Or kids are a type of family. We care for our families. If they're God's family, our kids, our our parents, our spouses, our friends. Everybody but God created us to work. God invested in his creation and that includes us and wants us to continue investing in it. As well. So this week, remember we are created to work. Those of you that head back to work today, tomorrow. Here we go again. It's the grind. I get it, but we are created to work so try to focus on caring for your work, caring for your responsibilities by first pointing it towards God. Right, and that includes thinking about the results of your work. What will happen with them? And remember that the results are more about sharing God's love and grace and kindness than they are about the tangible things that that happen right here. But then about how work makes you feel, does it beat you up sometimes? If it does. Give it to God and give it to God right in the moment as it starts to hit you and you feel it. When we feel it mount up, just give it to God right away. And then remember why we work, because that's what God created us to do. God wants us to work what he's given us. So try to see work as a whole in that new way. Point it towards God and let him change the way you see your work. Life, let's pray. Got to thank you again for today for the words we have. How's the challenging one for for work which has so many different views from people God? But I thank you that it's there and thank God you have words on it for us and that we can take a cue from the words of Jesus and that we can have work mean more. So kind of pray that we would all take whatever our work life, our responsibilities daily, whatever those are and we would point them to you that you would help us see. You in it. And that we would look to the results, not as. What we do. But God how we can show you to people and take that grace, and that love that you invested in us and put it back in other people. So gotta pray for anybody that's that's stressed or strained with work that's feeling beaten down by. Work out that you would really get ahold of their hearts and their minds and give them that peace. That piece that doesn't make sense. But it's there. So God, I pray that everybody would have. That and God. For the people that love their jobs. And their responsibilities. Kind of you just enhance it even more, make them love them more. So I thank you again for these words and your name.