

The Difficulty of Work

Genesis 3:17-19

Despite the divine design and dignity to human work, our experience of work reveals its great difficulty as well. Like every other aspect of human life, work has fallen under the consequences of sin. As a result, work can often be fruitless, unfulfilling, and selfish.

THE DIFFICULTY OF WORK

1. The Curse of Work

“Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground.” - Genesis 3:17-19

“Work is not itself a curse, but it now lies with all other aspects of human life under the curse of sin.”
- Keller

2. The Consequences of the Curse

“The Office says to us that we were created to work, yet unresolved tensions fill the air of every episode, and we are left to ponder that work now is not what it really ought to be. Daily we are confronted by the sobering reality that our work, the workers we work with, and the workplaces in which we work are not as God originally designed them in a myriad of ways we are painfully reminded each and every day that we live and work in a fallen and corrupted world. Like many other things in life, work in this less-than-perfect world is a mixed bag.” - Tom Nelson

THE CONSEQUENCES

1. Work Can Be Fruitless

“What does man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun? Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity.”
– Eccl 2:22-23

“As products of the Depression and two world wars, my parents’ and grandparents’ generations were grateful to have work of any kind because it helped them and their family survive. But members of my children’s generation are utterly dissimilar. They insist that work be fulfilling and fruitful, that it fully fit their talents and their dreams, and that it ‘do something amazing for the world,’ as one Google executive described his company’s mission ... While the circumstances shaping my parents’ generation perhaps gave them a lower view of work than one found in the Bible’s description of creation, so my children’s generation has a more naïve and utopian view of work than is suggested by the Bible in its description of the world’s fall into sin.” - Tim Keller

Manage Your Expectations to Avoid Extremes!

2. Work May Not Be Fulfilling

“I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind. Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me.” - Ecclesiastes 2:17-18

“Work is no longer a way to create and bring out the wonders of the created order, as Calvin would say, or to be an instrument ... serving the basic needs of our neighbor, as Luther would say. Instead, it becomes a way to distinguish myself from my neighbor, to show the world and prove to myself that I’m special. It is a way to accumulate power and security, and to exercise control over my destiny.”
- Tim Keller

Look for Fulfillment “Beyond the Sun”!

3. Work Can Be Selfish

“‘Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.’ And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. They said, ‘Come, let us build for ourselves a city whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.’”
– Genesis 11:4-5

“The moment you [only] think of serving other people, you begin to have a notion that other people owe you something for your pains; you begin to think that you have a claim on the community. You will begin to bargain for reward, to angle for applause, and to harbor a grievance if you are not appreciated. But if your mind is set upon serving the work then you know you have nothing to look for; the only reward the work can give you is the satisfaction of beholding its perfection. The work takes all and gives nothing but itself; and to serve the work is a labor of pure love ... It is the work that serves the community; the business of the worker is to serve the work.” - Dorothy Sayers

Serve Your Profession by Redeeming It!