

MEANINGLESS?

Unmasking the Myths that Make us Miserable

Have you ever gotten something you always wanted? Maybe you chased it for years, working, praying, and paying for it, and once you finally had it, you felt empty and unfulfilled. And so you kept going, chasing, and thinking, "If I only had a little bit more, then I'll be satisfied." But what if that's a lie? What if the things we're all chasing were never meant to satisfy us? For six weeks we'll learn some hard lessons from the book of *Ecclesiastes*. Written by King Solomon, *Ecclesiastes* is a cautionary tale about what happens when you get everything you ever wanted and it's still not enough. With this series, we'll expose life's darkest lies by holding them up to the light of God's truth.

April 19, 2026 - Myth #2: "My Career Will Validate Me"

Ecclesiastes 1:1-2 - The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem: "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

What is the first and most important thing we need to understand about the book of Ecclesiastes? Why is it so different when compared to the rest of the Bible - and so different from other books written by King Solomon?

"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms— to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

- Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

When you read Ecclesiastes, how would you describe Solomon's chosen attitude when he wrote it?

Today, we'll focus on Solomon's complicated view of *work*. **Before we get there, how would you describe your feelings about work? Do you enjoy it? How, if at all, do you see your work as intertwined with your faith?**

Ecc. 2:17-23 - So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, 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 they 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 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 then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. 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.

How would you summarize Solomon's view of work in this passage? What is his grievance with work?

What did Solomon get *right* about work in this passage? What was he missing?

Ecc. 3:9-15 - What do workers gain from their toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. 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. I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil - this is the gift of God. 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. Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account.

In this passage, Solomon declared work to be both a "burden" from God and a source of "satisfaction". **Which is it? Did God intend for work to satisfy us, or to punish us?**

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."

Genesis 3:23 - So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

How does Solomon's view of work here differ from the way he understood the value of work earlier in his life?

Proverbs 16:3 - Commit your work to the LORD and your plans will be established.

Psalms 127:1-2 - Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain... in vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat - for He grants sleep to those He loves.

How does Solomon's view of work in Ecclesiastes compare with Jesus' wisdom about work?

John 6:27 - Do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life.

Ecclesiastes 3:18-22 - I also said to myself, "As for humans, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals. Surely the fate of human beings is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: as one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; humans have no advantage over animals. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return. Who knows if the human spirit rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth? 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?"

Here, Solomon's deepest despair comes through as he suggests that human beings are no better off than the animals. **How is it possible that a man who was so wise early in his life would end up believing something so patently false?**

How is Solomon's despair in Ecclesiastes a warning to hard-working Christians today?

What is a more theologically accurate, biblical understanding of the role that work should play in our lives?

In what practical ways can believers, most of whom work secular jobs in a cutthroat, get-ahead environment, weave their work into their faith, and their faith into their work?

Name one or two concrete things you can realistically do to make your work more faith-full:

Your Notes:



Save the Date: Graduation Sunday

Join us Sunday, May 17 as we celebrate all of our kids & students moving up to the next level of programming at The Story, and honor our graduating Senior Class of 2026! Learn more & share your info here: thestory.church/events



Story Students End-of-Year Social

All students in 6th through 12th grade are invited to our end-of-year social at Urban Air on Sunday, April 26 from 5-7pm! Learn more and register on: thestory.church/events



Registration Open for Vacation Bible School

Registration is open for this year's VBS - **June 22-25, 2026 from 9am to noon!** VBS is open to children in PreK-4 through 5th grade. Visit thestory.church/vbs to learn more and register your children today. Cost: \$60 per child