

The Vanity of Work and an Antidote to Life Under the Sun

Intro:

1 – Work is vanity because in the end someone else will benefit from all your achievements (2:18-21)

- A. The verb “to leave” means to bequeath something as in an inheritance.
- B. Qoheleth sees this not only as vanity but a “great evil” or injustice.

2 – Work is vanity because the payoff isn’t worth the pain: (2:22-23)

- A. Work involves both physical pain and mental vexation.
- B. Wisdom literature teaches that diligence in work is not restless anxiety: (Ps. 127:2)

3 – The antidote to the vanity of life under the sun: (2:24-26)

- A. Verse 24a is a positive assertion not a negative resignation.
- B. The reason many find this “unspiritual” may be the remnants of Gnosticism, which teaches that material things are evil and immaterial are spiritual and good.
- C. Scripture plainly recognizes the spirituality of everyday activities: (1 Tim. 4:3; 1 Cor. 10:31)
- D. The basis for Qoheleth’s assertion is realizing that food, drink and labor are gifts from God (3:13)
- E. The gifts of food and work are separate from the *capacity* to enjoy them in this fallen world. The latter is a distinct gift that belongs only to believers (2:25-26).

Concluding Reflections:

- A. When God is at the center of your life and thinking you may find joy in this fallen and enigmatic world.
- B. The sure way to be frustrated is to attempt to squeeze out of anything OR anyone that which they is only found in Jesus.

CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS

1. HOW DO MANY PEOPLE VIEW THEIR WORK?
2. WHAT WAS THE FIRST REASON SOLOMON (QOHELETH) HATED THE FRUIT OF HIS LABOR?
3. WHAT WAS THE SECOND REASON SOLOMON (QOHELETH) HATED THE FRUIT OF HIS LABOR?
4. WHAT DID THE SABBATH REST TEACH ISRAEL? (Ps. 127:2)
5. IS VERSE 24 A POSITIVE ANSWER OR A NEGATIVE ANSWER TO FUTILITY?
6. WHAT DID THE GNOSTICS TEACH THAT MANY STILL THINK TODAY?
7. WHERE DO THE OLD TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT TEACH THAT FOOD AND DRINK ARE THE GIFTS OF GOD?
8. HOW DOES REALIZING THAT WORK IS A GIFT HELP SOMEONE?
9. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO SEE THAT FINDING JOY IN WORK IS ALSO A GIFT FROM GOD?
10. WHO IS ABLE TO FIND JOY IN WORK EVEN IN A HARD LIFE?