

Moving Forward -- Consequential Labor & Creational Enjoyment

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 (Eccl. 2:24).

Consequential Labor

Introduction -- my view of work as a young man & my disposition. A couple of errors about it. A key book for me: *Why America Doesn't Work*.

Key Concept -- God values productive labor in and of itself. It's not just because we meditate on the glory of God or work for God or evangelize or build relationships. The work itself is valuable in God's eyes.

Scripture Responsive Reading & Prayer

Leader: Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground (Gen. 1:28)

Response: Lord, establish the work of our hands.

Leader: Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth (Gen. 9:1).

Response: Lord, establish the work of our hands.

Leader: See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, 3 and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills— 4 to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, 5 to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts (Ex. 31:1–5).

Response: Lord, establish the work of our hands.

Leader: 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 (Eccl. 2:24).

Response: Lord, establish the work of our hands.

Leader: 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 (Col. 3:23–24).

Response: Lord, establish the work of our hands.

Leader: Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody (1 Thess. 4:11–12).

Response: Lord, establish the work of our hands. Yes, establish the work of our hands.

What this Entails (More than Just Work)

1. All productive labor is valuable in itself to God.
2. Note that this was true before the fall. Work is not part of the curse.
3. Note in Col. 3, the context is referring to slaves. Even in a situation that is a perversion of God's design for economic cooperation and organization (slavery), the work itself is so valuable, that we can work for God.
4. Labor is not merely the labor of our hands specifically. It also includes organization, caregiving, and intellectual labor. Note my mistake.

5. Note that honest labor includes not only the work itself but also the preparation needed to do it better such as physical exercise, skill development, education, and planning. All these things are part of God's plan and value of all significant labor that blesses ourselves and others and glorifies God.

Song: God of Concrete, God of Steel

God of concrete, God of steel,
God of piston and of wheel,
God of pylon, God of steam,
God of girder and of beam,
God of atom, God of mine,
All the world of power is thine!

Lord of cable, Lord of rail,
Lord of motorway and mail,
Lord of rocket, Lord of flight,
Lord of soaring satellite,
Lord of lightning's livid line,
All the world of speed is thine!

Lord of science, Lord of art,
God of map and graph and chart,
Lord of physics and research,
Word of Bible, Faith of Church,
Lord of sequence and design,
All the world of truth is thine!

God whose glory fills the earth,
Gave the universe its birth,
Loosed the Christ with Easter's might,
Saves the world from evil's blight,
Claims mankind by grace divine,
ALL THE WORLD OF LOVE IS THINE!

Creational Enjoyment

Introduction - enjoyment of creation is not something we do merely at the end of work to recuperate. It is something God calls us to specifically. We are to take delight in enjoying what God has made and all the combinations of the things God has made in human art and industry.

Key Concept - enjoyment of creation itself is a duty

Scripture Responsive Reading

Leader: I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food (Gen. 1:29).

Response: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever (1 Chron. 16:34).

Leader: He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate— bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts (Psalm 104:14–15).

Response: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever (1 Chron. 16:34).

Leader: 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 (Eccl. 2:24).

Response: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever (1 Chron. 16:34).

Leader: “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh. 8:10).

Response: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever (1 Chron. 16:34).

Leader: They ate to the full and were well-nourished; they reveled in your great goodness (Neh. 9:25).

Response: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever (1 Chron. 16:34).

Leader: So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

Response: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever (1 Chron. 16:34).

Leader: For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer (1 Tim. 4:4–5).

What This Entails

1. Enjoying the things that God has made.
2. Enjoying the things that others have made from what God has made.
3. There is enjoyment of the end and of the process. We can buy a purchased meal, but there is also joy in making a meal, for example.
4. We may have to develop skills that will enable us to enjoy things such as playing an instrument, singing, or cooking.
5. We may need to spend time learning about things. For example, observing birds brings joy. We need to learn about birds in order to be able to enjoy them.
6. This would also involve all planning and strategizing related to accomplishing these things.

Quote from Herman Witsius on how we can glorify and enjoy God -- For instance, a person then eats and drinks to the glory of God, when, confessing himself unworthy to enjoy this life and the conveniencies of it, he praises that bountiful favour of God, which

abundantly bestows all things upon him, and above all admires that immense love of the Lord Jesus, who willingly was destitute of all the dainties of life, and submitted to drink vinegar and gall, that his people, through the favour of God, might eat the fat and drink the sweet: when also he does not delight so much in the creatures and the gifts of providence, as in the Creator himself and the giver; tasting to his unspeakable pleasure, how sweet the Lord is: when he sincerely proposes faithfully to employ his life, which is lengthened out by these means, and all his faculties, which are thus continually refreshed, to the service of God, who gave and preserves them: when, in fine, he rises in meditation, from the delights of this natural life, to the almost unspeakable pleasures of a future and heavenly life; and having a prelibation of them in thought and faith, with a grateful heart tunes up a song of love to God: "Lord, if thou doest such things in this dark dungeon, what wilt thou not do for us, when admitted into thy palace of light!"

A Few Diagnostic Questions

1. Do you organize your week including your job time and your non-job time to maximize your ability to do significant labor and to enjoy God's creation?
2. Do you take pleasure in the labor that you have to do, even if it is "menial" and do it to the glory of God?
3. Do you take time to enjoy things or do you rush through them?
4. Do you refer your labor and your enjoyment to God?