

“All the Toil of My Labors”

Sermon Notes

➤ **Like everything else under the sun, our work is ultimately meaningless until it comes under the Son**

**East of Eden...*

1. Our work yields little in the way of lasting reward, and often results in nothing more than depression (vv.18-21)

2. Our work robs us of much needed rest, because it furnishes us with a great deal of opportunity for anxiety (vv.22-23)

➔ By God’s common grace, our work can be repurposed - but only in Christ can it be rescued, reconciled, and renewed (vv.24-26; Titus 2:9-11; Colossians 3:23; 1 Corinthians 15:58)

Next Week: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 - “A Time for Every Matter Under Heaven”

MEFC Community Group Study Questions

For the week of October 25th-31st

***This study guide first appeared several months back toward the end of the stay-at-home order, when some of our Community Groups weren't meeting routinely. They address this week's topic of work and vocation, but from the perspective of Titus 2:9-10. If you haven't yet had the opportunity to work through these questions, this week is an ideal opportunity. If you've already done so, consider reviewing this week's passage in Ecclesiastes 2:18-26, the sermon outline, any notes you've taken, or discuss this excellent article from Christopher Ash on "7 Ways to Become a Better Sermon Listener":**

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/7-ways-to-become-a-better-sermon-listener/> .

Getting Started

1. What is the best, worst, strangest, longest, or shortest job you've ever had? Make sure everyone in the group has a chance to share. Currently, what keeps you busy during the week? Does everyone in the group know how each of you spend your Monday-Friday (or in some cases - weekends)? If not, please share this as well.

Digging Deeper

2. If you are in the working season of your life (age 18 to retirement), do you believe that you have found your 'calling' with your present employment? If not, is your present employment preparing you in any way for what you sense to be your calling? If you are unemployed, do you have a clear sense of your calling? If so, what do you believe that to be and why?

If you are retired, as you look back over the arc of your career, do you believe you labored with a sense of vocation, or calling, from the Lord? Explain.

If you are currently a student, what sort of vocation do you believe the Lord is preparing for you? Do you feel that your current time of education is equipping you to the right way for the work to which the Lord is calling you? Why or why not?

Open Your Bible to Titus 2:9-10...

3. In Titus 2:9-10, Paul instructs Titus about his responsibility toward "bondservants" or "slaves" in the church. When we hear the term "slave" today what tends to come to mind? Why are passages such as Titus 2:9-10, Ephesians 6:5-9, Colossians 3:22-25, and 1 Peter 2:18-25 poor proof-texts for the Trans-Atlantic slave trade of history or modern day sex trafficking today?
4. Though it's not a perfect analogy, why are 21st century employee-employer relationships a fair application for the slave-master relationships of the 1st century? If you don't recall from the sermon, click [here](#)¹ for a brief video clip of the translators of the ESV discussing how to render

¹ You can also find this four minute video by searching for "ESV Translators Debate the Word 'Slave' at Tyndale House, Cambridge: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mx06mtApu8k> .

the Greek word for “slave”. In the discussion, listen to Wayne Grudem describe the lives of 1st century slaves in the Roman Empire.

5. Seeking to apply vv-9-10 in the context of your own vocation, which specific instructions do you find most challenging? How about the most encouraging?
6. The Scriptures are quick to remind us that our vocations are intimately tied to aspects of Christian mission and the advance of the gospel. How do passages such as Titus 2:9-10 and 1 Peter 2:18-25 especially bring this into focus?
7. Sometimes Christians who don't earn their living through the local church can be made to feel as though what they do for a living isn't really a part of the 'front lines' of gospel ministry. Have you ever felt that way? How does a text like Ephesians 4:11-12 turn this sort of thinking on its head? According to the New Testament, who's really on the 'front lines' of our mission, and who's back behind the lines – resourcing the front lines? Why does this matter?
8. As you close your group in prayer, be sure to pray for our church family and all of the ways we labor in our vocations for the advance of the gospel. Pray specifically through the points of our sermon text, asking for the Lord's pardon and power in our lives as we seek to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (Titus 2:10).