

Meaning in Life: Work or Relationships?

Ecclesiastes 4:4-16

1. Working from envy destroys relationships. (vv. 4-6)
 - a. Philippians 2:3 Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.
 - c. James 3:14-16 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.
 - d. 1 Corinthians 3:3 For you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?
 - e. The solution to working from envy is not laziness.
 - i. Proverbs 6:10-11 (24:33-34) A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—11and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.
 - f. The real solution is wisdom and contentment.
 - i. Proverbs 14:30 A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.
 - ii. Proverbs 15:16 Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure with turmoil.
 - iii. Proverbs 17:1 Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.
2. Working all of the time prevents relationships. (vv. 7-12)
 - a. Ephesians 4:28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.
 - b. Luke 12:16-21 And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. 17He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ 18“Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. 19And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.” ’ 20“But God said

to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' 21 "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

- c. We need other people and other people need us.
 - i. Hebrews 3:12-13 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.
 - ii. Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider how to spur one another on to love and good deeds.
 - iii. Galatians 6:1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

3. Getting to the top doesn't matter if you are there alone. (vv. 13-16)
 - a. Proverbs 12:15 The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.
 - b. Proverbs 18:24 A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

LOOKING AT LIFE BEYOND THE SUN:

- Most everything that Solomon has said is true.
- We need to have a right view of work, possessions, and position.
- We need to value relationships before all of those things.
- We know the importance of relationships but still struggle in them.
 - Genesis 3:7-8
 - Jesus is the friend that sticks closer than a brother.
 - Jesus is the third cord.
 - Jesus brings us back to God. Romans 5:1
 - Jesus brings us back to one another. Ephesians 2:14-16