

A God View of Our Work

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Day One

Why do we talk repeatedly about work-life balance? It seems like a problem we cannot solve in our current connected society. I mean, we are always “on”. But why? What is creating urgency?

The statement alone suggests the tension people feel about work and life, but why have we separated these two words? Life has taken on a definition it was never intended to hold. Here's what I mean. According to the dictionary, the word life has almost 20 different uses, but all of them encompass the state of being. For example, when talking about a biography of someone, you say it is about their life. A biography is about someone personally and professionally, about their family and accomplishments, hobbies and all. Fragmenting work life, personal life, family life, and social life surely creates tension!

So, you can't have a work-life balance, but you *can* have a balanced life! The book of Ecclesiastes has me thinking about a balanced life. Why do we feel this tension? And what does work have to do with it? *It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with* (Ecclesiastes 1:13b ESV).

This verse alone suggests the inherent tension we feel as human beings about the business we are busy with! And sometimes that business is work business and other times it isn't. For example, you may love your job and have a wonderful time each day with your colleagues but then return home to be a caregiver, which is very stressful.

You see, “work” is defined as physical or mental effort directed toward producing or accomplishing something. And God created us to work! We start to feel the true tension of this work when our underlying motivations about it aren't what God would want for us.

I really think becoming more attuned to God's views on our work can help us relieve some of the tension we feel in life! Having this view can bring us into a better balance of life.

After all: *What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?* (Ecclesiastes 1:3 ESV)

Day Two

Are you working from a place of fear? I don't want you to think about work as the job you are paid to do. Think of work as anything requiring your physical or mental energy to produce something. So, as you are trying to work, is fear an underlying feeling?

I know we could all describe the feelings surrounding fear which could include worry and even grief. Physically, fear can cause us to feel the tension we desperately want to release. Are you having a hard time sleeping? Does your heart race at thoughts of something you are working on? Do you get headaches?

Perhaps you are afraid of failing at something. Is there a new skill you are trying to master? Maybe a project is looming with a deadline you feel like you will miss?

Is there a threat of layoffs at work? Maybe you are afraid of losing your job. Or are you spending too much time at the office and are afraid of losing connection with your spouse or children? Perhaps a new hire has started at the office and is receiving a lot of attention. Are you afraid of losing ground with your colleagues or boss?

All of this is life tension! And it is all rooted in our thinking, or rather our wrong thinking, about a situation.

I am not saying it is easy, but the Word of God is clear. We are not to be fearful or afraid. God calls us to a deep faith and reliance, trusting in him for everything. This includes our work.

In Isaiah 41:13 the word says: *For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you."*

When fear is creating unhealthy tension, think about God being with you. He is there to help. And, if we fear anything, *God is the one we must fear* (Ecclesiastes 5:7b ESV).

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man (Ecclesiastes 12:13 ESV).

When you are fearful, turn that fear of worldly things to fear of the Lord. Ecclesiastes tells us this is our whole duty! Fear God and follow his commandments. One of his commands is that we don't fear because he is there to intercede on our behalf.

Cry out to the Lord in prayer. It can be simple, "God, hold my right hand. I am afraid. I know you will help me."

Proverbs 14:27 reminds us: *The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.*

Day Three

If you always want more, you will never enjoy what you have. Have you ever thought about that? Is your striving for more causing an imbalance in life? What leaves you wanting more?

Then I saw that all toil and skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor (Ecclesiastes 4:4a ESV).

If envy is driving you to work more, to earn more, to have more, you need to pause and reflect. What enjoyment will you have with something if the reason you are working for it stems from envy? In fact, once you achieve this thing you may gain something even worse than the envy—pride.

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall (Proverbs 16:18 ESV).

Achieving anything that causes you to feel pride leads to fleeting satisfaction. Ecclesiastes further warns: *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income, this is also vanity* (Ecclesiastes 5:10 ESV). Earning a good income and trying to better yourself is not inherently wrong, but if your toil is for the wrong reasons, you simply will never be satisfied.

Perhaps you are working more hours to save for something that you need. Or, maybe you are trying for a promotion that comes with an increase in pay. Where is this desire coming from? If it comes from a genuine place, where you are not comparing yourself to others or continually chasing for more, this is

not necessarily bad. It is when you are always needing more and more. Or when you are striving to keep up with other people.

Hard work is valued by God when it works for his kingdom. Think of the Proverbs 31 woman. She buys and sells and rises when it is still night. She provides food for her household and for her maidens. Her *lamp doesn't go out at night* but she *opens her hand to the poor and the needy* (Proverbs 31:18,20). Hard work to gather more for yourself will never fill, but hard work that will give to the glory of the Kingdom will always feel good. We are called to see the needy and love.

Think about what you are working for today. Are you striving because you are coveting? Pray today! "Lord, change my heart. Help me to see where I am striving for material things that will never fill. Help me to see how I can use my time, treasure and talent to give to those you care about the most."

Day Four

What consumes our thoughts can often lead to a life that is truly out of balance. You know, too much of a good thing can stop becoming a good thing when it is causing you to feel like you don't have balance.

"In the United States, achievement is life's defining commandment: 'Thou shalt make something of thyself.' You are what you achieve." This quote from *Everything is Never Enough*, by Bobby Jamison¹, sums up how our culture runs. What have you achieved? More importantly, how is this being measured?

Achievement can be about the accumulation of things that never fill. Achievement can also be about what you achieve at work in the form of a title, salary, or even about the freedom of being a founder of your own company. Again, promotions, raises, and even entrepreneurship are not inherently bad things! Perhaps this is even what God has planned for you. However, when running towards this achievement takes the place of God in your life this is when the trouble begins. Are you making something of yourself without giving glory to God?

Colossians 3:23-24 tells us: *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*

Are you working for the Lord when you are working towards achievement? Can God say, well done good and faithful servant, or is your striving more about the recognition you will receive from colleague or others in your sphere of influence?

What about patterns of self-indulgence? We can self-indulge in almost anything. From food to alcohol, to dining out when we don't have enough money to overspending on any one item, we have the tendency to self-indulge. Sometimes we can focus so much on these things that we cause ourselves more stress in having to work harder to feed our needs for self-indulgence. If you think about any one thing more than you think about God, this has become an idol in your life.

God wants us to achieve everything he has in store for us, and he wants us to enjoy the good things he has created! But he wants us to enjoy him first!

Pray: God, help me to have the right attitude about achievement. Lead me in the paths you have for me. Help me, Lord, to enjoy what you have allowed and to give you glory in all things.

¹ Jamison, Bobby. *Everything Is Never Enough: Ecclesiastes' Surprising Path to Resilient Happiness* (WaterBrook, 2025)

Day Five

You truly can't take it with you. I am sure you have heard this statement before, but do you live it? Let's face it, no amount of accumulation of things, titles, or achievements here on earth can be taken to your heavenly home.

How much are you thinking about the past and about the future rather than focusing on just this moment? All this overthinking can lead to feelings of an out-of-balance life and will steal the joy from the moment you are in.

This mindset can be difficult. With the ever-present noise and connectivity of our culture, how can you refocus on the present?

Job 33:4 reminds us: *The Spirit of God has made us, and the breath of the Almighty gives us life.*

Pause a moment and think about the wonder of your life, and who gives it to you. Do you wake up each day with gratitude for the wonder of the breath in your lungs? Think about this—you do not have any control of your breath. You can't earn your breath. You can't work for your breath. It is a gift that powers your body, which is equally wonderful.

If you like scientific variables, a statistical analysis performed on the probability of your unique individual self being born is calculated as 1 in 400 trillion. (Ali Binazir²) While I am not a proponent of measuring what God creates, this human statistical analysis gives you an idea of how amazing you are!

I can hear you almost saying to me, but Lauren the moment I am in right now it isn't filled with joy or peace or happiness! Understandably, if you are in a season of unexpected loss of a loved one, illness, job loss, you probably want to know when you will move past this time.

This is why I have brought the focus down to the gift and wonder your life is! Finding gratitude and a moment of centering on this can help you truly know that God created you for a reason. He created you as a one of one. And, as a follower of Jesus Christ, he chose you as part of his royal family.

Pray: God, thank you for the breath in my lungs! Thank you for creating me in your image and loving me so much that I know Jesus Christ as my Savior. I am thankful to be part of your royal family, and I rest in this today.

So many things can bring our lives out of balance, but God can help root us in his truths that bring us peace.

² Binazir, Dr Ali. "Are You a Miracle? On the Probability of You Being Born," Huffpost, August 16, 2011)