

Lesson 4 | The Fatigue of Success

Objective: To reflect on the purpose of work and recognize that true value of the human effort lies in serving God and living with contentment.

Biblical Reading: Ecclesiastes 2:17–26

Memory Verse: “Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun *was* distressing to me, for all *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.” **Ecclesiastes 2:17**

Biblical Topic

In this section, Solomon bitterly reflects on the result of his labor. Although he built, accumulated, and achieved much, he ended up feeling empty. He said he hated life because everything he had achieved would have to be left to others, not knowing whether those heirs would be wise or fools (**Ecclesiastes 2:18–19**). This feeling of frustration is shared by many who have dedicated years working hard, only to find unreal satisfaction in the end. Solomon is inviting us to think beyond apparent success.

Today, we live under pressure to demonstrate productivity: studying, working, becoming an entrepreneur, earning money, staying busy. While work is a blessing and part of God’s plan (**Genesis 2:15**), it can also become a source of anxiety if done without rest, spiritual direction, or boundaries. The problem is not the effort itself but doing it for the wrong reasons or with expectations that only what is eternal can fulfill (**Matthew 6:19–21**).

On one occasion, animal behavior experts, observed how a group of ants worked tirelessly for long hours, ignoring signs of danger and exhaustion. The most striking event was that some of them died from overexertion simply because they didn’t know when to stop. This scene, though natural, illustrates a profound truth: when work is done without limits or rest, even the most organized creatures can collapse. Similarly, human beings must understand that they were not created to produce endlessly, but to live with a balance between effort and rest (**Ecclesiastes 3:1; Proverbs 23:4**).

For this reason, the Sabbath is not just a religious tradition, but a blessing God established to protect us from physical, emotional, and spiritual burnout (**Exodus 20:8–11; Mark 2:27**). Many people around the world pay large sums of money for retreats, therapy, or experiences that allow them to disconnect from the fast pace of life. We, on the other hand, are freely given this sacred space every week as we gather in church and step away from our daily pressures. As members of God’s people, we should ensure that the Sabbath is truly a day of delight—not one of tension or obligation, but a time to enjoy peace, community, and God’s favor, like someone resting under the protection of a blessed family.

Isaiah 58:13–14; Psalm 84:4

Solomon mentions that he worked with wisdom, knowledge, and integrity, yet he still had to leave everything to someone else (**Ecclesiastes 2:21**). This teaches us that we do not have full control over the outcome of our efforts. That is why we should learn to enjoy what we have while we can with gratitude and humility (**Ecclesiastes 3:13**). It’s not about not working, but rather not living enslaved by performance. A life full of labor without joy, without healthy relationships, and without time for God is an unbalanced life.

Moreover, the desire to accumulate or to outshine others can lead to envy, isolation, or emotional exhaustion. The Bible encourages us to work with diligent hands, but to rest as well, to share, to value the small things, and trust that God blesses the work of our hands (**Psalm 127:1–2; Colossians 3:23–24**). Contentment is the key in maintaining peace while fulfilling our responsibilities (**1 Timothy 6:6–8**).

Today, we see how social media often idealizes productivity as the definition of success. There's an abundance of content promoting routines where people wake up at 4:00 a.m., stay busy all day, and go to bed after midnight—as if a person's worth depended on how many tasks they can complete in 24 hours. It is even claimed that being busy constantly is essential for success. However, this mindset can be deceptive and dangerous, as it fuels an unsustainable pace of life that often neglects emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being.

From the biblical perspective, a person's value is not found in their productivity, but in their relationship with God and their ability to live wisely. Rest is not laziness; it is obedience and balance. Work is important, but so is stopping, reflecting, and enjoying the fruits of our labor with gratitude (**Ecclesiastes 3:13**). If we don't learn to pause, even the greatest achievements can lose their meaning. True fulfillment is not measured by full schedules, but by hearts filled with the peace of God. **Philippians 4:6–7**.

CHURCH ACTIVITY

Together with the members of your youth group, carry out the activity called *"Where Are You Pouring Out Your Life?"* Place a pitcher filled with colored water (so it's visible) and several transparent cups labeled with areas such as: work/school, friendships, family, social media, church, time with God, and rest. Each one will take a turn, filling the cups according to how they currently distribute their time and energy. Then they will briefly share how they've felt living in such way and what they believe needs to change. At the end, everyone will pour the water from the cups back into the pitcher as a symbol that our entire life should be reorganized under God's direction.

HOME ACTIVITY

Answer and reflect on the following questions and share your responses in the next session:

- Have you ever felt that you work so much that you no longer enjoy what you do?
- What has been your main motivation for studying or working?
- How could you better balance your daily efforts with your time for God, yourself, and others?