

The Reason to Rest
(from Our Daily Bread)

What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? -Ecclesiastes 2:22

Scripture Reading:

¹⁷So I came to hate life because everything done here under the sun is so troubling. Everything is meaningless—like chasing the wind. ¹⁸I came to hate all my hard work here on earth, for I must leave to others everything I have earned. ¹⁹And who can tell whether my successors will be wise or foolish? Yet they will control everything I have gained by my skill and hard work under the sun. How meaningless! ²⁰So I gave up in despair, questioning the value of all my hard work in this world. ²¹Some people work wisely with knowledge and skill, then must leave the fruit of their efforts to someone who hasn't worked for it. This, too, is meaningless, a great tragedy. ²²So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety? ²³Their days of labor are filled with pain and grief; even at night their minds cannot rest. It is all meaningless. ²⁴So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that these pleasures are from the hand of God. ²⁵For who can eat or enjoy anything apart from him? ²⁶God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him. But if a sinner becomes wealthy, God takes the wealth away and gives it to those who please him. This, too, is meaningless—like chasing the wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:17-26 (NLT)
[ptents.com/s/Ecc2.17-26](https://www.bible.com/s/Ecc2.17-26)

If you want to live longer, take a vacation! Forty years after a study of middle-aged, male executives who each had a risk of heart disease, researchers in Helsinki, Finland, followed up with their study participants. The scientists discovered something they hadn't been looking for in their original findings: the death rate was lower among those who had taken time off for vacations.

Work is a necessary part of life—a part God appointed to us even before our relationship with Him was fractured in Genesis 3. Solomon wrote of the seeming meaninglessness of work experienced by those not working for God's honor—recognizing its “anxious striving” and “grief and pain” (Ecclesiastes 2:22–23). Even when they're not actively working, he says their “minds do not rest” because they're thinking about what still needs to be done (v. 23).

We too might at times feel like we're “chasing after the wind” (v. 17) and grow frustrated by our inability to “finish” our work. But when we remember that God is part of our labor—our purpose—we can both work hard and take time to rest. We can trust Him to be our Provider, for He's the giver of all things. Solomon acknowledges that “without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?” (v. 25). Perhaps by reminding ourselves of that truth, we can work diligently for Him (Colossians 3:23) and also allow ourselves times of rest.

Reflect & Pray

How can you invite God into your labors? How might you allow Him to be your satisfaction even when your work isn't “finished”?

God, You bring meaning and purpose to all my labors.