

## **536: Hard Work**

Last week, I shared the five regrets of the dying as reported by a woman in Australia who worked with many dying patients, which you can access [here](#). We looked at the first regret and that was people wished they had been more true to themselves and not to others' expectations. I wasn't planning on going through the other four regrets, but let's at least look at one or two more before we move on.

### **HARD WORK**

The second regret was, "I wish I had not worked so hard." That is interesting to me, for work is God's gift to mankind. When the writer of Ecclesiastes discussed his life lessons learned from pursuing many things, he came to this conclusion: "[So I saw that there is nothing better for a person than to enjoy their work, because that is their lot](#)" (Ecclesiastes 3:22). That verse and conclusion number two led me to ask a question: Were the people doing the right work that caused them to wish they had not worked so hard?

You see, if it is God's lot for you to enjoy your work, then why would He not want you to engage that work as often as possible? Isn't the joy an incentive to pursue the work, at least in part? I wonder if the regret should have been worded, "I wish I had not worked at the wrong work so hard"?

### **PAUL'S PERSPECTIVE**

Years ago I was complaining to the Lord that I was working too hard. I had a dream one night and heard this verse in my dream, and have used it as a guide for most of my adult life. It is in 1 Corinthians 15:10: "[But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.](#)"

Paul acknowledged that it was God's grace with him that caused him to work as hard as he did. I felt the Lord was indicating that He was not going to send me any less work, but actually more work. Yet it would be work that I would enjoy, work that He would help me achieve. I would say He has done that for me, and I think He wants to do it for you, too.

If I got the end of my life and had devoted thousands of hours to work I hated or that didn't matter, I think I would regret that like those who were part of that woman's conclusions. Rather I have worked doing what I love and that has made my adult life enjoyable, meaningful and rich. My father retired from his work at 62, and I will be that age this year. I cannot even imagine stopping doing what I love to do something else or nothing at all. I hope you feel the same.

If you don't, what are you prepared to do about it? It's not too late to lay the foundation for meaningful, enjoyable work. What are you waiting for? Most people know what that

work would be, but they let fear rob them of the efforts to perform it. Don't end up like those people in the survey who wished they had not worked so hard. Instead be like Paul who rejoiced that God's grace empowered him to work hard and see results. Thank you and have a great week!

### **537: Afraid of Happy?**

Two weeks ago we looked at a summary of five regrets of the dying, as reported by an Australian woman who worked with those who were terminally ill. We have covered two of the five regrets the last two weeks, and this week we will cover a third (and last), and the move on. The fifth regret was "I wish that I had let myself be happier." Notice they did not say they wish they were happier, but rather they wish they had *let* themselves be happy. That means that they actually did not give themselves permission to be happy and enjoy life. How sad.

### **APART FROM THE LORD**

I know there is no true fulfillment or happiness outside of the Lord, and it's possible that some or many of those surveyed were not believers. My experience, however, is that some or perhaps many believers are guilty of the same thing: they are fighting themselves and their joy. They are so conditioned to think that joy and happiness are traps and not really consistent with the Christian life that they avoid joy and happiness. In other words, they are afraid of joy? Is this possible?

The writer of Ecclesiastes conducted a life experiment, as you can read in [Ecclesiastes 2](#). He tried all kinds of pleasure, pursued knowledge and wisdom, undertook great projects and amassed considerable wealth. None of these things in and of themselves brought the writer happiness.

Having done all these things, he came to this conclusion:

[A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind \(Ecclesiastes 2:24-26\).](#)

So let me ask you a question based on the writer's conclusion: Are you happy in your work?

### **AFRAID OF HAPPY?**

Do you enjoy your work or are you afraid of the joy and happiness it can bring? Are you conditioned to think that work must be miserable or at least only tolerable? Have you put the pursuit of the big three, career, a nice salary and benefits, ahead of joyful work?

There is nothing wrong with any of those three things, but if you are pursuing them and don't have joy, you will eventually be frustrated and even burn out.

When you are afraid of happy, you are in some ways fighting yourself, resisting who God made you to be and what He created you to do. God wanted to make the process a bit simpler for you but attaching joy to the work He has for you to do. When you fight the joy, you fight God as well as yourself. So do yourself a favor, listen to the writer and pursue what you love - the money will follow eventually, I promise. Don't let yourself be scared of your own shadow of happiness, but let it come into the fullness of the light of your daily existence. Thank you and have a great week!