

When Work Fights Back

Pastor Gregg Brenes

Our good God made a very good world and made us for good work.

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Romans 12:1 MSG

Why is work so hard sometimes?**■ God's good gift of work is now under a curse.**

And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Genesis 3:17-19 ESV

■ Ultimate hope cannot be found in work.

So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. ¹⁰ And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. ¹¹ Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun. Ecclesiastes 2:9-11 ESV

■ Jesus came to redeem us from the curse.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"... Galatians 3:13 ESV

- We are co-laborers with Christ.
- Our work now carries eternal purpose.

Redeeming work...

- Rest in Christ's finished work so you don't burn out in yours.
- Let work frustration reveal your heart.
- Stop worshipping work before it runs your life.
- Trust God to find joy in the daily grind.
- Work from your identity in Christ, not for it.

Let's Talk About It

Work is a gift from God—but let's be honest, it doesn't always feel that way. We've all experienced frustration in our work. Whether it's difficult coworkers, unhealthy environments, burnout, or just the sense that our efforts aren't making a difference... work can be hard. *Why is that?* It goes all the way back to Genesis. Sin didn't just affect our relationship with God—it affected our work, too. What God designed for good became marked by struggle, frustration, and striving. Even in a broken world, Jesus can redeem our work and give us purpose and joy in it as we work with Him and for His glory.

Romans 12:1; Genesis 3:17-19; Ecclesiastes 2:9-11, 3:13; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:58

Discussion questions:

- Which part of the message impacted or challenged you?
- Read Genesis 3:16-19. What specific consequences does sin bring to our work and relationships? How have you experienced some of those effects (frustration, pain, conflict, toil) in your own work or daily responsibilities? In what ways do you try to "fix" work-related struggles apart from God? What's been the result?
- Read Ecclesiastes 2:9-11. Why do you think even great success can feel empty or unfulfilling? Can you relate to working hard and still feeling like something is missing? What do you think your heart was really chasing?
- Why does anxiety and striving show up in our work lives? How do you deal with anxiety and striving in your work?
- Read Galatians 3:13. How does Jesus redeem the brokenness we feel in our work? What would it look like to invite God into your everyday work this week—not just for help, but for mission and purpose and joy in your work?

Take a Step

Identify one area of your work or weekly responsibilities that feels especially frustrating or fruitless. Take time to ask God: *"Lord, what are You showing me here? Holy Spirit, where does my heart need your grace to realign with your purposes? How can I honor You in this part of my work?"* Look for one way to shift your mindset or approach—trusting that God is present and working through you.

Here's My Prayer

God, thank You for giving me work as a good gift, even when it feels hard. Help me see Your purpose in the middle of my daily responsibilities and frustrations. Teach me to honor You with my work and trust that You're using it for something greater. In Jesus' name, amen.