

Reflection Questions: Genesis 3
For the message, "The Problem with Work" given by Pastor John Ferguson
at Mercy Hill Church in Bryan/College Station, Texas, on July 1, 2018

These reflection questions are designed to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life. You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion. To review the message, go to MercyHillBCS.org/resources/messages.

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read the Scripture text: Genesis 3

A summary of the message: The problem with work is both its curse and its futility. We were meant to be God-centered in our work, partnering with him and others in the creation of a great culture — what the Bible calls "the kingdom of God." In humanity's rebellion and alienation from God—the result is described as "cursed." It's simply what life is like apart from God and lived mysteriously against the purpose of our existence. And hence, we can sense sometimes acutely the futility of work.

Key Quotes:

- Cornelius Plantinga "Ultimately, the only human beings we know are people who have been created to please God and build shalom but who, to a greater or lesser degree, mysteriously live against the purpose of their existence."
- Tim Keller, "Because of the nature of God's creation, we need work for our happiness. And because of God's intentions for our work—to contribute to the flourishing of the world—we have glimpses of what we could accomplish. But because of the fall of the human race, our work is profoundly frustrating, never as fruitful as we want, and often a complete failure."
- Tom Nelson, "There really is no good news about our work without the Good News of the Gospel."
- Ecclesiastes 3:12-13, "I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to mankind."

Bottom Line:

- Though the bad news is that sin entered the world, the good news is that Jesus Christ also entered the world. Therefore, the curse and futility of work does not have the final word. Rather, Jesus Christ does. He is the one we can hear say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:21).

QUESTIONS

1. Let's think about how this text applies to our lives as individuals.

- What do you find most frustrating about your work? Where do you sense its futility? Have you ever wrestled with it not being as fruitful as you want? Have you ever experienced a complete failure with work?

- How would my prayers need to change in order to deal with the frustrations and sense of futility of work? What would I need to ask God for?
- How does the story line of the Gospel bring you hope in the midst of the frustration and futility of work? In other words, how does the fact that “curse” and “futility” is not the final word about our work?

2. Let’s think about how this text applies to us as a community of Jesus’ followers.

- What role do you think our community of faith can play in helping each other think about our work? How can we be an encouragement to one another in our various callings, and how could we better support one another?
- What would it look like if we as a community of faith could view our work in such a way that we long to hear the words of Jesus, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master”? In other words, how would this changed the way we viewed work?

3. Let’s think about how this text applies to our city.

- How does this text about the curse and futility of work in the context of the story of the Gospel actually serve as Good News for those outside the faith? (Review the quote from Tom Nelson above).
- What kind of new life / future in Christ is this text calling our city to experience?

CONCLUSION QUESTION

What is the one thing you want to take away from this study to remember or to make a change in your life?

PRAYER

What are some ways you can turn what you are learning into prayer? List them as bullet points....

- Lord, I sense the “curse” and “futility” of work specifically in _____.
- Jesus, help me to see _____.
- Holy Spirit, enable me to _____.