

“Life In the Fast Lane”
“Your Work”

We work like everyone else it seems, in the fast lane. Why? Because everyone is doing it. After a doctor checked a patient over, he asked, “Have you been living a normal life?” “Yes, doctor.” “Well, you’ll have to cut it out for awhile.” Normal in America is not necessarily good. And on the surface it would appear that our scripture passage recommends life in the fast lane. Ecclesiastes 9:10 reads, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.” The way we deal with our fast lane work lives is much like we treat most things we treat the symptoms instead of the problems. A certain lady visited her doctor nearly every week with a new complaint even though she was in good health. One particular week she said that she was growing hard of hearing. She said, “It’s so bad that I can’t hear myself cough.” The doctor nodded patiently and wrote out a prescription. She asked, “Will this improve my hearing?” “No,” replied the doctor, “BUT IT WILL HELP YOU TO COUGH LOUDER.” Working louder doesn’t get you out of the fast lane. But we can get some striking lessons from a small, teeny, little scripture written by the man who was supposed to be the wisest man who ever lived, Solomon. Now remember, I shared with you last week that if we are going to change our life in the fast lane we must first change our thinking. Here are some thoughts that propel us into the fast lane.

First, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” **This implies that your work is not what you are, work is what you do.** In our culture, most people are what they do. We hear, I am an accountant, I am a bricklayer, I am a, you fill in the blank. And, if that is true then there is no room for you to be anything else in your mind than what you do. When there is no room in your thinking for anything but what you do, you never escape what you do. You are in the rat race of your work life 24/7. Your first thought reconstruction must be, “I am not what I do.” I read several years ago a little story about the noted English architect Sir Christopher Wren was supervising the construction of a magnificent cathedral in London. A journalist thought it would be interesting to interview some of the workers, so he chose three and asked them this question, "What are you doing?" The first replied, "I'm cutting stone for 10 shillings a day." The next answered, "I'm putting in 10 hours a day on this job." But the third said, "I'm helping Sir Christopher Wren construct one of London's greatest cathedrals." Which of these men knew that what they did was not who they were?

Secondly, Solomon then writes, “...for in the grave, where you are going.” This reminds you, regardless of how consuming, hectic or frenetic your work is, **Your work is not your future.** It is not your future in eternity and it doesn't have to be your work in this world forever. You are capable of preparing yourself for and accomplishing work that fills your need for provision and pleasure. One of the most debilitating thoughts we have about our work is when we think and believe that there is nothing, absolutely nothing else we can do but chase the back side of the rat in front of us.

Thirdly, if you draw your worth from your work, your work will never be enough.

It never is. There are some who are workaholics, who think that if they can just get a little more and accumulate a little more, then we will have found the secret to happiness in life as well. But it just doesn't work that way. If you work and do not rest, you miss one of the greatest blessings of all. We are created in God's image, and the Bible says that after God completed the work of creation, He rested and made the 7th day holy as a day of rest.

There is a great passage in Ecclesiastes 5:12. It says, "The sleep of the laborer is sweet whether he eats little or much." I like that. I am finding as I get older that if I eat too much too late, I don't sleep very well. A laborer's work is over when it's over. A laborer draws no value from the work itself but from the fact that they are able.

Last thought reconstruction is this, most of the time influence your work and those you work with. Not vice-versa. I remember many years ago Dr. Wayne Oates was teaching a class at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. I was in the class. I remember something he said that has stuck with me for many years. He said, "Are you fun to live with? Are you fun to work with?" What a question! The idea is that if you are not fun to live with or fun to work with then something is wrong. This doesn't mean that you're going to be in prime shape every day or in an excellent mood every day but overall, if you're not a pleasant person, peaceable, easy to get along with, easily joked with or teased, then something is wrong! People with sour dispositions don't bless others! How do we get joy into our souls? By remembering, contemplating and thinking these first three thoughts about work. J. M. Barrie said, "Those who bring sunshine (joy) into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves." Someone said, "The first steps toward happiness

are the church steps.” In other words, seek the Lord. He alone can put joy into our lives or change us into joy-filled people. Well how does that happen? I believe it is a simple formula really.

First work heartily. An Indian walked into a cafe with a shotgun in one hand and a bucket of buffalo manure in the other. He says to the waiter, "Me want coffee." The waiter says, "Sure chief, coming right up". He got the Indian a tall mug of coffee, and the Indian drank it down in one gulp, picked up the bucket of manure, threw it into the air, blasted it with the shotgun, then just walked out. The next morning the Indian returned. He had his shotgun in one hand and a bucket of buffalo manure in the other. He walked up to the counter and says to the waiter, "Me want coffee". The waiter said "Whoa, Tonto. We're still cleaning up your mess from the last time you were here. What was that all about, anyway?" The Indian smiled and proudly said, "Me in training for upper management. Come in, drink coffee, shoot the bull, and disappear for the rest of the day." Not all managers or bosses are that way or are that bad. But the person you work for can make a difference in your work and life.

Col. 3:22-24 “Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” The boss or manager for whom you work can make a difference in your work. We ALL work for the Lord no matter what we do in life. Many people are quick to point out to me that I work for the Lord who is the best boss in the

world. But so do you. When you are a Christian your greatest loyalty is not to your company but to your Christ!

Secondly, SEE GOOD. Once a rabbi decided to test the honesty of his disciples, so he called them together and posed a question. “What would you do if you were walking along and found a purse full of money lying in the road?” he asked. “I’d return it to its owner,” said one disciple. “His answer came so quickly, I must wonder if he really means it,” the rabbi thought. “I’d keep the money if nobody saw me find it,” said another. “He has a frank tongue, but a wicked heart,” the rabbi told himself. “Well, Rabbi,” said a third disciple, “to be honest, I believe I’d be tempted to keep it. So I would pray to God that He give me the strength to resist such temptation and do the right thing.” “Aha!” thought the rabbi. “Here is the man I would trust.” There is evil in the world today. Almost everywhere you look there is evil. And it seems that most of the news on TV and in the papers is about evil or bad things that are taking place. There is much evil in people, but there is also good in people and this is what we must look for in order to live better in this world. Accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative. This doesn’t mean, however, that we must be blind to evil. Eph. 5:15-17 “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”

Thirdly, BE HELPFUL. Gal. 6:9-10 “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

Never be in such a hurry to get your work done that you can't stop and help a fellow worker. However, there may be a couple of exceptions. What's your motive for helping John Wesley said: Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, at all the time you can, To all the people you can, As long as ever you can. The whole purpose of helping others and doing good to others is to bless them! We should be in the blessing business! But at the same time, as we bless them we will bless ourselves. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap!

Lastly LAUGH LONG. We do that by working at being content. Friends, we have to work hard at being content, don't we? Remember this, contentment is not having everything you want, it's wanting everything that you have. I love what G.K. Chesterton said, "There are two ways to get enough. One is to continue to accumulate more; the other is to desire less." Proverbs 15:30 "A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones." Proverbs 17:22 "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." But what gets in the way of accomplishing these things to confront our fast lane work tendencies?

An old Scottish woman went from home to home across the countryside selling thread, buttons, and shoestrings. Whenever she came to an unmarked crossroad, she would toss a stick into the air and go in the direction the stick pointed when it landed. One day, however, she was seen tossing the stick up several times. "Why do you toss the stick more than once?" someone asked. "Because," replied the woman, "it keeps pointing to the left, and I want to take the road on the right." Many times we are no different when it comes to what we do in life. What it boils down to is that we often do what we want to do regardless

of what is the wise thing to do. The wise thing to do is to think differently and then act upon those thoughts. Come out of the fast lane,