

Practical Theology

Questions Concerning Labor / Caring for the Poor

A) Biblical Principles Related to Labor

1) When did God institute labor for mankind, and what was the first job? (See Genesis 2)

2) Is labor a blessing, a curse or neutral? Explain

3) Why does Solomon disparage his labor?

Ecclesiastes 2:10–11 (LSB), ¹⁰ *All that my eyes asked for I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any gladness, for my heart was glad because of all my labor, and this was my reward for all my labor.* ¹¹ *Thus I turned to all my works which my hands had done and the labor which I had labored to do, and behold, all was vanity and striving after wind, and there was no advantage under the sun.*

Ecclesiastes 2:18–23 (LSB) ¹⁸ *Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me.* ¹⁹ *And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a man of simpleminded folly? Yet he will have power over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored and for which I have acted wisely under the sun. This too is vanity.* ²⁰ *Therefore I turned my heart to despair of all my labor for which I had labored under the sun.* ²¹ *When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, then he gives his portion to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil.* ²² *For what does a man get in all his labor and in the striving of his heart with which he labors under the sun?* ²³ *Because all his days his endeavor is painful and vexing; even at night his heart does not lie down. This too is vanity.*

Ecclesiastes 6:7 (LSB) ⁷ *All a man's labor is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not fulfilled.*

See also: Psalm 90:10 (LSB) ¹⁰ *As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to might, eighty years, Yet their pride is but labor and wickedness; For soon it is gone and we fly away.*

4) What good did Solomon see in labor?

Ecclesiastes 2:24–25 (LSB) ²⁴ *There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and have his soul see good in his labor. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God.* ²⁵ *For who can eat and who can have enjoyment outside of Him?*

Ecclesiastes 3:10–13 (LSB) ¹⁰ *I have seen the endeavor which God has given the sons of men with which to occupy themselves.* ¹¹ *He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.* ¹² *I know that there is nothing better for them than to be glad and to do good in one's lifetime;* ¹³ *moreover, that every man who eats and drinks and sees good in all his labor—it is the gift of God.*

5) What labor did Jesus do while on earth?

While a child?

While living with His parents and siblings?

During His public ministry?

How did such labor affect him?

- 6) What are some of the maladies that labor provides a remedy?
- 7) What are some of God given reasons for man to labor?
- 8) Ultimately, for whom do you work? Who should you seek to please with your labor?

Biblical Principles of Charity

- 9) What should the Christian response be towards those that refuse to work?
- 10) What should be the Christian response to those who are in need and cannot work?
- 11) Who has the first responsibility to provide for those in need?
- 12) What is the order of priority for a Christian in doing charitable work?
- 13) What principles does 1 John 3:17-18 set for guiding an individual's response to a need?
- 14) What blessings will come to the person that is charitable?
- 15) What curses will come upon the person that lacks compassion to close up his heart (and wallet) to those in need?
- 16) Why is it generally true that those who are poor are more generous with what little they have than those who are rich with their great wealth?

Charitable Institutions

- 17) What qualifications should a charitable institution meet before a Christian gives to it?
- 18) What qualities in a charitable institution should exclude it from receiving gifts from Christians?
- 19) There are many qualified charitable institutions for Christians to support. How do you decide which should receive your support? i.e. - what is your grid of priorities for deciding on charities to support?
- 20) What dangers exist for a Christian charitable institution to take government funding?
- 21) When did American government entities become involved in charitable (relief) work? What was the result as governments became more involved?

ECONOMIC / POLITICAL SYSTEMS

Compare each of the following political / economic systems;

System	Property Ownership	State Control	Distribution of goods	Incentive / Motivation	Individual Freedom
“Democratic” Capitalism					
Laissez-faire Capitalism					
“Crony” Capitalism					
European Social Democracy					
Authoritarian Socialism					
Revolutionary Communism					
Pure Communism					
Liberation Theology					
Fascism					

- 22) Of political economic systems listed on the previous page, which are closest to the Biblical principles already discussed?
- 23) In what ways do all forms of Communism, Socialism and Fascism violate basic Biblical principles?
- 24) Why do some Christians fall for / advocate Communism, Socialism or Fascism?
- 25) How should a Christian behave if living in a country controlled by a political / economic system that does not support Christian principles of labor and charity?

Use of social programs?

Meeting needs of the poor?

Incentive to work diligently?

- 26) Should churches be involved in charitable social work? Explain

- 27) If a church gets involved in charitable social work, what principles should guide it in setting up its purpose and mission statement?

Evangelism?

Partnership with government?

Partnership with other charities?

Priorities in mission?

Assessing genuine need?

Financial Accountability?