

Chapter 21

Enjoy Your Toil--Acceptance

I would rather not dwell too much on the portion of Ecclesiastes that discusses enjoying your toil.

Enjoying toil sounds sadistic or masochistic, right? I would like to challenge that notion, particularly by reference to the story I told you about my dad, and how he feels wealthy in his truck driving to the baseball games that he umpires. This would be drudgery and toil to me, but because my dad has ingeniously combined his rest (something he enjoys) with industry, he experiences effortless enjoyment of his “toil”.

Many people think about toil and feel the same way I do, that it sounds like pushing a rock up a mountain only to see it fall down again on the other side the next day. The 20th century French existential philosopher Albert Camus employed the ancient Greek myth of Sisyphus to demonstrate that we should live our lives even in the face of the absurdity of our uselessness, knowing that no matter our efforts or virtue in this world, in the end we all will die. We can get depressed about that and become suicidal like I did, or we can accept the fundamental absurdity of this notion and revel in it. Camus gives some valuable recommendations, and

I would recommend his book, *The Myth of Sisyphus* highly.

One thing worth noting here specifically is that community can provide deep meaning. Even if you do not believe in an immortal existence, you at least can acknowledge that there will be people in the world who will live after you. You could say that you do not care because after you're dead you will have no further knowledge of the affairs of the living. Do you not have anyone to love in the world? A person that loves no one is pitiable and must be miserable.

I mentioned before how in 2017 I was directed on a path that did not seem at all related to my goal of accumulating \$10 million. I perceived that my poetry was not very popular. I knew quickly that I would never get rich by selling it, but I didn't care. I really liked what I was writing and found it gratifying. I felt like for the first time I understood many of the scriptures that previously just danced through and read quickly without comprehending their depths. I don't say this to assert the truth of my sacred text or to persuade you to become a Christian (although if you want to I will talk with you about that), but only as an example of how, when I asked the universe for something, the universe drew me to

itself. The universe said, “Know more about me before you get to a place of thinking about yourself.” Of course, the universe knew that when I hit Solomon’s words in Ecclesiastes, I would have the gift of true wealth as described in The Offer:

To all whom God gives both possessions wealth,
and likewise, whom he has enabled well,
to find enjoyment, to accept their lot
in all their toils this is the gift of God.

This is where the universe left me after I prayed for my reward. When I was writing the poetry, at times I got discouraged. Nevertheless, I also was so inspired because I knew of the great potential of what I was writing.

What if my poetry could draw other people to my source text like it did with me? At the very least I knew that my mom and dad both liked it. Even as a 49-year-old man they could take pleasure in their son exercising his creative talents just like you can with your five-year-old son drawing pictures with crayons at the kitchen table. There is nothing wrong with being proud of your five-year-old son, and there's nothing wrong with being proud of your 49-year-old son. Your 49-year-old son, though, knows how to analyze and determine whether that poetry is just something that his mom and dad

might enjoy or maybe it is something that the whole world would enjoy.

I have received enough positive feedback from people other than my mom and dad to make me believe that my Bible poetry is a blessing, and thus, it may be worthwhile for me to continue to write. Consequently, I continue to write it and I currently am about halfway through Isaiah. I stay true to my focus writing under the name of a pseudonym and writing poetry that over the last few years I do not think many people have read. That is okay because I was doing it for myself trying to train myself to write better. I knew that I would write this poetry and it would teach me how to be a better writer. I knew that somehow the universe would use that skill for other purposes, or maybe it wouldn't. Maybe I could just use this skill for the sole purpose of my enjoyment, my pleasure! I continued to adhere to the process and eventually after three years of writing only Bible poetry, in 2020, The Offer came to me. I wrote it very quickly and with a great amount of clarity, desire, intention, and passion.

One of my favorites artists in Austin is a painter and creator of collages named Spencer Smith. We were talking recently at Jon's art gallery where Spencer's work

was displayed. He described how he had completed a large body of work because of COVID-19. He said that in this sense COVID-19 drove him to work harder and he produced more art. I told him I identified with that myself.

When I got my direction to write those five or six Bible poetry books, I did not understand how that related to me accumulating \$10 million dollars of real estate. Nevertheless, the poetry was the direction that the universe put me on and I was at peace because I was really enjoying the project. I knew that my writing was improving. I would read back over things that I wrote with pride and have that sense that many artists share, that in my poetry, the universe was communicating through me and allowing me to transmit ideas that I never could have come up with on my own. What a gift and blessing! I felt like the voice of the universe sometimes. That is agency.

My friend Spencer spends his time working at a job that involves driving a truck. He paints and creates collages in all his spare time when he is not working. I can identify with this. I practice the law in all my working hours, and I devote as much as myself as I can to my poetry when I am not attending to my legal

practice. Many times, I would much rather write poetry than practice law. I can gain acceptance by remembering that the work that I do practicing law influences my poetry, and of course the same is true in reverse. My law career has been a fantastic blessing to me. It has allowed me to make a decent living, but it also has made me into a better poet simply because I am a better writer for having practiced law. Being a writer and learning how to write as an attorney is a thing! I tell people now that I am a writer instead of a lawyer, and they are intrigued rather than impressed. I would much rather cultivate love than fear in my life.

Spencer is a collage artist, and, in his art, he takes related but disparate images and combines them into a unified single image that has special relevance and artistic meaning. I told Spencer that he should never feel discouraged driving the truck because he is absorbing so much source material in the world, seeing so much more of it than I ever do. I typically drive around in the same routes every day: back and forth to my office; the grocery store; my favorite barbecue store; back and forth from Jon's apartment (where Spencer has a studio) to play chess; back and forth to be with my kids. I run in the same grooves all the time. Spencer goes to random

locations and absorbs all the images that he sees on his way. I know that he uses what he absorbs from the world in his art.

Neither Spencer nor I are earning a living from our art (yet). We both are wealthy men in our art, though, because we engage in our art even while acknowledging that we are working on things that seemingly do not have direct apparent significance or relevance. Nevertheless, we know that we are refining and focusing our craft and so in that sense, our work is always being rewarded.

I wanted to mention an excellent quote from the 2nd century BCE holy book of the Hindu faith, the Bhagavad Gita. I must confess that I only know about this quote because I read it in B. K. S Iyengar's excellent *Light on Yoga*. The passage is a few lines long but well worth quoting in its entirety:

Work alone is your privilege, never the
fruits thereof. Never let the fruits of action
be your motive; and never cease to work.
Work in the name of the Lord, abandoning
selfish desires. Be not affected by success
or failure. This equipoise is called Yoga.

This passage speaks to me much about the notion of acceptance, finding joy in toil, and yoga. This passage is

highly relevant for The Offer.

Spencer's art is really cool. In fact, last night I just bought another one of his prints for \$300. I love his art because it combines images of pop culture and it is psychedelically inspired. It is intentionally subversive as all good art should be and Spencer is a direct artistic descendant of Andy Warhol. We all know how popular he was. I do not know whether Spencer's works will ever sell for millions like Andy's, but Spencer has that potential. Why? Because Spencer, just like you and me, has infinite value!

Spencer satisfies the definition of wealth because he accepts his toil as a delivery driver and finds joy in it. He agrees with me about how much more of popular culture he absorbs because of his job, and it comes out in cool and weird ways in his art. I know of the joy that he feels when he produces his art and when he is in his community since I'm part of his community.

Spencer is young but also feels the urgency of how his time may be wasted because of the energy he devotes to his "day" job. This is the case because his higher calling probably is the painting. He is simply so skilled with his art, and in fact, art may be where he earns his highest hourly rate. All things being equal, if

you are working for other people, try to move yourself in the direction of maximizing your hourly rate because this will lead to more money and more time.

I cannot imagine that the universe gave Spencer the gifts he possesses not wanting them to be on full display through his art. His art challenges our sensibilities and I joked last night with him and Jon that Spencer's art makes me feel "uncomfortable". They laughed.

My whole point of this chapter is to let you know that you may be working on something right now that does not seem like it is directing you towards your goals. I deeply understand that and all I can do is encourage you to persist as I mentioned in Chapter 19 about Think and Grow Rich. If you do not know what to do at this very moment to better achieve your goals, the best things you can do are begin a regular meditation practice, start practicing yoga, and read Think and Grow Rich. The cool thing about that book is that you really do have to just read the first chapter until Napoleon says you can stop reading once you understand its premise. I wrote down my chief aim and goal and waited. I cannot guarantee that you're going to become a millionaire but if you adopt the principles in TGR and The Offer, I know

that you can become wealthy by the definition of wealth that we've been describing here. Don't forget: you define wealth for yourself, according to your personal values.