



## [Ecclesiastes 4:6](#)

(6) Better one handful with tranquillity  
than two handfuls with toil  
and chasing after the wind.  
*New International Version*

Ecclesiastes 4:6, without mentioning a specific worker that Solomon may have observed, presents us with a more balanced approach that we should strive for. Putting it simply, Solomon calls for contentment. One commentator calls this a picture of an “integrated” man; today, we might call him “balanced.” This person is productive in his labors, but he also carves out time for other important activities. He guards against being caught up in the rat race, finding time to balance his life through sharing himself with his family and other activities for their well-being.

Americans spend more time working than any other people in the industrialized world. We are part of an entire nation caught up in “getting” what we refer to as “the good life.” When a person's heart is consumed with constant “doing” or “working,” chasing after whatever he wants out of life, true quietness is ignored, and life gradually becomes a battle to ensure that all of his time is spent simply in “activity.” But [God](#) says so simply what our aim should be: “Now godliness with contentment is great gain” ([1 Timothy 6:6](#)). This is a choice we are free to make. Solomon is teaching that, to have truly good work habits, a person must also make the choices to exercise a measure of contentment to balance life.

The industrious man reveals that he thinks life's sole purpose is material achievement. Meanwhile, the lazy person's self-serving, pleasure-seeking goal results in slow suicide. The balanced worker deliberately makes choices to divide time and energies to include the well-being of others too. What is the lesson so far? We can take what we want from life, but we must pay for what we take.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Ecclesiastes 4:6 (<http://www.theberean.org>)

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