

# Ecclesiastes 6:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.

## Analysis

**All the labour of man is for his mouth** (כָּל-עֲמַל הָאָדָם לִפְיָהוּ, kol-amal ha'adam lefihu)—human toil primarily serves basic physical sustenance. The Hebrew amal (labor/toil) carries connotations of wearisome, burdensome work. Despite humanity's higher capacities—intellect, creativity, spirituality—the Preacher observes that most labor serves the mundane necessity of eating. **And yet the appetite is not filled** (וְגַם-הַנֶּפֶשׁ לֹא תִמָּלֵא, ve-gam-hanefesh lo timale)—the word nefesh can mean 'soul' or 'appetite/desire.' Physical hunger returns after each meal; psychological desire persists despite satisfaction.

This verse captures the treadmill of existence 'under the sun': work to eat, eat to gain strength to work, work again to eat again—an endless cycle. Even when physical needs are met, desires multiply, preventing lasting satisfaction (5:10). Only when labor and eating are received as God's gifts and enjoyed within covenant relationship does this cycle gain meaning (2:24-26). Jesus later taught that man doesn't live by bread alone but by God's word (Matthew 4:4), and that those who labor should seek food that endures to eternal life (John 6:27).

## Historical Context

Ancient agrarian societies understood this verse viscerally—most labor was subsistence farming to produce food. Even Solomon's sophisticated kingdom rested on agricultural foundation. The observation that appetite is never permanently filled resonated with daily experience: yesterday's meal doesn't

prevent today's hunger. Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature often addressed the tension between endless labor and limited satisfaction. However, Ecclesiastes uniquely locates the problem not in labor itself but in pursuing labor as ultimate purpose rather than receiving it as means to enjoy God's gifts. The Protestant Reformers developed robust theology of vocation: work gains dignity and purpose not from its outcomes but from being done as service to God and neighbor (Colossians 3:23-24).

## Related Passages

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**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How much of your labor serves merely 'filling your mouth'—meeting basic physical needs—versus serving higher purposes of loving God and neighbor?
2. What does it mean that appetite is never permanently filled, and how does this reality challenge consumerist assumptions about satisfaction?

## Interlinear Text

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כָּל	עֲמַל	הָאָדָם	לִפִּי יְהוָה	וְגַם	הַנֶּפֶשׁ	לֹא
H3605	<b>All the labour</b>	<b>of man</b>	<b>is for his mouth</b>	H1571	<b>and yet the appetite</b>	H3808
	H5999	H120	H6310		H5315	

תִּמְלֵא:  
**is not filled**  
 H4390

## Additional Cross-References

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**John 6:27** (Parallel theme): Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

**Proverbs 16:26** (Parallel theme): He that laboureth laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.

**Matthew 6:25** (Parallel theme): Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

**Ecclesiastes 5:10** (Parallel theme): He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.

**Ecclesiastes 6:3** (Parallel theme): If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he.

**Luke 12:19** (Parallel theme): And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.