

Ecclesiastes 2 Commentary

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Decades of Searching
(in the days of King Solomon)
circa 936BC

King Solomon
Author

Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself." And behold, it too was futility.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:1 επον γ ν καρδ μου δε ρο δ πειρ σω σε ν ε φροσ ν κα δ ν γαθ κα δο κα γε το το μαται της

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said in my heart, Come now, I will prove thee with mirth, and behold thou good: and, behold, this is also vanity.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:1 I thought to myself, "Come now, I will try self-indulgent pleasure to see if it is worthwhile." But I found that it also is futile.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Go ahead, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy what is good." But it turned out to be futile.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:1 I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Come on, let's try pleasure. Let's look for the 'good things' in life." But I found that this, too, was meaningless.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said in my heart, 'Pray, come, I try thee with mirth, and look thou on gladness;' and lo, even it is vanity.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:1 I thought to myself, 'Very well, I will try pleasure and see what enjoyment has to offer.' And this was futile too.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself." But again, this also was vanity.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Come, now, let me try you with pleasure and the enjoyment of good things." But behold, this too was vanity.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:1 I thought to myself, "Now I want to experiment with pleasure and enjoy myself." But even this was pointless.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said in my heart, I will give you joy for a test; so take your pleasure -- but it was to no purpose.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity.

- **said:** Ec 2:15 1:16,17 3:17,18 Ps 10:6 14:1 27:8 30:6,7 Lu 12:19
- **Come now:** Ge 11:3,4,7 2Ki 5:5 Isa 5:5 Jas 4:13 5:1
- **I will test you :** Ec 8:15 11:9 Isa 50:5,11 Lu 16:19,23 Jas 5:5 Tit 3:3 Rev 18:7,8



Carpe Diem! Tempus Fugit! Redeem the Time!

SOLOMON SELF-REFLECTS ON VALUE OF PLEASURE TO SATISFY THE SOUL

I **said to myself** is literally to my heart = [leb](#), his "control center" so to speak. He is inviting his "heart" to try self-indulgent pleasure!

NET NOTE - Heb "I said, I, in my heart" (אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְלִבִּי, 'amarti 'ani bélibbi). The term "heart" (לֵב, lev) is a synecdoche of part ("heart") for the whole (the whole person), and thus means "I said to myself" (see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 648 - [SYNECDOCHE OF THE WHOLE](#)).

"**Come now, I will test you with pleasure** ([simchah](#); Lxx - [euphrosune](#) - gladness). **So enjoy yourself.**" - **Red** = commands. NET = "Come now, I will try self-indulgent pleasure to see if it is worthwhile." This experiment with hedonism is to determine if pleasures give significance to life under the sun.

THOUGHT - Solomon's approach reminds me of an old beer commercial which said **'You only go around once in life, so grab for all the gusto you can get.'** Notice how the first phrase is in fact "Biblical," so to speak! One chance at temporal life is all we get! The slogan connected with the post-World War II Baby Boomer generation, who were now adults — eager for freedom, adventure, and self-indulgence. The company ran TV commercials showing people doing things with gusto. This "live life fully" idea struck a nerve — it became bigger than the brand. The commercials had an energetic, adventurous, and aspirational tone that captured the spirit of the era, emphasizing living life to the fullest and seizing every opportunity. Ordinary people started quoting it — it became part of everyday conversation about making the most of life. It helped popularize phrases like: "Live life to the fullest!" "No regrets!" Even today, many people still reference the "you only go around once" idea — often without knowing it originated in a beer commercial! It sounds good on the surface, but Ecclesiastes is Solomon's simple response to that mantra - "Been there! Done that! Doesn't work!" Let me suggest an alternative slogan - Carpe Diem! Tempus Fugit! Redeem the Time, the time of your life!

NET NOTE - The Hebrew verb לָכָה (lékhah, "**Come!**") is a weakened imperative, used merely as an introductory word, e.g., Gen 19:32; 31:44; Judg 19:11; 1 Sam 9:9–10; 11:14; 2 Kgs 3:7; Ps 66:5; Song 7:12; Isa 1:18; 2:3; Mic 4:2 (HALOT 246 s.v. 2 לָכָה; BDB 234 s.v. לָכָה I.5.f.2). Whenever לָכָה introduces an exhortation, it functions as an invitation to the audience to adopt a course of action that will be beneficial to the addressee or mutually beneficial to both the speaker and the addressee. Here, Qoheleth personifies his "**heart**" (לִבִּי, libbi) and addresses himself. **The examination of self-indulgent pleasure is designed to be beneficial to Qoheleth.**

*it is not so much Qoheleth who is put to the test with pleasure,
but rather that pleasure is put to the test by Qoheleth*

NET NOTE - Or "test." The cohortative אֶנְסֶכְהָה ('anassékhah) emphasizes the resolve of the speaker. The term נָסָה (nasah, "to test") means "to conduct a test," that is, to conduct an experiment (Judg 6:39; Eccl 2:1; 7:23; Dan 1:12, 14; see HALOT 702 s.v. נָסָה 3; BDB 650 s.v. 1 נָסָה). The verb נָסָה is often used as a synonym with בָּחַן (bakhan, "to examine"; BDB 103 s.v. בָּחַן and 650 s.v. 1 נָסָה) and לָדַעַת (lada'at, "to ascertain"; Deut 8:2). Heb "**I will test you with pleasure.**" The term שִׂמְחָה ([simchah](#), "pleasure") has a two-fold range of meanings: (1) it can refer to the legitimate enjoyment of life that Qoheleth affirms is good (Eccl 5:17; 8:15; 9:7; 11:8, 9) and that God gives to those who please him (Eccl 2:26; 5:19); or (2) it can refer to foolish pleasure, self-indulgent, frivolous merrymaking (Eccl 2:1, 2; 7:4). The parallelism in Eccl 2:2 between שִׂמְחָה and שְׂחֹק (sékhōq, "laughter, frivolous merrymaking"), which always appears in the context of banqueting, drinking, and merrymaking, suggests that the **pejorative sense is in view in this context**. The statement **I will try self-indulgent pleasure** is a figurative expression known as metonymy of association. As Eccl 2:1–3 makes clear, it is not so much Qoheleth who is put to the test with pleasure, but rather that pleasure is put to the test by

Qoheleth.

This is the key phrase in this section of Ecclesiastes.

Qoheleth sought to discover (רָאָה) whether merry-making offered any value (טוֹב) to mankind.

NET NOTE - Heb “**See what is good!**” The volitive sequence of the cohortative (אֶנֶסְכָּה, ‘anassékhah, “I will test you”) followed by vav + imperative (וּרְאֵה, uré’eh, “and see!”) denotes purpose/result: “**I will test you ... in order to see....**” The verb רָאָה (ra’ah, “to see”) has a broad range of meanings (e.g., in the Qal stem 16 categories are listed in HALOT 1157–1160 s.v.). In this context it means “to discover; to perceive; to discern; to understand” (HALOT 1159 s.v. 13 רָאָה; BDB 907 s.v. 5 רָאָה). The phrase “**to see what is good**” (רָאָה, ra’ah, “to see” + טוֹב, tov, “good”) is repeated twice in Eccl 2:1–3. This is the key phrase in this section of Ecclesiastes. Qoheleth sought to discover (רָאָה) whether merry-making offered any value (טוֹב) to mankind.

Temper Longman III - The relevance of the book of Ecclesiastes may be seen in that even today many people live for pleasure. The booming entertainment industry is testimony to the draw of pleasures of all types. Modern pleasure seekers need to listen closely as the Teacher announces his intention to investigate pleasure for possible meaning and then tells us his sad conclusion: the “good things” in life turned out to be meaningless. In the final analysis, they are useless. While there may be a momentary thrill in pleasure, there is no lasting significance. Therefore, pleasure is not ultimately satisfying. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 268](#))

And behold (hinneh; Lxx - idou), it too was futility (hebel; Lxx - mataiotes - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) - First note Solomon uses **behold** because he wants to grab our attention so we don't miss his conclusion. His conclusion after testing pleasure is it was futile and empty. Solomon's conclusion reminds me of the wise words of the writer of Hebrews in his description of Moses in Heb 11:25+ for he choose "rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin." Yes, sin brings "pleasures" but (1) it is passing and (2) it brings pain! You can choose your pleasure, but you cannot choose your pain (your consequences)!

NET NOTE on **futility** - This use of הֶבֶל (hebel) denotes “futile, worthless, fruitless, pointless” (HALOT 237 s.v. 1 הֶבֶל; BDB 210–11 s.v. 1 הֶבֶל). It is a synonym to מְהוּלָל (méholal, “folly”) in 2:2a and an antonym to טוֹב (tov, “worthwhile, beneficial”) in 2:1b and 2:3c

Ryrie summarizes this first section - Solomon's pursuit of fulfillment through indulgence (Ec 2:1-3), achievements (Ec 2:4-6), possessions and wealth (Ec 2:7-8), and great fame (Ec 2:9) all failed to bring enduring satisfaction (cf. 1Ki 4:21-28; 2Chr 9:13-28).

Eric Ortlund - Qohelet's Three Searches (Ec 1:12–18; 2:1–11, 12–26) Excerpt from Themelios article [Laboring in Hopeless Hope: Encouragement for Christians from Ecclesiastes](#)

In Ec 2:1–3, Qohelet makes a second, more restricted search, this time confining himself to what is good for human beings in whatever time they have (Ec 2:3). It is as if Qohelet, soured by the world and its activity as a whole, turns to the finest and most noble things in life. His list of accomplishments in Ec 2:4–9 is truly impressive, but already in Ec 2:1 Qohelet gives us advance notice that this second investigation terminates, as the first did, in **vanity**. We see why in Ec 2:10–11, where Qohelet reflects on his accomplishments. He begins positively by saying in Ec 2:10 that he gave himself over to enjoying his work and that his heart rejoiced in all his labor. This is his portion or inheritance (חֵלֶק) from his life's work. In one sense, Qohelet's second search succeeded because he was able to “look upon good” (רָאָה בְטוֹב), or, as most translations have it, “**enjoy himself.**” Note that Qohelet remains within himself in Ec 2:10, speaking of his own involvement in his work. This perspective changes in Ec 2:11: Qohelet stands back and considers his accomplishments in themselves. When he does this, his joy evaporates as he relegates all his work to הֶבֶל and wind-chasing (Ec 2:11), without profit or permanent advantage (יִתְרוֹן) again, strongly recalling Ec 2:1:3). There seem to be two reasons for this conclusion. First, the amount of joy Qohelet received from his work was not enough in itself to redeem the years of toil it required. By analogy, I found my doctorate a satisfying experience, but the quality of that satisfaction is in no way adequate to the years of toil and late nights that it cost to produce a manuscript now collecting dust in the basement of a university library. The disproportion between effort and satisfaction in result is vanity, according to Qohelet's use of the word. Second, to whatever extent the mention of “profit” or “advantage” recalls ch. 1, one must ask how long the achievements of Ec 2:4–9 will last. Qohelet has enjoyed his life's work, but nothing permanent has been gained.

The Futility of Wealth and Pleasure 2:1-11 - Fulfillment doesn't come through indulgence. (Ec 2:1-3) [Don Robinson](#)

- a. pleasure seeking usually becomes a selfish endeavor, and selfishness destroys true joy.
- b. people who live for pleasure often exploit others to get what they want, and they end up with broken relationships.
- c. pleasure alone can never bring true satisfaction because it appeals to only to the flesh.

- d. living for pleasure only results in a decrease in enjoyment and necessitates an increase in intensity to bring the desired results.
- e. the more people drink, the more they need to drink...the more people are involved in drug use, the more often they need drugs and stronger ones in order to achieve the desired level of intoxication.
- f. there is nothing wrong with innocent fun, but the person who builds his or her life only on seeking pleasure is bound to be disappointed in life.

Test (tempt) (05254) [nacad/nasah](#) Lxx = [peirazo](#) in most OT uses has idea of testing or proving quality of someone or something and doing so often through adversity or hardship. As the following context makes clear (note "to see," lit., "to know," in 3:4), the purpose of this divine test was to determine if Israel was truly loyal. An examination of parallel passages shows that such divine tests were designed to reveal otherwise hidden character qualities. Testing which shows what someone is really like generally involves difficulty or hardship. **Swanson** sums up **Nacad** - 1. (piel) test, try, i.e., attempt to learn the true nature of something ([1Ki 10:1](#)); 2. (piel) attempt, try, i.e., exert oneself to do something (Dt 4:34); 3. (piel) test, try, i.e., cause or allow hardship or trouble in a circumstance, often with choices within the situation, implying a different outcome is possible (Jdg 2:22). Only used once in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Pleasure (joy, gladness, pleasure, delight) (08057) [simchah](#) from samach = to rejoice, be glad) is a feminine noun which means joy, gladness (with one's entire being as indicated by its association with the heart cf. Ex 4:14; Ps 19:8; 104:15; 105:3, soul Ps 86:4, cp verb samach in Pr 15:30 = "bright eyes gladden the heart") and refers to both the emotion and the manifestation of the emotion (Ezra 3:12, 13). Simchah refers to the reality, the experience and manifestation of joy and gladness. Joy is happiness over an unanticipated or present good. Delight or gladness in our heart comes from God (Psalm 4:7, cp 2Chr 20:27, 30:21). David prays "make me know joy and gladness (simchah)." (Ps 51:8) God desires that we serve Him with joy (Dt 28:47). Jdg 16:23 describes pagan (Philistines) rejoicing upon conquering their enemy (Israel). We see joy associated with music and/or singing (1Sa 18:6, 1Ki 1:40, 1Chr 15:16, 2Chr 23:18, 29:30). We see joy associated with willing offering from a whole heart (1Chr 29:9, 17). Joy was associated with celebration of the feast (2Chr 30:21, 23, 26, Ezra 6:22) In God's "presence is fullness of joy" (Ps 16:11). God gives a person "gladness of heart" in the labor and toil of this earthly life (Eccl. 5:20). One's wedding day is a day of rejoicing (Song 3:11). The "joy of the godless" is momentary (Job 20:5) because it depends on joy producing circumstances. Even as God can give joy, He can also take it away (Isa 16:10, Jer 7:34, Joel 1:16).

Behold (02009) [hinneh](#) is an interjection meaning behold, look, now; if. "It is used often and expresses strong feelings, surprise, hope, expectation, certainty, thus giving vividness depending on its surrounding context." (Baker) **Hinneh** generally directs our mind to the text, imploring the reader to give it special attention. In short, the Spirit is trying to arrest our attention! And so **hinneh** is used as an exclamation of vivid immediacy (e.g., read Ge 6:13)! (See [Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament page 220](#))

Spurgeon reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

NET NOTE - The particle הִנֵּה (véhinneh, literally "Behold!") occurs after verbs of perception to introduce what was seen, understood or discovered (HALOT 252 s.v. הִנֵּה 8). It is used to make the narrative graphic and vivid, enabling the reader to enter into the surprise of the speaker (BDB 244 s.v. הִנֵּה c). This is an example of the [heterosis](#) of the deictic particle ("Behold!") for a verb of perception ("I found"). See online [E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 510–34](#).

Hinneh is translated in the **Septuagint** with the interjection [idou](#) (strictly speaking a command in the second person [aorist imperative, middle voice](#)) a demonstrative particle (used 1377 times in the Septuagint and NT) which is found especially in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke "and giving a peculiar vivacity to the style by bidding the reader or hearer to attend to what is said: "**Behold! See! Lo!**" (Thayer) The command is calling for urgent attention. Do this now! Don't delay! It could be loosely paraphrased "Pay attention!" or "Listen up!" to arouse attention and introduce a new and extraordinary fact of considerable importance.

Vanity (futility, idols, breath, delusion, worthless, emptiness) (01892) [hebel](#) means breath, vapor, vanity, emptiness, meaninglessness; idols. **Hebel** commonly has the figurative use of that which is evanescent and unstable. The first OT use refers to idols (Dt 32:21, cf. 1 Ki 16:13, 26, Jer 8:19; Jeremiah 10:8, 15; Jer 14:22 Jer 51:18; Jonah 2:9; Ps 31:6), a fitting word picture for the worthlessness of idols! **Hebel** refers to breath because of its transitory fleeting character, as in Job's figurative use "my days are

but a **breath**." (Job 7:16, cf similar idea Ps 39:5, 6, 11; Ps 62:9; Ps 78:33 where hebel parallels behālā from root bāhal "to hasten": Ps 94:11; Ps 144:4) **Hebel** "generally appears in contexts where it is used as a simile emphasizing the transitory state of an object, never as descriptive of the biological function. A prime example would be "Humanity is like a breath (Ps. 144:4). Not only is breath ethereal and of short duration, but all things which breathe will die." (Gilbrant)

Michael Eaton adds **Hebel** means (i) brevity and unsubstantiality, emptiness (NEB), spelt out in Job 7 where the 'vanity' (Job 7:16, Heb.) of man's life is a 'breath' (Job 7:7), an evaporating cloud (Job 7:9), soon to be ended (Job 7:8) and return no more (Job 7:9f.); (ii) unreliability, frailty, found also in Psalm 62 where God, a 'Rock' and a 'high tower' (Ps 62:6), is compared with man who is 'vanity' (Ps 62:9), a 'leaning wall' and a 'tottering fence' (Ps 62:3); (iii) futility, as in Job 9:29 (Heb.), where 'in vanity' means 'to no effect'; (iv) deceit (cf. Jer. 16:19; Zech. 10:2). Ecclesiastes includes each of these emphases. All is untrustworthy, unsubstantial; no endeavour will in itself bring permanent satisfaction; the greatest joys are fleeting. Between Eccl 1:2 and Eccl 12:8 the Preacher will echo this key statement about thirty times, showing that his book is in fact its exposition. Vanity characterizes all human activity (Eccl 1:14; 2:11): joy (Eccl 2:1) and frustration (Eccl 4:4, 7-8; 5:10) alike, life (Eccl 2:17; 6:12; 9:9), youth (Eccl 11:10) and death (Eccl 3:19; 11:8), the destinies of wise and foolish (Eccl 2:15, 19), diligent and idle (Eccl 2:21, 23, 26). (Borrow [Ecclesiastes : an introduction and commentary page 56](#))

Vine's summary of **hebel** - **First**, the word represents human "breath" as a transitory thing: "I loathe it; I would not live always: let me alone; for my days are vanity [literally, but a breath] (Job 7:16). **Second**, hebel means something meaningless and purposeless: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Eccl. 1:2). **Third**, this word signifies an "idol," which is unsubstantial, worthless, and vain: "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities ..." (Dt. 32:21, the first occurrence). See SPIRIT usage notes.

Warren Baker adds that **hebel** "refers to the vanity and ultimate emptiness and meaninglessness of all things in this life, whether they seem good or bad (Eccl. 1:2, 14; 2:11, 15, 3:19; 4:4, 7, 8; 5:7; 6:2, 4, 9; 7:6, 15; 8:10; 9:9; 11:8). Combined with itself in the plural, it means **absolute meaninglessness** (Eccl. 1:2). Idols and the vain religious customs associated with them are all delusions (Jer. 10:3, 15). It denotes an empty, vain life (Eccl. 6:12). Used with the verb hāḇal, it means to carry out vain talk or action or what is empty (Job 27:12). As an adverb, it means to talk in vain, emptily (Job 35:16). To walk after hebel means to go after or follow vanity (2 Ki. 17:15; Jer. 2:5). Anything obtained through evil is vain, such as wealth (Prov. 13:11)." (Borrow Complete Word Study Dictionary— Old Testament)

Victor Hamilton (See [TWOT](#)) on "the cluster of references (of [hebel](#)) found in Ecclesiastes (thirty-six). These may be grouped into several subdivisions. First are those passages in which the author states his inability to find fulfillment in work, both in his failure to be creative and in his lack of control over the privilege of free disposition of his possessions; this is "vanity": Eccl 2:11, 19, 21, 23; Eccles. 4:4, 8; Eccles. 6:2. Second are those verses in which the author struggles with the idea that the connection between sin and judgment, righteousness and final deliverance is not always direct or obvious. This is an anomaly about life and it is vanity": Eccles. 2:15; Eccles. 6:7-9; Eccles. 8:10-14. The meaning of hebel here would be "senseless." Thirdly are those verses in which the author laments the shortness of life; this is vanity": Eccles. 3:19; Eccles. 6:12; Eccles. 11:8, 10. Life, in its quality, is "empty" or "vacuous" (and thus unsubstantial), and in its quantity is "transitory." Rather than the above observations being final conclusions about life by the author of Ecclesiastes, perhaps they reveal something of his method and his concealed premise. He may be attempting to demonstrate man's inability to find meaning to life unaided by divine revelation and interruption. This solo quest will always end in futility.

HEBEL - 67X/64V - breath(5), delusion(2), emptily(1), emptiness(2), fleeting(2), fraud(1), futile(1), futility(13), idols(7), mere breath(2), nothing(1), useless(1), vain(3), vainly(1), vanity(19), vanity of vanities(3), vapor(1), worthless(2). Deut. 32:21; 1 Ki. 16:13; 1 Ki. 16:26; 2 Ki. 17:15; Job 7:16; Job 9:29; Job 21:34; Job 27:12; Job 35:16; Ps. 31:6; Ps. 39:5; Ps. 39:6; Ps. 39:11; Ps. 62:9; Ps. 78:33; Ps. 94:11; Ps. 144:4; Prov. 13:11; Prov. 21:6; Prov. 31:30;

Eccl. 1:2; Eccl. 1:14; Eccl. 2:1; Eccl. 2:11; Eccl. 2:15; Eccl. 2:17; Eccl. 2:19; Eccl.

2:21; Eccl. 2:23; Eccl. 2:26; Eccl. 3:19; Eccl. 4:4; Eccl. 4:7; Eccl. 4:8; Eccl. 4:16; Eccl. 5:7; Eccl. 5:10; Eccl. 6:2; Eccl. 6:4; Eccl. 6:9; Eccl. 6:11; Eccl. 6:12; Eccl. 7:6; Eccl. 7:15; Eccl. 8:10; Eccl. 8:14; Eccl. 9:9; Eccl. 11:8; Eccl. 11:10; Eccl. 12:8;

Isa. 30:7; Isa. 49:4; Isa. 57:13; Jer. 2:5; Jer. 8:19; Jer. 10:3; Jer. 10:8; Jer. 10:15; Jer. 14:22; Jer. 16:19; Jer. 51:18; Lam. 4:17; Jon. 2:8; Zech. 10:2

Deuteronomy 32:21[±] 'They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their **IDOLS** (no god = ESV, so-called gods = CSB, false gods = NET)(hebel; Lxx - [eidolon](#)). So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) EAT DESSERT FIRST

I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?" I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives. Ecclesiastes 2:1-3NIV

Solomon's search led him from wisdom to pleasure— especially pursuit of pleasure as an end in itself. He tried laughter, wine, and the party scene. All the while he didn't lose his perspective but observed hedonism as a philosophy of life. In the end he found it empty. As verse 3 makes clear, no one lives forever. In light of your oncoming death, why not party hearty?

A certain restaurant placed the following sign in a front window: "Life is short. Eat dessert first." Besides being a catchy advertisement for cheesecake and apple pie, the sign conveys a fascinating message.

Life is short. On every hand we see the evidence that no one lives forever. The ever-changing obituary notices remind us that one day we too will die. Or to make it more personal, one day I will die and one day you will die.

But what insight follows from that undeniable truth? The sign suggests a thought along these lines: "Since you don't know how long you are going to live, eat dessert first because you don't want to die eating mashed potatoes." Or something like that.

I find a certain wisdom in that approach. There are some foods I prefer not to eat dead or alive—tuna fish and brussel sprouts being high on that list. So, yes, I'd prefer to have a chocolate eclair rather than a tuna casserole.

But there is another side to all this. "Eat dessert first" seems to imply that the real purpose of life is personal pleasure. But does not experience teach us to "work first, then play hard"? A menu of nothing but sweets will eventually rot your teeth and give you a very unhappy tummy. Likewise, you only appreciate your pleasure when it comes as a reward for hard work well done.

Life is short. Work hard, play hard, love God with all your heart, take each day as a blessing from the Lord, enjoy your family, love your neighbor as yourself, take time to pray and to smell the coffee. In so doing, you will find what the psalmist called the "light of life" (Ps 56:13)—and you may even discover that tuna fish can be as tasty as apple pie. Heavenly Father, I pray for the genuine joy of the Lord to fill my life today Amen. -

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Name three people who exhibit the joy of the Lord. What characteristics do those people have in common?
- What is the essential difference between happiness and joy?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Nehemiah 8:10-18; Psalm 16:11; and Ephesians 5:18-21

Warren Wiersbe - Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 WHEN PLEASURE IS TREASURED [Pause for Power: A 365-Day Journey through the Scriptures - Page 243](#)

"I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; 1 refused my heart no pleasure. . . . Yet when 1 surveyed all that my hands had done . . . everything was meaningless" (Ecc. 2:10).

Today's world is pleasure-mad. Millions of people will pay almost any amount of money to buy experiences and temporarily escape the burdens of life. While there is nothing wrong with innocent fun, the person who builds his or her life only on seeking pleasure is bound to be disappointed in the end.

Why? For one thing, pleasure-seeking usually becomes a selfish endeavor, and selfishness destroys true joy. People who live for pleasure often exploit others to get what they want, and they end up with broken relationships as well as empty hearts. People are

more important than things and thrills. We are to be channels, not reservoirs; the greatest joy comes when we share God's pleasure with others.

If you live for pleasure alone, enjoyment will decrease unless the intensity of the pleasure increases. Then you reach a point of diminishing returns when there is little or no enjoyment at all, only bondage. For example, the more that people drink, the less enjoyment they get out of it. This means they must have more drinks and stronger drinks in order to have pleasure; the sad result is desire without satisfaction. Instead of alcohol, substitute drugs, gambling, promiscuous sex, money, fame, or any other pursuit, and the principle will hold true: when pleasure alone is the center of life, the result will ultimately be disappointment and emptiness.

Not Enough

The writer of Ecclesiastes said that pleasure, material possessions, and even great knowledge do not bring lasting satisfaction. Jesus went even further. He said that a person who possesses everything this world has to offer but doesn't prepare for eternity is spiritually destitute. We all need more than fun, finances, and fame to be fulfilled.

Thinking about this made me consider some prominent people who had committed suicide. One was a baseball star, several were entertainers, and two had inherited great wealth. I also recalled a highly esteemed scholar and his wife who both took a lethal overdose of drugs when they learned that she had terminal cancer. These people had failed to find meaning in their existence.

Because we were created in God's image, our lives do have meaning for both time and eternity. God made us for His glory and placed us on earth to honor Him. We have the remarkable ability to reflect on Him and on eternity.

Believing that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the grave meets our need for meaning. Salvation brings assurance that we're forgiven. We have an eternal purpose and the hope of heaven. This is enough to bring deep peace and joy to our lives. Have you found this to be so? —Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

For Further Study

Perhaps you're looking for
that elusive sense of satisfaction.

Check out *Why In The World Am I Here?*

Hold loosely the things of earth.

—Corrie ten Boom

(Ed: *Hold tight to Jesus*)

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 True Satisfaction

A man stopped at a travel agency and said he wanted to go on a cruise. "Where to?" he was asked. "I don't know," was his reply. So the travel agent suggested that he take a look at a large globe that was in the room. He studied it for some time, then with a look of frustration he exclaimed, "Is this all you have to offer?"

The world in which we live has many things that appeal to us. Apart from what is sinful, we can and should enjoy its pleasures. A delicious meal graced with the good fellowship of friends warms our hearts. The beauties of nature inspire and fill us with wonder. Good music refreshes our souls. And work itself can be fulfilling.

Even in a sin-cursed world we can find great enjoyment. And yet these pursuits do not bring full and lasting satisfaction. In fact, people who live only for self-gratification, no matter how lofty their achievements, will always long for more. It makes no difference how deeply they drink from the wells of this world's pleasures, their thirst is still not satisfied. They must agree with Solomon that "all is vanity and grasping for the wind" ([Ecclesiastes 2:17](#)).

Only by living for Jesus Christ do we experience true satisfaction. —Richard De Haan

The world is filled with so much good

That brings us joy and pleasure,

But true fulfillment only comes

When Christ we love and treasure.

—Sper

Putting Christ first brings satisfaction that lasts.

The New Religion

Driving through Ireland to a Bible conference, I saw a fascinating billboard. It was large and white with nothing on it but a woman's red shoe and the bold caption: "Is Shopping The New Religion?"

The pursuit of possessions continues to be one of the most powerful motivations that people can experience. But can the accumulation of things bring true satisfaction?

In Luke 12:15, Jesus answered that question with a firm and uncompromising "No!" During a discussion on material wealth, He said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." Life must always be more than just the inventory of the things we own.

King Solomon also attempted to find satisfaction in the pursuit of things. He discovered it to be full of emptiness (Eccl. 2:1-17). If we have placed "the abundance of the things" we possess at the center of our lives, shopping may, in fact, have become a substitute for God—a new religion. But such endeavors will always result in emptiness.

David prayed, "You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing" (Ps. 145:16). Only God is able to bring real satisfaction to our lives. —Bill Crowder (Our Daily Bread)

O Lord, help us to be content
With all that we possess,
And may we show our gratitude
With heartfelt thankfulness.
—Sper

You are rich when you are satisfied with what you have.

The Pursuit Of Pleasure

In Your presence is fullness of joy. —Psalm 16:11

Today's Scripture : Psalm 16:1-11

The United States Declaration of Independence says that one of our unalienable rights is "the pursuit of happiness." I think we would all agree that pleasure, the agreeable reaction of our senses to some stimulus, is a king-size ingredient of happiness. Most people spend much of their leisure time pursuing pleasure in the hope of finding happiness.

Scripture doesn't say that we shouldn't enjoy life. Indeed, Paul affirmed that God has given us "richly all things to enjoy"—like food and drink and the ability to sing, laugh, and make music (1 Timothy 6:17).

Paul also warned us that excessive indulgence in God's good gifts may have a killing effect on our enjoyment of the supremely good. "[The widow] who lives in pleasure," he wrote, "is dead while she lives" (5:6). And the writer of Ecclesiastes learned that pleasure cannot satisfy (Ecclesiastes 2:1).

Anyone who makes pleasure the main goal of life becomes desensitized to earth's greatest delight—fellowship with God—which is also the abiding joy of heaven. As David wrote in Psalm 16:11, "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." No pleasure can rival that of fellowship with God—a pleasure that is a foretaste of heaven. By: Vernon Grounds (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord,
A wonderful Savior to me;
He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock,
Where rivers of pleasure I see.
—Crosby

Fellowship with Christ is the secret of happiness now and forever.

ECCLESIASTES 1-2					
Ec 1:12	Ec 2:1	Ec 2:4	Ec 2:12	Ec 2:18	Ec 2:24
Attempts to Find Significance through...			Frustration of...		Conclusion

Wisdom	Pleasure	Accomplishments	Death	Life	Conclusion
Man trying to find significance without God					God's Gift

[Chuck Smith](#) - 1 John 5:11+

I. LIFE "UNDER THE SUN" IS LIFE ON THE HUMAN PLANE.

A. Life on this plane is frustrating vexation of the spirit.

1. Man is conscious of an unfulfilled purpose.
 - a. A desire to be?
 - b. A desire to have?
 - c. A desire to attain?
2. I achieve my goal only to discover it wasn't what I thought it was.
 - a. I drink but I am still thirsty.
 - b. I eat but I am still hungry.

B. Life on this plane. "Vanity, vanity all..."

1. I feel an emptiness within.
 - a. Nothing seems to fill that emptiness.
2. Things finally seem so futile.

C. Life on this plane is filled with pursuits.

1. I think happiness is the ultimate purpose for life. Ec 2:1.
2. I think building some monument Ec 2:4.
3. I think possessions Ec 2:7.
4. I think entertainment Ec 2:8.
5. I think wisdom.

D. Life on this plane results in bitterness Ec 2:17.

1. We become cynical, disappointed.

II. "LIFE IN THE SON" IS LIFE ON THE SPIRITUAL PLANE.

1 John 5:11+ And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

A. Life on this plane is satisfying.

1. I have a consciousness of fulfilled purposes.
 - a. I have become a son of God.
 - b. I have received eternal life.
 - c. "My cup runneth over."

B. Life on this plane is full and rich.

1. Nothing I do is in vain.
 - a. A purpose even in my failures.
 - b. "Your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

C. Life on this plane is a life of rest.

1. I rest in the finished work of Christ my Lord.

D. Life on this plane results in love, joy, peace.

III. ON WHICH PLANE DO YOU LIVE?

A. Some choose to live under the sun.

1. They feel what has happened to others won't happen to them.
 - a. This present pursuit is the real answer.
2. They labor under the false notions and lies Satan has spread about life in the Son.
 - a. They have preferred his lie to God's truth.

B. Others choose to live "in the Son."

1. You see it is a matter of choice.
2. You choose that - "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."
3. Some get all hung up on a loving God sending men to hell.
 - a. God does not send men to hell.
 - b. If they choose to go there, He won't violate their choice.

C. On which plane do you choose to live?

The Pursuit Of Pleasure - Ray Stedman

I thought in my heart, Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good. But that also proved to be meaningless. Ecclesiastes 2:1

In chapter 2 we are introduced to the record of what Solomon found in this search. We have an examination of the various ways by which humans have sought through the ages to find contentment, enjoyment, and delight in life. The first way, the one that is most popular today and always has been, is his examination of what philosophers call hedonism, the pursuit of pleasure. All of us instinctively feel that if we can just have fun, we will find happiness. That is what the Searcher examines first to see whether it is true.

He gives us details of what he experienced. First, Solomon tells himself, "Enjoy yourself," so he went in for mirth, laughter, and pleasure. You can let your mind fill in the gaps here. Imagine how the palace must have rocked with laughter. Every night they had stand-up comics and lavish feasts, with wine flowing like water.

Solomon gives us the result of the search. "Laughter," he said to himself, "is foolish." I wonder if each of us has not experienced this to some degree. Have you ever spent time with a group of your friends, giving yourself to laughing, having fun, and telling stories? If you think carefully about it, you will recall that at least parts of the stories were based on exaggeration; they did not have much basis in reality.

It is the same with laughter. Laughter deals only with the peripheries of life. There is no solid content to it. "Like the crackling of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:6). Laughter is only a crackling noise. It leaves one with a sense of unfulfillment. I have had such afternoons and evenings that were delightful occasions. We laughed all the time as we rehashed experiences and told jokes, but when all was said and done, we went to bed feeling rather empty. That was Solomon's experience. He is not saying that this is wrong. He says that laughter is empty, it does not fulfill or satisfy.

Of pleasure, Solomon's comment is, "What use is it? What does it contribute to life?" "Nothing," is his answer. Pleasure consumes resources; it does not build them up. Most of us cannot afford a night out more than once or twice a year because it costs so much. Going out uses up resources that have been acquired through hard work. Pleasure, Solomon concludes, adds nothing.

Solomon says there were some positive things. First, he gained a degree of notoriety. He became great, surpassing all who went before him in Jerusalem. Many people think that fame will satisfy the emptiness of the heart. Solomon found fame. "I enjoyed it for a while," he says. "I found pleasure in all my toil, but that was all the reward I got for my labor—momentary enjoyment. Each time I repeated it, I got a little less enjoyment out of it."

"My conclusion," Solomon says, "is that it was not worth it. Like a candle, it all burned away, leaving me jaded and surfeited. Nothing could excite me after that." He concludes that it was all emptiness, a striving after wind. He was burned out.

Lord, I too have sought for my satisfaction in fun, laughter, and pleasure, and, like Solomon, I have come up empty. Let me enjoy those pleasures You give as gifts from Your hand, but let me find my heart's delight in You.

Life Application - Do we live as consumers, using every resource & person in our quest for fulfillment? Has the well of hedonistic pleasures gone dry? Where do we go after burn out?

THE FRUSTRATION OF PLEASURE - John Stevenson

"If it feels good, do it!"

The next thing that Solomon did was to invest in the pleasures of life. That is the slogan of today's lifestyle - "If it feels good, do it!" That is the message given in our advertisements and in our commercials. You only go around once, so eat, drink and be merry! The technical term for this is HEDONISM.

Solomon tried pleasure. He tried comedians. He tried laughter. And he even livened it up with the best of wines. He ate and he drank and he tried to be merry. He was an ancient man with a modern lifestyle. But it was all to no avail. There are several lessons that we can learn from Solomon's experiences:

1. Sensual pleasures make promises that lack staying power.

They can be enjoyable for a time. But after awhile, the fun fades, the limelight loses its luster and the amusements just aren't as amusing as they used to be. This is true of...Drugs, Sex, Alcohol

It is true of any kind of physical pleasure. The pursuer of pleasure continues to strive for more and more because the thrill gradually wears off. Eventually it is an empty thrill.

I can remember the first time I ever went to Disney World. What a thrill! The rides were exciting. The food was good. The entertainment was entertaining. But no longer. I will be satisfied never again to visit the Magic Kingdom. It has lost its magic for me. The thrill just isn't there anymore. And physical pleasures and entertainments are always like that.

2. Sensual pleasures offer to open your eyes, but in reality they blind us.

How do they blind us? By making us feel as if the quest for pleasure is the most important thing in life. Empty pleasures blind us to those things in life which bring real happiness because they divert our attention from them.

James said that they "wage war in your members" (James 4:1). The lie of the serpent in the Garden was, "Do this and you will know more, see more, feel more." But the truth is that a lifestyle of self-gratification only leads us away from the important things of life - from family, friends and God.

3. Sensual pleasures disillusion us, making us cover-up artists.

When the good feelings begin to fade away, our tendency is to begin to pretend that we are having fun, even when we aren't.

Sometimes this disillusionment takes another form. Once the party is over any you are faced with the emptiness of your quest, then your reaction is one of ceasing to search. Instead of deciding that you have been searching for your answers in the wrong direction, you decide that there are really no answers to be found. Colleges and universities are full of people who have come to this conclusion. They are without hope. They are empty. And they are no longer searching for answers because they have concluded that there are no answers.

Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of laughter, "It is madness," and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?"

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:2 τ γ λωπ ε πα περιφορ ν κα τ ε φροσ ν τ το το ποιε ς

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said to laughter, Madness: and to mirth, Why doest thou this:

NET Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of partying, "It is folly," and of self-indulgent pleasure, "It accomplishes nothing!"

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said about laughter, "It is madness," and about pleasure, "What does this accomplish?"

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:2 "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?"

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:2 So I said, "Laughter is silly. What good does it do to seek pleasure?"

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:2 Of laughter I said, 'Foolish!' and of mirth, 'What is this it is doing?'

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:2 This laughter, I reflected, is a madness, this pleasure no use at all.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:2 Of laughter I said: "Mad!" and of mirth: "What good does this do?"

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:2 I thought, "Laughter doesn't make any sense. What does pleasure accomplish?"

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:2 Of laughing I said, It is foolish; and of joy -- What use is it?

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:2 I said of laughter-- "Madness!"; and of mirth, "What does it accomplish?"

- **I said:** Solomon is not speaking here of sober enjoyment of the things of the world, but of intemperate pleasure, whose two attendants, laughter and mirth, are introduced by a beautiful prosopopoeia, as two persons, whom he treats with the utmost contempt.
- **It is:** Ec 7:2-6 Pr 14:13 Isa 22:12,13 Am 6:3-6 1Pe 4:2-4

I said of laughter, "It is madness," - NET - "I said of partying, "It is folly," He is saying laughter is insanity, folly, silly. Of course Solomon is not saying we should never laugh, but just that laughter would not provide a solution to the problems of life under the sun.

Wright - We notice that this description of Solomon omits mention of immorality but is concerned with the joys of luxury. No serious thinker supposes that a Casanova is on the way to discover the purpose of living (cf. Ec 7:26). The Teacher set his sights on those pleasures that many people considered worthwhile in themselves. He surrounded himself with happy people who kept him amused, but even the jokes and laughter grew stale (cf. Ec 7:1–6). (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Page 241](#))

The connotation of "frivolous merrymaking" fits this context best.

NET NOTE Heb "laughter." The term קִיחֹק (sékhōq, "laughter") has a fourfold range of meanings: (1) "joyful laughter" (Ps 126:2; Prov 14:13; Job 8:21); (2) "frivolous laughter, merrymaking" (Eccl 2:2; 7:3, 6); (3) "pleasure, sport" (Prov 10:23; Eccl 10:19); and (4) "derision, mockery, laughingstock" (Jer 20:7; 48:26, 27, 39; Job 12:4; Lam 3:14). See HALOT 1315 s.v. קִיחֹק; BDB 966 s.v. קִיחֹק. In Ecclesiastes, קִיחֹק is always used in contexts of self-indulgent banqueting, drinking, frivolous partying and merrymaking (Eccl 2:2; 7:3, 6; 10:19). It is distinct from "healthy" joy and laughter (Ps 126:2; Job 8:21). The connotation of "frivolous merrymaking" fits this context best.

And of pleasure ([simchah](#); Lxx - [euphrosune](#) - gladness), "**What does it accomplish?**" - Rhetorical question calling for a negative response so that **NET** renders it "*of self-indulgent pleasure, "It accomplishes nothing!"*"

NET NOTE on **pleasure** - The term שִׂמְחָה (simkhah, "pleasure") has a two-fold range of meanings in Ecclesiastes: (1) it can refer to the enjoyment of life that Qoheleth affirms is good (Eccl 5:17; 8:15; 9:7; 11:8, 9) and that God gives to those who are pleasing to him (Eccl 2:26; 5:19); and (2) it can refer to foolish pleasure, that is, frivolous merrymaking (Eccl 2:1, 2; 7:4). The parallelism between שִׂמְחָה and קִיחֹק (sékhōq, "laughter, frivolous merrymaking") in Eccl 2:2 suggests that the pejorative sense is in view here.

Duane Garrett adds that "Throughout the book the Teacher will recommend enjoying life, but here he warns that partaking of pleasure does not of itself give meaning to existence." (Borrow [Ecclesiastes page 290](#))

NET NOTE on "**What does it accomplish?**" The rhetorical question "What does it accomplish?" expects a negative answer: "It accomplishes nothing!" (see E. W. Bullinger's discussion of "[Affirmative Negation](#)" [Figures of Speech](#), 949–51). See, e.g., Ge 1:19; 18:14, 17; Dt 7:17; 1Sa 2:25; Job 40:2; Pss 56:7; 90:11; 94:16; 106:2; Eccl 3:21.

Pleasure's Aftermath

I said of laughter—"Madness!" And of mirth, "What does it accomplish?" — Ecclesiastes 2:2

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

There are two words in Ecclesiastes 2:2 that describe living for pleasure without thought for God. The first word, laughter, means “superficial gaiety,” which is called “madness.”

I observed firsthand the truth of those words when I was 16. I worked in a meat market with some hard-drinking men. They were destroying their health and enduring needless pain. On Monday they would come in sick, miserable, and unable to do their job efficiently. But when Saturday night rolled around, they would repeat the previous week’s insanity.

A few years later I saw illustrated the truth of the second word, mirth. It means “thoughtful pleasure.” An elderly man had carefully built a successful business and had more money than he could spend. He told me he was unhappy and felt unloved by his heirs. He dreaded dying. His life of “thoughtful pleasure” had left him empty, cynical, and closed to the gospel.

After trying every form of pleasure-seeking, Solomon concluded that it is “vanity and grasping for the wind” (v.11). It’s not sinful to enjoy life, but the aftermath of living only for pleasure is emptiness.

Have you left God out of your life? Trust Christ as your Savior and experience life’s greatest pleasures. By: Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Earthly pleasures vainly call me,
I would be like Jesus;
Nothing worldly shall enthrall me,
I would be like Jesus.
—Rowe

Worldly pleasure is anything that crowds Christ out of your life.

Norman Geisler - ECCLESIASTES 2:2—Is laughter good or bad? - [When Critics Ask](#)

PROBLEM: Sometimes the Bible speaks as though laughter is good and other times as though it is bad. Solomon concluded, “I said of laughter, ‘It is madness’; and of mirth, ‘What does it accomplish?’ ”(Ecc. 2:2). He added that “sorrow is better than laughter” (7:3). Jesus added, “Woe to you who laugh now” (Luke 6:25). On the other hand, the Bible encourages laughter, claiming that “a merry heart does good, like medicine” (Prov. 17:22). Solomon even “commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry” (Ecc. 8:15).

SOLUTION: The answer lies in another verse. “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven ... a time to laugh; a time to mourn” (Ecc. 3:1, 4). What the Bible says about laughter can be summarized in the following contrast.

WHEN LAUGHING IS GOOD

The means of enjoying life
Means of expressing happiness
In a cheerful spirit
As reasonable merriment

WHEN LAUGHING IS BAD

The end (goal) of life itself
Means of attaining happiness
In riotous derision
As senseless hilarity

Worldly pleasure is anything that crowds Christ Out of your life.

Earthly pleasures vainly call me,
I would be like Jesus;
Nothing worldly shall enthrall me,
I would be like Jesus.
—Rowe

Ecclesiastes 2:3 I explored with my mind how to stimulate my body with wine while my mind was guiding me wisely, and how to take hold of folly, until I could see what good there is for the sons of men to do under heaven the few years of their

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:3 I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:3 κατεσκεψ̃ μὴν ἡ καρδ̃ μου τὸ ἀκσαῖ εἰς τὸ νοῦν τὴν σρκά μου καὶ καρδ̃ αὐμοῦ ὁ γησεν ἡ σοφ̃ καὶ τὸ κρατ̃σαι π̃ φροσ̃ν ὡς ὁ ὀωποὺν τ̃ γαθ̃ν τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ νῆρ̃ που ποιοῦσιν π̃ τὴν λιοῦ ριθμ̃ν μερ̃ν ζῶς αὐτ̃ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:3 And I examined whether my heart would excite my flesh as with wine, (though my heart guided me in wisdom,) and I desired to lay hold of mirth, until I should see of what kind is the good to the sons of men, which they should do under the sun all the days of their life.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:3 I thought deeply about the effects of indulging myself with wine (all the while my mind was guiding me with wisdom) and the effects of behaving foolishly, so that I might discover what is profitable for people to do on earth during the few days of their lives.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:3 I explored with my mind how to let my body enjoy life with wine and how to grasp folly-- my mind still guiding me with wisdom-- until I could see what is good for people to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:3 I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine-- my heart still guiding me with wisdom-- and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:3 I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly--my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:3 After much thought, I decided to cheer myself with wine. And while still seeking wisdom, I clutched at foolishness. In this way, I tried to experience the only happiness most people find during their brief life in this world.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:3 I have sought in my heart to draw out with wine my appetite, (and my heart leading in wisdom), and to take hold on folly till that I see where is this -- the good to the sons of man of that which they do under the heavens, the number of the days of their lives.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:3 I decided to hand my body over to drinking wine, my mind still guiding me in wisdom; I resolved to embrace folly, to discover the best way for people to spend their days under the sun.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:3 I searched with my mind how to cheer my body with wine-- my mind still guiding me with wisdom-- and how to lay hold on folly, until I might see what was good for mortals to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:3 I thought of beguiling my senses with wine, though my mind was concerned with wisdom, and of taking up folly, until I should understand what is best for men to do under the heavens during the limited days of their life.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:3 I explored ways to make myself feel better by drinking wine. I also explored ways to do some foolish things. During all that time, wisdom continued to control my mind. I was able to determine whether this was good for mortals to do during their brief lives under heaven.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:3 I made a search with my heart to give pleasure to my flesh with wine, still guiding my heart with wisdom, and to go after foolish things, so that I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under the heavens all the days of their life.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:3 I searched with my mind how to cheer my body with wine -- my mind still guiding me with wisdom -- and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:3 I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives.

- **while my mind was guiding me:** Pr 20:1 31:4,5 Eph 5:18
- **how to take hold of folly:** Ec 7:18 Pr 20:1 23:29-35 Mt 6:24 2Co 6:15-17
- **until :** Ec 6:12 12:13
- **the few years:** Heb. the number of, Ge 47:9 Job 14:14 Ps 90:9-12

CONTROLLED MIND STIMULATION WITH ALCOHOL

I explored with my mind ([tur](#); Lxx- [kataskopeo](#) - Lit - *In my heart I explored*) how to stimulate my body with wine while my mind was guiding me wisely ([chokmah](#); Lxx - [sophia](#)) and how to take hold of folly - NET = "I thought deeply about the effects of indulging myself with wine (all the while my mind was guiding me with wisdom) and the effects of behaving foolishly" Remember he is doing a test to see if pleasure produces real meaning to life and here he uses wine as the test. He is speaking more like a wine connoisseur not a back alley drunk. A modern version might be does your wine cellar with 5000 bottles of the finest aged wine fulfill your life with purpose and meaning? That's rhetorical of course. Clearly No!

Wright - The Teacher turned to sensual pleasures, such as the enjoyment of drink, which so easily becomes the folly of overindulgence. Yet he still kept a hold of himself so that he could analyze his experiences and see whether they proved to be the answer to all human desires. In other words, is the true philosophy of life "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (Isa 22:13)? (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Page 241](#))

Duane Garrett adds that "Throughout the book the Teacher will recommend enjoying life, but here he warns that partaking of pleasure does not of itself give meaning to existence." All will agree that a life of total dissipation and indulgence is reprehensible—we need no "Teacher" to show us that. Rather, he wanted to know if rationally controlled indulgence in pleasure gave meaning to life. He did not become a drunk. His experiment was an experiment in pleasure, not debauchery.(Borrow [Ecclesiastes page 290](#))

NET NOTE on Heb "In my heart I explored." The verb תור ([tur](#), "to seek out, to spy out, to explore") is used in the OT to describe: (1) the physical activity of "spying out" or "exploring" geographical locations (Num 13:2, 16, 17, 21, 25, 32; 14:6, 7, 34, 36, 38; Job 39:8) and (2) the mental activity of "exploring" or "examining" a course of action or the effects of an action (Eccl 1:13; 2:3; 7:25; 9:1). See BDB 1064 s.v. תור; HALOT 1708 s.v. תור. It was used as a synonym with דַּרַּשׁ (darash, "to study") in 1:13: "I devoted myself to study (לְדַרֹּשׁ, lidrosh) and to explore (לְתוֹר, latur)."

NET NOTE As the repetition of the term לֵב (lev, "heart" or "mind") indicates (Ec 2:1, 3), this experiment appears to have been only an intellectual exercise or a cognitive reflection: "I said to myself (Heb "in my heart [or "mind"]," Ec 2:1); "I explored with my mind (Heb "heart," Ec 2:3a); and "my mind (Heb "heart") guiding me with wisdom" (Ec 2:3b). **Qoheleth himself did not indulge in drunkenness; but he contemplated the value of self-indulgence in his mind.**

NET NOTE Or "I sought to cheer my flesh with wine." The term לְמַשְׁכּוֹךְ (limshokh, Qal infinitive construct from מָשַׁךְ, mashakh, "to draw, pull") functions in a complementary sense with the preceding verb תור (tur "to examine"): Heb "I sought to draw out my flesh with wine" or "I [mentally] explored [the effects] of drawing out my flesh with wine." The verb מָשַׁךְ means "to draw, to drag along, to lead" (BDB 604 s.v. מָשַׁךְ) or "to draw out; to stretch out [to full length]; to drag; to pull; to seize; to carry off; to pull; to go" (HALOT 645–46 s.v. מָשַׁךְ). BDB suggests that this use be nuanced "to draw, to attract, to gratify" the flesh, that is, "to cheer" (BDB 604 s.v. מָשַׁךְ). While this meaning is not attested elsewhere in the OT, it is found in Mishnaic Hebrew: "to attract" (Qal), e.g., "it is different with heresy, because it attracts [i.e., persuades, offers inducements]" (b. Avodah Zarah 27b) and "to be attracted, carried away, seduced," e.g., "he was drawn after them, he indulged in the luxuries of the palace" (b. Shabbat 147b). See Jastrow 853–54 s.v. מָשַׁךְ. Here it denotes "to stretch; to draw out [to full length]," that is, "to revive; to restore" the body (HALOT 646 s.v. מָשַׁךְ [sic] 3). The statement is a metonymy of cause (i.e., indulging the flesh with wine) for effect (i.e., the effects of self-indulgence).

NET NOTE Heb "and my heart was leading along in wisdom." The vav + noun, וְלִבִּי (vélibbi) introduces a disjunctive, parenthetical clause designed to qualify the speaker's remarks lest he be misunderstood: "Now my heart/mind...." **He emphasizes that he never lost control of his senses in this process. It was a purely mental, cognitive endeavor; he never actually gave himself over to wanton self-indulgence in wine or folly.**

NET NOTE on take hold of folly - Heb "embracing folly." The verb אָחַז ('akhaz, "to embrace") is normally used to describe the physical action of taking hold of an object. Here it is used metaphorically to describe a person's choice of lifestyle, that is, adopting a particular course of moral conduct (e.g., Job 17:9); see HALOT 31–32 s.v. אָחַז; BDB 28 s.v. אָחַז.

Until I could see what good there is for the sons of men to do under heaven the few years of their lives- NIV = "I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives." Note phrase **the few years of their lives** indicating Solomon is very aware that life is brief. (cf "one fate befalls them both" = Ec 2:14, "die" Ec 2:16, cf Eccl 5:17; 6:12; 9:9)

NET NOTE on the few years of their lives - Heb “number of the days.” The Hebrew noun מִסְפָּר (mispar, “number, quantity”) sometimes means “few” (e.g., Gen 34:30; Num 9:20; Deut 4:27; 33:6; Isa 10:19; Jer 44:28; Ezek 12:16; Ps 105:12; Job 16:22; 1 Chr 16:19); see HALOT 607 s.v. 2 מִסְפָּר.b; BDB 709 s.v. 1 מִסְפָּר.a. This phrase is an idiom that means, “during all their lives” (BDB 709 s.v.), “during their total [short] time of life,” that is, “as long as they live” (HALOT 608 s.v. 3 מִסְפָּר.d). **Ecclesiastes often emphasizes the brevity of life** (e.g., Eccl 5:17; 6:12; 9:9). The LXX rendered מִסְפָּר in a woodenly literal sense: ἀριθμὸν (arithmon, “the number [of days of their lives]”). Several English translations adopt a similar approach: “all the days of their life” (ASV, Douay) and “the number of days of their lives” (YLT). However, this idiom is handled well by a number of English translations: “*during the few days of their lives*” (RSV, NRSV, NASB, NIV, Moffatt, NJPS), “*during the limited days of their life*” (NAB), and “*throughout the brief span of their lives*” (NEB).

Ecclesiastes 2:4 I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself;

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:4 μεγ λυνα πο ημ μου κοδ μησ μοι ο κους φ τευσ μοι μπελ νας

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:4 I enlarged my work; I built me houses; I planted me vineyards.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:4 I increased my possessions: I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:4 I increased my achievements. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:4 I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:4 I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:4 I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:4 I made great my works, I builded for me houses, I planted for me vineyards.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:4 I worked on a grand scale: built myself palaces, planted vineyards;

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:4 I made great works; I built houses and planted vineyards for myself;

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:4 I undertook great works; I built myself houses and planted vineyards;

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:4 I accomplished some great things: I built houses for myself. I planted vineyards for myself.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:4 I undertook great works, building myself houses and planting vine-gardens.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:4 I made great works; I built houses and planted vineyards for myself;

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:4 I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards.

- made: Ge 11:4 2Sa 18:18 Da 4:30
- I builded: De 8:12-14 1Ki 7:1,2,8-12 9:1 15:19 10:19,20 2Ch 8:1-6,11 Ps 49:11
- I planted: 1Ch 27:27 2Ch 26:10 Song 1:14 7:12 8:11,12 Isa 5:1

THE GOSPEL OF SELFISHNESS

I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself - Solomon now carries out the "pleasure test" with things that only very rich people could even attempt.

THOUGHT - How many times have you wished you had a ski in/ski out in Colorado and a beachfront condo in Florida, thinking that is all you would need to make you happy in life? Solomon will carry out the experiment for us that we could never afford and he will end up telling us it is empty, chasing after wind! Some of the most miserable people on earth are some of the most wealthy! (cf [Howard Hughes](#)). And think about Solomon's end. He lost the Kingdom of Israel because of his apostasy which was "catalyzed" by his many pagan wives!

the Teacher does everything described

in this section for his own pleasure

Temper Longman III - for myself - This prepositional phrase is repeated eight times in Ec 2:4–8, after most of the main verbs. The NLT does not translate it in every instance for fear that it would be overly repetitive. We must not miss the point, however, that the Teacher does everything described in this section for his own pleasure. There are no philanthropic intentions involved with his actions here. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 268](#))

I planted vineyards for myself - For myself appears 8x in these 5 verses (Ec 2:4-8) on pleasure prompting **Duane Garrett** to label this the “gospel” of selfishness” ([Ecclesiastes](#))

NET NOTE The expression **for myself** is repeated eight times in Eccl 2:4–8 to emphasize that Qoheleth did not deny himself any acquisition. He indulged himself in acquiring everything he desired. His vast resources as king allowed him the unlimited opportunity to indulge himself. He could have anything his heart desired, and he did.

The Futility of Wealth and Pleasure 2:1-11 - [Don Robinson](#) Fulfillment doesn't come through achievements. (Ec 2:4-6)

- a. next, Solomon got involved in all kinds of projects, hoping to discover something that would make his life worth living.
- b. his great works included houses, cities, gardens, vineyards, orchards and forests, and the water system needed to service them.
- c. Solomon also supervised the construction of the temple, one of the greatest buildings of the ancient world.
- d. even after all of these accomplishments, he still found no fulfillment.
- e. history is filled with the names of people who made great discoveries, did tremendous works, and enjoyed the world's acclaim for their accomplishments, but still found no happiness.

ILLUSTRATION - Money Can Make You Mad - [The Death of Howard Hughes](#)

Hughes is reported to have died on April 5, 1976, at 1:27 p.m. on board an aircraft, [Learjet](#) 24B N855W, owned by Robert Graf and piloted by Roger Sutton and Jeff Abrams.^[174] He was en route from his penthouse at the [Acapulco Princess Hotel](#) (now the Princess Mundo Imperial) in Mexico to [the Methodist Hospital](#) in Houston.^[175]

His reclusiveness and possibly his drug use made him practically unrecognizable. His hair, beard, fingernails, and toenails were long—his tall 6 ft 4 in (193 cm) frame now weighed barely 90 pounds (41 kg), and the [FBI](#) had to use [fingerprints](#) to conclusively identify the body.^[176] Howard Hughes' alias, John T. Conover, was used when his body arrived at a morgue in Houston on the day of his death.^[177]

An [autopsy](#) recorded [kidney failure](#) as the cause of death.^[178] In an eighteen-month study investigating Hughes' drug abuse for the estate, it was found that "someone administered a deadly injection of the painkiller to this comatose man ... obviously needlessly and almost certainly fatal".^[179] He suffered from [malnutrition](#) and was covered in [bedsores](#). While his kidneys were damaged, his other internal organs, including his brain, which had no visible damage or illnesses, were deemed perfectly healthy.^[70] [X-rays](#) revealed five broken-off [hypodermic needles](#) in the flesh of his arms.^[70] To inject codeine into his muscles, Hughes had used glass syringes with metal needles that easily became detached.^[70]

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) THE MAN WHO HAD IT ALL

I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. Ecclesiastes 2:4-7NIV

If you ever travel to the Holy Land, you will no doubt see the remnants of Solomon's handiwork described in verses 4-6. Even though three thousand years have passed since Solomon reigned in Jerusalem, remains of his vast building projects dot the landscape. Archeologists have uncovered his stables, numerous cities he fortified, and underneath the Temple Mount in Jerusalem they have excavated the enormous stones that served as the foundation of the Temple itself.

He spent seven years building the Temple (1 Kings 5-6) and thirteen building his palace (1 Kings 7). First Kings 9:17-19 adds these details: "And Solomon rebuilt Gezer. He built up Lower Beth Horon, Baalath, and Tad-mor in the desert, within his land, as well as all

his store cities and the towns for his chariots and for his horses—whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon and throughout all the territory he ruled." First Kings 10 tells us about his throne of ivory overlaid with gold; his ships that sailed to distant ports, returning with precious metals, apes and baboons; and how silver was as plentiful as stones in Jerusalem. The whole world sought audience with the king to hear the wisdom God had put on his heart. There never was a man like Solomon—not before or since. No king ever had so many earthly advantages.

Yet the end of the story is not a happy one. Solomon's many foreign wives turned his heart away from following God fully (1 Kings 11:1-6). Unlike his father David, he was not a man after God's own heart. David was an adulterer and a murderer, but deep inside he truly wanted to please God. Solomon, for all his greatness, had character flaws that eventually caused his kingdom to split in two. He also brought idol worship into the land. That curse would not be removed for hundreds of years.

The lesson in all this is not hard to find. Wisdom alone is not enough. Solomon had more wisdom than David, but three thousand years later the world now acclaims father as greater than his son. David had many flaws, but in the end he had a heart to know God. Solomon had it all from an earthly point of view, but in the end what he had didn't matter because he didn't have the one thing that mattered most. Solomon's wisdom led him to greatness but it couldn't prevent him from sowing the seeds of his own decline. Having it all doesn't matter if the Lord is not first in your heart.

Father, I pray for a heart fully devoted to You. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- What are the "great projects" of your life right now?
- Have you ever dedicated your efforts to the Lord Jesus Christ and asked for His blessing? Take a few moments to do that before reading any further.

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read 1 Kings 6:1-38; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; and Revelation 21:22.

Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees;

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:5 πο ησ μοι κ πους κα παραδε σους κα φ τευσα ν α το ς ξ λον π ν καρπο

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made me gardens and orchards, and planted in them every kind of fruit-tree.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:5 I designed royal gardens and parks for myself, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made gardens and parks for myself and planted every kind of fruit tree in them.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made gardens and parks, filling them with all kinds of fruit trees.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made for me gardens and paradises, and I planted in them trees of every fruit.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:5 made myself gardens and orchards, planting every kind of fruit tree in them;

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made gardens and parks, and set out in them fruit trees of all sorts.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made gardens and parks for myself. I planted every kind of fruit tree in them.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made myself gardens and fruit gardens, planting in them fruit-trees of all sorts.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:5 I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

- **myself:** Song 4:12-16 5:1 6:2 Jer 39:4
- **I planted:** Ge 2:8,9 Lu 17:27-29

IS THERE PLEASURE IN PARADISE?

I made (royal) gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees- My title is a play on Solomon's making parks which might well be his attempt to replicate the conditions of the Garden of Eden ([see note below](#)), but of course he found this to be futile for that Garden was undisturbed for a time by sin! Sin contaminated Solomon's "garden of Eden." Gardens and parks were common with ancient kings as in the famous [Hanging Gardens of Babylon](#).

NET NOTE on (royal) **gardens** - The term does not refer here to vegetable gardens, but to orchards (cf. the next line). In the same way the so-called "garden" of Eden was actually an orchard filled with fruit trees. See Ge 2:8–9.

Longman III - The Heb. word is *paredes* [TH6508, ZH7236], which the attentive reader can see is related to the English word "*paradise*." The language of this verse (see also next note) implies that the Teacher is trying to recreate the conditions of paradise—that is, Eden itself. Brown (2000:38) points out that ancient, as well as more recent, kings gloried in their gardens. Their ability to tame "raw nature," he observes, goes with their ability to wage war and to control society. **all kinds of fruit trees.** This language is reminiscent of the language used to describe Eden in Gen 1:11, 29; 2:9 (see Verheij 1991). (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 268](#)) **ED COMMENT** - I think Longman is spot on! The Septuagint translates the Hebrew for parks (*paredes*) with the Greek noun *paradeisos* or "paradise" which is used repeatedly in Genesis 2 to describe the Garden of Eden! Ge 2:8 "The LORD God planted a garden (Lxx - *paradeisos*) toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed."

NET NOTE on **parks** - The noun פָּרְדֵּס (*pardes*, "garden, parkland, forest") is a foreign loanword that occurs only 3 times in biblical Hebrew (Song 4:13; Eccl 2:5; Neh 2:8). The original Old Persian term *pairidaeza* designated the enclosed parks and pleasure-grounds that were the exclusive domain of the Persian kings and nobility (HALOT 963 s.v. פָּרְדֵּס; LSJ 1308 s.v. παράδεισος). The related Babylonian term *pardesu* "marvelous garden" referred to the enclosed parks of the kings (AHw 2:833 and 3:1582). The term passed into Greek as παράδεισος (*paradeisos*, "enclosed park, pleasure-ground"), referring to the enclosed parks and gardens of the Persian kings (LSJ 1308). The Greek term has been transliterated into English as "**paradise**."

Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:6 πο ησ μοι κολυμβ θρας δ των το ποτ σαι π α τ ν δρυμ ν βλαστ ντα ξ λα

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made me pools of water, to water from them the timber-bearing wood.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:6 I constructed pools of water for myself, to irrigate my grove of flourishing trees.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:6 I constructed reservoirs of water for myself from which to irrigate a grove of flourishing trees.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:6 I built reservoirs to collect the water to irrigate my many flourishing groves.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made for me pools of water, to water from them a forest shooting forth trees.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:6 had pools made for watering the young trees of my plantations.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:6 And I constructed for myself reservoirs to water a flourishing woodland.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made pools to water the forest of growing trees.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made pools to give water for the woods with their young trees.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:6 I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove.

- **I made ponds of water** : Ne 2:14 Song 7:4
- **to irrigate**: Ps 1:3 Jer 17:8

I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees- The implication of this verse is that Solomon utilized technical skill to irrigate an entire forest.

Ecclesiastes 2:7 I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:7 I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:7 κτησ μην δο λους κα παιδ σκας κα ο κογενε ς γ νοντ μοι κα γε κτ σις βουκολ ου κα ποιμν ου πολλ γ νετ μοι π ρ π ντας το ς γενομ νους μπροσθ ν μου ν Ιερουσαλημ

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:7 I got servants and maidens, and servants were born to me in the house: also I had abundant possession of flocks and herds, beyond all who were before me in Jerusalem.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:7 I purchased male and female slaves, and I owned slaves who were born in my house; I also possessed more livestock— both herds and flocks— than any of my predecessors in Jerusalem.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:7 I acquired male and female servants and had slaves who were born in my house. I also owned many herds of cattle and flocks, more than all who were before me in Jerusalem.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:7 I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:7 I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:7 I bought slaves, both men and women, and others were born into my household. I also owned large herds and flocks, more than any of the kings who had lived in Jerusalem before me.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:7 I got men-servants, and maid-servants, and sons of the house were to me; also, I had much substance -- herd and flock -- above all who had been before me in Jerusalem.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:7 I bought slaves, male and female, had home-born slaves as well; herds and flocks I had too, more than anyone in Jerusalem before me.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:7 I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house; I also had great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:7 I acquired male and female slaves, and slaves were born in my house. I also had growing herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, more than all who had been before me in Jerusalem.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:7 I bought male and female slaves. In addition, slaves were born in my household. I owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:7 I got men-servants and women-servants, and they gave birth to sons and daughters in my house. I had great wealth of herds and flocks, more than all who were in Jerusalem before me.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:7 I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house; I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:7 I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me.

- servants: 1Ki 9:20-22 Ezr 2:58 Ne 7:57
- and had: Ge 17:12,13
- servants born in my house: Heb. sons of my house
- also: Ge 13:2 2Ki 3:4 1Ch 27:29-31 2Ch 26:10 32:27-29 Job 1:3 42:12

Related Passages:

1 Kings 4:20-23+ Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance; they were eating and drinking and rejoicing. 21 Now Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.

22 Solomon's provision for one day was thirty kors of fine flour and sixty kors of meal, 23 ten fat oxen, twenty pasture-fed oxen, a hundred sheep besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl.

I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem - Solomon's description underscores his incredible wealth. He had to possess large herds given his daily provision for food (1Ki 4:22-23).

NET NOTE on **homeborn slaves** - The phrase "sons of a house" (בְּנֵי בַיִת, véne vayit) appears to be parallel to "a son of my house" (בֶּן-בֵּיתִי, ven-beti) which refers to a person born into slavery from male and female servants in the master's possession, e.g., Eleazar of Damascus (Gen 15:3). The phrase appears to denote children born from male and female slaves already in his possession, that is, "homeborn slaves" (NASB) or "other slaves who were born in my house" (NIV). Apparently confusing the sense of the phrase with the referent of the phrase in Gen 15:3, NJPS erroneously suggests "stewards" in Eccl 2:7.

The Futility of Wealth and Pleasure 2:1-11 - [Don Robinson](#) Fulfillment doesn't come through wealth or fame. (Ec 2:7-9)

- a. in this morning's paper there was an article about the winners of the Florida state lottery.
- b. six people will split \$105 million and receive around \$17.5 million each.
- c. Solomon had great wealth and all the things that money could buy!
- d. he was richer than anyone else, and his fame grew as well, but still there was no satisfaction.

Ecclesiastes 2:8 Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men—many concubines.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as **musical instruments, and that of all sorts.**

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:8 συν γαγν μοι κα γεργριον κα χρυσον κα περιουσιασμο ς βασιλ ων κα τ ν χωρ ν πο ησ μοι δοντας κα δο σας κα ντρυφ ματα υ ν το νθρ που ο νοχ ον κα ο νοχ ας

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:8 Moreover I collected for myself both silver and gold also, and the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces: I procured me singing men and singing women, and delights of the sons of men, a butler and **female cupbearers.**

NET Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also amassed silver and gold for myself, as well as valuable treasures taken from kingdoms and provinces. I acquired male singers and female singers for myself, and **what gives a man sensual delight— a harem of beautiful concubines!**

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I gathered male and female singers for myself, and **many concubines**, the delights of men.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:8 I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and **a harem as well**—the delights of the heart of man.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:8 I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both men and women, and had **many beautiful concubines**. I had everything a man could desire!

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:8 I gathered for me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. I prepared for me men-singers and women-singers, and the luxuries of the sons of man -- **a wife and wives.**

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:8 I amassed silver and gold, the treasures of kings and provinces; acquired singers, men and women, and every **human luxury, chest upon chest of it.**

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and of the provinces; I got singers, both men and women, and delights of the flesh, and **many concubines.**

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:8 I amassed for myself silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and provinces. I got for myself male and female singers and **all human luxuries**.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also gathered silver and gold for myself. I gathered the treasures of kings and provinces. I provided myself with male and female singers and **the pleasures men have with one concubine after another**.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:8 I got together silver and gold and the wealth of kings and of countries. I got makers of song, male and female; and the delights of the sons of men -- **girls of all sorts to be my brides**.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces; I got singers, both men and women, and **many concubines, man's delight**.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and **musical instruments** of all kinds.

- **silver:** 1Ki 9:14,28 10:10 14:21,22,27 2Ch 9:11,15-21
- **men singers:** 2Sa 19:35 Ezr 2:65
- **concubines** (KJV - musical instruments) - 1Ch 25:1,6 Job 21:11,12 Ps 150:3-5 Da 3:5,7,15 Am 6:5

MONEY CAN'T BUY YOU HAPPINESS

Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure ([segullah](#)) of kings and provinces (see 1Ki 10:14-29+) - His incredible resources assure that he can successively carry out his experiment to see if pleasure fulfills!

John Stevenson - Solomon had MONEY. He took the old saying that *money can't buy happiness* and he tested it by collecting the treasures of the nations. It was always party time in Jerusalem. There was song and there was sex and there was the enjoyment of every worldly pleasure. And it all of this, Solomon kept his wits about him, using his intellect to enjoy life to the fullest.

NET NOTE on **treasure** - The term [הִגְדָּל](#) ([segullah](#)) denotes "personal property" (HALOT 742 s.v. 1 הִגְדָּל) or "valued property, personal treasure" (BDB 688 s.v. 2 הִגְדָּל). Elsewhere, it refers to a king's silver and gold (1 Chr 27:3). It is related to Akkadian sug/kullu "flock" (AHw 2:1053–54) and sikiltu "private property [belonging to the king]" (AHw 2:1041). **The term refers to the personal, private and valued possessions of kings, which do not pass into the hands of the state.** Heb "of kings and provinces." **This personal treasure was taken as tribute from other kings and governors.** See T. Longman III, [Ecclesiastes \(NICOT\)](#), 92.

I provided for myself male and female singers - Presumably Solomon is saying that he was a generous patron of the arts but it was for himself not the populace at large.

And the pleasures of men—many concubines (KJV - musical instruments) - Many women can't buy happiness and in fact they proved to be Solomon's downfall resulting in division of the Kingdom (1Ki 11:1-14+). Like the famous Beatles song "Can't buy me love."

NET NOTE on **Concubines** were slave women in ancient Near Eastern societies who were the legal property of their master, but who could have legitimate sexual relations with their master. A concubine's status was more elevated than a mere servant, but she was not free and did not have the legal rights of a free wife. The children of a concubine could, in some instances, become equal heirs with the children of the free wife. After the period of the Judges concubines may have become more of a royal prerogative (2 Sam 21:10–14; 1 Kgs 11:3).

Longman III - many concubines. The Heb. word (shiddah [TH7705, ZH8721]) that refers to these women is rare, but is probably related to the word "breast" (shad [TH7699, ZH8716]) and thus is a crude expression referring to a woman by reference to her sexual parts..(See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 268](#))

Concubines (KJV - musical instruments) The difficult words {shiddah weshiddoth} are variously rendered. The LXX. have [oinocoon kai oinochoas,] "male and female cup-bearers," with which the Syriac and Arabic and Parkhurst agree; Aquila, [kulikon kai kulikia,] "a cup and smaller cups;" Jerome, {scyphos et urceolos, (Vulg. {urceos,}) "goblets and pots;" Targum, "warm and cold baths;" others, as M. Desvoeux, "male and female captives;" others, "cooks and confectioners;" others, "a species of musical compositions," derived from Sido, a celebrated Phoenician woman, to whom Sanchoniatho attributes the invention of music; but others, with more probability, "wives and concubines;" and {siddoth} may be in this sense synonymous with the Arabic {seedat, domina, conjux} from {sada,} in {Conj. V. conjugium invit.} Of the former, Solomon had three hundred concubines, and seven hundred wives; and if they

are not mentioned here they are not mentioned at all, which is wholly unaccountable.

Wright on concubines - Various translations have been suggested for נְשֻׁדֹת שֵׁדָה (šiddāh wešiddôt) since the term occurs nowhere else in the Bible. Some suggestions follow:

1. “Harem” (cf. “Concubines,” RSV) is the NIV’s rendering. The word is perhaps connected with שֵׁד (šad, “breast”). A Canaanite word of similar form is used to translate the Egyptian word for “concubine” in a letter of Amenophis III (ANET, p. 487a). We note that concubinage was considered a legal relationship and not fornication or adultery by the people. Although it was looked on as a normal convention in OT times, it is nowhere ordered by the Lord.
2. “Musical instruments” (KJV) is a traditional Jewish interpretation (so Kimchi in his lexicon), but its derivation is uncertain.
3. Connected with the Aramaic root שָׁדַ (šedā, “to pour”), the LXX has “male and female cupbearers.”
4. The Talmud (Gittin 78a) says that in Palestine the word meant “chests” or “sedan chairs”; hence JB’s “every human luxury, chest on chest of it.” (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

NET NOTE on concubines - The meaning of the superlative construction נְשֻׁדֹת שֵׁדָה (shiddah véshiddot) is uncertain because the term שֵׁדָה (shiddah) occurs only here in the OT. There are four basic approaches to the phrase: (1) Most scholars suggest that it refers to a royal harem and that it is in apposition to “the sensual delights of man” (וְתַעֲנוּגֹת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם, véta’anugot béne ha’adam). There are four variations of this approach: (a) There is a possible connection to the Ugaritic sht “mistress, lady” and the Arabic sitt “lady” (HALOT 1420 s.v. שֵׁדָה). (b) German scholars relate it to Assyrian sadadu “love” (Delitzsch, König, Wildeboer, Siegfried); however, BDB questions this connection (BDB 994 s.v. שֵׁדָה). (c) Ibn Ezra relates it to II שָׁד (shad) “plunder; spoil” or שֵׁדָה “[women] taken by violence,” and suggests that it refers to the occupants of the royal harem. (d) BDB connects it to the Hebrew noun I שָׁד (shad, “breast”; e.g., Isa 28:9; Ezek 16:7; 23:3, 21, 34; Hos 2:4; 9:14; Song 1:13; 4:5; 7:4, 8, 9; 8:1, 8, 10; Job 3:12) adding that שֵׁדָה is related to the cognate Arabic and Aramaic roots meaning “breast” (BDB 994 s.v.). This would be a synecdoche of part (i.e., breast) for the whole (i.e., woman), similar to the idiom “one womb, two wombs” (רַחֲמִים רַחֲמַתַּיִם, rakham rakhamatayim) where “womb” = woman (Judg 5:30). This is the approach taken by most English versions: “many concubines” (NASB, RSV, NRSV), “a wife and wives” (YLT), “mistresses galore” (MLB), “many a mistress” (Moffatt), and “a harem” (NIV). This is the approach suggested by the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project: “une femme et des femmes” = one or two women (e.g., Judg 5:30); see D. Barthélemy, e.d., Preliminary and Interim Report on the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project, 3:566. (2) The NJPS connects it to the Mishnaic Hebrew noun שֵׁדָה which became שֵׁדָה (“a strong box, chest”; Jastrow 1558 s.v. שֵׁדָה) and renders the phrase “coffers and coffers of them” in apposition to the phrase “the luxuries of commoners” (וְתַעֲנוּגֹת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם). KJV and ASV take the phrase in apposition to “male and female singers” and translate it as “musical instruments.” However, there is no known Hebrew term that would justify this approach. (4) The LXX related the term to the Aramaic root שָׁדַ (“to pour out [wine]”) and rendered the phrase as ο οἰνοχοὸν καὶ οἰνοχοῶς (oinochoon kai oinochoas), “a male-butler and female cupbearers.” Aquila took a similar approach: κυλικιον καὶ κυλικια (kulikion kai kulikia), “wine cups and wine vessels.” This is reflected in the Vulgate and Douay: “cups and vessels to serve to pour out wine.” Although the semantic meaning of the term נְשֻׁדֹת שֵׁדָה (“a breast of breasts”) is uncertain, the grammatical/syntactical form of the phrase is straightforward: (1) It is in apposition to the preceding line, “the delights of the son of men” (וְתַעֲנוּגֹת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם). The phrase is a superlative construction. When the second word is plural and it follows a noun from the same root which is singular, it indicates the best or most outstanding example of the person or thing so described. In addition to the Judg 5:30 parallel cited above, see the expression “a generation, generations” in Pss 72:5; 102:25; Isa 51:8. Unlike, Eccl 2:8, this juxtapositioning of the singular and plural to express the superlative usually involves a construct form. See קִדְשׁ הַקִּדְדָשִׁים (qodesh haqqodashim, “the holy of holies,” i.e., the most holy place”; Exod 26:33), שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים (shir hashirim, “the song of songs,” i.e., “the most excellent song”; Song 1:1), אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַאֲדֹנֵי הָאֲדֹנִים (’elohe ha’elohim va’adone ha’adonim, “the God of gods and Lord of lords,” i.e., “the Highest God and the Supreme Lord”; Deut 10:17), and עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים (’eved ’avadim, “a slave of slaves,” i.e., “the most abject slave”; Gen 9:25). See GKC 431 §133.i; R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 17–18, §80; IBHS 154 §9.5.3j. If the semantic meaning of the terms נְשֻׁדֹת שֵׁדָה denotes “a breast (among) breasts” or “a lady (among) ladies” (Eccl 2:8, but see the previous note on the phrase “a man’s sensual delights”), the superlative construction may connote “the most beautiful breasts” (metonymy of part for the whole) or “the most beautiful woman.” This might refer to a harem of concubines or to one woman (the wife of the king?) who was the most beautiful woman in the land.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) MONEY, SEX AND POWER

I amassed silver and gold for myself and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well—the delights of the heart of man Ecclesiastes 2:8NIV

Solomon had a harem, all right—seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. Historians tell us that many of his wives were not romantic attachments but rather convenience marriages made to cement

certain foreign relationships and guarantee peaceful relations with other nations. Nevertheless, common though this practice may have been, it got Solomon in trouble and helped pave the way for the breakup of his kingdom.

I love the phrase "the delights of the heart of man." What a nice way to put it. If we say "sexual temptation" it sounds much different. Not too many years ago we went through a period in which several of America's best-known preachers fell prey to sexual sin. In each case good men who apparently loved the Lord yielded in a moment of weakness.

I am thinking now of one man I used to watch on television as he preached with great power to thousands of people. I felt then that the power of the Holy Spirit was truly upon his life. Although his behavior shocked and saddened me, I did not believe he was a religious charlatan.

But something somewhere, somehow, at some point, went tragically wrong. Did he become so big that he thought he could get away with anything? Did the empire he built finally destroy him? Did he think that he was above God's moral law? If so, he would not be the first man to fall at the height of his own power.

His downfall came when he refused to accept the discipline imposed by his own denomination. Like so many before him, he thought he could solve his problems on his own. Like so many others, he discovered too late that he couldn't do it by himself.

Years ago a friend told me, "The first price you pay is always the cheapest." Which being interpreted means, the quicker you deal with your problems, the better off you will be. We avoid facing our own moral weakness because we hope the problems will go away on their own. That almost never happens, especially in the realm of sexual sin. The price never goes down; it always goes up.

The way of transgressors is always hard, but as so many others have discovered, you don't have to make it harder by refusing the help of people who truly love you.

Loving Lord, when I am tempted to depart from Your ways, show me in advance the dangers of disobedience. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Do you agree that "the first price you pay is always the cheapest"? If so, how have you experienced this truth in your own life?
- What happens when we disregard God's teaching regarding sexual purity?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Ezra 9:1-10:4; Proverbs 5:15-19; and Hebrews 13:4.

Ecclesiastes 2:9 Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:9 καὶ μεγάλην καὶ προσθήκα παρ' ἑνὸς τοῦ γεγονότος μου ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ γέσοφά μου στή μοι

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I became great, and advanced beyond all that were before in Jerusalem: also my wisdom was established to me.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I was far wealthier than all my predecessors in Jerusalem, yet I maintained my objectivity:

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom also remained with me.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:9 I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom never failed me.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:9 And I became great, and increased above every one who had been before me in Jerusalem; also, my wisdom stood with me.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I grew great, greater than anyone in Jerusalem before me; nor did my wisdom leave me.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:9 I became great, and I stored up more than all others before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom, too, stayed with me.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I grew richer than anyone in Jerusalem before me. Yet, my wisdom remained with me.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:9 And I became great; increasing more than all who had been before me in Jerusalem, and my wisdom was still with me.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:9 So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.

- Ec 1:16 1Ki 3:12 10:7,23 1Ch 29:25 2Ch 1:1 9:22,23

WISE KING WHO HAD IT ALL EXCEPT FULFILLMENT

Then - Marks progress in his narrative, moving on to another subject.

I became great ([gadal](#) - powerful, influential, or important; Lxx - [megaluno](#)) **and increased** (Implies accumulation of wealth, fame, or influence) **more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom** ([chokmah](#); Lxx - [sophia](#)) **also stood by me** (Literally "it remained with me" "it supported me") - **NET** - "So I was far wealthier than all my predecessors in Jerusalem, yet I maintained my objectivity" Solomon achieved unmatched status, power, and wealth. No previous king or ruler in Jerusalem matched his prosperity. Even in indulgence, his testing of pleasure, etc, his God-given wisdom remained intact, helping him observe, evaluate, and reflect on his experiences. In short, Solomon was the ideal test subject: he had limitless resources and unmatched insight. Yet, as he will reveal, even this greatness did not satisfy (vv. 11–12). Solomon's wisdom was not lost, even in the midst of lavish self-indulgence, and thus he was able to make accurate observations and conclusions.

THOUGHT - "Great, but Empty"

Solomon had what everyone else wanted. Power. Progress. Prestige. His life was one long highlight reel. Yet he steps back and says, "I became great... but even then, something was missing." His greatness didn't keep him from despair. His wisdom didn't shield him from emptiness. Why? Because human greatness cannot satisfy divine longing. We were made for more than increase—we were made for intimacy with God. Without Him, even the highest throne feels hollow. In a world that tells you to "become great," let Solomon's words slow you down. Let your heart ask:

- Is my greatness rooted in God's calling or my own ambition?
- Do I seek influence, or impact for eternity?

True greatness is not in what you build—
but in who you trust.

Wisdom ([Q2451](#)) [chokmah](#) from the verb [chakam](#) - to be wise) is the ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action, based on knowledge and understanding. **Wisdom** is the ability to see something from God's viewpoint. **Wisdom** is "God's character in the many practical affairs of life." **Chokmah** is the knowledge and the ability to make the right choices at the opportune time. The consistency of making the right choice is an indication of one's spiritual maturity. The prerequisite for this "**wisdom**" is the fear of the Lord (Pr 1:7-[note](#)). "**Wisdom**" is personified as crying out for disciples who will do everything to pursue her (Pr 1:20). The person who seeks **chokmah** diligently will receive understanding: (Pr 2:6) and will benefit in life by walking with God (Pr 2:20, cf Gal 5:16). Wisdom is the right use of knowledge: All true spiritual wisdom is found only in Christ. **Thayer** makes an excellent point that **wisdom** is "used of the knowledge of very diverse matters, so that the shade of meaning in which the word is taken must be discovered from the context in every particular case." **Wisdom** is skill, expertise, competence that understands how life really works, how to achieve successful and even beautiful results. We see a picture of wisdom in Exodus 35:31, where the word translated "**wisdom**" in Proverbs 1:2 is used for the skill of an artist adorning the tabernacle.

CHOKMAH IN ECCLESIASTES - Eccl. 1:13; Eccl. 1:16; Eccl. 1:17; Eccl. 1:18; Eccl. 2:3; Eccl. 2:9; Eccl. 2:12; Eccl. 2:13; Eccl. 2:21; Eccl. 2:26; Eccl. 7:10; Eccl. 7:11; Eccl. 7:12; Eccl. 7:19; Eccl. 7:23; Eccl. 7:25; Eccl. 8:1; Eccl. 8:16; Eccl. 9:10; Eccl. 9:13; Eccl. 9:15; Eccl. 9:16; Eccl. 9:18; Eccl. 10:1; Eccl. 10:10

Related Resources:

- [What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge?](#) | GotQuestions.org
- [What is godly wisdom?](#) | GotQuestions.org
- [How can I get wisdom from God?](#) | GotQuestions.org

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) THE VIEW FROM THE PENTHOUSE

I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. Ecclesiastes 2:9NIV

Here is his story, briefly told: At age six, his mother threw his birthday cake off the porch. He played the French Horn at age twelve and by the time he was fifteen he was playing professionally with some of the top jazz musicians of the day. Eventually, he became the first black musician to break the Hollywood color barrier as a composer of scores. He is perhaps best known as the composer of the score for The Color Purple.

But it hasn't come easy. Quincy Jones has been married three times, survived two brain surgeries, and endured a complete emotional breakdown. Several years ago he faced surgery for an aneurysm that threatened to kill him. The doctors told him that his chances of recovery were 100 to 1. Miraculously, he survived.

Question: "What did you start doing different after your operation?"

Answer: "The first thing I started doing was hugging a lot. "When you get to be fifty, you start dealing with the countdown, and you can deal with it in a positive way or a negative way. I try to deal with it in a positive way. . . . You try to make this little life to be this great gift." Then he added these words: "You know that old cliché about your life passing in front of you? Well, it really does."

I don't know much else about Quincy Jones, but his philosophy of life makes sense to me. What do you do when the doctors tell you that there is virtually no chance you will survive the operation, and then you open your eyes and you find out you aren't dead after all? You were the 1 in 100 who made it.

You take a good look at life and then you start hugging a lot. It makes you take stock of the passing days and you realize that you cheated the Grim Reaper, but only temporarily. Suddenly life takes on a new meaning. You see it as it really is, as the most precious gift you will ever possess, a gift that must someday be returned to the Giver.

If you are smart, you start hugging a lot, because when you get down to it, the relationships you have with the people you love matter more than the awards and the roar of the crowd. That's just fluff and frosting and window dressing.

The only tragedy is that too often it takes a tragedy to make us wake up and figure out what's really important in life.

Lord Jesus, thank You for using the hard times of life to rearrange my priorities. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Who is the wealthiest person you know? As far as you know, where does this person stand with the Lord?
- What is the major temptation a rich person faces with regard to his own wealth?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Colossians 2:2-3; and James 3:13-18.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - SOLOMON AND JESUS Ecclesiastes 2:9; Luke 11:31

Jesus mentioned Solomon twice. In the first instance He commented that Solomon in all his glory did not possess the simple glory of the lilies of the field (see Matthew 6:29; Luke 12:27). The lilies don't even work for what they have. God gives it to them. And do you think the flowers worry? The flowers don't even last very long. You buy some today and by Wednesday they've started to wilt. Little helpless flowers that pass away so quickly. Yet God takes care of them.

But we are not flowers. We are living souls. Your body is not you. It's part of you, but it's not the whole you. The real you is more than the sum total of your blood, muscles, bones, fat, nerves, and skin. You are not just a piece of gross anatomy. You are a living

soul in a body made by God. And you are going to live forever somewhere. That's makes you infinitely more valuable than the lilies of the field. And it actually puts you in a better position than Solomon if you understand that God has promised to take care of you.

Jesus' only other mention of Solomon occurs in a context of judgment on the wicked generation that rejected Him (see Matthew 12:42; Luke 11:31). The Queen of Sheba came hundreds of miles to learn from Solomon (1 Kings 10:1 -13) and left mightily impressed with his wisdom. Yet Jesus was greater than Solomon and people rejected Him. Matthew Henry points out that the queen came a long way yet Christ is in our midst. She had no invitation but we are invited to sit at Jesus' feet. Solomon had wisdom from God, but Christ is the wisdom of God. The queen could only learn wisdom from Solomon, but Christ can give wisdom to all who ask for it. Henry concludes that if we do not receive Christ's wisdom, then the Queen of Sheba will rise up in judgment against us, "for Jesus is greater than Solomon."

With that statement our journey ends where life begins—with Jesus Christ.

Lord God, forgive me for looking anywhere else for satisfaction. May m y c r y always be, Only Jesus and Jesus only! Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- How is Jesus greater than Solomon?
- In what ways are you currently receiving the wisdom of Christ? What is the condition of your heart?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Isaiah 9:6-7; Ephesians 4:20-24; and Hebrews 1:1-3.

Ecclesiastes 2:10 All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:10 κα π ν τ ησαν ο φθαλμο μου ο χ φε λον π α τ ν ο κ πεκ λυσα τ ν καρδ αν μου π π σης ε φροσ νης τι καρδ α μου ε φρ νθη ν παντ μ χθ μου κα το το γ νετο μερ ς μου π παντ ς μ χθου μου

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:10 And whatever mine eyes desired, I withheld not from them, I withheld not my heart from all my mirth: for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my portion of all my labour.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:10 I did not restrain myself from getting whatever I wanted; I did not deny myself anything that would bring me pleasure. So all my accomplishments gave me joy; this was my reward for all my effort.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:10 All that my eyes desired, I did not deny them. I did not refuse myself any pleasure, for I took pleasure in all my struggles. This was my reward for all my struggles.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:10 And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:10 I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:10 Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure. I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:10 And all that mine eyes asked I kept not back from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced because of all my labour, and this hath been my portion, from all my labour,

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:10 I denied my eyes nothing that they desired, refused my heart no pleasure, for I found all my hard work a pleasure, such was the return for all my efforts.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:10 Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:10 Nothing that my eyes desired did I deny them, nor did I deprive myself of any joy, but my heart rejoiced in the fruit of all my toil. This was my share for all my toil.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:10 If something appealed to me, I did it. I allowed myself to have any pleasure I wanted, since I found pleasure in my work. This was my reward for all my hard work.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:10 And nothing which was desired by my eyes did I keep from them; I did not keep any joy from my heart, because my heart took pleasure in all my work, and this was my reward.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:10 And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:10 Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, For my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my reward from all my labor.

■ **All that my eyes desired:** Ec 3:22 6:9 11:9 Ge 3:6 6:2 Jud 14:2 Job 31:1 Ps 119:37 Pr 23:5 1Jn 2:16

■ **my heart was pleased:** Ec 2:22 5:18 9:9 Ps 128:2

SOLOMON DID NOT PRACTICE SELF-DENIAL

All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor ([amal](#) -toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) - Note repetition of **labor** indicating that he continued to work hard. In context he seems to have "worked hard" at testing pleasures only to find they were a dead end street!

[John Stevenson](#) - There was not anything that Solomon wanted that he did not take to himself. And when he had gotten it all and studied it all and built it all, then he set out to enjoy it. He wasn't like the man who slaved to be rich only to die before he could enjoy the benefits of his labors. Solomon became rich while he was still young. He was like the bumper sticker on the Cadillac that says, "I'm spending my children's inheritance."

My heart is a [synecdoche](#) of part (i.e., heart) for the whole (i.e., whole person). See E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 648 - [SYNECDOCHE OF THE WHOLE](#). The term is repeated twice in 2:10 for emphasis.

The phrase "**whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them**" points to the lust of the eyes (cf. 1Jn2:16+). The Preacher experienced all the joyous sensations from a way of life characterized by the gratification of every whim (v3-9), but when the temporal joy vanished, only the labor remained: a burdensome reminder of the fruitlessness of labor in itself and of the inadequacy of materialism. When the work ended, so did the enjoyment of it.

Labor (mischief, toil trouble, anguish) ([05999](#)) [amal](#) from verb **amal** = to labor especially the dark side of labor, the grievous and unfulfilling aspects of work) means trouble, labor, toil, toilsome, wearying work. Every use of [amal](#) in the Septuagint is translated with the noun [mochthos](#) which describes hard and difficult labor involving suffering hardship, struggle, strenuous toil. Note that **amal** is not just describing physical toil but can also describe mental anguish as in the following passages -- anguish (Ps. 25:18), Joseph's 'anguish' of mind (Ge 41:51), the 'misery' from which Israel was delivered (Nu 23:21NIV), Job's 'trouble' (Job 3:10).

Labor ([amal](#)) is used by Solomon in Ps 127:1+ explaining how man's labor is in vain without the LORD! = "Unless the LORD builds the house, They **labor** ([amal](#)) in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in **vain**."

Gilbrant - This is the noun that describes the labor that Qoheleth, the Preacher of Ecclesiastes, considered vanity, because the laborer could never enjoy the fruit of the labor (Ecc. 1:3; 2:11). The term is used figuratively to describe the heaviness of certain painful thoughts, particularly the psalmist's concern over the prosperity of the wicked (Ps. 73:16). 'āmāl can also refer to the fruit or produce of labor (Ps. 105:44; Ecc. 2:19) and the notion of trouble or vexation (general weariness or weariness of situations and circumstances). Joseph named his firstborn son Manasseh since God had made him forget all his toil (Gen. 41:51). The Lord heard the affliction and toil of his people in Egypt and sent Moses to deliver them (Deut. 26:7). Job's so-called friends are called "troublesome comforters" (Job 3:10; 16:2). The Suffering Servant, Jesus Christ, experienced for our sakes "the anguish of his soul" (Isa. 53:11). 'āmāl may also be translated "wickedness" (cf. Num. 23:21; Isa. 10:1), which conveys the emotion of vexation and anguish associated with sinful behavior, especially by those who are the recipients of such evil acts. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

AMAL USES IN ECCLESIASTES - Eccl. 1:3; Eccl. 2:10; Eccl. 2:11; Eccl. 2:18; Eccl. 2:19; Eccl. 2:20; Eccl. 2:22; Eccl. 2:24; Eccl. 3:13; Eccl. 4:4; Eccl. 4:6; Eccl. 4:8; Eccl. 4:9; Eccl. 5:15; Eccl. 5:18; Eccl. 5:19; Eccl. 6:7; Eccl. 8:15; Eccl. 9:9; Eccl. 10:15;

- a. Solomon did not exercise any self-control: if he wanted it, he got it; if he wanted to do it, he did it
 - b. however, all he received was temporary satisfaction while he was involved.
 - c. when he observed afterward, what he saw was of no enduring value!
-

Work: A Narcotic

A friend told me that he feels closest to God when he's the busiest. He explained that when demands are the greatest, he finds himself most reliant on the Lord's strength. He pointed out, however, that unless he takes time for daily worship, his work can quickly become an escape.

Many people engage in activity for activity's sake and use busyness as a device to avoid facing reality. Just as alcohol can deaden the senses to personal relationships, family obligations, and community responsibilities, so also constant work can be a narcotic. It dulls our sensitivity to the deeper issues of life.

About 3,000 years ago, the author of Ecclesiastes discovered this. He sought satisfaction by busying himself with building houses and planting vineyards. But then as he thought about the work he had done, he realized it was full of emptiness (Eccl 2:10-11).

We can make the same mistake, even in the name of the Lord. Could this be the reason some of us try to keep the church running by our own efforts but forget that fulfillment comes only from hearts full of God? Are we laboring without those vital times of worship and reflection? If so, it's time now to worship before we get caught again in the trap of working merely for work's sake. —Mart De Haan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lord, teach me how to work each day,
That every deed I do
May not be driven by false pride
But render service true.
—Anon.

Never take on more work than you have time to pray over.

The Hunger Of A Black Hole

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. —John 14:27

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 2:1-17

A black hole is a swirling mass deep in outer space that like a ravenous beast swallows any bit of matter that comes close to it.

The human heart is like that. Professor Diogenes Allen of Princeton Seminary states, "There is an emptiness at our core that is like a black hole. . . . There is an emptiness in us which threatens to suck us down as well, although what it is actually doing is dispelling an illusion. It is not destroying us, but revealing to us that we are already a dead thing trying to give itself life by taking all within its reach. But the core of us remains an emptiness."

What can satisfy the black hole of the human heart? Wealth, pleasure, travel, fame, learning, art? These can no more fill that inner void than a fistful of pebbles can fill the Grand Canyon.

In an attempt to find peace for his soul, King Solomon experimented with every resource imaginable. He wrote, "I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure" (Eccl. 2:10). But what was the result of his search? He concluded, "All is vanity and grasping for the wind" (v.17). Solomon's ultimate realization was that fulfillment can be found only in knowing and living for God (12:13).

Where are you looking for peace and fulfillment? By: Vernon Grounds (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Why do we keep on trying
The fare of this world's sin
When God has set before us
The joy of Christ within?
—JDB

Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in God.

The Smart House

Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established. — Proverbs 24:3

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

A group in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, is developing a "Smart House." This computer-equipped home can be programmed to monitor the baby, make the coffee, start the shower, dim the lights, and turn on the music. It senses whether people are in a room and adjusts the heat and lights accordingly. If the vacuum cleaner is running when the doorbell or telephone rings, the computer automatically shuts it off.

Imagine owning a dream house like that! You could have a taste of the life of Solomon, who in his day had anything a person could want (Eccl. 2:10).

Remember, however, that when Solomon filled his life with luxuries, he also filled it with emptiness (v.11). When he lived for riches and comfort, he ran into the same kinds of problems that put For Sale signs in front of thousands of homes today. The wealthy who have forgotten the Lord are plagued by divorce, alcoholism, and depression.

But Solomon finally came to his senses (12:13-14). He came back to his own principles. He remembered that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and that a real dream home is any house, no matter how big or small, that is built on the wisdom of God (Prov. 24:3). By: Mart DeHaan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Look away from earth's attractions,
All earth's joys will soon be o'er;
Rest not till thy heart exclaimeth:
"I have Christ! What want I more?"
—Walker

Be smart—ask for God's wisdom.

The Pleasure Is Mine

I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure . . . All was vanity and grasping for the wind. —Ecclesiastes 2:10-11

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

I always look forward to summer. The warm sunshine, baseball, beaches, and barbecues are pleasures that bring joy after a long, cold winter. But pleasure-seeking isn't just seasonal. Don't we all enjoy good food, engaging conversation, and a crackling fire?

The desire for pleasure isn't wrong. God has built us for it. Paul reminds us that God "gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17). Other passages welcome us to the healthy pleasure of food, friends, and the intimacy of a marriage relationship. But thinking that we can find lasting pleasure in people and things is ultimately an empty pursuit.

Ultimate pleasure is not found in the short-lived thrills our world offers, but rather in the long-term joy from a deepening intimacy with our Lord. King Solomon learned this the hard way. "I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure," he admitted (Eccl. 2:10). But after his pleasure-seeking spree, he concluded: "All was vanity and grasping for the wind" (Ec 2:11). It's no wonder he warned, "He who loves pleasure will be a poor man" (Prov. 21:17).

What we are really looking for is satisfied only in a fulfilling and growing relationship with Jesus. Pursue Him and taste His delights! By: Joe Stowell (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

The world is filled with so much good
That brings us joy and pleasure,
But true fulfillment only comes
When Christ we love and treasure.
—Sper

Are we living for our own pleasure, or living to please our heavenly Father?

Tantalized Sinners

I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure All was vanity and grasping for the wind. — Ecclesiastes 2:10-11

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

In Greek mythology, King Tantalus offended the gods and was punished in the underworld. He was placed in a lake in water up to his chin, but whenever he attempted to satisfy his burning thirst the water receded. Over his head were branches laden with choice fruit, but when he tried to satisfy his hunger they eluded his grasping hands.

Tantalus, therefore, became the symbol of utter frustration. Even today his name is remembered in the English word tantalize.

Outside of a relationship with God, many things in life are tantalizing but unrewarding. The author of Ecclesiastes pursued happiness through knowledge, pleasure, riches, and work. Nothing satisfied the hunger in his soul. So he wrote, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (1:2). It was only when he focused on knowing and pleasing God (12:13-14) that he found life's true purpose.

If you are among those who have been tantalized by what you thought would bring you happiness and peace, and you feel frustrated and worn out, come to Jesus. He promised, "I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). You will discover with joy that He has everything you've ever hoped for—and much more. By: Henry G. Bosch (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

If we commit ourselves to Christ
And follow in His way,
He'll give us life that satisfies
With purpose for each day.
—Sper

Only Jesus, the Living Water, can satisfy the thirsty soul.

Sunshine Chaser

I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure. —Ecclesiastes 2:10

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

Diana and Dave love to ride their jet skis on the lake, skimming across the water on warm sunny days. But one morning the weather was cool and mostly cloudy, and Diana couldn't convince Dave to go out. So she went on her own. It was so cold that she flitted back and forth across the lake, trying to keep herself in the sunshine for some needed warmth. But every time she reached a sunny area, the clouds moved and it quickly turned to shade. Realizing the futility and silliness of chasing the sunshine, she finally gave up because it didn't bring her what she wanted.

King Solomon did another kind of chasing that couldn't bring him satisfaction (Eccl. 2:1). In the first 11 verses of Ecclesiastes 2 alone, he mentions that he chased after pleasure, laughter, wine, wisdom, houses, gardens, money, possessions, and music. But his evaluation was that "all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun" (Ec 2:11). Those pursuits were empty—"vanity of vanities" (Ec 1:2). He wisely concluded: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all" (Ec 12:13).

Are you chasing after some of the same things that Solomon was? It's a vain pursuit. Purpose and satisfaction come only from knowing and obeying God. By: Anne Cetas (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Chasing after empty pleasure
Will not satisfy one's heart;
But to those who follow Jesus,
Life's fulfillment He'll impart.
—Sper

Only God can fill an empty heart.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) KING FOR A DAY

I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work,

and this was the reward for all my labor. Ecclesiastes 2:10NIV

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be king for a day? Suppose that for just one day you had unlimited wealth, unlimited power, and could do anything you wanted. You could ask for a jet and fly anywhere in the world. Or you could go on a shopping spree in Beverly Hills and never run out of money. Or you could buy a new home—or two or three—and still have enough to buy one hundred homes tomorrow.

Solomon had all that—and not just for one day but every day. If he saw it, he bought it. If he wanted it, he took it. If he thought he would enjoy it, he tried it. His investigation of the pleasures of life took him in every direction and brought him great delight. Put simply: He enjoyed being the king and the richest man on earth.

This leads to an interesting observation. Some people can be rich in the will of God. I think that God sometimes blesses men and women with an abundance of wealth as a kind of test. While poverty certainly

poses its own set of problems, so does wealth. The apostle Paul reminds us that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10, italics added). Money itself is morally neutral. The same dollar that buys pornography may also be used to support a missionary in Thailand. It can fuel greed or it can feed a hungry child. Money has no moral value except as we use it for good or for evil. Since that is true, it follows that every dime we spend represents a moral choice.

Christianity is a giving religion. It starts with God who gave His Son—the "indescribable gift" of 2 Corinthians 9:15. It is "indescribable" because of its extent. For if I were to go to the bank and withdraw all my money and give it away, and if I were to sell my car and give the money to the poor, and if I were to give everything I had and then gave myself as someone's slave . . . I wouldn't have given as much as God did when He gave His only begotten Son.

God can never owe me anything. I can never outgive Him. When I come to the end of my philanthropy and begin to pat myself on the back for being such a wonderful person, God bids me to look to the Cross and see the bleeding Son of God. Then I realize I know nothing of what real giving is.

Spirit of God, I thank You that I have all that I need and more besides. Help me to become a generous giver. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- If you had Solomon's power, what pleasure would you choose for yourself today?
- The Westminster Confession says that man was created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. What does "enjoying God forever" mean to you? What keeps you from enjoying God more than you do?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Genesis 1:31; Psalm 63:1-5; and 1 Timothy 4:4.

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 Breathtaking

A man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labor all the days of his life. —Ecclesiastes 8:15

A popular slogan says, "Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away." I see the phrase everywhere, on everything from T-shirts to pieces of art. It's a catchy phrase, but I think it's misleading.

If we measure life by breathtaking moments, we miss the wonder of ordinary moments. Eating, sleeping, and breathing seem "ordinary" in that we do them every day, usually without much thought. But they are not ordinary at all. Every bite and every breath are miracles. In fact, having breath is more miraculous than anything that takes our breath away.

King Solomon may have had more breathtaking moments than anyone. He said, "I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure" (Eccl. 2:10). But he expressed cynicism about it by saying, "All of it is meaningless" (v.17 NIV).

Solomon's life reminds us that it's important to find joy in "ordinary" things, for they are indeed wonderful. Bigger is not always better. More is not always an improvement. Busier doesn't make us more important.

Rather than look for meaning in breathtaking moments, we should find meaning in every breath we take, and make every breath meaningful.

All that I want is in Jesus;
He satisfies, joy He supplies;
Life would be worthless without Him,
All things in Jesus I find.

Breathing is more miraculous than anything that takes our breath away.

TANTALUS - In Greek mythology, King Tantalus offended the gods and was punished in the underworld. He was placed in a lake in water up to his chin, but whenever he attempted to satisfy his burning thirst the water receded. Over his head were branches laden with choice fruit, but when he tried to satisfy his hunger they eluded his grasping hands. (cp Lu 16:19-31)

Tantalus, therefore, became the symbol of utter frustration. Even today his name is remembered in the English word tantalize. Outside of a relationship with God, many things in life are tantalizing but unrewarding (cp Heb 11:25). The author of Ecclesiastes pursued happiness through knowledge, pleasure, riches, and work. Nothing satisfied the hunger in his soul. So he wrote, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (1:2). It was only when he focused on knowing and pleasing God (Eccl 12:13-14) that he found life's true purpose.

If you are among those who have been tantalized by what you thought would bring you happiness and peace (and this includes every one of us in one form or another) & you feel frustrated & worn out, come to Jesus. He promised to "give you rest" (Mt 11:28). You will discover with joy that He has everything you've ever hoped for—and much more -- He alone is true Life, the essence of all that satisfies the deepest needs of our soul. He alone is the Source of rivers of living water (Jn 7:38). All else is broken cisterns (Jer 2:13).

If we commit ourselves to Christ
And follow in His way,
He'll give us life that satisfies
With purpose for each day. —Sper

Only Jesus, the Living Water, can satisfy the thirsty soul.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:11 καὶ πλεψα γὰρ ἐν πσιν ποιμασν μου ὅς ποησαν ἅχερς μου καὶ νμχθ
μχθησατο ποιε ν καὶ δοτ πντα μαται της κα προαρεσις πνεματος κα οκ σιν περισσεα π τ ν λιον

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:11 And I looked on all my works which my hands had wrought, and on my labour which I laboured to perform: and behold, all was vanity and waywardness of spirit, and there is no advantage under the sun.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:11 Yet when I reflected on everything I had accomplished and on all the effort that I had expended to accomplish it, I concluded: "All these achievements and possessions are ultimately profitless—like chasing the wind! There is nothing gained from them on earth."

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:11 When I considered all that I had accomplished and what I had labored to achieve, I found everything to be futile and a pursuit of the wind. There was nothing to be gained under the sun.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:11 But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless-- like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:11 and I have looked on all my works that my hands have done, and on the labour that I have laboured to do, and lo, the whole is vanity and vexation of spirit, and there is no advantage under the sun!

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:11 I then reflected on all that my hands had achieved and all the effort I had put into its achieving. What futility it all was, what chasing after the wind! There is nothing to be gained under the sun.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and again, all was vanity and a chasing after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:11 But when I turned to all the works that my hands had wrought, and to the toil at which I had taken such pains, behold! all was vanity and a chase after wind, with nothing gained under the sun.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:11 But when I turned to look at all that I had accomplished and all the hard work I had put into it, I saw that it was all pointless. It was like trying to catch the wind. I gained nothing from any of my accomplishments under the sun.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I saw all the works which my hands had made, and everything I had been working to do; and I saw that all was to no purpose and desire for wind, and there was no profit under the sun.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done And on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.

- **I looked:** Ec 1:14 Ge 1:31 Ex 39:43 1Jn 2:16,17
- **behold:** Ec 2:17-23 1:3,14 Hab 2:13 1Ti 6:6

PROFITLESS PURSUITS TRYING TO CATCH THE WIND

This verse is Solomon's personal verdict after systematically testing pleasure, accomplishments, and possessions. He reflects back on everything he built, owned, and experienced and arrives at a powerful, sobering conclusion:

Thus I considered (deliberate act of reflection - intentional, not impulsive) **all my activities** (everything he built and accomplished) **which my hands had done and the labor** ([amal](#) - toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) **which I had exerted** - More literally it reads "All the labor ([amal](#)) I had labored ([amal](#)) to do" the verb [amal](#) repeated to emphasize the burden and weariness of the labor which Qoheleth exerted in his accomplishments. Solomon was not just toying with this grand experiment he was carrying out to find the meaning of life and what gives lasting significance. He worked hard at this! While he says **ALL**, in context he is referring to the activities dealt with in Eccl 2:4–11.

and behold ([hinneh](#); Lxx - [idou](#) - PAY ATTENTION!!!) **all was vanity** ([hebel](#) - fleeting, insubstantial, short-lived; Lxx - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) **and striving** ([reuth](#)) **after wind and there was no profit** ([yithron](#); Lxx - [perisseia](#) - that which is beyond the regular or expected amount) **under the sun** - NET - "CONCLUDED "All these achievements and possessions are ultimately profitless— like chasing the wind! There is nothing gained from them on earth."" Solomon arrives at three conclusions of all his laborious activities - empty (like vapor having no lasting weight), trying to grasp wind (try catching the uncatchable which pictures futility), and no profit in life on earth without considering God (Nothing gained in the eternal ledger from all his earthly success.) In a sense, all three describe emptiness, futility, fruitlessness. Solomon is not saying do not labor on earth. That would be absurd. Solomon is not rejecting hard work, but is rejecting of finding meaning in work alone. He is not saying labor does not offer some relative and temporal benefits, such as material acquisitions and the enjoyment of the work of one's hands, but that there is no ultimate fulfillment or benefit to be gained from secular human achievement.

[John Stevenson](#) - The Emptiness of Accomplishments. Even though he had it all and knew it all and built it all, Solomon concluded that it was ultimately meaningless. It isn't that you cannot accomplish things. It is that once you accomplish them, they provide no lasting fulfillment. Alexander the Great conquered the entire known world before he was 30 years old and then wept that there were no more worlds to conquer.

Profit (03504) [yithron](#) (from [yathar](#) = to remain over, remain, be left over) is a masculine noun refers literally to what is left over (a gain or a profit) or metaphorically to what is advantageous or of benefit, or that which remains after one's work (Eccl. 1:3; 5:16, 10:11); or knowledge (Eccl 7:12). The word yithrôn appears 10 times, all in Ecclesiastes and each time it appears, it questions what is the lasting benefit or eternal value does all this effort really yield? Yithrôn is not just about material gain, but about meaning, enduring value, or spiritual profit.

The noun יִתְרוֹן (yithron, "profit") has a two-fold range of meanings: (1) "what comes of [something]; result" (Eccl

1:3; 2:11; 3:9; 5:8, 15; 7:12; 10:10) and (2) “profit; advantage” (Eccl 2:13; 10:11); see HALOT 452–53 s.v. יִתְרוֹ. It is derived from the noun יִתֵּר (yeter, “what is left behind; remainder”; HALOT 452 s.v. יִתֵּר). The related verb יָתַר (yatar) denotes “to be left over; to survive” (Niphal) and “to have left over” (Hiphil); see HALOT 451–52 s.v. יָתַר. When used literally, יִתְרוֹ refers to what is left over after expenses (gain or profit); when used figuratively, it refers to what is advantageous or of benefit.

Though some things have relative advantage over others

***(e.g., light over darkness, and wisdom over folly in Eccl 2:13),
there is no ultimate profit in man’s labor due to death.***

Complete Biblical Library - Likely a loanword from Aramaic, yitron is derived from the cognate of Hebrew verb yathar, “to remain”. Appearing exclusively in Ecclesiastes, the noun is attested in Jewish Aramaic, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Syriac and Mandaean. The nuance of “profit” is a direct extension of the verbal nuance of “to be left over,” as it denotes that which is superfluous or more than the necessary amount. It appears in two broad contexts, that of the lack of profit of labor and in the context of the advantage of wisdom.

It appears twice in the comparative simile “wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness” (Eccl 2:13). Near the conclusion of a proclamation concerning the greatness of wisdom, the statement is: “the advantage of knowledge is wisdom” (Eccl 7:12). It also appears with this nuance in a series of metaphors which express the defilement of folly. Wisdom achieves profit (Eccl 10:10). “A serpent may bite when it is not charmed; The babbler is no different (Eccl 10:11, NKJV).

The second broad context for this noun is that of the rhetorical question, “What profit is labor?” The pointlessness of work is manifested in the realization that the earth is eternal, and generations continually do the same work, minimizing the significance of any individual (Eccl 1:3); as the only profit gained was the reward of the work itself (Eccl 2:11). Indeed, labor itself gains one nothing, not only in this life (Eccl 3:9), nor beyond as well, as one leaves life in the same financial state they entered (Eccl 5:16). Financially, a king is better than anarchy, in regard to land claims (Eccl 5:9).

YITHRON - 10x/9v - advantage(5), excels(2), profit(3). Eccl. 1:3; Eccl. 2:11; Eccl. 2:13; Eccl. 3:9; Eccl. 5:9; Eccl. 5:16; Eccl. 7:12; Eccl. 10:10; Eccl. 10:11

Striving (07469) reuth from **rea** - purpose, aim. Reuth refers to a person's efforts to attain something, to achieve or master something, to find out all about the world and its purposes. Each appears in the phrase “striving after wind,” a graphic image of the impossibility and futility of the pursuit of earthly happiness and meaning apart from the Lord (Eccl 1:14; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 6, 9).

The Septuagint translates reuth with proairesis which a choosing of one thing before another, an act of deliberate choice, a purpose, resolution, commitment (in political language, a deliberate course of action, a policy,)

THOUGHT- “When Success Isn’t Enough”

“I looked at all I had built... and I found it was empty.” – Solomon

It’s easy to live as if the next achievement, project, or possession will finally bring fulfillment. But Solomon had it all and still felt hollow. This verse is a mirror for our modern hearts: We chase promotions, build platforms, accumulate stuff. But in the quiet moments, we too may say, “All was vanity.” Solomon’s lament is not hopeless. It’s instructive: Don’t look to your hands for what only God can give your heart. Meaning isn’t found in what you build, but in Who you serve. Work has purpose but only when offered to God.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren **be** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) steadfast, immovable, always abounding in **the work of the Lord**, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.” – 1 Corinthians 15:58+

The Missing Piece

“Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.” Ecclesiastes 2:11 ESV

I’m not much for jigsaw puzzles, but I know that you need all the pieces to enjoy a satisfying outcome. In many ways, life is like a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle. We spend our days putting it together, hoping to create something meaningful out of all the scattered pieces. But when we can’t find the strategic pieces that complete the picture of some challenging situation in life, we face unsettling

disappointment at best, and, at worst, despair.

Honest philosophers have been telling us for centuries that life can be confusing, lonely, meaningless, and empty. Disappointment and despair are to be expected as normal by-products of our existence. The remedies proposed range from the passive resignation of a life stuck in the byword whatever to engagement in experiences that provide the adrenaline rush of temporary excitement. Even the writer of Ecclesiastes searched the depths of wisdom, pleasure, wealth, and work to find meaning and satisfaction but came up disillusioned. His conclusion is painstakingly honest: “Behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind” (Eccl. 2:11 ESV).

Let’s face it; there have been times when we’ve wondered why life is not more rewarding. Even our best experiences rarely leave much of lasting value, and often the anticipation is more fulfilling than the experience itself. We “channel surf” life, looking—hoping—for something to catch our attention, only to end up bored, jaded, and flat. And when life gets in our face, we are shocked at how brutal and unconsoling it can be. In our quiet moments, we feel stalked by a sense of emptiness and fear.

We wonder, “Why? What’s missing?”

Has anyone noticed that the one thing the philosophers, the meaning-searcher in Ecclesiastes, and many of us have in common is that God has been removed as the preeminent center of our existence? He is the missing piece; the piece we so desperately need in order to complete the picture of life.

Even those of us who are connected to God through redemption, often live our lives as though He isn’t particularly relevant to our everyday occasions and encounters. We are proficient at maintaining the level of religious activity we deem appropriate, but God is hardly the center of our lives.

When God is banished from human experience or relegated to the religious margins of our lives, left only to serve us on an “on-call” basis, we become functionally alone. And in that aloneness, emptiness and vulnerability become more than philosophical theory—they are naked reality.

The good news is, while we have life and breath, God will not cease to pursue a rewarding, deepening intimacy with us. He is not content to leave us alone. His unceasing, unconditional love for each of us compels Him. He wants to meet us at the intersection of every dream, every desire, every choice, and every thought, and He urges us to turn toward Him and actualize the finished work of His Son, the gift of the Spirit, and the resource of His Word.

God welcomes us to begin a pilgrimage that puts our backs toward the aloneness in our souls and turns our faces toward the spectacular glow of intimacy with Him, toward life the way it was meant to be. Once we put Him in the right place, He begins to bring all the scattered pieces together to complete the picture of our lives—and it’s a good picture when He is the strategic piece!

YOUR JOURNEY... Do you feel as if your life is missing something? If so, what? Have you ever considered that you might be lacking intimacy with God?

Read Ecclesiastes 2:10-11. Can you identify with this experience? If so, think of some things you strive for that are nothing more than “vanity.” Confess the vain things that come to mind, and commit to strive after intimacy with God instead. Did you have an experience like this in the past? What happened?

How do you feel when you realize that God pursues you for a deeper, richer relationship with Him? Think of a time when this was evident in your life. If you are interested in reclaiming that (or initiating it), read Revelation 3:14-20. Then take it personally!

Finding Joy in the Meaningless

When I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Ecclesiastes 2:11

TODAY’S SCRIPTURE Ecclesiastes 2:1–11

Today’s Insights --The book of Ecclesiastes was most likely written by Solomon; the author is said to be the son of David (1:1) and king of Israel (v. 12). This is significant because as king, Solomon had access to everything he needed to conduct his “experiment” of finding meaning by pursuing the things that humans desire the most (2:1–11). Additionally, throughout this search for meaning and despite indulging in worldly pleasures, he notes that he was still being guided by wisdom (vv. 3, 9). We’re told he was the wisest person to have ever lived (see 1 Kings 3:11–12).

Today’s Devotional - In 2010, James Ward, the creator of the blog “I Like Boring Things,” launched a conference called the “Boring Conference.” It’s a one-day celebration of the mundane, the ordinary, and the overlooked. In the past, speakers have addressed seemingly meaningless topics like sneezing, sounds that vending machines make, and inkjet printers of 1999. Ward knows the

topics may be boring, but the speakers can take a mundane subject and make it interesting, meaningful, and even joyful.

Several millennia ago, Solomon, the wisest of kings, launched his own search for joy in the meaningless and mundane. He pursued work, bought flocks, built wealth, acquired singers, and constructed buildings (Ecclesiastes 2:4–9). Some of these pursuits were honorable and some were not. Ultimately, in his pursuit of meaning, the king found nothing but boredom (v. 11). Solomon maintained a worldview that didn't press beyond the limits of human experience to include God. Ultimately, however, he realized that he'd find joy in the mundane only when he remembered and worshiped God (12:1–7).

When we find ourselves in the whirlwind of tedium, let's launch our own daily mini-conference, as we "remember [our] Creator" (v. 1)—the God who fills the mundane with meaning. As we remember and worship Him, we'll find wonder in the ordinary, gratitude in the mundane, and joy in the seemingly meaningless things of life. Marvin Williams (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Reflect & Pray

Why is it so hard to find meaning in things that can never satisfy? How do you need to reprioritize your commitment to and worship of God so you can find your meaning in Him?

God, take the unremarkable moments of my life and infuse them with Your joy and wonder.

What Brings Happiness?

All was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun. —Ecclesiastes 2:11

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

After studying the effect of the post-World War II economic boom in Japan, Richard Easterlin concluded that monetary growth does not always bring more satisfaction. More recently, economists Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers conducted surveys in more than 100 nations and concluded that life satisfaction is highest in the richest countries.

So who's right? Let's check with the writer of Ecclesiastes. He should know! He was a truly rich man (2:8). He had the means to try everything in this world—and he did! He gave himself to pleasure (vv.1-3), grand projects (vv.4-8), entertainment (v.8), and hard work (vv.10-11). But he concluded that it was all "vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun" (v.11).

Lasting satisfaction doesn't come from possessing tangible things like savings accounts and material goods. Recent events have shown that these things can suddenly lose value. To find true happiness, we have to find it in Someone who is not from "under the sun." And that is our Savior, Jesus.

Hymn writer Floyd Hawkins wrote: "I've discovered the way of gladness, I've discovered the way of joy, I've discovered relief from sadness. . . . When I found Jesus, my Lord." Only He can give joy that is full (John 15:11). By: C. P. Hia (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Take the world, but give me Jesus,
All its joys are but a name;
But His love abideth ever,
Through eternal years the same.
—Crosby

To know happiness, get to know Jesus.

Are You Losing Touch?

I looked on all the works that my hands had done . . . and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. —
Eccl. 2:11

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

A number of years ago in Rochester, New York, 30 people competed in a charity fundraiser called a Touch-A-Thon. A new car was to be given to the person who could touch a red spot on the car for the longest time, not counting the 15-minute breaks that were allowed every 4 hours.

After four days, one man and one woman were left. But then the woman reached into her purse for a fingernail file and took her hand off the car. She lost touch and lost the prize.

King Solomon, the author of Ecclesiastes, also tells about losing touch—but in his case he forfeited something of inestimable value. He had started out well by living for God, but then he began seeking personal profit and pleasure. As he surveyed his wealth and his fame, it dawned on him that in reaching out for those things, he had let go of his contact with God, his true source of meaning and lasting happiness.

Are we justifying what we are doing, not realizing that we may no longer be living in close fellowship with the Lord? Do we need to stop worrying about trivial things and reestablish our contact with eternal values through repentance and faith?

We can't afford to lose touch with God. By: Mart DeHaan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Keep me in touch with You, dear Lord,
Through every day in all I do;
For if I go in my own way,
I'll lose the joy of knowing You.
—Hess

If we walk with God, we'll be out of step with the world.

Henry Morris - Labor and Profit

"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (Eccles. 2:11).

One of the inequities of human life seems to be that there is no dependable relation between the diligence with which one labors and the reward he receives for that labor. Some men may work hard all their lives, yet live in poverty. The "idle rich," on the other hand, may inherit their wealth and see it multiply abundantly, simply on the interest received from investments. What sort of "profit" should be assigned to "labor," and who should receive that profit is a problem that perpetually vexes economists and has even led to violent revolutions.

The trouble is that perfect equity can never be achieved in such matters while man's entire dominion is in bondage to sin and death, under God's curse (Gen. 2:17-19). As long as one's goals and motives in working are only "under the sun," there is bound to be "vanity and vexation of spirit," no matter what his current economic and social status may be. The accounts are not to be settled in the fallible ledgers kept here on earth, but in God's books.

"Labor not for the meat which perisheth," said the Lord, "but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (John 6:27). It was to bondslaves he was speaking when Paul said, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23-24).

It is important to remember that, when all accounts are settled at His Judgment seat, the "profit" we receive is not based on quantity, but quality, of services rendered. "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it... and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Cor. 3:13).

Not "how much," but "what sort"! There is little profit under the sun, but if we are "abounding in the work of the Lord... your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Painted Sticks (Ecclesiastes 2:11)

One Sunday a preacher told how, while sitting in his garden, he had watched a caterpillar climb a painted stick that was for decoration. After reaching the top, the caterpillar reared itself, feeling this way and that for a juicy twig to feed on, or some way to further progress. Finding nothing, it slowly returned to the ground, crawled along till it reached another painted stick, and did the same thing all over again. The preacher said: "There are many painted sticks in the world—those of pleasure, wealth, and fame. All these call man and say, 'Climb me to find the desire of your heart, fulfill the purpose of your existence, taste the fruit of success, and find satisfaction, but they are only painted sticks.' " Solomon tried to find the purpose of his life in the world's "painted sticks." He gave his heart to seek wisdom, but learned that it was "vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 1:15). He then turned to the pleasures of the world for meaning in life. He built great houses, and gardens, and pools. He had servants and maidens; in fact, he had all that a man could desire. Solomon's comment on pleasure as a true source of happiness, however, was, "All was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (Eccl. 2:11). After trying all that the world could offer, Solomon's final decision was, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13).

We All Admire The Guy Who “Makes It”

We're talking about that “Fortune 500” type who grabs the brass ring and makes things happen!

Here's the brief autobiography of one such man:

“I built ...

“I made ...

“I bought ...

“I owned ...

“I amassed ...

“I acquired ...”

And finally:

“I BECAME ...”

In other words, he arrived, having achieved affluence. Visibility. Status. Perhaps even respect.

And then he indulged! “I denied myself nothing ...” (Ecclesiastes 2:1–10)

But here is the kicker: According to his autobiography:

“When I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.” (Ecclesiastes 2:11)

How is this possible? Had he not achieved it all? The answer is, “No, he had not.” And the reason?

- None of his achievements could fill his inner emptiness. As Pascal sagaciously observed, “Inside of every man there is a God-shaped vacuum that only God can fill.”
- Jesus Christ cautioned, “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?... A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” (Matthew 16:26; Luke 12:15)

How tragic it would be to have climbed the ladder of success, only to realize too late (as did Solomon) that you had leaned it against the wrong wall.

SO THE QUESTION IS: “Which wall is your ladder leaning against?”

BOUNCING BALL [Moments With You: Daily Connections for Couples - Page 90](#)

I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity. ECCLESIASTES 2:11

There are seasons in life when our work requires more of us than it does at other times. Tax season for the accountant. Christmas season for the retailer. Whatever your line of work, it likely has a natural rhythm that spikes at certain times.

But increasingly in our success-driven culture, busy seasons have run together into all seasons. We have allowed the pace to perpetuate itself, driving us at full throttle month after month, year after year. Things begin to come totally unraveled at home, in our marriage, in our relationship with our children. It can happen, seemingly, in a blink.

This reminds me of a commencement address attributed to Brian Dyson, who held several senior management positions with Coca-Cola during his long career. He told a class of Georgia Tech graduates, “Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling five balls in the air: work, family, health, friends and spirit. You're keeping all of these in the air.

“You soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls are made of glass. If you drop one of these, it will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged, or even shattered. It will never be the same.”

You may not get as many pats on the back for being at home to dry the dishes or settle a disagreement or help a child study for a test. You may not receive the same sense of affirmation you feel from accomplishing a work goal or achieving recognition among your peers. But you will be living proof that winning at home first is the key to winning anything of value.

Marriages and families don't bounce. They shatter. For generations.

Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun. Ecclesiastes 2:11NIV

You would think Solomon would be happy. After all, he had it all—money, fame, power, a vast harem, an enormous kingdom, ships that brought him riches from foreign shores, a nation at peace, the respect and admiration of his fellow monarchs, a temple that was the wonder of his day, and the affection of a grateful nation. Really, what more could a man ask for?

Good question. Evidently whatever he lacked wasn't in the material realm, because he quite simply had reached the top of the heap. There weren't any other mountains to climb. It is reminiscent of Alexander the Great who died at age thirty-three having conquered the known world.

What had Solomon gained? In the end, nothing. It was all vanity, emptiness, and chasing after the wind. And that brought him back to God—which is where all of Solomon's journeys eventually ended up.

We often say, "Jesus is all I need." But you will never know if Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have. When Jesus is all you have, then you discover that Jesus is all you need.

The more I think about that, the more profound it seems to me. For most of us, "Jesus is all I need" is little more than a Christian cliché—a bumper sticker slogan and nothing more. But recently I visited a friend who is dying of cancer. There is no hope for her recovery—a fact that is completely clear in her mind. With a wry smile she said, "Jesus has been so good to me. If He wants to take me home now, I'm ready to go. Whatever the Lord wants is all right with me." Where does that kind of faith come from?

Ask the single moms; they know all about it. Ask the man who just lost his job; he knows about it. Ask the woman who is struggling with the shattering pain of divorce—she has learned the truth over and over again. Ask that young girl whose father died when she was fifteen. Or the man whose wife has Alzheimer's disease. Or the young couple who lost their first child.

Gordon MacDonald said, "I have discovered that your theology is only as deep as your pain." Pity those who have an easy life. They never really know Jesus.

If pain has any advantage, it is this: When we hurt, we find out if what we believe is really true. Many can testify through their tears: "When everything else was gone, I turned to Jesus and He was still there."

Is Jesus all you need? Yes, but you'll never know for sure until Jesus is all you have. And when Jesus is all you have, to your utter surprise you'll discover that everything you always heard is true—Jesus is all you need.

Lord of my life, may I never expect to find lasting happiness in the world, but only in You. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Why wasn't Solomon happy? Would you have been happy?
- How has God used pain to deepen your walk with Him?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Genesis 32:22-26; Proverbs 15:16-17; and Luke 18:18-30.

Just How Lasting Are Your Investments? - Facts of the Matter - Daily Devotionals

As an old man, Solomon agonized over the futility of his investments:

“When I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun ... So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me ... A chasing after the wind ...” (Ecclesiastes 2:11, 17)

Do your investments parallel Solomon's? Or are you making the kind of investments that will outlive you, lasting for eternity? If you want:

A one year return on your investment, plant grain.

A ten year return on your investment, plant a tree.

An eternal return on your investment, plant people.

It is God's intention to destroy everything physical, including your earthly investments:

“The day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away ... and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.” (2 Peter 3:10)

Can we therefore grasp the fact that only God, His Word, and people are eternal?

God: “Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” (2 Peter 3:8) (See Psalm 102:12; Ephesians 3:21)

His Word: “Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.” (Psalm 119:89) (See Psalm 119:152, 160; Matthew 5:18; 24:34; 1 Peter 1:25)

People: “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Daniel 12:2) (See Matthew 25:46; Romans 2:7, 8; 2 Thessalonians 1:5–9)

Consequently, the only investments that will withstand the coming holocaust will be those made in the lives of people. Thus, God regularly places individuals in our path with whom He desires our investment: The person at the club. That neighbor across the street. A business associate. A relative. Someone in distress.

QUESTIONS: As you encounter these people, are you blithely brushing past them to fulfill your agenda? Or are you viewing each one as a divine appointment? Are you responding to the prompting of the Spirit by graciously and determinedly investing in their lives for the purpose of bringing Christ to them? Or building Christ in them? Even when it means altering your predetermined schedule?

I suppose the answers to these questions are determined by whether we are living for the temporal, or investing in the eternal.

Greg Laurie - FAILING FORWARD - For Every Season

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 2:11)

Did you know that success can be a form of failure? Some may argue that success is the most important thing in life. After all, there is so much emphasis on it today. But is success the most important thing in life? That all depends on whose definition of success you choose.

Many people achieve their goals, but my question is what did it cost to achieve them? Was it by using deception and betrayal? By abandoning their principles and sacrificing integrity? By neglecting their family and friends? By forgetting about, and in some cases, outright abandoning God?” If so, they may be successful by certain definitions, but ultimately, they’re failures.

We can do worse than fail. We can succeed and be personally proud of our success. We can succeed and worship the accomplishment rather the One who helped us to reach it. We can succeed and forget whose hand it is that gives and withholds.

Sometimes failure can be good, because we can learn from our mistakes. And failure can be good, even when we do something that is wrong ... if we learn from it, that is, and if we learn to fail forward.

By failing forward, I mean that after we have done something wrong and have tasted the bitter results of it, we say, “I really don’t want to do that again.” So we put safeguards around our lives and take precautionary steps to never fall into that same trap. If that is the case, then we have learned something from our failures.

Painted Sticks (Ecclesiastes 2:11) - AMG Bible Illustrations

One Sunday a preacher told how, while sitting in his garden, he had watched a caterpillar climb a painted stick that was for decoration. After reaching the top, the caterpillar reared itself, feeling this way and that for a juicy twig to feed on, or some way to further progress. Finding nothing, it slowly returned to the ground, crawled along till it reached another painted stick, and did the same thing all over again. The preacher said: “There are many painted sticks in the world—those of pleasure, wealth, and fame. All these call man and say, ‘Climb me to find the desire of your heart, fulfill the purpose of your existence, taste the fruit of success, and find satisfaction, but they are only painted sticks.’” “Solomon tried to find the purpose of his life in the world’s “painted sticks.” He gave his heart to seek wisdom, but learned that it was “vanity and vexation of spirit” (Eccl. 1:15). He then turned to the pleasures of the world for meaning in life. He built great houses, and gardens, and pools. He had servants and maidens; in fact, he had all that a man could desire. Solomon’s comment on pleasure as a true source of happiness, however, was, “All was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun” (Eccl. 2:11). After trying all that the world could offer, Solomon’s final decision was,

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:

Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13).

Ecclesiastes 2:12 So I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly; for what will the man do who will come after the king except what has already been done?

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:12 And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:12 καὶ πλὴν αὐτὸ ὅτι σοφίαν καὶ περιφροσύνην καὶ φρόνησιν τίς ἄνθρωπος ἔσται πῶς βούλεται ποιεῖν αὐτὴν

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:12 Then I looked on to see wisdom, and madness, and folly: for who is the man who will follow after counsel, in all things where in he employs it?

NET Ecclesiastes 2:12 Next, I decided to consider wisdom, as well as foolish behavior and ideas. For what more can the king's successor do than what the king has already done?

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:12 Then I turned to consider wisdom, madness, and folly, for what will the man be like who comes after the king? He will do what has already been done.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:12 So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:12 Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom, and also madness and folly. What more can the king's successor do than what has already been done?

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:12 So I decided to compare wisdom with foolishness and madness (for who can do this better than I, the king?).

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:12 And I turned to see wisdom, and madness, and folly, but what is the man who cometh after the king? that which is already -- they have done it!

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:12 My reflections then turned to wisdom, stupidity and folly. For instance, what can the successor of a king do? What has been done already.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:12 So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what can the one do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:12 For what will the man do who is to come after the king? What men have already done! I went on to the consideration of wisdom, madness and folly.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:12 Then I turned my attention to experience wisdom, madness, and foolishness. For instance, what can the man who replaces the king do? Only what has already been done.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:12 And I went again in search of wisdom and of foolish ways. What may the man do who comes after the king? The thing which he has done before.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:12 So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what he has already done.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:12 Then I turned myself to consider wisdom and madness and folly; For what can the man do who succeeds the king?-- Only what he has already done.

- I turned: Ec 1:17 7:25, even that which hath already been done, or, in those things which have been already done, Ec 2:25

Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 1:17+ And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I realized that this also is striving after wind.

**SOLOMON'S SEARCH
SHIFTS TO WISDOM**

So I turned (looked again deliberately) **to consider** (observe, carefully analyze) **wisdom** ([chokmah](#); Lxx - [sophia](#)), **madness** (*Holeloth* - rash, irrational actions) **and folly** (*Kesiluth* - moral and intellectual foolishness,) - **NET** - "Next, I decided to consider wisdom, as well as foolish behavior and ideas." Solomon now shifts from pleasure to **wisdom**, that practical attribute which gives one skill in living life.

For what will the man do who will come after the king except what has already been done- **NET** - "For what more can the king's successor do than what the king has already done?" In other words: "*What can anyone do that I haven't already done?*" He is in essence saying none of my predecessors can "top" me in my experiments to try to arrive at the meaning of life. He is saying that anyone who came after him would only be able to repeat what Solomon already tried. Solomon's description would include all the famous philosophers (Socrates, Aristotle, etc) and brilliant thinkers (Stephen Hawking, etc). Future philosophers, brilliant thinkers, kings, etc, who find anything new under the sun that he has not already uncovered.

Solomon is explaining that he has already tested the limits of earthly wisdom and pleasure, and no one after him will discover a different result by repeating the same experiment. His point reinforces the vanity of life "under the sun"—without God, all efforts eventually prove empty.

NET NOTE - Throughout Ec 2:1–11, Qoheleth evaluated the merits of merrymaking (Ec 2:1–3), accomplishing grand things (Ec 2:4–6), amassing great wealth (Ec 2:7–8), and secular acquisitions and accomplishments (Ec 2:9–10). Now, he reflects on the benefit in life in living wisely and not giving oneself over to frivolous self-indulgence.

Duane Garrett writes that "In context this line states that there is little chance that humans will behave with greater wisdom than their first ancestor, Adam, who came directly from the hand of God." (Borrow [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs page 294](#))

Ecclesiastes uses the term "wisdom" and "wise" in a way that is different from the way in which it is used in Proverbs. Ecclesiastes is not talking about God's wisdom. This is wisdom "*under the sun*." This is the wisdom of the world. This is the wisdom of Albert Einstein and of Isaac Newton and of Plato and Aristotle and Carl Sagan and David Thoreau and Spinoza. Solomon had made it his life's ambition to be WISE.

Wisdom in Proverbs	Wisdom in Ecclesiastes
The fear of the Lord is the beginning and foundation of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10).	Wisdom is seen as natural intellect in looking at life "under the sun."
Wisdom equals godliness.	Only secular wisdom is in view.

John Stevenson - Solomon realized that the same thing happens to the wise man that happens to the fool. It doesn't matter if you have an I.Q. of 60 or 160. In each case, you are born and you live and then you die. The fool doesn't live any longer than the wise man. Neither escapes death. And when you die, you are quickly forgotten. Before my own father died, I came across some old family pictures. There was one with the name inscribed on the back - Joel Armour Stevenson. I believe it to be my father's grandfather. But when I asked him about it, he couldn't remember. In the space of two generations, a man and his wife who had borne four children had been forgotten so that their own grandchildren couldn't even remember their names. Solomon's disillusionment turned to bitterness. He "hated life" (2:17). He found himself hating all of his accomplishments. They mocked him because he realized that they would not last. Go to Israel today and visit Jerusalem. Where is Solomon's Temple? Where are the magnificent palaces? Where are the rich stables? It has all been destroyed. Only some of the weathered foundation stones remain for the rummaging of grey-haired archaeologists.

The Benefits of Wisdom	The Futility of Wisdom
Ecclesiastes 2:13-14	Ecclesiastes 2:15-16
Wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise man sees where he is going while the fool walks in darkness.	The same fate awaits both the wise and the fool. Both the wise and the fool are forgotten after their death. Death is the great equalizer.

Eric Ortlund - Qohelet's Three Searches (Ec 1:12–18; 2:1–11, 12–26) Excerpt from Themelios article [Laboring in Hopeless Hope: Encouragement for Christians from Ecclesiastes](#) Qohelet retreats even further in Ec 2:12–23, turning to investigate **wisdom and folly**. (We should not forget both the practical and the moral/theological dimensions of these words in OT wisdom literature.) (See

further the fulsome description of wisdom and those possessing it in Bruce Waltke, Proverbs 1–15 NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004, 53–55, 94–107.) Qohelet’s conclusion is unambiguous and without qualification (Ec 2:13): wisdom is better than folly and sin. In fact, Qohelet uses the word יָתֵרוֹן again to describe the contrast between the two, implying that there is a permanent gain in wisdom, as absolute as the difference between light and darkness. The sorts of reservations Qohelet registers against all human activity (Ec 1:12–15) and satisfying accomplishment in work (Ec 2:1–11) are not applied here. But that does not mean that wisdom provides an escape from vanity because the same fate befalls both foolish and wise and both are forgotten forever in the grave (Ec 2:15–16). Lives completely different in their moral character end in exactly the same way. However wise one is, one dies just like a fool. In this sense, pursuing wisdom is pursuing the wind (Ec 2:16).

Qohelet tells us his reaction to his discovery of the vanity of wisdom in Ec 2:17–23: he came to hate life (Ec 2:17) and everything he worked for (Ec 2:18). The incongruity between Qohelet’s vast labor and his leaving it to another who may squander it after his death turns the labor into something hateful for Qohelet (Ec 2:18–21). He cannot believe he spent so many years working for something that passes out of his hands so quickly (Ec 2:22–23). Then, without warning, Qohelet goes on to tell us there is nothing better for us to do than eat and drink and enjoy our work as from the hand of God (Ec 2:24). Given what he has just said about hating life and despairing over his work, this verse feels abrupt. Has Qohelet given up? Is he being ironic? Or is Qohelet resignedly recommending pleasure because he is out of options, like a condemned man enjoying his last meal?

*Qohelet is counseling us not to identify the value of our work
with permanent and stable results that we can secure.*

We are, at this point, at the center of the eye of the needle. In order to pass through, let us recall that Qohelet’s three searches are narrated to the reader as past events. Qohelet no longer hates life. He is telling us how he used to so that we can avoid his mistake. I cannot help but wonder if Qohelet demanded too much of life. After all, is giving your life’s work to another really a “great misfortune” (Ec 2:21)? Surely that is a bit of an overreaction. In Qohelet’s three searches, he seems to be putting infinite demands on finite things, asking them to satisfy him in ways they were never intended to. We are not much different: we expect some permanent gain under the sun for our work (Ec 1:3) and then are bitterly disappointed when life fails our expectations. Qohelet is counseling us not to identify the value of our work with permanent and stable results that we can secure. The value of our work is rather found in its status as a gift directly from God. Life **under the sun** is subject to incongruities and flagrant inconsistencies that we will never understand, much less untangle. But we should enjoy life **under the sun** anyway for no other reason than that God gives it to us (Ec 2:25–26). Qohelet is telling us to avoid his mistake and avoid trying to manipulate our הִבְדֵּל-existences to achieve permanent results. Just enjoy what God gives you. In a profound paradox, the “recognition of the absurdity of human life requires nothing less and nothing more than exhausting every present moment as God’s gift.” (William Brown, Character in Crisis: A Fresh Approach to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, 148.)

Let us try to sketch more concretely what living this paradox day by day actually looks like. We all enjoy things we do not deserve, and each one of us lacks things we might legitimately expect to have. This incongruity is inescapable. Qohelet’s counsel to us is not to try to figure out why this is so, as if from survivor’s guilt. We are rather to enjoy our lives as a gift from on high, almost—if you will excuse the phrase—as if they come out of nowhere. Enjoy your work or a vacation from it, and don’t look beyond it. Don’t try to understand how you might keep the life you have or how it may be taken from you. Accept it for what it is: a good, vain thing.¹³ **God wants us to enjoy life without forgetting that such enjoyment is colored by הִבְדֵּל, remembering that our God-given enjoyment of life does not unlock life’s secret or give us a way out of 14. הִבְדֵּל**

*Leave the results of your work with God and keep your eye on the plow in front of you.
Since God has placed mastery outside of our reach, simply enjoy each good thing as it comes*

Furthermore, do not set your hopes on leaving a permanent mark on the world (or your denomination) through your work, or you will burn out. (Brown, Character in Crisis, 149.) Only God knows the end result of your work, not you. Just enjoy working on what is at hand.¹⁶ Minister to others with everything you have (Ec 9:10) without worrying about the end result or being envious (Ec 4:4) of the pastor down the road who has a bigger church and more money at his disposal and flashier services, but who is not very spiritually minded (this, too, is הִבְדֵּל). God has apportioned all manner of absurdities under the sun. Leave the results of your work with God and keep your eye on the plow in front of you. Since God has placed mastery outside of our reach, simply enjoy each good thing as it comes.¹⁷ It is our illusion of mastery—and our identification of the value of our work (and our lives) with this mastery—from which Qohelet seeks to deliver us.

This is the path to true engagement with life colored by vanity. In Jacques Ellul’s striking words, “In order to be prepared to hope in what does not deceive, we must first lose hope in everything that deceives.”¹⁸ As a seminary professor with an incurably bookish bent, I personally find it deeply liberating to disconnect the value of my teaching and writing from visible results. It is a relief to me to admit that I cannot produce the results I want in my students; that is God’s work. With regard to publishing, it has been my observation that paradigms in OT studies last around 50 years; articles published in the 1960s and 1970s are already beginning to

look like antiques. Soon my work will be an antique as well. If I set my hopes on making a visible impact on the state of professional biblical studies, I may very well become so frustrated that I start to hate the work. This is true even if I succeed, for (if I am honest) I will have to admit that my influence will fade quickly. Qohelet liberates me from that despair to enjoy each day of teaching, simply and as nothing else than a gift. And God's word becomes rich and sharp in a way it never would if my only goal were to be an influential professional scholar.

It would be easy to translate these reflections for someone pastoring full-time: instead of worrying about how big your church is compared to others or how impressive the services are or how many compliments you receive, enjoy the counseling appointment you have this afternoon or the half-hour you have carved out for sermon preparation. God himself is giving these gifts directly to you, and he does not give them to everyone.

An additional aspect of Qohelet's most paradoxical way of encouraging us is seen in Ec 9:7–10, a passage very similar to Ec 2:24–26. In this later passage, Qohelet again tells us to enjoy our lives and our work to the hilt, "for God has already approved of your work" (כִּי כְבֹר כָצָה הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־מַעְשֶׁיךָ, v. 7). The word "already" is most striking. I take Qohelet to be saying that before we achieve what we want in our work (if we ever do), God is already smiling on us. God is pleased with us irrespective of what we do or do not accomplish. To use a somewhat different framework, God is pleased with our lives irrespective of our works. God simply smiles and gives us these gifts. That is the value of our work: the status as gifts according to grace, not visible results we can give back to God.

Ecclesiastes 2:12ff Nest Eggs

The rich get richer and the poor get poorer—and it seems that compound interest would virtually guarantee it! Not so, according to investment counselor David Dreman. Writing in Forbes magazine, Dreman noted that most large fortunes diminish and sometimes disappear in only two or three generations. He observed, "Why most nest eggs dissipate over time is a major problem..." (Today in the Word)

Warren Wiersbe - Ecclesiastes 2:12-23 [Pause for Power: A 365-Day Journey through the Scriptures - Page 145](#)

"I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool?" (Ecc. 2:18)

MONEY MANAGEMENT

Solomon was born wealthy, and great wealth came to him because he was the king. But he was looking at life under the sun and speaking for the common people who were listening to his discussion. The day would come when Solomon would die and leave everything to his successor. This reminds us of our Lord's warning in the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21) and Paul's words in 1 Timothy 6:7-10. A Jewish proverb says, "There are no pockets in shrouds."

Money is a medium of exchange. Unless it is spent, it can do little or nothing for you. You can't eat money, but you can use it to buy food. It will not keep you warm, but it will purchase fuel. A writer in The Wall Street Journal called money an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven, and as a universal provider of everything except happiness.

Of course, you and I are stewards of our wealth; God is the Provider (Deut. 8:18) and the Owner, and we have the privilege of enjoying it and using it for His glory. One day we will have to give an account of what we have done with His generous gifts. While we cannot take wealth with us when we die, we can send it ahead as we use it today according to God's will (Matt. 6:19-34).

Applying God's Truth:

1. To what extent would you say you are concerned about leaving a good inheritance for your children? Do you wonder if they will appreciate it as they should?
2. What is your philosophy of money? How much importance do you think it deserves?
3. What does it mean to you to be a steward of your wealth?

The Futility of Wealth and Pleasure 2:1-11 - [Don Robinson](#) The Futility of Materialism. Ec 2:12-23

1. He sees death as the common factor. (12-17)
 - a. wisdom is far greater than folly v12-13
 - b. but whether wise or foolish, each must die. v14
 - c. what lasting value is there to wisdom? v15-17
 - d. once again he sees that he has been chasing the wind.

2 He despaired over leaving the results of his labor to another. (18-21)

- a. who knows whether the man who benefits from my labor will be wise or foolish?
- b. he declares that this just isn't right, this is a great injustice.
- c. we have all heard accounts of children who have foolishly squandered their inheritance received from their parents hard work.
- d. Solomon is concerned about who will inherit the results of his labor.

3. He despaired over the absence of some reward for all his labor. (22-23)

- a. what is the point?
- b. what does man get for all his labor?
- c. nothing but sorrow, grief, and restlessness.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) THE TURTLE ON THE FENCE POST

Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom, and also madness and folly. What more can the king's successor do than what has already been done? Ecclesiastes 2:12NIV

I'm sure Solomon felt pressure from both sides on the issue of kingly succession. On the one hand his father was David, who quite frankly was a better man than he would ever be—even though Solomon was technically a greater king. Matthew 1:1 called the Lord Jesus Christ the "son of David," not the "son of Solomon," though that title is also correct. Solomon lived and reigned in the shadow of his father, and I am sure he knew that no matter what he did, he could never eclipse his father's place in the hearts of his people.

Then there was the matter of his successor. Transferring power is always a tricky business, but Solomon didn't help himself by all the foreign wives he married and the consequent introduction of idolatry into Israel. First Kings 11 plainly says that God used the rebellion of Jeroboam to wrest the kingdom from Solomon's hands in judgment for Solomon's sins in the latter years of his reign. Solomon evidently knew nothing about God's decision. He died thinking that Rehoboam his son would rule the whole nation as he had done. However, his son proved to be too proud to listen to wise counsel and levied a severe tax on the people. The northern ten tribes revolted. That left the tribes of Benjamin and Judah—a tiny remnant of Solomon's vast empire.

In the end Solomon was not as great as his father but much greater than his son. His reign would be remembered as Israel's Golden Age—a time when the borders of the nation reached their zenith. With much pride Solomon asked in Ecclesiastes 2:12: "What more can the king's successor do than what has already been done?" But Solomon was wrong. He could not outstrip King David as a military leader or as a poet.

Perhaps the lesson here has something to do with the dangers of pride. It is no surprise that the ancient church fathers listed pride as the first of the Seven Deadly Sins. First because it destroys more people than any other sin; because it comes in unawares and does so much damage; and also because religious people are so susceptible. Pride, remember, was the sin that caused Satan to fall from heaven.

In his office, noted author Alex Haley had a painting of a turtle on top of a fence post. When people asked him why he had the painting, he replied that it reminded him of a great truth: Whenever you see a turtle on a fence post, you know he didn't get there by himself. Somebody had to put him there.

The next time you are feeling a little puffed up about all the great things you have done, and you are about to break your arm patting yourself on the back, remember the turtle on the fence post. You didn't crawl to the top by yourself. Somebody had to put you there.

Eternal Father, help me live so that those who come after me won't be ashamed to follow in my steps. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Why is it often difficult to follow a successful person?
- Whose steps are you following? And who is following you right now?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Joshua 1:1-3; Malachi 3:7; and Hebrews 11:17.

THOUGHT- "Already Been Done"

Have you ever tried to be the one who finally figures it out? Who fixes what no one else has? Who builds something that lasts?

Solomon already did. He stood atop the highest mountain of wealth, wisdom, and worldly experience—and found the view frustratingly familiar. “What can the man do who comes after the king...?” He means this: you can spend your life trying to outdo others, but you will still face the same questions, the same mortality, the same God. This isn’t a call to apathy. It’s a call to humility. You are not the first to seek meaning. You will not be the last to feel empty. But you may be the first in your generation to seek it rightly—in Christ Alone. Let this verse (Ec 2:12) redirect your ambition. Stop chasing novelty. Start pursuing eternity. What has already been done can be redeemed only when it is done in Christ and for the glory of the eternal Father.

Dear Father in Heaven, let it be so for each person who reads these words. In Jesus' Name. Amen

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

– Hebrews 13:8+

Ecclesiastes 2:13 And I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:13 Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:13 κα ε δον γ τι σιν περισσε α τ σοφ π ρ τ ν φροσ νην ζ περισσε α το φωτ ζ π ρ τ σκ τος

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:13 And I saw that wisdom excels folly, as much as light excels darkness.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:13 I realized that wisdom is preferable to folly, just as light is preferable to darkness:

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:13 And I realized that there is an advantage to wisdom over folly, like the advantage of light over darkness.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:13 Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:13 I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:13 I thought, "Wisdom is better than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:13 And I saw that there is an advantage to wisdom above folly, like the advantage of the light above the darkness.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:13 More is to be gained from wisdom than from folly, just as one gains more from light than from darkness; this, of course, I see:

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:13 Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:13 And I saw that wisdom has the advantage over folly as much as light has the advantage over darkness.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:13 But I saw that wisdom has an advantage over foolishness as light has an advantage over darkness.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:13 Then I saw that wisdom is better than foolish ways -- as the light is better than the dark.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:13 Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:13 Then I saw that wisdom excels folly As light excels darkness.

- I saw: Ec 7:11,12 9:16 Pr 4:5-7 16:16 Mal 3:18 4:1,2
- that wisdom excelleth folly: Heb. that there is an excellency in wisdom more than in folly, etc
- light: Ec 11:7 Ps 119:105,130 Pr 4:18,19 Mt 6:23 Lu 11:34,35 Eph 5:8

And I saw (perceived, discerned, understood) **that wisdom** ([chokmah](#); Lxx - [sophia](#)) **excels** ([yithron](#) - an advantage, profit; [Lxx](#) - [perisseia](#) - that which is beyond the regular or expected amount) **folly** (*sikluth* - moral and intellectual foolishness) **as light excels darkness** - After examining the emptiness of pleasure and the limitations of labor, Solomon revisits the question of wisdom's value—not dismissing it, but comparing it to folly. Solomon uses a straightforward term of comparison to emphasize what is fairly obvious, that wisdom excels folly. That is, wisdom brings clarity, direction, and safety, while folly leads to confusion, stumbling, and danger. Solomon acknowledges that wisdom is far superior to folly in terms of navigating the obstacles of life under the sun. Even if wisdom cannot solve the problem of death, it greatly improves the quality and direction of life while we live.

Bob Utley - There is value in wisdom, but it is not ultimate (cf. Eccl. 7:11,12,19; 9:18; 10:10). Human wisdom is always tenuous and partial.

Duane Garrett writes that "In context this line states that there is little chance that humans will behave with greater wisdom than their first ancestor, Adam, who came directly from the hand of God." Wisdom is like light. The wise know where they are going, even if they only know they are heading for trouble. They therefore can avoid some disasters and be prepared for others. Fools, however, are always surprised by events that befall them. (Borrow [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs page 294](#))

Christ Is Light - Ian Paisley

"Light excelleth darkness" Ecclesiastes 2:13

How delightful is light! How dismal is darkness. Darkness destroys our vision, Light increases our vision. Darkness brings incapability. Light brings enablement. Yet we can pray this night the time honoured words, "Lighten our darkness", we beseech Thee O Lord—for our God can give us, the Israel of God, light in our dwellings while the Egyptians sit in a darkness that can be felt. We need not fear then the darkness of this night or any other night for in Christ's light, even in the darkest night, we shall see light. Parting thought: "God enlargeth the day to His friends, the night to His enemies"—Thos. Adams.

ECCLESIASTES 2:13

READ: Ecclesiastes 10:1-15

IT was a clear-cut case of arson. The perpetrator had torched his own home. But he would never be brought to justice. Why? The criminal was a jackdaw, a member of the crow family. He had picked up a red-hot cigarette and dropped the "prize" into his nest.

The jackdaw's name comes from an Old English word used to ridicule foolish, thievish, and overly talkative people. The bird lives up to its reputation. On the ground, it struts about with a swagger; in flight, it has a flair for showy aerial displays. And at roosting time, the jackdaw loves being part of the noisy crowd.

Some of the most enjoyable people have a similar zest for life. Their love of a practical joke and a good laugh makes them the life of any party. But, like the jackdaw, these happy-go-lucky individuals can come up short on discernment. They can start fires of anger, resentment, and distrust in their own homes by being careless with their words, attitudes, and actions.

Although fun and games have their place, a joke is never funny when it comes at another's expense. We can learn from the freewheeling jackdaw and from the author of Ecclesiastes 2:13 to distinguish between carefree fun and careless insensitivity.—MRDII (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lord, sometimes what I consider a clever twist of phrase sounds to others like a cruel attack. Help me keep in mind not only what I want to say, but how others might interpret it. May I never value cleverness over kindness.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) AM I WISE OR AM I FOOLISH?

I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness. The wise man has eyes in his head, while the fool walks in the darkness; but I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both. Ecclesiastes 2:13-14NIV

Sergei Nikolaev, pastor of the Temple of the Gospel in St. Petersburg, Russia, knows Billy Graham well, having served as the evangelist's translator during one of Graham's missions to Moscow. Somehow the question came up: Why is Billy Graham so effective? Pastor Nikolaev said that in his opinion Billy Graham's sermons are not profound. They are usually incredibly simple, so simple that learned scholars dismiss him because he doesn't use high-sounding language or speak with theological subtlety.

What is the evangelist's secret? "It is the way he presents his message," Pastor Nikolaev answered. "When you listen to Billy Graham, he preaches it in such a way that you can only come to one conclusion: If I am a normal person, I must say yes to Jesus

Christ." Dr. Graham preaches so that the only logical, rational decision is to come to Christ. Therefore, Pastor Nikolaev said, the hearer must ask himself this question: Am I normal or am I crazy? If I am normal, I must accept Christ. So Dr. Graham is constantly bringing people to ask the question: Am I smart or am I stupid? Am I wise or am I foolish?

During one Graham crusade in St. Petersburg, a very brilliant architect, an atheist, came to hear him. Night after night he listened to the preaching of the gospel. He didn't make a decision during the crusade. As he thought about the matter later, he realized the question was not "What should I do with Jesus?" but rather "Am I smart or am I stupid?" And so while he was taking a shower one day, it all came together for him. With the water splashing in his face, he looked to heaven and said, "Jesus Christ, forgive my sins." In that moment, he was saved, and his sins were forgiven. He is now active in Pastor Nikolaev's church.

So I ask: Are you wise or are you foolish?

Remember, you can't help being a sinner. That comes by virtue of being a descendant of Adam. But God has made a way for you to pass from Adam to Christ. Your first birth put you in Adam; your second birth puts you in Christ. That's why Jesus said, "You must be born again."

Have you ever been born again? Have you ever passed from death to life? If you are in Adam, don't despair. You don't have to stay there. You can come to Christ right now. It's the smartest move you'll ever make.

Lord Jesus, I am trusting You and You alone as my only hope for eternal salvation. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Do you believe that trusting Christ is the wisest decision any person can make? Why or why not?
- Are your sins forgiven?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Proverbs 4:18-19; John 16:8; and Romans 1:21-22.

The World Wide Web

I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. —Ecclesiastes 2:13

Brewster Kahle has a vision for the Internet. He dreams of universal access to all human knowledge. As Digital Librarian and Director and co-founder of Internet Archive, Kahle believes we have only begun to tap the vast potential of the Internet to change and improve our world. "My interest," he says, "is to build the great library. . . . It is now technically possible to live up to the dream of the Library of Alexandria." He's referring to a huge vault of writings in ancient Egypt that was said to house all the world's knowledge.

But knowledge is not the same as wisdom. King Solomon was a man of vast knowledge (1 Kings 4:29-34). In his better moments, he used his God-given capacity to collect information and insight from every corner of life. In unguarded moments, however, he showed that all the knowledge in the world does not keep a person from missing the purpose of life (Eccl. 1:16-18). In spite of his knowledge, Solomon married many women, and when he was old he built altars to their gods (1 Kings 11:1-11). His foolishness eventually led to his downfall.

Wisdom is the application of knowledge. Don't get caught in a web of knowledge without true wisdom that comes from the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7; 9:10). —Mart De Haan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

True wisdom is in living
Near Jesus every day;
True wisdom is in walking
Where He shall lead the way.
—Anon.

Wisdom gives wings to knowledge

THOUGHT - When Light Breaks Through

Solomon had seen the heights of wisdom and the depths of foolishness—and though both end in death, he still writes "Wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness." Because even if the destination is the same, the journey matters. Wisdom helps you see what's ahead. Wisdom saves you from needless pain. Wisdom generally shows you what's true. On the other hand, darkness never leads you anywhere safe, but causes you to stumble, fear, and grope for meaning. Wisdom is a lamp in the darkness. Though

wisdom doesn't erase sorrow, it helps us walk through it with purpose.

Am I walking in God's light, or stumbling in self-made darkness? Do I value wisdom not just intellectually, but as a way of life?

Ultimately we should seek God's light in His Word and in Christ (Jn 8:12) to enable us to walk through the spiritual darkness of this fallen world.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path".

– Psalm 119:105

Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:14 το σοφο ο φθαλμο α το ν κεφαλ α το κα φρων ν σκ τει πορε εται κα γνων κα γε γ τι συν ντημα ν συναντ σεται το ς π σιν α το ς

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walks in darkness: and I perceived, even I, that one event shall happen to them all.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man can see where he is going, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I also realized that the same fate happens to them both.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I also knew that one fate comes to them both.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man has eyes in his head, while the fool walks in the darkness; but I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:14 For the wise can see where they are going, but fools walk in the dark." Yet I saw that the wise and the foolish share the same fate.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise! -- his eyes are in his head, and the fool in darkness is walking, and I also knew that one event happeneth with them all;

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise have their eyes open, the fool walks in the dark. No doubt! But I know, too, that one fate awaits them both.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise have eyes in their head, but fools walk in darkness. Yet I perceived that the same fate befalls all of them.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I knew that one lot befalls both of them.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:14 A wise person uses the eyes in his head, but a fool walks in the dark. But I have also come to realize that the same destiny waits for both of them.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the foolish man goes walking in the dark; but still I saw that the same event comes to them all.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness; and yet I perceived that one fate comes to all of them.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:14 The wise man's eyes are in his head, But the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived That the same event happens to them all.

- **wise:** Ec 8:1 10:2,3 Pr 14:8 17:24 1Jn 2:11
- **one:** Ec 9:1-3,11,16 Ps 19:10 49:10

DIFFERENT PATHS BOTH

SHARE THE SAME END

The wise man's eyes are in his head - TEV = "see where they are going"; NJB = "have their eyes open" Literally this reads "The wise! -- his eyes are in his head" which is a Hebrew idiom meaning the wise man is alert, prudent, and observant. Solomon is figuratively referring to the **wise man's** mental and spiritual faculties. The wise person has insight, awareness, and foresight. He sees what's ahead and lives carefully.

But (term of contrast) **the fool** ([kesil](#); Lxx - [aphron](#)) **walks in darkness** ([choshek](#) ignorance, moral blindness)- He has no light. He does not see obstacles in his path. Even wisdom under the sun provides some light to one's paths, but the fool **walks in darkness** and incurs the dangers inherent in such a journey. The fool is blind to truth, stumbles through life, and makes careless decisions. This is the picture of one led by impulse and/or ignorance, lacking spiritual or moral light.

And yet I know that one fate ([migreh](#)) **befalls them both** - What's the old saying "Death and Taxes!" Here of course by **one fate befalls both** he means death. Despite their differences in understanding and conduct, death remains the great equalizer. Solomon always seems to be cognizant of the brevity of life and the assurance of death in making his assessments of what is of value in our short sojourn on earth (cf Ec. 2:15; Ec 3:19 [twice]; Ec 9:2,3). Yes, wisdom helps us live better, but cannot change our ultimate destiny.

Duane Garrett writes that "The wise man can see death coming and contemplate it. This is better than the mindless tumble into death taken by the fool, but he can do nothing to stop it. Both the wise and the fools are equal heirs of human mortality described in Gen 3. (Borrow [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs page 294](#))

Fool ([03684](#)) **kesil** is a stupid fellow, a morally insensitive dullard, whether it be in spiritual, intellectual, or moral matters. One who despises wisdom and discipline. These are stupid people who are totally confident in own wisdom, thinking they have it all figured out without God's assistance. **Swanson** adds that **kesil** refers to (1) foolishness, stupidity, insolence, i.e., the state of being in complete lack of understanding, implying rebellion (Pr 10:1); (2) fool, insolent person, i.e., one completely lacking understanding, implying to be a rebel against standard or person (Pr 10:18).

Vine - The **kesil** is "insolent" in religion and "stupid or dull" in wise living (living out a religion he professes)....They have knowledge of God but do not properly evaluate or understand what they know...(In Proverbs the fool) rejects the claims and teachings of wisdom. However, in the Bible wisdom is the practical outworking of one's religion. Therefore, even in these contexts there is a clear connotation of insolence in religion.

KESIL IN ECCLESIASTES - Eccl. 2:14; Eccl. 2:15; Eccl. 2:16; Eccl. 4:5; Eccl. 4:13; Eccl. 5:1; Eccl. 5:3; Eccl. 5:4; Eccl. 6:8; Eccl. 7:4; Eccl. 7:5; Eccl. 7:6; Eccl. 7:9; Eccl. 9:17; Eccl. 10:2; Eccl. 10:12; Eccl. 10:15

THOUGHT - **"The Same Grave"** Solomon's honesty is raw. It shakes us out of comfort. You can live wisely, walk carefully, think deeply—and still end up in the same grave as the fool. Does that mean wisdom is pointless? Not at all. It means: wisdom is not ultimate—Christ is, for only in Him "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col 2:3+). Wisdom may help illuminate our path, but it cannot change our ultimate destination after death. Only faith in Christ gives one a sure hope, an eternal perspective and true meaning to life beyond the grave. "It is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment." – (Hebrews 9:27+) "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory (OVER DEATH) through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57+). May God's Word and Spirit enable us to supernaturally walk with spiritual eyes open, not trusting our wisdom, but trusting solely in Christ Jesus our Savior, the Giver of eternal life. Amen.

D L Moody - One event happeneth to them all.

When Severus, Emperor of Rome, found his end approaching, he cried out, "I have been everything; and everything is nothing." Then, ordering the urn to be brought to him in which his ashes were to be enclosed on his body being burned, he said, "Little urn, thou shalt contain one for whom the world was too little."

Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?" So I said to myself, "This too is vanity."

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:15 κα ε πα γ ν καρδ μου ζ συν ντημα το φρονος κα γε μο συναντ σετα μοι κα να

τ σοφισ μην γ ττε περισσ ν λ λησα ν καρδ μου δι τι φρων κ περισσε ματος λαλε τι κα γε το το μαται της

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:15 And I said in my heart, As the event of the fool is, so shall it be to me, even to me: and to what purpose have I gained wisdom? I said moreover in my heart, This is also vanity, because the fool speaks of his abundance.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:15 So I thought to myself, "The fate of the fool will happen even to me! Then what did I gain by becoming so excessively wise?" So I lamented to myself, "The benefits of wisdom are ultimately meaningless!"

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:15 So I said to myself, "What happens to the fool will also happen to me. Why then have I been overly wise?" And I said to myself that this is also futile.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this also is vanity.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then I thought in my heart, "The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?" I said in my heart, "This too is meaningless."

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:15 Both will die. So I said to myself, "Since I will end up the same as the fool, what's the value of all my wisdom? This is all so meaningless!"

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:15 and I said in my heart, 'As it happeneth with the fool, it happeneth also with me, and why am I then more wise?' And I spake in my heart, that also this is vanity:

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:15 'Since the fool's fate', I thought to myself, 'will be my fate too, what is the point of my having been wise?' I realised that this too is futile.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then I said to myself, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also; why then have I been so very wise?" And I said to myself that this also is vanity.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:15 So I said to myself, if the fool's lot is to befall me also, why then should I be wise? Where is the profit for me? And I concluded in my heart that this too is vanity.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:15 I thought to myself, "If the destiny that waits for the fool waits for me as well, then what is the advantage in being wise?" So I thought that even this is pointless.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then said I in my heart: As it comes to the foolish man, so will it come to me; so why have I been wise overmuch? Then I said in my heart: This again is to no purpose.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:15 Then I said to myself, "What befalls the fool will befall me also; why then have I been so very wise?" And I said to myself that this also is vanity.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:15 So I said in my heart, "As it happens to the fool, It also happens to me, And why was I then more wise?" Then I said in my heart, "This also is vanity."

- **Then I said to myself** Ec 1:16,18 1Ki 3:12
- **Why then!** Ec 2:1 1:2,14

SOLOMON SOBERED BY THOUGHT THOUGHT OF HIS OWN MORTALITY

Then I said to myself is literally **to my heart** = [leb](#), to his "control center" so to speak.

"As is the fate ([miqreh](#)) of the fool ([kesil](#); Lxx - [aphron](#)), it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise ([chakam](#))?" - This rhetorical question expresses his frustration and is an example of negative affirmation, expecting a negative answer: "I gained nothing!" So did wisdom give Solomon longer life or answer the question of the meaning of life? No, not really. In fact Solomon died at about age 60, ten years younger than his father David, despite the fact that Solomon's wisdom far superseded David's!

So I said to myself, "This too is vanity ([hebel](#); Lxx - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) And so he laments not that the fate of the wise man is the same as that of the fool, but that even he himself the wisest man of all would fare no better in the end than the most foolish. The value of wisdom is ultimately meaningless, not because it is inherently bad, but because it cannot save or outlast death. **Vanity ([hebel](#))** speaks of transience, futility, and lack of lasting value in worldly things.

This verse is a turning point and reveals Solomon's wrestling with mortality, and his realization that wisdom alone cannot deliver ultimate purpose or eternal life.

NET NOTE - Qoheleth's (SOLOMON'S) acquisition of tremendous wisdom (Ec 1:16; 2:9) was "excessive" because it exceeded its relative advantage over folly: it could not deliver him from the same fate as the fool. He had striven to obtain wisdom, yet it held no ultimate advantage.

Fate (04745) **miqreh** from **qarah** - to encounter, meet, befall. **Miqreh** refers to a chance event, happenstance, fortune. It is something that occurs without human planning or intervention. **Miqreh** is used with the sense of **fate** especially in Ecclesiastes where the preacher insists that the same lot (death) happens to everyone and life's efforts are all vain (Eccl 2:14-15, 3:19, 9:2-3). **Fate** refers to a predetermined state, end or outcome. Oxford English dictionary definition - the development of events outside a person's control (**ED: BUT NOT OUT OF CONTROL OF GOD WHO IS IN COMPLETE CONTROL**), regarded as predetermined by a supernatural power. **Miqreh** means "happenstance," "chance," "fate," "fortune." The preacher of Ecclesiastes insisted that the same lot, i.e., death, happens to all, and life's efforts and labor are all vain (Ecc. 2:14f; 3:19; 9:2f). The overall tie between usages of this Hebrew word is that it all describes something which did not happen by human planning.

MIQREH - 8V - accident(1), chance(1), fate(6), happened*(1). Ruth 2:3; 1 Sam. 6:9; 1 Sam. 20:26; Eccl. 2:14; Eccl. 2:15; Eccl. 3:19; Eccl. 9:2; Eccl. 9:3

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) TEMPORARY ADVANTAGES

Then I thought in my heart, "The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?" I said in my heart, "This too is meaningless." For the wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered; in days to come both will be forgotten. Like the fool, the wise man too must die! Ecclesiastes 2:15-16NIV

Some years ago an artist painted a picture showing a mountain of skulls. At first glance all the skulls seem to be the same, but when the observer looked closely he noticed some writing on each skull. One said "doctor," another "teacher," another "secretary," another "technician," another "salesman"; still others were labeled "foreman, driver, captain, lawyer, and judge. There were hundreds of skulls in the painting, each one representing a different occupation.

The artist and Solomon would agree. No matter what your position in this life may be, you will eventually die. Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief—they all die sooner or later. In one sense, this is certainly true. You will eventually die. No one escapes death forever, no matter how much one may try or how hard he exercises or how carefully he avoids catastrophe. The Grim Reaper knocks on every door sooner or later.

Yet there is another side to the truth. While death comes eventually to all men, death does not erase all the distinctions between men. From the standpoint of the Christian faith, it is at death that the real differences among people become apparent. I speak not of the artificial differences of money, power, fame, and worldly achievement. Those truly will all perish with the grave.

Years ago I received a phone call at 10:30 P.M. Someone had died. Would I please call the family? Before I could pick up the phone a second time, the mother called me. Her son had taken drugs and had died earlier that evening. As I got dressed to go to the home, I wondered what I would say. When I got there everyone was milling around in a state of confusion. At length the mother took me aside and through her tears she asked me the inevitable question, the question I had known was coming: "Why? Why did God let this happen to my son?"

As I recall, the young man had been a bouncer at a topless nightclub. At the funeral, I preached the gospel to row upon row of rough-looking people who seemed frightened to be in the same room with their dead friend. Afterwards the reception area was blue with cigarette smoke as if everyone lit up at the same time to calm their collective nerves.

But then I think of many other funerals I have done across the years. Without fail, whenever the time comes to bury a Christian, along with the sorrow comes an enormous amount of joy. There is triumph as the people of God rehearse the promise of God—of resurrection to life in heaven—even as they lay their loved ones to rest.

What happens when you die depends on what happens to you before you die. Jesus Christ makes the difference.

Lord Jesus, You showed us how to live and You showed us how to die. I want to follow in Your steps so that I'll be ready when my time comes. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- How does the Christian gospel answer the problem of death?

- Why is the life Jesus offers truly "eternal" life? Have you received the gift of eternal life through faith in Christ?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 49:10-11; 2 Timothy 1:10; and 1 John 5:12.

Ecclesiastes 2:15-26 Heaven On Earth?

Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. —Colossians 3:2

The Singapore developer of an extravagant condominium advertised its new project as, "Rediscover Heaven on Earth." I suppose it meant to convey to prospective buyers that their purchase would be so luxurious that it would be like living in heaven while here on earth.

Solomon, the writer of Ecclesiastes, was an extremely wealthy man (Eccl. 1:12). He tried to find heaven on earth and had the means to live as luxuriously as he could wish (2:1-10). Yet he wasn't satisfied. So disillusioned was he with life, he described it with just one word—"vanity" (or "meaningless"). And he repeated the word eight times in chapter two alone. As long as he looked only at life "under the sun" (2:18), he felt hollow and dissatisfied. All of his striving was ultimately futile. There would come a day when he would have to relinquish his possessions and leave them to someone else (v.18).

If you are a Christian, you can look to Christ's promise of a heavenly home He has gone to prepare (John 14:2). That's why Paul advised those who are enjoying what God has given: "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). Don't try to find heaven on earth. You won't—no matter how hard you look! (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lightly hold earth's joys so transient,
Loosely cling to things of clay,
Grasp perfections everlasting,
Where Christ dwells in heaven's day!
—Bosch

Those who have their hearts fixed on heaven will hold loosely the things of earth.

Ecclesiastes 2:16 For *there* is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die!

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:16 For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:16 τι ο κ σπιν μν μη το σοφο μετ το φρονος ε ς α να καθ τι δη α μ ραι α ρχ μεναι τ π ντα πελ σθη κα π ς ποθανε ται σοφ ς μετ το φρονος

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:16 For there is no remembrance of the wise man with the fool for ever; forasmuch as now in the coming days all things are forgotten: and how shall the wise man die with the fool?

NET Ecclesiastes 2:16 For the wise man, like the fool, will not be remembered for very long, because in the days to come, both will already have been forgotten. Alas, the wise man dies— just like the fool!

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:16 For, just like the fool, there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man, since in the days to come both will be forgotten. How is it that the wise man dies just like the fool?

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:16 For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool!

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:16 For the wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered; in days to come both will be forgotten. Like the fool, the wise man too must die!

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:16 For the wise and the foolish both die. The wise will not be remembered any longer than the fool. In the days to come, both will be forgotten.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:16 That there is no remembrance to the wise -- with the fool -- to the age, for that which is already, in the days that are coming is all forgotten, and how dieth the wise? with the fool!

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:16 For there is no lasting memory for the wise or the fool, and in the days to come both

will be forgotten; the wise, no less than the fool, must die.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:16 For there is no enduring remembrance of the wise or of fools, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How can the wise die just like fools?

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:16 Neither of the wise man nor of the fool will there be an abiding remembrance, for in days to come both will have been forgotten. How is it that the wise man dies as well as the fool!

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:16 Neither the wise person nor the fool will be remembered for long, since both will be forgotten in the days to come. Both the wise person and the fool will die.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:16 Of the wise man, as of the foolish man, there is no memory for ever, seeing that those who now are will have gone from memory in the days to come. See how death comes to the wise as to the foolish!

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:16 For of the wise man as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise man dies just like the fool!

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:16 For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, Since all that now is will be forgotten in the days to come. And how does a wise man die? As the fool!

- **there is:** Ec 1:11 Ex 1:6,8 Ps 88:12 103:16 Mal 3:16
- **how:** Ec 6:8 2Sa 3:33 Ps 49:10 Heb 9:27

FUTURE MEMORY OF WISE MEN NO BETTER THAN FOOLS

For (term of explanation - explains "vanity" of wisdom - Ec 2:15) **there is no lasting** ([olam](#) - forever; Lxx - eis [aiona](#)) **remembrance** ([zikkaron](#)) **of the wise** ([chakam](#); Lxx - [sophos](#)) **man as with the fool** ([kesil](#); Lxx - [aphron](#)), **inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die** - NET = "For the wise man, like the fool, will not be remembered for very long" Not only do the wise and foolish share the same fate (death), Solomon now goes a step further saying that not only do they both die, but they are both eventually forgotten. Forgetfulness is the common destiny of all so that even greatness fades. Both wise and foolish people are forgotten over time. Obscurity does not play favorites for both wise men and fools will fade into the abyss of obscurity! Future generations no more remember the wise man than they do the most abject fool, for in time both will be forgotten. While wisdom may improve one's life temporarily, it cannot preserve one's memory to future generations nor can it delay mortality. In short, time erases names, memories, and legacies! Solomon acknowledges that even the best of human endeavors cannot defeat the grave. To reiterate, Solomon is saying wisdom cannot preserve memory, nor prevent mortality. In the end, legacy fades, and death equalizes everyone. Without an eternal perspective, even wisdom feels futile. This prepares the heart for the later call in Ecclesiastes "Fear God and keep His commandments." (Eccl. 12:13+)

Eric Ortlund - Lives completely different in their moral character end in exactly the same way. However wise one is, one dies just like a fool. In this sense, pursuing wisdom is pursuing the wind (Ec 2:16). ([Laboring in Hopeless Hope: Encouragement for Christians from Ecclesiastes](#))

THOUGHT- The Unseen Line Beyond the Grave

Death is the great equalizer.

But Christ is the great Redeemer.

We spend much of life trying to leave a legacy—building a name, a reputation, a monument that will outlast us. But Solomon reminds us that even wisdom and greatness cannot defeat forgetfulness. Time swallows kings and fools alike. Libraries gather dust. Statues crumble. But there is the sure hope of the Gospel of grace for...

While earth forgets, God remembers.

While death erases, Christ redeems.

Jesus said, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20+) Jesus also promised to give overcomers (all believers) "a **new name** written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it." (Rev 2:17+) Again He promised "He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and **I will confess his name** before My Father, and before His angels." (Rev 3:5+) And finally again to overcomers Jesus promised "**I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God**, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name." (Rev 3:12+) And finally at the end of the Bible Jesus promises that all believers "shall see His face, and **His name shall be**

on their foreheads." (Rev 22:4+)

Dearly beloved of the Father, this is just a small preview of our eternal legacy in Christ. While we may not be remembered for long by man, we will be known eternally by God.

Ponder these questions:

- Are you living for a name on earth or a name in heaven? Or better yet are you living for His Name?
- What does it mean to be wise in the eyes of God, not just in the eyes of men?

Two Lives, Two Views

How does a wise man die? As the fool. --Ecclesiastes 2:16

Ecclesiastes 2:12-16 reminds me of the story about two brothers whose lives went in opposite directions. The younger one broke the hearts of his parents by his godless lifestyle. He became a bitter cynic and died relatively young. Few people mourned his passing.

The other brother believed on Jesus as a child, became a minister, and raised a lovely family. He had a far more satisfying life. When he died in his eighties, he was mourned by his family and friends.

But a skeptic might say, "The godly man is just as dead as his brother. So what!" That was the view Solomon expressed when he wrote, "How does a wise man die? As the fool!" (v.16).

Even though Solomon later abandoned his cynicism and saw the wisdom of living obediently for God, he didn't have the benefit of knowing about Jesus and the hope He offers. The apostle Paul, for example, while facing imminent execution, could speak of joyously anticipating the day when he would meet Jesus and receive from Him "the crown of righteousness." This reward is reserved for "all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

As Christians, we don't have to face death with the perspective of the godless. We can do so with joy! —Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

While some view death as ending all,
The Word of God does not agree--
Eternal pain awaits the fool;
Unending joy the wise will see.
--Sper

Those who are prepared to die are prepared to live

Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:17 κα μ σησα σ ν τ ν ζω ν π πονηρ ν π μ τ πο ημα τ πεποιημ νον π τ ν λιον τι τ π ντα μαται της κα προα ρεις πνε ματος

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life; because the work that was wrought under the sun was evil before me: for all is vanity and waywardness of spirit.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I loathed life because what happens on earth seems awful to me; for all the benefits of wisdom are futile— like chasing the wind.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:17 Therefore, I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me. For everything is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I came to hate life because everything done here under the sun is so troubling. Everything is meaningless-- like chasing the wind.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:17 And I have hated life, for sad to me is the work that hath been done under the sun, for the whole is vanity and vexation of spirit.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:17 Life I have come to hate, for what is done under the sun disgusts me, since all is futility and chasing after the wind.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and a chasing after wind.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:17 Therefore I loathed life, since for me the work that is done under the sun is evil; for all is vanity and a chase after wind.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I came to hate life because everything done under the sun seemed wrong to me. Everything was pointless. It was like trying to catch the wind.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I was hating life, because everything under the sun was evil to me: all is to no purpose and desire for wind.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:17 Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.

- **I hated:** Nu 11:15 1Ki 19:4 Job 3:20-22 7:15,16 14:13 Jer 20:14-18 Jon 4:3,8 Php 1:23-25
- **work:** Ec 1:14 3:16 Eze 3:14 Hab 1:3
- **because:** Ec 2:11,22 6:9 Ps 89:47

SOLOMON'S BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT IN LIFE

So (term of conclusion) **I hated** ([sane](#); Lxx - [miseo](#)) **life** - Solomon hates that which is associated with life, that is, the profitlessness and futility of human secular achievement.

ESV Study Bible - The fact that he elsewhere states that life is superior to death (9:4-5) and commends its enjoyment (e.g., 3:12-13; 9:9) indicates that this statement is not to be interpreted as a capitulation to utter despair. Rather, his use of "hate" in this instance is to be understood as the common rhetorical technique of stating a relative contrast in absolute terms (see the use of "hate" in Gen. 29:30-31; Deut. 21:15; Luke 14:26). The Preacher "hates" life in the sense that he finds it deeply disappointing in certain key respects; life has lost much of its sweetness for him. (See [ESV Study Bible - Page 395](#))

For (term of explanation - explaining why he "hated life") **the work which had been done under the sun was grievous** (frustrating, distressing, awful, troubling) **to me** - Solomon is saying that even his achievements under the sun (apart from God) were wearisome.

Because (term of explanation - explaining why work was "grievous") **everything** (wisdom, work, success) **is futility** ([hebel](#); Lxx - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) **and striving** ([reuth](#)) **after wind** - Solomon expresses the futile efforts of attempting to control or capture what cannot be seized (like the wind).

THOUGHT - Can we not all identify to some degree with Solomon? We have poured everything into our work, only to realize it did not give us true, lasting satisfaction? But this honest despair and is the doorway to true hope. God allows the collapse of earthly idols (remember first use of [hebel](#) is "idols" in Dt 32:21+) so we might find rest in Him (Mt 11:29+). The antidote to hating life is receiving new life from Christ (2Co 5:17+) and living with vertical vision, daily fixing our eyes on our Blessed Hope (Titus 2:13+).

Ecclesiastes 2:17-26 Is Work Your God?

The ability to work is a wonderful gift, but are we taking it too far? In the past, people left their jobs at the office, but now they come home to e-mail and phone messages.

Dr. Dave Arnott, associate professor of management at Dallas Baptist University, says, "I don't know whether work is taking over

family and community, or whether family and community are giving up their place to work. But I know the movement is going on. Everyone's job seems to be who they are." We tend to equate our identity with what we do for a living.

The president of the Families and Work Institute says, "How busy you are has become the red badge of courage. . . . It's become a status symbol," even though people complain about it.

Making a god out of work is not a new problem. In the first commandment, God said, "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3). That includes our jobs. Through God's gift of work, we can honor Him, care for our families, and help people in need. Work is not to be our main source of fulfillment; that must come from God Himself.

No matter what our occupation, we must keep work in perspective. God and family are more important than dedication to a job. Work is a gift, not a god. —David C. McCasland (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) I HATED LIFE

So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Ecclesiastes 2:17NIV

"Sometimes I get so lonely it's unbelievable. Life has been so good to me. I've got a great wife, good kids, money, my own health—and I'm lonely and bored. . . . I often wondered why so many rich people commit suicide. Money sure isn't a cure-all." Those were the words of O. J. Simpson in 1978.

More people than we know have said with Solomon, "I hated life." Not all of them have thought about suicide, but many have and more than we'll ever know have taken at least one step in that direction. What happens to those who commit suicide? Does God automatically send them to hell? I believe the answer is no. Romans 8:38-39 contains Paul's triumphant statement that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. He lists a succession of extreme opposites: height or depth, length or breadth, things present or things to come. He includes "neither death nor life." By life he means all the various experiences of life: No matter how difficult our circumstances, how discouraging our defeats, how frustrating our days may be, how badly others may mistreat us—nothing in this life can separate us from the love of God.

It's true. You may lose your wealth, your health, your happiness, your friends, your influence, your job, and everything you have worked for. But no one can take Jesus away from you. You are saved and saved forever. God's love is secure despite the discouragements of life.

But note that the apostle writes "neither death nor life." That can only mean one thing. Death itself cannot conquer the child of God. The grave has lost its victory; death has lost its sting. Death separates us from many things—from our loved ones, from our friends, from our conscious life on this earth, from all that we have said and done and accomplished—all of that vanishes when we die, but death cannot win the one battle that matters. It cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

But what about suicide? Surely you don't believe that suicide is stronger than God's love. A man or a woman may, in a desperate, sad moment feel so trapped, so oppressed, so discouraged, so angry, so despondent that they may take their own life. Can that act, you wonder, separate us from the love of God? No.

Do some people who commit suicide go to hell? Yes, but not because of the death they died, but because of the life they lived. Suicide doesn't send people to hell. Sin sends people to hell, especially the greatest sin, the sin of saying "No" to Jesus Christ.

The real issue of life and death is this: What have you done with Jesus Christ? The issue isn't suicide; it's Jesus Christ. What have you done with Him? That's the one decision that determines where you go when you die.

Lord, may I not count my life so important that I forget to look beyond it to eternity. Give me eyes to see what lies beyond the river. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Have you ever felt like saying, "I hate my life"? If so, what did you do about it?
- How do you handle times of discouragement in your own life?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Luke 14:26; John 10:10; and Revelation 12:11.

Ecclesiastes 2:18 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.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:18 Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:18 κα μ σησα γ σ ν π ντα μ χθον μου ν γ μοχθ π τ ν λιον τι φ ω α τ ν τ ν θρ π τ γινομ ν μετ μ

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:18 And I hated the whole of my labour which I took under the sun; because I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:18 So I loathed all the fruit of my effort, for which I worked so hard on earth, because I must leave it behind in the hands of my successor.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:18 I hated all my work that I labored at under the sun because I must leave it to the man who comes after me.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:18 I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me,

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:18 I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:18 I came to hate all my hard work here on earth, for I must leave to others everything I have earned.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:18 And I have hated all my labour that I labour at under the sun, because I leave it to a man who is after me.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:18 All I have toiled for under the sun and now bequeath to my successor I have come to hate;

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:18 I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to those who come after me

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:18 And I detested all the fruits of my labor under the sun, because I must leave them to a man who is to come after me.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:18 I came to hate everything for which I had worked so hard under the sun, because I will have to leave it to the person who replaces me.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:18 Hate had I for all my work which I had done, because the man who comes after me will have its fruits.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:18 I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me;

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:18 Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

- **I hated:** Ec 2:4-9 1:13 4:3 5:18 9:9
- **I must:** Ec 2:26 5:13,14 1Ki 11:11-13 Ps 17:14 39:6 49:10 Lu 12:20 16:27,28 Ac 20:29,30 1Co 3:10

WHEN SUCCESS BREEDS BITTERNESS AND FUTILITY

Thus I hated (despised) **all the fruit of my labor** ([amal](#) - toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) **for which I had labored under the sun** - NET - "So I loathed all the fruit of my effort." **Labor** is in effect a metonymy of cause (i.e., toil) for effect (i.e., fruit of labor).

For (term of explanation explaining why he hated the fruit of his work) **I must leave it to the man who will come after me**- Why did Solomon hate **the fruit of his labor**? Because he despaired having to **leave** it to his heir. Solomon once delighted in his

achievements—now he despises them, not for what they are, but for what they cannot do: stay with him. Because death demands we let go. Our houses, businesses, ministries—even our families—will eventually be led by someone else. Everything he built and achieved through hard labor would one day be left behind, inherited by someone else—possibly unworthy or foolish (as stated in v.19). This verse reveals a shift from pleasure-driven despair to legacy-driven disillusionment. Even when work produces visible success, its impermanence renders it bitter, especially when it must be relinquished in death. He "hated" the very fruit he once celebrated—because it would outlive him but not stay with him.

[John Stevenson](#) - Solomon realizes that, no matter what he has collected or built or accomplished, he will have to leave it all behind when he dies. You will never see a hearse with a U-Haul. But that is not the worst of it. To make matters worse, you do not really know if the person to whom you leave all of your inheritance will be deserving of that inheritance. It doesn't matter that you have acted wisely in whatever you have built and in whatever you have invested your time and effort and finances. There is no guarantee that the person to whom you leave it will act wise or whether he will squander it. Indeed, Solomon will spend 40 years in building a united kingdom of Israel and making it into the premier nation of the world of that day. It will take his son, Rehoboam, only a few months to tear apart the nation. At Solomon's death, Rehoboam will meet with the elders of Israel and he will act so badly that 10 of the tribes of Israel will secede from the union. But that is not all. A few years later Egypt will invade Rehoboam's weakened kingdom and he will attempt to bribe the Egyptians by stripping off the gold from the Temple that Solomon had built. As a result, Solomon says that he came to hate the fruit of his labor for which he had labored. There is a lesson here. It is that the fruit of your labor will not endure. The only thing that will last is the fruit of the Spirit. From where are you seeking fruit? What are you sowing? What kind of seed are you planting? If you only look at life "under the sun" then the only fruit you will enjoy will be the fruit of your own labor. Solomon has shown what will happen to such fruit. It will be passed to another and you don't even have a guarantee as to whether he will make a full use of it or merely throw it away. It is only the fruit of the Spirit that will endure.

Fruit of Your Labor	Fruit of the Spirit
Those things which you attempt to accomplish in this life.	Those things that are accomplished in you through the working of God.
Temporal	Eternal

[Bob Utley](#) - Traditional wisdom teachers put great faith in one's prosperity, not so Qoheleth. Everyone leaves everything (cf. v. 21; Ps. 39:6; 49:10).

Under the sun (תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ taḥath ha-shemesh) is a key phrase in Ecclesiastes and refers to life without reference to God and eternity, but describes purely an earthly, temporal perspective.

UNDER THE SUN - 29x/27v Eccl. 1:3; Eccl. 1:9; Eccl. 1:14; Eccl. 2:11; Eccl. 2:17; Eccl. 2:18; Eccl. 2:19; Eccl. 2:20; Eccl. 2:22; Eccl. 3:16; Eccl. 4:1; Eccl. 4:3; Eccl. 4:7; Eccl. 4:15; Eccl. 5:13; Eccl. 5:18; Eccl. 6:1; Eccl. 6:12; Eccl. 8:9; Eccl. 8:15; Eccl. 8:17; Eccl. 9:3; Eccl. 9:6; Eccl. 9:9; Eccl. 9:11; Eccl. 9:13; Eccl. 10:5

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) PASSING THE BATON

I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. Ecclesiastes 2:18-19NIV

It turns out that Solomon was quite right to worry about his successor. His son Rehoboam was so inept as a leader that he presided over the breakup of the kingdom. Perhaps Solomon saw some character defect in his son and feared the worst. In the early chapters of Proverbs he appeals over and over to "my son" to heed his words, turn from wickedness, and seek wisdom with all his heart. Check out these verses: Proverbs 1:10; 2:1; 3:1; 3:11; 4:20; 5:1; 5:20; and 6:20. These are only a few of the verses where Solomon appeals to his son's heart. From our vantage point we perhaps tend to read those verses in a generic sense—as if Solomon is writing for young people in general. But perhaps there is something deeper here—the anxious heart of a father who knows that one day he will have to hand over to his son all that he has spent a lifetime building.

I know of no way to guarantee that your children will follow in your steps. Children have minds of their own, and in the end our sons and daughters must choose for themselves whether they will serve the Lord. However, I do believe we can tip the scales in the right direction by the way we live day to day. Training up a child in the way he should go (Proverbs 22:6) certainly means living a consistent Christian life. Our kids have excellent baloney detectors and can smell a phony a mile away. On the other hand, we don't have to be perfect either. Consistency matters, time spent with our children matters, prayer matters, and faith matters.

Children make many mistakes in the course of life, but those raised in godly homes will be inclined toward righteousness. Christian

parents need to take the long view when evaluating how their children are doing. Many teenagers and young adults go through a period of questioning values and testing their limits. But the good seed planted in childhood will eventually bear fruit, though not necessarily as soon as we would like or as abundantly as we would like.

Our children belong to the Lord, not to us. This is a hard lesson to learn, and most of us have to relearn it many times. They are gifts from the Lord, entrusted to our care for a few brief years.

A few months ago I heard someone say a most reassuring thing: "God is not worried about your children." He knows them better than we do and He loves them with an everlasting love. He will not stop until His work in them is complete. Our part is to be faithful, and God will take care of the rest.

Help me to pass along my faith, O Lord, so that the things I believe in won't die with me. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- What steps have you taken to prepare for the distribution of your assets after you die? What steps do you still need to take?
- What can you do to pass along your faith to those who will come after you?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Genesis 47:29-30; 50:24-25; Joshua 24:32; and Hebrews 11:22.

Frustrated Or Content?

I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun. --Ecclesiastes 2:18

King Solomon, who had studied diligently and worked hard for worthwhile earthly goals, realized that at his death his fortune would go to people who had not worked for it and might misuse it. This caused him to become resentful because of all the "sorrowful" days and sleepless nights (2:23) he had invested. He's not alone in feeling this way.

A highly successful lawyer told me he often wonders why he works so hard. He said his sons and daughters had been misusing his money and making a mess of their lives. He knows they will probably waste everything he leaves them. Another man who had worked hard and managed his money well said sadly, "All my hard work! And my kids can hardly wait for me to die."

Solomon, however, did not remain in this dejected state. He found meaning and satisfaction through faith in God. He said that inner contentment is a gift of God to His children. This enables them to enjoy the fruit of their labor (v.24). God replaces frustration with contentment!

The more room we give to God in our lives, the more we will have "wisdom and knowledge and joy" (v.26). Paul summed it up this way: "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). —Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

O Lord, help us to be content
With all that we possess;
And may we show our gratitude
With heartfelt thankfulness.
--Sper

Contentment is the soil in which true joy thrives

Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:19 κα τ ς ο δ εν ε σοφ ς σται φρων κα ξουσι ζεται ν παντ μ χθ μου μ χθησα κα σοφισ μην π τ ν λιον κα γε το μαται της

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? and whether he will have power over all my labour in which I laboured, and wherein I grew wise under the sun? this is also vanity.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:19 Who knows if he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will be master over all the fruit of my labor for which I worked so wisely on earth! This also is futile!

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will take over all my work that I labored at skillfully under the sun. This too is futile.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:19 and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who can tell whether my successors will be wise or foolish? Yet they will control everything I have gained by my skill and hard work under the sun. How meaningless!

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knoweth whether he is wise or foolish? yet he doth rule over all my labour that I have laboured at, and that I have done wisely under the sun! this also is vanity.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:19 who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all the work into which I have put my efforts and wisdom under the sun. That is futile too.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:19 -- and who knows whether they will be wise or foolish? Yet they will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruits of my wise labor under the sun. This also is vanity.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:19 Who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? He will still have control over everything under the sun for which I worked so hard and used my wisdom. Even this is pointless.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who is to say if that man will be wise or foolish? But he will have power over all my work which I have done and in which I have been wise under the sun. This again is to no purpose.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:19 and who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:19 And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity.

- **who knows:** Ec 3:22 1Ki 12:14-20 14:25-28 2Ch 10:13-16 12:9,10
- **wise:** Ec 9:13 Lu 16:8 Jas 1:17 3:17

SOLOMON'S DESPAIR OVER UNCERTAINTY OF HEIR'S WISDOM

And who knows whether he will be a wise([chakam](#); Lxx - [sophos](#)) **man or a fool**([kesil](#); Lxx - [aphron](#))? - This is the author's major concern. So he asks a rhetorical question calling for a negative response - "No one!" Solomon admits a painful uncertainty. After all his wisdom-driven work, he cannot control whether his successor will be wise or foolish. It's a fear every builder, leader, parent, and worker faces. Will the one who inherits my labor use it wisely or squander it? As it turns out, Solomon was describing his heir, his son Rehoboam, who proved to be a fool, taking the advice of younger men and disregarding advice of older men (1Ki 12:6-11+).

Yet he will have control over (shalat - authority over) **all the fruit of my labor** ([amal](#) - toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) **for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity** ([hebel](#); Lxx - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness). The unpredictability of legacy deepens Solomon's sense of futility. It was **vanity** because he did not know whether his son would squander the family fortune. All the striving, planning, and labor cannot secure the future of what we leave behind and cannot guarantee that your legacy will be honored after you are gone..

Ecclesiastes 2:20 Therefore I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:20 καὶ π στρεψα γ το ποτ ξασθαι τ καρδ μου π παντ τ μ χθ μ χθησα π τ ν λιον

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:20 so I went about to dismiss from my heart all my labour wherein I had laboured under the sun.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:20 So I began to despair about all the fruit of my labor for which I worked so hard on earth.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:20 So I began to give myself over to despair concerning all my work that I had labored at under the sun.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:20 So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun,

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:20 So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:20 So I gave up in despair, questioning the value of all my hard work in this world.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:20 And I turned round to cause my heart to despair concerning all the labour that I laboured at under the sun.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:20 I have come to despair of all the efforts I have expended under the sun.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:20 So I turned and gave my heart up to despair concerning all the toil of my labors under the sun,

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:20 So my feelings turned to despair of all the fruits of my labor under the sun.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:20 Then I fell into despair over everything for which I had worked so hard under the sun.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:20 So my mind was turned to grief for all the trouble I had taken and all my wisdom under the sun.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:20 So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun,

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:20 Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun.

- Ge 43:14 Job 17:11-15 Ps 39:6,7 1Co 15:19 2Co 1:8-10 1Th 3:3,4

SOLOMON DESPAIRS OVER HIS LABOR

Therefore (term of conclusion) - What is Solomon concluding? Solomon understood that the future of his legacy was uncertain. In the prior verses (esp. vv. 18–19), Solomon lamented that everything he had built could be handed to someone unwise or careless and he could not guarantee the value or stewardship of what he was leaving behind.

I completely despaired (Lit = turned aside my heart to despair) **of all the fruit of my labor** ([amal](#) -toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) **for which I had labored under the sun** - He reaches a low point of despair, not because his work was unproductive, but because its ultimate fate is out of his control. The Hebrew word for “**despaired**” (יָאָשׁ – ya’ash) means to give up hope or fall into deep discouragement. This is not mild disappointment but is a soul-level collapse of confidence in the value of his earthly labor. The verb despaired is used in the Piel stem (often conveys intensified, stronger, or more deliberate action), where the preacher despairs over the futility of hard work. One works hard to accumulate wealth and then turns it over to another person who will benefit from it but who has not worked for it. This, he writes, is a frustrating dilemma.

Bob Utley on **despaired** - The VERBAL (BDB 384, KB 382, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) means "despair," "be hopeless," "desperate." Qoheleth uses strong language to describe the depth of his emotions about the utter futility of human effort!

Solomon is exposing a painful truth that if one's hope is in their accomplishments, they will be devastated when they face mortality. Without a view of eternity, even our best work feels like sand slipping through our fingers.

Solomon had it all—kingdoms, vineyards, wisdom, wealth. But here he sits, looking at the fruit of his labor with empty hands and a heavy heart. Why? Because he knows it can't follow him past the grave. The palaces will stand, but he will fall. The vineyards will bloom, but he won't taste them again. His despair is deeply human. It's the ache of a soul who built for time, but not for eternity.

Why Do I Sigh?

I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun. —Ecclesiastes 2:20

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, a 15-year-old girl yawned continually for 5 weeks in 1888. No details were given as to the reason for the girl's plight.

It made me wonder why we yawn. Why does a person suddenly stretch his mouth wide open, take a deep breath, and give forth a sigh? The answer is that shallow breathing, warm stuffy air, or nervousness can deplete the oxygen in the body. So our Creator-Designer equipped us with a deep-breath reflex that sends a rush of oxygen to the rescue. Aside from this technical explanation, a yawn or a sigh usually signals nervousness, tiredness, or boredom.

Then there's the "sigh" of the soul. Reading Ecclesiastes, we can almost hear Solomon sigh as he tried one thing after another in an effort to find meaning. Time after time his spirit reacted to various situations, only to cry, "All is vanity." Everything he touched produced emptiness (1:2; 2:11). He finally realized that nothing satisfies except to fear God and keep His commandments (12:13).

Lord, help us see that our sighs of disappointment with the pleasures and things of this life are meant to bring us to You. You alone give eternal significance to everything we pursue. —Mart De Haan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Christian, are you disappointed
With the world and all around?
Turn your eyes from earth to heaven,
Where true joys may all be found.
—Anon.

Once we've feasted on the goodness of God, nothing else will satisfy

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) GOD'S CURE FOR ANXIOUS CARE

So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless. Ecclesiastes 2:20-23NIV

The king sounds a little depressed in the above verses, doesn't he? I can't blame him for his down-to-earth honesty. Nothing numbs the heart more than realizing that your children don't appreciate what you have done for them. As Ecclesiastes makes clear, there are no guarantees in this life—except that one day we will die. Everything is up for grabs.

The foundation of gratitude is the expectation of nothing. Often we live in disappointment because we expect more than life has to offer. Many of us complain about the thorns when we ought to give thanks for the roses. If we expected less, we would be more grateful. We complain because we think we deserve more than we have. The less you expect out of life, the more you can be grateful for every blessing you receive.

In the end we all receive far more than we deserve. The Christian gospel teaches us that God gives us what we don't deserve (salvation) and withholds from us what we do deserve (punishment). Somehow we accept this truth when it comes to salvation but neatly overlook it when we evaluate our lives on a daily basis.

Some friends moved to Ireland to begin a new ministry. It hasn't been an easy transition. In a letter the wife wrote without regret of what she is missing—especially her two-year-old nephew's birthday party. Her heart longs to be with her extended family, but she has no doubts about the path she and her husband have chosen. "There is the calm assurance that this is where we're supposed to be (most days, that is)." I appreciate the parenthetical comment and the little smiley-face she drew beside it. That makes it very real.

Is it worth it? she wonders. Then she ponders what Jesus said about losing your life for His sake and gaining it in the end. Here is her conclusion: "That compels me to recognize the joy I have in living where He wants me— even on the days when I don't feel happy to be here." How wonderful that statement is. Because she is where God wants her, she can have joy even when she isn't particularly happy to be there.

If you know that God is sovereign, then you can be content—and even find joy—in the midst of circumstances that are less than ideal.

Lord, I do not pray for a lighter load but I do ask for stronger shoulders. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Are you a worrier? How would your friends answer that question?
- Stop and pray about your three greatest concerns at this moment.

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 119:165; Isaiah 26:3; and Philippians 4:4-7.

Ecclesiastes 2:21 When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge and skill, then he gives his legacy to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:21 For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:21 τι σπιν νθρωπος ο μ χθος α το ν σοφ κα ν γν σει κα ν νδρε κα νθρωπος ς ο κ μ χθησεν ν α τ δ σει α τ μερ δ α α το κα γε το το μαται της κα πονηρ α μεγ λη

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:21 For there is such a man that his labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in fortitude; yet this man shall give his portion to one who has not laboured therein. This is also vanity and great evil.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:21 For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; however, he must hand over the fruit of his labor as an inheritance to someone else who did not work for it. This also is futile, and an awful injustice!

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:21 When there is a man whose work was done with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and he must give his portion to a man who has not worked for it, this too is futile and a great wrong.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:21 because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:21 For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:21 Some people work wisely with knowledge and skill, then must leave the fruit of their efforts to someone who hasn't worked for it. This, too, is meaningless, a great tragedy.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:21 For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity, and to a man who hath not laboured therein he giveth it -- his portion! Even this is vanity and a great evil.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:21 For here is one who has laboured wisely, skilfully and successfully and must leave what is his own to someone who has not toiled for it at all. This is futile too, and grossly unjust;

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:21 because sometimes one who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by another who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:21 For here is a man who has labored with wisdom and knowledge and skill, and to another, who has not labored over it, he must leave his property. This also is vanity and a great misfortune.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:21 Here is someone who had worked hard with wisdom, knowledge, and skill. Yet, he must turn over his estate to someone else, who didn't work for it. Even this is pointless and a terrible tragedy.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:21 Because there is a man whose work has been done with wisdom, with knowledge, and with an expert hand; but one who has done nothing for it will have it for his heritage. This again is to no purpose and a great evil.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:21 because sometimes a man who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by a man who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:21 For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not labored for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.

- whose: Ec 2:17,18 9:18 2Ch 31:20,21 33:2-9 34:2 35:18 36:5-10 Jer 22:15,17
- leave: Heb. give

THE VANITY OF LEAVING A LEGACY

This verse continues Solomon's reflections on the futility of human labor when viewed "under the sun"—that is, apart from an eternal perspective.

When there is a man who has labored ([amal](#) - toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) **with wisdom** ([chokmah](#); Lxx - [sophia](#)), **knowledge and skill** - Solomon (uses the phrase "there is") introduces a hypothetical situation, describing a diligent, thoughtful worker who has invested care, intelligence, and effort into his life's work. The three virtues mentioned (wisdom, knowledge, skill) indicate both mental excellence and practical craftsmanship.

Then - Marks progression. Solomon mourns that earthly wisdom cannot protect or preserve a legacy for it may pass to someone unworthy or careless.

He gives his legacy ([cheleq](#) - portion, share; Lxx - [meris](#)) **to one who has not labored** ([amal](#) - toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) **with them**. After all that wearisome effort, the fruit of his labor is inherited by someone who did nothing to earn or contribute to it.

This too is vanity ([hebel](#); Lxx - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) **and a great evil** (**NET** - "an awful injustice!" **GWN** - "terrible tragedy") - **Vanity** emphasizes the futility of passing one's legacy on, because everything they have carefully built is now surrendered to chance. **A great evil** (ra' gādōl) expresses Solomon's deep emotional disturbance at this potential unfairness, for a lifetime of wisdom, excellence, and sacrifice can end up in the careless hands of someone who did nothing to earn it.

*There is no control of wealth
beyond the grave!*

NET NOTE on **great evil** - The noun רָעָה (ra'ah, "evil") probably means "misfortune" (HALOT 1263 s.v. 4 רָעָה) or "injustice; wrong" (HALOT 1262 s.v. 2 רָעָה.b). The phrase רָעָה רַבָּה (ra'ah rabbah) connotes "grave injustice" or "great misfortune" (e.g., Eccl 2:17; 5:12, 15; 6:1; 10:5). It is expressed well as: "This too is ... a great misfortune" (NAB, NIV, MLB) and "utterly wrong!" (NEB).

Duane Garrett - Not only the man's possessions but even the skill and intelligence by which he acquired them are nullified by death. Hence the fact that he was a great businessman means very little. (Borrow [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs page 294](#))

Ecclesiastes 2:22 For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun?

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:22 For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:22 τι τ γ νεται τ νθρ π ν παντ μ χθ α το κα ν προαιρ σει καρδ ας α το α τ ς μοχθε π τ ν λιον

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:22 For it happens to a man in all his labour, and in the purpose of his heart wherein he labours under the sun.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:22 What does a man acquire from all his labor and from the anxiety that accompanies his toil on earth?

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:22 For what does a man get with all his work and all his efforts that he labors at under the sun?

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:22 What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun?

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:22 What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun?

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:22 So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety?

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:22 For what hath been to a man by all his labour, and by the thought of his heart that he laboured at under the sun?

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:22 for what does he gain for all the toil and strain that he has undergone under the sun-

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:22 What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun?

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:22 For what profit comes to a man from all the toil and anxiety of heart with which he has labored under the sun?

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:22 What do people get from all of their hard work and struggles under the sun?

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:22 What does a man get for all his work, and for the weight of care with which he has done his work under the sun?

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:22 What has a man from all the toil and strain with which he toils beneath the sun?

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:22 For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun?

- **man:** Ec 1:3 3:9 5:10,11,17 6:7,8 8:15 Pr 16:26 1Ti 6:8
- **and of the:** Ec 4:6,8 Ps 127:2 Mt 6:11,25,34 16:26 Lu 12:22,29 Php 4:6 1Pe 5:7

Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 1:3+ What advantage does man have in all his work Which he does under the sun?

WHAT'S THE PAYDAY FOR ALL THE TOILSOME LABOR?

For what does a man get in all his labor ([amal](#) -toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) **and in his striving with which he labors under the sun** - **NET**= "What does a man acquire from all his labor and from the anxiety that accompanies his toil on earth?" **NLT** = "So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety?" What's the return on all this effort? It's not just the physical work—but the mental and emotional turmoil that comes with it. What's the gain that endures? Solomon's question implies even the most ambitious human labor and passionate striving when disconnected from eternal purpose ultimately yields nothing of lasting worth.

Solomon is concluding that, **under the sun**, apart from God, man gains no ultimate benefit from his work. It may fill time, produce wealth, or build empires—but it cannot satisfy the soul, prevent death, or secure lasting peace. This question drives us toward the ultimate answer Solomon will give in the final chapter: "Fear God and keep His commandments..." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

THOUGHT - This passage does not have to be a believer's lament. Here are two verses that change this somber perspective entirely: (1) Ephesians 2:10+ "For (see what Paul is explaining - Eph 2:8-9+) we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand so that (term of purpose) we would walk in them." This should motivate us to seek His face and ask Him to show us those divinely pre-prepared **good works** in Christ. (2) John 15:5+ "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, **he bears much fruit**, for apart from Me you can do (absolutely) nothing (that lasts past the grave)." So once God shows us the good works, we need to be diligent to abide in Christ, allowing His Spirit to supernaturally enable us to accomplish those works, bearing fruit for the glory of the Father (Mt 5:16+), works, unlike those mentioned by Solomon, which will endure forever and ever. (Jn 15:16+). Amen

A W Tozer - WHAT REALLY MATTERS? [Mornings with Tozer: Daily Devotional Readings - Page 12](#)

For what hath man of all his labour...wherein he hath laboured under the sun? Ecclesiastes 2:22

It is all but impossible these days to get people to pay any attention to things that really matter. The broad cynic in our modern civilization is likely to ask: "What really matters, after all?"

It is our personal relationship to God that really matters!

That takes priority over everything else, for no man can afford to live or die under the frowning displeasure of God. Yet, name one modern device that can save him from it. Where can a man find security? Can philosophy help him? or psychology? or science? or atoms or wonder drugs or vitamins?

Only Christ can help him, and His aid is as old as man's sin and man's need.

A few other things matter to be sure. We must trust Christ completely. We must carry our cross daily. We must love God and our fellow men. We must fulfill our commission as ambassadors of Christ among men. We must grow in grace and in the knowledge of God and come at last to our end like a ripe shock of corn at harvest time.

These are the things that really matter!

The Reason to Rest

What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? Ecclesiastes 2:22

Today's Scripture & Insight : Ecclesiastes 2:17–26

If you want to live longer, take a vacation! Forty years after a study of middle-aged, male executives who each had a risk of heart disease, researchers in Helsinki, Finland, followed up with their study participants. The scientists discovered something they hadn't been looking for in their original findings: the death rate was lower among those who had taken time off for vacations.

Work is a necessary part of life—a part God appointed to us even before our relationship with Him was fractured in Genesis 3. Solomon wrote of the seeming meaninglessness of work experienced by those not working for God's honor—recognizing its “anxious striving” and “grief and pain” (Ecclesiastes 2:22–23). Even when they're not actively working, he says their “minds do not rest” because they're thinking about what still needs to be done (v. 23).

We too might at times feel like we're “chasing after the wind” (v. 17) and grow frustrated by our inability to “finish” our work. But when we remember that God is part of our labor—our purpose—we can both work hard and take time to rest. We can trust Him to be our Provider, for He's the giver of all things. Solomon acknowledges that “without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?” (v. 25). Perhaps by reminding ourselves of that truth, we can work diligently for Him (Colossians 3:23) and also allow ourselves times of rest. By: Kirsten Holmberg (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

How can you invite God into your labors? How might you allow Him to be your satisfaction even when your work isn't “finished”?

God, You bring meaning and purpose to all my labors.

From God's Hand [Moments of Hope: Devotions for Morning and Evening](#)

What do people get from all of their hard work and struggles under the sun? Their entire life is filled with pain, and their work is unbearable. Even at night their minds don't rest. Even this is pointless. Ecclesiastes 2:22–23

Some might ask themselves, “Why did I bother?” when a frustrating outcome is the result of hours or years of hard effort. For example, when you spent hours cleaning the house for a family gathering only to find your efforts criticized or undermined by others trashing the house. Or, if you spent years chasing after a dream only to have the dream become a nightmare. This realization sadly turns to bitterness or disillusionment.

Perhaps you're feeling like that right now. The writer of Ecclesiastes isn't telling you to adopt a “why bother” attitude, even though he alludes to some activities as pointless. Worrying about matters totally outside the realm of your control or spending your whole life chasing after satisfaction outside of the will of God is like trying to sweep the sand off the beach—pointless. But just one verse later, he leads us to the right attitude: “There is nothing better for people to do than to eat, drink, and find satisfaction in their work. I saw that even this comes from the hand of God” (Ecclesiastes 2:24). Note that satisfaction comes “from the hand of God.”

You have access to a heavenly Father who craves your friendship and obedience to His ways. In return, He allows joy and peace to saturate your spirit. Turn your mind to Him as you settle into bed this evening. Allow yourself to be comforted by His Spirit. Smile. Now slide into your night of sleep.

Ecclesiastes 2:23 Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:23 τι πσαι α μ ραι α το λημ των κα θυμο περισπασμ ς α το κα γε ν νυκτ ο κοιμ ται καρδ α το κα γε το το μαται της στ ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are days of sorrows, and vexation of spirit is his; in the night also his heart rests not. This is also vanity.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all day long his work produces pain and frustration, and even at night his mind cannot relax! This also is futile!

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are filled with grief, and his occupation is sorrowful; even at night, his mind does not rest. This too is futile.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:23 All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:23 Their days of labor are filled with pain and grief; even at night their minds cannot rest. It is all meaningless.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are sorrows, and his travail sadness; even at night his heart hath not lain down; this also is vanity.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:23 since his days are full of sorrow, his work is full of stress and even at night he has no peace of mind? This is futile too.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest. This also is vanity.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:23 All his days sorrow and grief are his occupation; even at night his mind is not at rest. This also is vanity.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:23 Their entire life is filled with pain, and their work is unbearable. Even at night their minds don't rest. Even this is pointless.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:23 All his days are sorrow, and his work is full of grief. Even in the night his heart has no rest. This again is to no purpose.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are full of pain, and his work is a vexation; even in the night his mind does not rest. This also is vanity.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:23 For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.

- **all:** Ge 47:9 Job 5:7 14:1 Ps 90:7-10,15 127:2
- **his heart:** Ec 5:12 Es 6:1 Job 7:13,14 Ps 6:6,7 32:4 77:2-4 Da 6:18 Ac 14:22

SOLOMON EXPLAINS WHY LABOR IS STRIVING UNDER THE SUN

Because (Hebrew conjunction כִּי *kî*, used to introduce a term of explanation) What is Solomon explaining? In effect Solomon is answering the rhetorical question and explaining why a man's labors are striving under the sun.

All his days his task is painful (עָבַד – [makob](#) - burdensome, draining and wearisome, not merely difficult) **and grievous** (כָּבֵד – [kaas](#) - implies emotional distress or frustration that accompanies the toil, mental anguish not just physical effort); **even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity** ([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) -- Man gains nothing lasting from his labor because (1) his work is painful ("his task is painful" – עֲמָלִי, literally "his occupation is sorrowful"), (2) it causes grief, emotional or mental distress, not just physical hardship, and (3) it robs him of rest so that even at night, his thoughts are troubled and he can't "shut off" his mind.

[Bob Utley](#) on "**his task is painful and grievous**" This is the recurrent description of fallen humanity's search for happiness. It always turns to despair (cf. Eccl. 1:18; 2:23; 5:17; 11:10).

His mind does not rest is literally “his heart ([leb](#) = mind, will, and emotions) does not lie down” - Describes a person who is mentally restless, with no peace or contentment, even during sleep (BEEN THERE, DONE THAT!!!)

THOUGHT - Have you ever fallen into bed exhausted, only to stare at the ceiling as your thoughts race—budgets, deadlines, regrets, plans? Solomon gets it. Even after a lifetime of building, achieving, and succeeding, he found no rest in his work—not by day, not by night. The more he gained, the more it cost him emotionally. And in the end? It was all vanity.

This verse exposes a painful reality that work without God wears us down but never fills us up. When God is absent from our daily grind, even success becomes a burden, and rest becomes a stranger. But Jesus offers us a better way calling out “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28) In Christ, filled with (Eph 5:18+) and walking in (Gal 5:16+) HIS SPIRIT, we are not just promised rest **after** labor, but rest **within** it—peace for our minds, and purpose for our days.

Ask yourself...

- Am I working for a reward that time and stress will consume?
 - Have I invited God's Spirit into my labor, or am I shouldering it alone?
-

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - Ecclesiastes 2:23 All his days are but sorrows, and his travail is grief. (R.V.)

What a glimpse this is into a heart that has put God out! Solomon's power turned away his heart, so that he was not perfect with God, as David, his father. He drifted from God; and plunged into pleasure and laughter; into building and planting; into the pursuit of science and learning. “Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them. And, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind” (R.V.). Nothing can satisfy us but God. We were made for Him; and the heart, as Augustine says, must be for ever restless till it finds rest in Him. Thus the shell, brought home from the sea-shore and placed on the shelf, sighs each time you place it to your ear for the ocean whence it came.

We have no need to envy those who prosper in this world, but are without God, and without hope. Their days are sorrows, and their travail is grief, and at night their hearts take no rest. But if we are to avoid their inward anguish, we must avoid their fatal mistake, and learn to take God into our lives. The river of life, which is the Holy Spirit, flows at our feet; but we must stoop to take it freely.

Dr. Gordon records the story of a traveller in Barbary, who saw a beautiful clear spring of water, over which was inscribed the legend; “Drink, and be gone.” Robbers infested the region, and were constantly on the track of the traveller, ready to waylay and rob him. Therefore he must snatch the cooling draught and hasten on. Shall we refuse ourselves all pleasure in this world? Shall we write Touch not on every innocent gratification? No; but as soon as we have tasted of the pleasant draught, and lingered long enough to refresh our jaded souls, to hasten to life's serious tasks.

Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:24 ο κ σιν γαθ ν ν νθρ π φ γεται κα π εται κα δε χει τ ψυχ α το γαθ ν ν μ χθ α το κα γε το το ε δον γ τι π χερ ς το θεο σιν

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:24 A man has nothing really good to eat, and to drink, and to shew his soul as good in his trouble. This also I saw, that it is from the hand of God.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for people than to eat and drink, and to find enjoyment in their work. I also perceived that this ability to find enjoyment comes from God.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for man than to eat, drink, and enjoy his work. I have seen that even this is from God's hand,

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God,

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:24 A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God,

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:24 So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that these pleasures are from the hand of God.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing good in a man who eateth, and hath drunk, and hath shewn his soul good in his labour. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is no happiness except in eating and drinking, and in enjoying one's achievements; and I see that this too comes from God's hand;

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God;

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for man than to eat and drink and provide himself with good things by his labors. Even this, I realized, is from the hand of God.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for people to do than to eat, drink, and find satisfaction in their work. I saw that even this comes from the hand of God.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for a man than taking meat and drink, and having delight in his work. This again I saw was from the hand of God.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God;

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:24 Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.

- **nothing:** Ec 3:12,13,22 5:18 8:15 9:7-9 11:9,10 De 12:12,18 Ne 8:10 Ac 14:17 1Ti 6:17
- **that it:** Ec 3:13 5:19 6:2 Mal 2:2 Lu 12:19,20

Related Passage:

Colossians 3:23-24+ Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

THE GIFT OF JOY FROM THE HAND OF GOD

There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor ([amal](#) -toilsome, wearying work; Lxx - [mochthos](#)) is good. NET = " There is nothing better for people than to eat and drink, and to find enjoyment in their work." When we came to this passage most of us probably took a deep breath and said something like "Thank you. Finally something positive and uplifting!" Clearly Solomon makes a thematic shift in his reflections. After lamenting the futility of labor and pleasure apart from God (Eccl 2:18–23), Solomon acknowledges that simple joys of eating, drinking, and work can be good, but only when recognized as gifts from God. Solomon is not preaching hedonism, but rather contentment and gratitude. Enjoyment is no longer the goal of life for that was vanity and striving after wind, but now he offers enjoyment as a good thing when understood as the byproduct of seeing God as the Source. We are thankful that finally Solomon affirms even earthly (under the sun) things can be good when viewed with an "*over the heavens*" God-centered lens.

THOUGHT - This verse reminds me of James 1:17+ which teaches that "Every **good thing given** and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation or shifting shadow ("and He never flicker!")." This should evoke a Hallelujah chorus, an attitude of deep gratitude to our great and good God. We need to continually remind ourselves that goodness is received not achieved. What are some good and perfect gifts you have overlooked even today? How would our hearts respond if you saw everything as coming from the Father of lights? Are you (am I) chasing blessings or continually thanking the Blessor (1Th 5:18+)? May we continually fix our eyes on the Giver, not the gift. And when your eyes are fixed on the Giver, every day is filled with gifts. Just keep your eyes open.

Father of lights, open our eyes to Your goodness and grace today, so that we might see every breath, every moment, every kindness as a gift from You. Teach us to trust not in the gifts, but in the Giver Who never changes. In Christ Jesus Name. Amen.

This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God- NET = I also perceived that this ability to find enjoyment comes from God." What is **this** at the beginning of this clause? Solomon has gone from "under the sun" to "above the son." Or stated another way

Solomon has been referring to the fact that toil "under the sun" is wearisome but now from God and ultimately "in the Son" (in Christ) it is good and is given to be enjoyed.

*If there is nothing but nothing under the sun,
then our only hope must lie above the sun.*

John Stevenson - Solomon's conclusion is a gloomy one for those who would find significance for life "under the sun." His conclusion is that this is as good as it gets. He concludes that "there is nothing better" - literally, "not good for a man except to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good." Man has only limited enjoyment from the things that he does. That has been the conclusion of each of Solomon's experiences. These things do give pleasure, but only for a time. If a man who had everything there was to have in this plane of existence investigated everything that there was to investigate and still came back with emptiness, then fulfillment must lie on a different plane. If there is nothing but nothing under the sun, then our only hope must lie above the sun. Most people have their focus so riveted to the here and now that they completely ignore any other dimension. Such a path leads to emptiness and eventual frustration. Satisfaction is a gift from God. It is only when the Lord enters the picture that a man can find fulfillment in any of his labors. When you place God first in your life and serve Him with all that you do (Ec 9:10), only then do you find true and lasting satisfaction.

Daniel Hill - The EATING AND DRINKING here is daily activity. Doing the things that sustain physical life. Then he tells himself his labor is good. This is the recognition that what we do is significant so long as it is part of God's plan for us. REGARDLESS OF THE MEDIOCRITY of the tasks we do we can do them as unto the Lord (Col 3:23+)...because He has given us that task at that time.

NET NOTE on hand of God - The phrase "from the hand of God" is an anthropomorphism (depicting God, who is an invisible spirit, in the form of man with hands) or anthropopatheia (depicting God performing human-like actions). The "hand of God" is a figure often used to portray God's sovereign providence and benevolence (see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 878). The phrase "the hand of God" is often used to connote the favor or grace of God (2 Chr 30:12; Ezra 7:9; 8:18; Neh 2:8, 18; see BDB 390 s.v. יָד 1.e.2).

Related Resource:

- [The Hand of the Lord](#)

Bob Utley - It is true there is no lasting benefit (cf. Eccl. 2:11) apart from God, but Eccl. 2:24-26 finally brings "above the sun" into focus. There is more to life than birth, life, and inevitable death. There is God, judgment, and an afterlife. Things will be set straight (cf. Eccl. 1:15), but not here, not now. Unfairness, injustice, and vanity seem to reign (because of the Fall, cf. Genesis 3), but wait, God reigns! He and His (i.e., humans made in His image, cf. Gen. 1:26-27) will spend eternity together. For now, the righteous must trust in His revelation and enjoy the simple daily pleasures that this world offers (when and while one can).

The Believer's Study Bible - (Ecc 2:24-26) This is the first of six occurrences of the book's refrain (see "Book note: Theme"), which gives the reader relief from the otherwise pessimistic viewpoint from which life is being examined. God's blessing provides even the most mundane aspects of life, i.e., eating and drinking. True enjoyment of the basics of life is possible, but even these natural gifts on the simplest and lowest level are not within man's power to bestow upon himself, but must come from a higher source. Ec 2:2-3 stand solidly against an Epicurean misinterpretation of this verse, which would interpret "eat and drink" only in its most narrow sense of bodily pleasure. Rather the emphasis is this: the power of enjoyment depends upon the will of God (cf. James 1:17). The end of Ec 2:26 could be translated "This indeed is vanity ..." Among the Hebrew names for God, *elohim* is the most general one. In *Ecclesiastes* it is the only name used. *Yahweh*, the personal covenant name of God, the name associated with His redemptive purpose, is not used.

Ryrie Study Bible page 984 (borrow) - Vs. 2:24 Solomon's solution to the paradoxes of life, set forth six times (Ec 2:24-26, 3:12-13; 3:22; 5:18-19; 8:15; 9:7-9), is to enjoy to the fullest the life that God has given, recognizing it as His gift. God has not revealed the solution to all of life's inconsistencies but has given man a life to enjoy while living in obedience to Him. This is vastly different from the solution of the Epicurean sensualists, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Solomon advises that one's life must be regulated by an awareness of future divine judgment (Ec 12:14).

To emphasize Ryrie's point, note that there are 6 times in which Solomon gives the reader some relief from the otherwise pessimistic view of life. Those passages are Ec 2:24-26, 3:12-13; 3:22; 5:18-19; 8:15; 9:7-9.

Temper Longman III points out that "Ecclesiastes 2:24–26 is the first of six so-called *carpe diem* passages (the others are 3:12–14; 3:22; 5:18–20; 8:15; 9:7–10). In other words, they encourage the reader to "seize [the pleasures] of the day." They should be read with a tone of resignation. After all, the passage begins with "there is nothing better than ..." In other words, this is the best that a person can hope for in this life that will end with death....In the interest of fairness, it should be pointed out that some scholars hold a

different view on these carpe diem passages. Kaiser (1979:463–466) and Whybray (1982) both suggest that these passages really represent the Teacher's ultimate conclusion and that we should read him as more orthodox than the present commentary is suggesting. However, as one continues in the book, one observes that the Teacher himself finds no peace in eating, drinking, or work. In the present passage (2:24), he admits that even these simple pleasures are God's gift; but from his tone and what he says to follow, we are led to conclude that this is a gift that he himself did not receive. The fact that the carpe diem passage ends with another expression of the meaninglessness of life also supports the idea that his conclusion is a pessimistic one—not that one should enjoy the simple pleasures of life. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 272](#))

FINDING MEANING IN LIFE [NIV, Once-A-Day: Worship and Praise Devotional: 365 Days to ...](#)

A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? ECCLESIASTES 2:24 – 25

Perhaps no one in history has illustrated this longing for meaning in life more than Solomon. The second son of David and Bathsheba, the boy grew up to become Israel's third king. Blessed with unearthly wisdom (see 1 Kings 4:29 – 34), Solomon enjoyed a reign of remarkable prosperity and unprecedented peace. He oversaw the building of Jerusalem's greatest and most glorious temple. He dabbled in engineering and botany, and became famous worldwide. But over time, proving that even wise people can do stupid things, he accumulated a household of 700 wives and 300 mistresses — many of them foreigners and worshipers of other gods.

Not surprisingly, Solomon's heart for the one true God cooled. His restlessness multiplied. Eventually he found himself in the ultimate mid-life crisis — a time of frantic searching, boredom and despair.

His diary from this period, the ancient book of Ecclesiastes, reads like the bitter ramblings of a depressed old skeptic. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless" (Ecclesiastes 1:2). Yet at the end of this book, after experimenting with every pleasure and pursuit this world has to offer, he concluded, "Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

What was Solomon's great discovery? That a life divorced from God is no life at all. That meaning and joy in life can only be found by relating rightly to the source of life. To fear God is to worship him. To worship him is to make him the top priority in your thoughts and actions.

PRAYER

Lord, my life has meaning because ...

ECCLESIASTES 2:24 The 19th-century British author Charles Kingsley wrote, "Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day which must be done whether you like it or not."

Consider what these three people gave to the world by working with diligence: Noah Webster labored 36 years and crossed the ocean twice to produce his dictionary. John Milton rose at 4 o'clock every morning to compose and rewrite his poetry. Edward Gibbon spent 26 years writing his famous history, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

What we do may seem insignificant by comparison. But if we work "heartily, as to the Lord" (Col. 3:23), He will use our labors to provide for our needs and the needs of others. Any kind of wholesome work can be a blessing. —H. G. B. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

To LEAVE LASTING FOOTPRINTS ON THE SANDS OF TIME, WEAR WORK SHOES.

Bob Utley -There is an interesting list concerning Qoheleth's understanding of God's actions in this fallen, temporal world (i.e., NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 553):

1. creator, Eccl. 11:5; 12:1,7 (like Psalms)
2. judge, Eccl. 3:17,18; 11:9
3. benefactor, Eccl. 2:24-26; 3:13; 5:18-20
4. one to be feared, Eccl. 3:14; 5:1-7; 7:18 (like Proverbs)
5. one to be obeyed, Eccl. 5:4; 7:26; 8:2; 13:13-14 (like Proverbs)
6. one causality in the universe, Eccl. 3:11; 5:18-6:2; 7:13-14 (like Psalms)
7. unknowable, Eccl. 3:11; 8:16-9:1 (like Job)
8. fair, Eccl. 8:12,13

The simple pleasures of life are gifts from God (cf. Eccl. 3:13; 5:19; 9:7; Prov. 13:22; Job 27:16-17). See note at Eccl. 2:1. This is one of just a few great truths in this book!

1. enjoy the simple pleasures of daily life (Eccl. 2:1,24; 3:12,13,22; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7-9)
 1. food (fellowship)
 2. drink (although this can refer to revelry [cf. Exod. 32:6; 1 Sam. 30:16; 1 Kgs. 1:25] in this context it refers to daily family and social life)
 3. sense of self-worth from life's work
 4. rejoicing in life (Eccl. 9:8)
 5. marriage and family (Eccl. 9:9)

Norman Geisler - ECCLESIASTES 2:24—Is Solomon commending hedonism here? - [When Critics Ask](#)

PROBLEM: Solomon concluded, “There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor.” But this is hedonism, which is condemned elsewhere in the Bible (Luke 12:19–20; 1 Cor. 10:7).

SOLUTION: Solomon is not recommending pleasure-seeking hedonism apart from God. There is a big difference between the hedonist’s “Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die” and Solomon’s exhortation to enjoy life because it comes “from the hand of God” (Ecc. 2:24). The kind of pleasures Solomon commended is that “which God gives him under the sun” (Ecc. 8:15), and that “is the gift of God” (Ecc. 3:13).

God is not a cosmic killjoy or a heavenly scrooge. He “gives us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17) and at His “right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps. 16:11). However, Solomon warns, “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment” (Ecc. 11:9). God wants us to enjoy this life, but to live it in the light of the next one.

Thankful for Monday

A person can do nothing better than to . . . find satisfaction in their own toil. Ecclesiastes 2:24

Today's Scripture & Insight : Ecclesiastes 2:17–25

I used to dread Mondays. Sometimes, when I got off the train to head to a previous job, I'd sit at the station for a while, trying to delay reaching the building, if only for a few minutes. My heart would beat fast as I worried over meeting the deadlines and managing the moods of a temperamental boss.

For some of us, it can be especially difficult to start another dreary workweek. We may be feeling overwhelmed or underappreciated in our job. King Solomon described the toil of work when he wrote: “What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? All their days their work is grief and pain” (Ecclesiastes 2:22–23).

While the wise king didn't give us a cure-all for making work less stressful or more rewarding, he did offer us a change in perspective. No matter how difficult our work is, he encourages us to “find satisfaction” in it with God's help (v. 24). Perhaps it will come as the Holy Spirit enables us to display Christlike character. Or as we hear from someone who's been blessed through our service. Or as we remember the wisdom God provided to deal with a difficult situation. Though our work may be difficult, our faithful God is there with us. His presence and power can light up even gloomy days. With His help, we can be thankful for Monday. By: Poh Fang Chia (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

What gives you the Monday blues? How will you lean on God's help to find satisfaction in your work today?

Faithful God, help me to see the good You're enabling me to accomplish through my work today!

For further study, read [How Can I Find Satisfaction in My Work?](#)

Walter Kaiser - 2:24–26 Eat, Drink and Be Merry? - [Hard Sayings in the Bible](#)

All too often the writer of Ecclesiastes has been blamed for all too much. For example, with regard to the text before us, it is not uncommon to hear charges of Epicureanism, the philosophy that advises us to eat, drink and be merry for we only go around once and then we die!

But this charge is false on several counts. For one thing, the text has not been translated correctly. For another, it misses the point

that death is not the natural sequel to eating and drinking. Instead, the text insists that even such mundane experiences as eating and drinking are gifts from the hand of a gracious God.

But let us begin with the translation issue. Literally rendered, the text here affirms, "There is not a good [inherent?] in a person that he [or she] should be able to eat, drink or get satisfaction from his [or her] work. Even this, I realized, was from the hand [or 'the power'] of God." This translation avoids the phrase "there is nothing better." Even though such a comparative form does exist in a somewhat similar formula in Ecclesiastes 3:12 and 8:15, it does not appear in this context.

Scholars uniformly assume that the word for better has dropped out of this context, but there is no evidence to back up that assumption. Furthermore, the writer is not saying at this point that no other options exist for the race other than to try calmly to enjoy the present. This indeed would be a hedonistic and materialistic philosophy of life that would effectively cut God off from any kind of consideration.

The Preacher's point is not one of despair—"There's nothing left for us to do than the basically physical acts of feeding one's face and trying to get as many kicks out of life as we can." Rather, his point is that whatever good or value is to be found, its worth cannot be determined merely by being part of the human race.

We mortals must realize that if we are to achieve satisfaction and pleasure from anything in life, even things as base and mundane as eating and drinking, we must realize that it all comes from the hand of God. The source of pleasure, joy and goodness does not reside in the human person, as humanism or idealism would want us to believe.

Ecclesiastes 2:25 is more adamant on this point. Who will be able to find any enjoyment unless they first find the living God who is the only true source of all joy, satisfaction and pleasure? The text assures us that "without him" such satisfaction is a lost search.

The ground for the distribution of this joy is carefully set forth in Ecclesiastes 2:26: it is a matter of pleasing God first. The opposite of pleasing God is "one who continues to live in sin." This same contrast between pleasing God and being a sinner is found in Ecclesiastes 7:26 and 8:12–13. Another way to define the one continually choosing sin is "one who does not fear God."

Such a call to please God as a basis for realizing joy, pleasure and satisfaction is not, as some claim, too cheery a note for such a pessimistic book. The truth of the matter is that all too many have missed the positive note that is deeply rooted in the repeated refrains in Ecclesiastes.

God will grant three gifts to those who please him: wisdom, knowledge and joy. But to the sinner who persists in trying to remake God's world, there is also an outcome: "a chasing after the wind." This reference to the chasing of wind is to the frustrating activity in which the sinner works night and day to heap things up only to find in the end that he must, and as a matter of fact does, turn them over to the one who pleases God.

If only the sinner would come to know God and please him, then he too would receive the ability to find joy in all of life just as the one who fears God has found it.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) LEARNING TO ENJOY LIFE

A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and **find** satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or **find** enjoyment? Ecclesiastes 2:24-25NIV

Twice in verses 24-25 Solomon speaks of "finding" satisfaction and "finding" enjoyment. He then informs us that while we are called to search, we will never find what we are looking for unless God gives it to us. This calls to mind the staccato commands of the apostle Paul: "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NASB). Someone has called these three commands "**the standing orders of the gospel.**" They are "standing orders" because they always apply to every Christian in every situation.

This is a great challenge, isn't it? After all, we would have no problem if the text said: "Rejoice sometimes"; "Pray occasionally"; and "Give thanks when you feel like it."

That's the way most of us live—on the "sometimes, occasionally, when you feel like it" plane of life. How do we rise to the higher level of "always," "without ceasing," and "everything"? Surely it relates to how we view the goodness of God.

I know one family living in a very difficult and sometimes dangerous area of the world. Yet the parents believe this is where God wants them to be. After recounting many of the setbacks and heartaches that are routine to missionary work, they included this telling paragraph. As much as anything else, it explains how a person can rise to the level of giving thanks in every situation:

Believers in our country frequently have a "Thanksgiving" offering, or even a special service. These offerings are usually given by

grateful members of the congregation—even after a tragic event. Yes, in ALL things we are to give God our thanksgiving and gratitude. It is in-teresting that one of the standard greeting lines here is: Q: "How is the work?" A: "We thank God."

I do not mean to suggest that this is easy, only that it is absolutely necessary. As hard as it may be to rejoice always, what is your alternative? To give in to despair and anger? If you refuse to give thanks in every situation, you are virtually saying that you know better than God how to run the universe. By giving thanks when we don't feel like it, we are proclaiming that God's wisdom is greater than ours. That simple act of giving thanks in the midst of sorrow and heartache is a testimony worth more than 10,000 words spoken when things are going well.

Perhaps we should end this section with a prayer by George Herbert:

Gracious God, You have given so much to me. Give me one thing more—a grateful heart. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- How much joy does God give you?
- Have you ever thanked God for the prayers He didn't answer? Take a moment and ask God for the gift of a grateful heart.

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Nehemiah 12:31-42; Psalm 103; and Revelation 4:9-11.

56,000 Hours

Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor.
— Ecclesiastes 2:24

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 2:17-26

By age 50, a person who has worked full-time since college will have put in about 56,000 hours of work. Whether you're teaching school, working as a nurse, running a press, or whatever else you do, that's a lot of time.

Keep that in mind and look at what Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 2:17. "I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity."

Think of 56,000 hours of worthless activity. That's 28 years of a career spent "grasping for the wind."

But wait. There's more. Keep reading in chapter 2. Hope shines through the otherwise dull efforts of the workplace—there can be satisfaction in work. Joy comes when work is done to please God (Eccl. 2:24-26; Col. 3:23-25). So all of our work, when done as a service to our Lord, has significance.

An airline employee who was struggling through a long delay in a flight's departure kept her composure as the passengers grew angrier. When someone asked her name so he could write a letter of commendation, she replied, "Oh, I don't work for this airline. I work for Jesus Christ."

Imagine the value of 56,000 hours of work done with that attitude! There's nothing better! By: Dave Branon (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

O what can I give to the Master,
The One who from sin set me free?
I'll give Him a lifetime of service
To thank Him for dying for me.
—K. De Haan

Daily work takes on eternal value when it is done for God.

The Futility of Wealth and Pleasure 2:1-11 - [Don Robinson](#) Solomon's conclusion of his initial reasoning: Enjoy and be content with the providence of God. 2:24-26

1. Recognize that life is a gift from God...so enjoy it.
2. There is no enjoyment in life without God.
3. God gives the righteous wisdom, knowledge, and joy.
4. For the unrighteous to seek after these things apart from God is another example of vanity.

Warren Wiersbe - EAT, DRINK, AND BE THANKFUL [Pause for Power: A 365-Day Journey through the Scriptures - Page 356](#)

Solomon is not advocating "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die!" That is the philosophy of fatalism, not faith. Rather, he is saying, "Thank God for what you do have, and enjoy it to the glory of God." Paul gave his approval to this attitude when he exhorted us to trust in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment (1 Tim. 6:17).

Solomon made it clear that not only were the blessings from God, but even the enjoyment of the blessings was God's gift to us (Ecc. 2:24). He considered it evil if a person had all the blessings of life from God but could not enjoy them (Ec 6:1-5). It is easy to see why the Jewish people read Ecclesiastes at the Feast of Tabernacles, for Tabernacles is their great time of thanksgiving and rejoicing for God's abundant provision of their needs. The farmer who prayed at the table, "Thanks for food and for good digestion" knew what Solomon was writing about.

The important thing is that we seek to please the Lord (2:26) and trust Him to meet every need. God wants to give us wisdom, knowledge, and joy; these three gifts enable us to appreciate God's blessings and take pleasure in them. It is not enough to possess things; we must also possess the kind of character that enables us to use things wisely and enjoy them properly.

Applying God's Truth:

1. What are your Top Ten blessings from God?
2. For each of the things you've listed, are you experiencing the degree of enjoyment that you feel you should? If not, how can you enjoy them even more?
3. How can you develop the kind of character that enables you to use things wisely and enjoy them properly?

Ecclesiastes 2:25 For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:25 For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I?

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:25 τί τς φγεται κα τς φεσεται πρεξ ατο

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:25 For who shall eat, or who shall drink, without him?

NET Ecclesiastes 2:25 For no one can eat and drink or experience joy apart from him.

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:25 because who can eat and who can enjoy life apart from Him?

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:25 for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:25 for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:25 For who can eat or enjoy anything apart from him?

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:25 For who eateth and who hasteth out more than I?

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:25 for who would get anything to eat or drink, unless all this came from him?

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:25 for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:25 For who can eat or drink apart from him?

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:25 Who can eat or enjoy themselves without God?

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:25 Who may take food or have pleasure without him?

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:25 for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:25 For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I?

- **who can:** Ec 2:1-12 1Ki 4:21-24

**THE GIVER OF
TRUE JOY**

For (כִּי – *kî*) - Term of explanation introduces a reason or explains what precedes it. He has just described the hand of God and here explains why Solomon concludes that enjoyment in life is from the hand of God. Because no one can truly enjoy even basic things like eating or pleasure without God granting it.

Mark it down -

There is no true enjoyment without God!

Who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him (apart from God - the Source)? This is a rhetorical question, and the implied answer is no one, for without Him all is vanity and striving after wind. True enjoyment of life is impossible without God. Solomon is explaining that even the most basic pleasures like eating, enjoying work, finding satisfaction are impossible apart from God. You might possess things, but not the ability to enjoy them without Him, and most often they end up possessing you! Apart from God, the human experience loses its sweetness. With God, even ordinary experiences become extraordinary gifts. God is not just the giver of things, but the giver of the ability to enjoy them.

*Life's deepest enjoyments are not earned by effort
but granted by grace.*

Solomon had unmatched wealth, wisdom, and pleasure (Eccl 2:4–10), but he came to realize that having everything means nothing if God does not give the heart to enjoy it. Without God, you can eat but not taste, labor but not rest, own but not enjoy. Solomon underscores a key biblical truth that enjoyment is not automatic but is God-given (cf fruit of Spirit Gal 5:22+). God not only provides blessings, but also the capacity to rejoice in them. Apart from God, even life's simplest pleasures become meaningless. With God, even the simplest things like food, rest, and labor become deeply fulfilling.

Blessed Routine

Without [God], who can eat or find enjoyment? Ecclesiastes 2:25

Today's Scripture & Insight : Ecclesiastes 2:17–26

Watching the morning crowd pour onto the train, I felt the Monday blues kick in. From the sleepy, grumpy faces of those in the jam-packed cabin, I could tell no one looked forward to going to work. Frowns broke out as some jostled for space and more tried to squeeze in. Here we go again, another mundane day at the office.

Then, it struck me that just a year before, the trains would have been empty because COVID-19 lockdowns had thrown our daily routines into disarray. We couldn't even go out for a meal, and some actually missed going to the office. But now we were almost back to normal, and many were going back to work—as usual. "Routine," I realized, was good news, and "boring" was a blessing!

King Solomon came to a similar conclusion after reflecting on the seeming pointlessness of daily toil (Ecclesiastes 2:17–23). At times, it appeared endless, "meaningless," and unrewarding (v. 21). But then he realized that simply being able to eat, drink, and work each day was a blessing from God (v. 24).

When we're deprived of routine, we can see that these simple actions are a luxury. Let's thank God that we can eat and drink and find satisfaction in all our toil, for this is His gift (3:13). By: Leslie Koh (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

What simple blessings can you thank God for today? What can you do for someone who's in need or is unable to enjoy life's simple routines?

Dear God, thank You for my "usual" routines, no matter how boring they may seem at times. Help me to be grateful for Your every blessing in life.

THOUGHT - "The Missing Piece of Joy"

It's not money, success, vacations, or health that makes life truly good. It's the invisible, irreplaceable presence of God. We can sit at the finest table, surrounded by abundance, and feel emptier than a desert if God is absent. We can work long hours, buy beautiful things, and still sense that something essential is missing. Because joy isn't in what you hold—it's in who holds you.

Jesus said: "I am the bread of life; the one who comes to Me will not be hungry, and the one who believes in Me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35)

Solomon's words are a whisper to our restless hearts -- Return to the Giver. See the feast not as the prize but as the reminder of the Provider.

Only from His hand does true satisfaction flow.

*Joy in life is not self-generated
but is grace-given.*

Do Whatever

For without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? Ecclesiastes 2:25

Today's Scripture & Insight : Ecclesiastes 2:17–25

In a recent film, a self-proclaimed “genius” rants to the camera about the world’s “horror, corruption, ignorance, and poverty,” declaring life to be godless and absurd. While such thinking isn’t unusual in many modern film scripts, what’s interesting is where it leads. In the end, the lead character turns to the audience and implores us to do whatever it takes to find a little happiness. For him, this includes leaving traditional morality behind.

But will “do whatever” work? Facing his own despair at life’s horrors, the Old Testament writer of Ecclesiastes gave it a try long ago, searching for happiness through pleasure (Ecclesiastes 2:1, 10), grand work projects (vv. 4–6), riches (vv. 7–9), and philosophical inquiry (vv. 12–16). And his assessment? “All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind” (v. 17). None of these things is immune to death, disaster, or injustice (5:13–17).

Only one thing brings the writer of Ecclesiastes back from despair. Despite life’s trials, we can find fulfillment when God is part of our living and working: “for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?” (2:25). Life will at times feel meaningless, but “remember your Creator” (12:1). Don’t exhaust yourself trying to figure life out, but “fear God and keep his commandments” (v. 13).

Without God as our center, life’s pleasures and sorrows lead only to disillusionment. By: Sheridan Voysey (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

How much do you seek happiness through things that won’t last? Since the writer of Ecclesiastes didn’t know the hope of resurrection, how would you consider his search in light of Romans 8:11, 18–25?

God, today I place You anew at the center of my living, working, joys, and disappointments, for without You nothing will satisfy or make sense.

Charles Swindoll - GENUINE ENJOYMENT [Wisdom for the Way: 365 Days of Wise Words for Busy People ...](#)

For who can eat or enjoy anything apart from him? Ecc 2:25

When I was growing up, my family lived next door to a family that had many of the world’s goods we didn’t have, but they didn’t have the joys Christ can bring—which we had in abundance. I remember one Christmas when we were singing together as a family.

Suddenly, my mom said, “We’re making so much noise; we better close the windows or we’ll disturb all the neighbors.” So we closed the windows.

Within minutes our phone rang. It was a girl who lived next door. She asked, “Why’d you close the windows?”

“Well, we didn’t want to disturb you,” was my mom’s answer. The girl blurted out, “Disturb us? That’s the most laughter we’ve heard the entire Christmas season! . . . That’s beautiful music!”

If you really want to have fun—I mean the kind of fun that is really enjoyment (without a hangover)—then you need . . . a relationship with the living God. -- Living on the Ragged Edge

One Less Thing

Who can eat and who can enjoy life apart from Him? (Eccl. 2:25)

[Journey Day by Day: Living Life Well - Page 218](#) - I hesitated before sending the e-mail to my writers’ group. How could I tell them I needed to take a break? They would be so disappointed. I’d been leading the group for years and considered each member my friend. But my husband had injured his back and would eventually need surgery. He clearly needed me home more.

Long before that, however, I’d sensed God telling me that something needed to go. I was involved in choir and worship team at church, attended a home Bible study and the ladies’ study group, in addition to being a mom and working as a freelance writer and

editor. “You’re doing too much,” several friends had pointed out.

Norm’s health issues doubled as a last straw and a convenient excuse to slow down. I quickly sent the e-mail before I could change my mind. As it turned out, many in the group welcomed the break. I wasn’t the only one who needed one less thing on her weekly calendar.

How do you know when you’ve crossed the line from an active lifestyle to an overcommitted one? Does it take one “last straw” event or request? A crisis? An out-of-the-blue season of unexplainable dissatisfaction when activities suddenly feel like chores, when what used to be fun is just one more thing to rush to? Admit it: sometimes it’s freeing to be forced to cut back.

Interestingly, one of the wisest, most successful men in history, King Solomon, became disillusioned with his work. One day all of it felt like “a pursuit of the wind” (Eccl. 2:26). What drove him to that point? As we read on, it’s clear he eventually saw work as a gift from God to be enjoyed. How can we get back to that point? Perhaps only when we are willing to stop juggling more than we can handle.

Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God’s sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

KJV Ecclesiastes 2:26 For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

BGT Ecclesiastes 2:26 π τ νθρ π τ γαθ πρ προσ που α το δωκεν σοφ αν κα γν σιν κα ε φροσ νην κα τ μαρτ νοντι δωκεν περισπασμ ν το προσθε ναι κα το συναγαγε ν το δο ναι τ γαθ πρ προσ που το θεο τι κα γε το το μαται της κα προα ρεις πνε ματος

LXE Ecclesiastes 2:26 For God has given to the man who is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but he has given to the sinner trouble, to add and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God; for this is also vanity and waywardness of spirit.

NET Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to the one who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner, he gives the task of amassing wealth— only to give it to the one who pleases God. This task of the wicked is futile— like chasing the wind!

CSB Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to the man who is pleasing in His sight, He gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner He gives the task of gathering and accumulating in order to give to the one who is pleasing in God’s sight. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

ESV Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

NIV Ecclesiastes 2:26 To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

NLT Ecclesiastes 2:26 God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him. But if a sinner becomes wealthy, God takes the wealth away and gives it to those who please him. This, too, is meaningless-- like chasing the wind.

YLT Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to a man who is good before Him, He hath given wisdom, and knowledge, and joy; and to a sinner He hath given travail, to gather and to heap up, to give to the good before God. Even this is vanity and vexation of spirit.

NJB Ecclesiastes 2:26 Wisdom, knowledge and joy, God gives to those who please him, but on the sinner he lays the task of gathering and storing up for someone else who is pleasing to him. This too is futility and chasing after the wind.

NRS Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to the one who pleases him God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of gathering and heaping, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a chasing after wind.

NAB Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to whatever man he sees fit he gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering possessions to be given to whatever man God sees fit. This also is vanity and a chase after wind.

GWN Ecclesiastes 2:26 God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to anyone who pleases him. But to the person who continues to sin, he gives the job of gathering and collecting wealth. The sinner must turn his wealth over to the person who pleases God. Even this is pointless. It's like trying to catch the wind.

BBE Ecclesiastes 2:26 To the man with whom he is pleased, God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of getting goods together and storing up wealth, to give to him in whom God has pleasure. This again is to no purpose and desire for wind.

RSV Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to the man who pleases him God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of gathering and heaping, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 2:26 For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

- **in his sight:** Heb. before him, Ge 7:1 Lu 1:6
- **wisdom:** 2Ch 31:20,21 Pr 3:13-18 Isa 3:10,11 Joh 16:24 Ro 14:17,18 1Co 1:30,31 Ga 5:22,23 Col 1:9-12 3:16,17 Jas 3:17
- **to the sinner:** Job 27:16,17 Pr 13:22 28:8

THE TRANSFER OF TREASURE

For (כִּי – *ki*) is a term of explanation, which introduces an explanation for the statement that precedes it, in this context explaining the basis of true enjoyment. The previous verses say that joy in labor, food, and life come from God. Now in this verse, Solomon explains that this is so because God selectively gives joy, wisdom, and knowledge to those who please Him.

*“Better is little with the fear of the Lord
than great treasure and turmoil with it.”*

– Proverbs 15:16

To a person who is good in His sight (lit before His face) **He has given wisdom** ([chokmah](#); Lxx - [sophia](#) - ability to live skillfully) **and knowledge** (spiritual and practical insight) **and joy** (ability to enjoy life as a gift from God) - **A person who is good** is not explained by Solomon, but suggests that this is a person who knows God and has a personal relationship with Him through belief in Christ (e.g. Abel - Ge 4:4, Heb 11:4).

*The righteous receive joy,
while the sinner gathers wealth he may never enjoy.*

While to the sinner ([chata](#) - one who misses the mark of Your will) **He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight.** The **sinner** is a person who chooses to live their life apart from God, replacing God with the vain idols of possessions, accomplishment, money, etc. And what is the reward to the sinner? God gives him the exhausting task of accumulating wealth, only to have it transferred to the godly. This reality upends worldly expectations. The "sinner" may seem successful, but his labor is ultimately fruitless. Imagine two people: One toils without God and builds a fortune but never enjoys it. Another walks with God, receives less, but enjoys it fully because joy is a gift, not a possession.

The task of gathering and collecting - depicts activity that is laborious and repetitive, reflecting a cycle of toil without eternal reward and parallels the theme of “chasing the wind”

*True enjoyment in life is not earned by effort,
but granted by grace.*

This too is vanity ([hebel](#); Lxx - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) **and striving after wind** - To what does "this" refer? In the immediate context it refers to the sinner.

Michael Eaton nicely sums this section up - The Preacher has held before his readers two ways of life: the vicious circle of a

pointless world, temporary pleasures, fruitless work, futile wisdom, inevitable death, versus an enjoyable life taken daily from the hand of God, in the 'assurance of faith' that he deals appropriately with righteous and unrighteous. (Borrow [Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries – Ecclesiastes page 76](#))

G Campbell Morgan - This also is vanity and a striving after wind.Ec 2.26.

These words occur at the close of a section of the debate, and are a refrain already oft repeated. In the first movement, after stating in general terms his conclusion, the Debater elaborated his statement by describing vividly his consciousness of the grind of the material universe (Ec1.4-11). Then he began to mass his evidence in support of his contention that all is vanity. He first gave his own experience in personal life. He tried knowledge, giving himself up to a study of "all that is done under heaven." The result was that he "perceived that this also was a striving after wind" (Ec 1.12-18). He gave himself up to pleasure, to mirth, and found "this also was vanity" (Ec 2.1-3). He devoted himself to the amassing of wealth, and this with conspicuous success, only to look on everything and to discover that "all was vanity and a striving after wind" (Ec 2.4-11). He then contemplated life in the light of these disappointments, and came to the material conclusion that "there is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink"; and yet he was forced to admit that "This also is vanity, and a striving after wind." This is indeed graphic literature. It shows us a man, richly endowed in himself, living in the midst of marvelous things, of knowledge, of mirth, of wealth, of life; giving himself to these things with all the powers of his being—and yet finding nothing in them. He is starved, homeless, despairing. There is a side to life which he is not counting on, or considering. It is the side which is spiritual, the completion of the sphere over the sun, above the material. Forgetting that, everything is vanity. This is as modern as the ennui of every human soul which seeks knowledge, mirth, wealth, life—and forgets God.

Martin Luther - CONTENTMENT COMES FROM GOD

To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God.Ecclesiastes 2:26

Whenever someone is able to feel content with what they have, it's a gift from God. God gives those who please him contentment without having to strive for it. God sees only two kinds of people:those who are faithful and those who are sinners. Besides the gifts he gives to all people, God gives wisdom and discretion to the faithful. On top of that, he adds joy. The faithful are content with what they have and are not tormented by the same kind of thoughts and desires sinners have. They go about their business with joy and peace.

On the other hand, sinners are always troubled. They are preoccupied with gathering and storing up wealth, but they're never satisfied. Even if they've been given wisdom and skill, so many difficulties are mixed in with these gifts that they feel more like punishment. Sinners don't enjoy their work, whether it's farming or building—even though others enjoy doing these things and find happiness in them. What sinners produce cannot be used in the right way by anyone except those who have God's approval. So whatever sinners accumulate belongs to those who have God's approval. The faithful know how to use God's gifts with joy and thanksgiving, even when they have very little.

But sinners don't even use what they have, in spite of all the trouble they go through to accumulate their possessions. In the end, faithful people truly own the whole world because they enjoy it with happiness and contentment. Even when they possess a lot, sinners have nothing. That's how pointless their lives are.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) ARE YOU ON GOD'S SIDE?

To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Ecclesiastes 2:26NIV

Verse 26 reminds us that there is a moral government in the universe. God honors those who honor Him (1 Samuel 2:30), and He judges those who sin against Him. The casual reader may skip right over the particular judgment Solomon has in mind. He suggests that the wicked store up wealth to give it to the righteous. This is a startling thought. It implies a number of interesting ideas, including the idea that sinners are just as much under God's ultimate control as the righteous. When we

sing "He's got the whole world in His hands," we don't usually think about sinners being in His hands, but they are.

Beyond that, we may also say that God orders events so that the righteous will often profit from the work of sinners. Proverbs 13:22 states the same truth in a different context: "A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous." And Proverbs 28:8 offers a similar statement: "He who increases his wealth by exorbitant interest

amasses it for another, who will be kind to the poor." Matthew Henry suggests that God "tantalizes" sinners by giving them wealth only to take it away later and give it to the righteous. God does it by an "overruling providence" so that the ungodly are compelled to yield their riches to the children of God. He offers as an example how the Canaanites kept the good land until God gave it to the children of Israel. We might also think of Mordecai receiving the king's signet ring after the death of Haman (Esther 8:2). Mordecai ends up receiving the estate of wicked Haman, who plotted against the Lord's people.

Several questions might be asked at this point, chief among them being, Why doesn't this happen all the time? The basic answer is we do not know; but I confess that I find much comfort in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.: "The arm of the universe is long but it bends toward justice."

We will never understand the inequities of life when we take a short-term view. Bad things do happen to good people and bad people sometimes get away with murder. One man gets cancer and dies at forty-two; another lives for ninety-five years—but the first man was godly and the second was not. How can this be? The person of faith must assume that there are other factors that go beyond what we can see.

However, if we take the long-term view our vision becomes much clearer. There truly is a moral order to the universe. God does honor those who honor Him. He judges sinners and rewards the righteous. The reward often comes in this life, but if not God has an eternity to set right what has gone wrong. In the end no one will ever regret serving the Lord.

Lord, I do not ask that You be on my side, only that I be on Yours. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- What three adjectives would you use to describe the life that pleases God?
- Do you believe it pays to serve God? Name some ways God rewards His children in this life.

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read 2 Chronicles 30:20-21; Hosea 14:9; and Romans 2:6-11.