

The Pleasures of Life Tested

Chapter 2 of Ecclesiastes

We'll take the most from living, have pleasure while we can (2-3-4)
Sha-la-la-la-la-la, live for today
Sha-la-la-la-la-la, live for today
And don't worry 'bout tomorrow, hey, hey, hey
Sha-la-la-la-la-la, live for today
Live for today

By "Let's Live for Today" by The Grass Roots

Although these lyrics are from an "oldies" tune, they accurately express ideas that are still very popular—live for today, pursue pleasure, don't worry about the future.

How does this view compare with biblical truth? It opposes it.

What do we call a lifestyle committed to the pursuit of pleasure? *Hedonism*

Why is pleasure and self-satisfaction so important to post-modern people?

If one does not have a theocentric point of view, the most important thing in life is pleasing yourself. Since most people are not theocentric in their thinking, hedonism becomes their philosophy of life.

After setting forth the truth that a life without God is truly meaningless and empty, Solomon goes on to discuss how he tested that hypothesis.

MATERIALISM AND PLEASURE **Read Ecclesiastes 2:2-10.**

List the things that Solomon tried.

- *Mirth/laughter (comedy, amusement, entertainment)*
- *Wine*
- *Wisdom*
- *Folly*
- *Great works—houses, gardens, orchards, pools, trees*
- *Servants*
- *Cattle*
- *Possessions/material wealth/silver and gold, treasures*
- *Music*
- *Anything he desired*

Read 1 Kings 4:20. *(The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy.)*

Sounds like quite a party was going on during Solomon's reign.

How is Solomon's experience typical of people today?

They are looking for pleasure, fun, excitement, enjoyment. Many people think that material goods will satisfy them. Also, they try many different things to give them pleasure. Material goods and pleasure are high on the list of priorities for most people. Saying: "He who dies with the most toys wins."

- Did any of the things Solomon tried bring him true satisfaction? *No*
- What was his conclusion about all the things he had accumulated (vs. 11)? *All was vanity--empty and meaningless.*
- What does this suggest about materialism and hedonism? *They bring no lasting joy and satisfaction. This is a very important lesson to learn. Sometimes we long to be rich and live in luxury, but those things in themselves are worthless and empty.*

Name several things that promise pleasure but lead to enslavement.

Alcohol, drugs, illegitimate sex, gambling.

What does the Bible say about materialism?

Proverbs 23:4 Labour not to be rich. Being rich should not be a goal.

- *Proverbs 28:22 He that [hurries] to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him. Lust for money leads to poverty.*
- *Luke 12:15 And [Jesus] said unto them, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Life is more than material possessions.*
- *1 Timothy 6:8-10 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that [desire to] be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all [kinds of] evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Be content with the basics. Don't love money.*

What principles ought to govern our attitude toward material goods? 1. All good things come from God; 2. We are stewards, not owners; 3. We should use our resources to benefit others; 4. It's wrong to love money and to hoard material wealth.

WISDOM AND FOLLY

Trace Solomon's train of thought regarding wisdom and folly (vss. 12-16).

He started out stating that "wisdom excelleth folly." .13

But he found that the same thing happens to both the wise man and the fool— "one event happeneth to them all." .14

He concluded, "this also is vanity" because no one remembers the wise man, and both the wise man and the fool die. .15-16

Is his conclusion valid? *From a human perspective it is.*

Can you think of any examples in which it doesn't seem to make sense to be a wise person?
When the wicked prosper and the godly/wise don't. See Psalm 73:2-3, 16-20.

Verse 17 says that Solomon hated his life. Why? (.18-23)

He had to leave the fruits of his labors to someone else, who may be wise or may be a fool. A man labors and loses sleep over his efforts for no purpose.

How does Solomon conclude this chapter? (.24-26)

Man should enjoy himself in his labor, because it is a gift from God. West. Confession—the ultimate goal in life is to honor God and enjoy Him forever. You might call this Christian hedonism—enjoying life before God. C.f. 1 Tim 6:17.

God is the source of wisdom, knowledge and joy. God gives meaning to labor.

Excellent Tutoring from Ecclesiastes Two:

1. Material wealth does not bring lasting joy, peace, or satisfaction. Don't base your happiness on the accumulation of goods.
2. Even wisdom not dedicated to the glory of God results in dissatisfaction and despair.
3. One should enjoy his life. God gives the believer plenty of reasons to enjoy himself. Life should be filled with joy and thanksgiving.
4. All things come from God, including labor, wisdom, knowledge and joy.
5. God is the One who gives any meaning and purpose to life.

Conclusion: Solomon had great wealth, and he used it to entertain himself and please his every whim. But he found that neither wealth nor fun was rewarding or satisfying. He concludes this section by stating that one must trust in God for true satisfaction.

For Further Discussion:

1. **Is it wrong for a person to have great wealth? Should a rich person give away most of his money?**

There is nothing wrong with being rich, as long as one does not love and/or serve his money/possessions. God often uses rich people to do great things in His service. Wealth doesn't bring joy; God does. Wealth or lack thereof does not say anything about one's relationship with God. How one uses his wealth does. However, Jesus did say that it was difficult for a rich person to get saved. Riches often prevent people from seeing their need of salvation.

2. **How can you prevent yourself from becoming materialistic?**

1. *Make giving a habit—become generous*
2. *Don't value things*
3. *Don't make being rich an objective/goal in your life*
4. *Find satisfaction in other places—God and family.*

3. **What evidence is there that suggests that people are materialistic and hedonistic?**

1. *The popularity and success of the entertainment industry (TV, amusement parks, theaters, video games—so many things that amuse or entertain)*
2. *The desire for people to own status symbols (Rolex, BMW, Tiffany, Designer names)*
3. *Lack of satisfaction—everything must be bigger and better*
4. *The increasing popularity of gambling and other get-rich-quick schemes.*