

PLEASURE UNDER THE SUN

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

What does he want to know?

^{2:1} I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity. ² I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"

What did his quest look like?

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.

⁴ I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself.

⁵ I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. ⁶ I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

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. 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. ⁹ So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. ^{10a} And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure,...



What did he discover?

^{10b} ...for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. 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.

All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied. (6:7)

So, what's his best advice?

Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. (5:18-19)

Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite. (6:9)

What pleasure did he miss?

I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. (Habakkuk 3:18)

⁸ I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure... ¹¹ You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:8-9, 11)

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. (Jesus, in John 15:11)

How do we come to enjoy this soul-satisfying pleasure?

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. (Paul, in Philippians 3:8a)

Pleasure Under the Sun

May 2, 2021



Open: What's something you enjoyed doing this past week?

Read: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

Discuss:

1. In this man's quest to find satisfaction through pleasure, what different forms of pleasure does he try? In verses 1 and 11 the Preacher says the pleasure he experienced was all "vanity." What do you think he mean by this?
2. How many times can you count the Preacher referring to himself? How does he describe the focus of his experiment in verse 10? Why is pleasure so often about self-indulgence?
3. Why do humans so often look for our satisfaction through earthly pleasure? Where do you have a tendency to look for satisfaction through earthly pleasure? What benefits does that pleasure generally provide? What are the limits of that pleasure's ability to satisfy you?
4. Many of the activities described in this passage can easily end up in sin. How should knowing this shape our pursuit of pleasure as followers of Jesus? How should we know when we have taken a potentially good thing too far?
5. In verses 3 and 9, the Preacher references maintaining his wisdom throughout his quest. What do you think he means to communicate by drawing our attention to this fact? In verses 7 and 9 the Preacher notes his superiority to all others. How is this relevant to his point?
6. **Read Psalm 16:8-9, 11.** How is finding our pleasure in God a more satisfying alternative to finding pleasure in things "under the sun"? What advice would you give about finding pleasure in God? How should we go about enjoying pleasure in the good things of this world in a way that honors God without allowing those pleasures to replace our joy in God?
7. **Read John 15:11.** How would you explain Jesus' teaching about joy in this verse? What are the implications for our lives? How will that shape your life this week?

Pray: Ask God to help us enjoy the blessings He has brought into our lives without using them as a replacement for God. Pray we would help others see just how satisfying Jesus can be.

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

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

Psalms 16:8-9,11

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John 15:11

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