

got wisdom? Lesson 10

Read Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

Solomon has been writing, in the last few sections, about the inability of material things, in themselves, to bring satisfaction in life. He ended the previous section by telling us that it is God who enables us to enjoy our lot in life. And when God enables us to do so, then we can live a happy, fulfilled life.

British essayist and poet Joseph Addison wrote, "The grand essentials to happiness in this life are something to do, someone to love, and something to hope for."

It's a basic principle that nobody can truly enjoy the gifts or provision of God apart from Him as the one who gives the gifts. Therefore, to enjoy the gifts without the Giver is idolatry. (Vs 1-2) When our focus is solely on the gifts and goods of God, we could imagine that He has less interest in making sure that they provide us the pleasure and satisfaction He himself is offering.

Solomon's assertion is that, just as God has the capacity to give us all we desire, He also has the capacity to ensure that we don't have the health life and strength to enjoy them. Though it may be "an evil affliction" This is not an intentional punishment by God, but His allowing our "life without Him" to catch up to us (Rom 6:23) .

(Vs 3-6) Solomon gives us a hypothetical, that may be difficult to embrace, yet it alludes to the idea that it would be better to have never experienced life at all than to have lived without divine fulfillment. This exaggerated reference to a stillborn child is grim, but he asserts that it's non-life is equivalent to life without God.

This, we could add to Solomon's list of things that are not "new under the sun" Numerous people from scripture have felt this way, wanting to die or wishing they had never been born. Even the "greats" of the faith like Moses (Num. 11:15), Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), Job (3:21; 7:15), Jonah (4:3).

There is more to life than the mere physical dimension and its pursuits and pleasures. This is why It is useless for us to search within ourselves or around us for the cure to all our miseries. Jesus, long ago said, "Man does not live on bread alone" (Mt 4:4). Not bread (the physical) but God's Word (the spiritual) keeps us alive (Jn 10: 10; Col 1:17).

The ability to enjoy life comes from within as a matter of character and not circumstances. This contentment is internal and can be eternal (Phil 4:11). The Greek word *autarkes*, translated "content," carries the idea of "self-contained, adequate, needing nothing from the outside." Paul asserts that, in Christ, we can carry within all the resources needed for facing life courageously and triumphing over difficulties (Phil. 4:13).

Concluding his argument with a forceful, but reiterated point, Solomon asks the rhetorical question: "Do not all go to the same place?" (vs. 6). As we have seen, Solomon throughout this book argues from a worldly point of view, as he seeks to find fulfillment and meaning in life, that eventually, all discussions concerning meaning and fulfillment in life must consider the afterlife.

(Vs 7-9) The Preacher's dissatisfaction returns again, and the trouble now is that we always have an appetite for more, and because we live to satisfy that appetite it only makes us crave more (Prov 16:25-27; Mt 6:19-21). If people have trouble enjoying life, if satisfaction is not guaranteed, no matter how long we live, then maybe we could avoid disappointment by wanting less out of life.

This is not the lowering of our expectations, but the ability to manage our desires so they don't become the driving force of our life, and we end up missing out on relationship with God (Mt 6:33; Lk 15:11-32). He suggests that it better to appreciate what we have in front of us than to be consumed by a roving appetite.

Usually, we think we can find satisfaction in everything that life has to offer; food and drink, art and beauty, family and friends. Yet, as one author says, "desire is a tramp". It's never content to stay at home, it always wants to go out wandering. This is the wanderlust of the soul, our desires are always traveling, but never arriving.

(Vs 10-12)

Solomon, seemingly reaches his wits end, knowing that his search for wisdom and fulfillment weren't going to get him out of his struggle with things "under the sun". Knowing that sometimes this is just the way life is and that it just doesn't pay to argue with God or to fight God, we have to accept it and let God have His way.

Because his writing of Ecclesiastes is the record of his own investigation into the meaning of life, He's not condemning honest inquiry. He's rather saying, "There are some questions about life that nobody can answer". However, our ignorance must not be used as an excuse for skepticism or unbelief. Instead, our ignorance should encourage us to have faith in God. We don't live on explanations; we live on promises.

One of the basic problems we face is that life sometimes confronts us with too many mysteries we can't fathom and too many puzzles we can't solve. For life to be truly satisfying, it has to make sense. When it doesn't make sense, we get frustrated. If we can't see a purpose in life, especially when we go through deep suffering, we tend to question God and even wonder if life is worthwhile.

The truth is that only God can fully satisfy, through his word, through his worship, and through the help that comes from the Holy Spirit when we turn to him in prayer. This is important to remember whenever we feel unhappy about anything in life. We need to ask ourselves what we truly need and remind ourselves what God wants to give us.

So, before we buy something or eat something or chase something, it is better for us to talk things over with our Father, praying, "Lord, you know how empty I feel right now. Help me not to run away from my problems but to turn them over to you. Teach me that you are enough for me. And by your grace, give me the peace and the joy that you have for me in Jesus."

What is Solomon saying to us? Enjoyment without God is merely entertainment, and it doesn't satisfy. But enjoyment with God is enrichment and it brings true joy and satisfaction. "Enjoy the blessings of God now and thank Him for all of them." Don't plan to live – start living now. Be satisfied with what He gives you and use it all for His glory.

The Take Home:

- 1. What is your "guilty pleasure" or your "vain pursuit" that you can begin to work on replacing with more time and attention to the pursuit of God.**
- 2. If you have them, how do you plan to get those "trampish" desires under control so that you are not wasting your time and energy on things that will not fulfill?**

