

Ecclesiastes– Tried It All

Ecclesiastes 1:12 – 2:26

“We pursue being a disciple making family: surrendered to Jesus, transformed by the gospel, and saturated in His word.”

Solomon shares the way he has searched for satisfaction through many different avenues. It isn't until the very end of this passage does he comment about the real hope and the real meaning of life that comes from fearing God and first finding enjoyment in Him. This text, even though it is based in his knowledge, is still a very secular approach to finding satisfaction and happiness. It is so easy to read this and agree with him that nothing in this life has the ability to satisfy or bring ultimate happiness. However, this struggle might be our greatest dilemma. For some reason, though we can see this truth in Scripture and also in the lives of others, we all struggle to practically live this out in our own lives. We tend to functionally see ourselves as the exception.

1. St. Augustine wrote in his *Confessions*, “*You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.*” He was saying that the human heart is characterized by an ongoing dissatisfaction within our soul, which only God can fill. Be honest, looking at Solomon's resume of happiness searches which one do you most relate to? Which one are you most tempted to pursue? Why? How have you been let down by your pursuit? Share an example.
2. Beginning with the fall of man and living in a sin marred world we tend to all see ourselves as the exception. This is pretty straightforward and easy to understand and easy to see the value of first fearing God. However, for some reason we don't always believe it applies to us. Slowly and over time we tend to begin to pursue things before the Lord. So, we enter into an ungodly relationship; we become workaholics; we seek material possessions; we go from one form of entertainment to another; we idolize our accomplishments, our kids, and their accomplishments. We tend to “justify” our pursuits in search for satisfaction. How have you experienced this in your own life? How do we as believers tend to justify? How do we overcome this tendency?
3. Solomon points out in 2:21 that despair came over him, “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.” We spend a lot of our time working, “toiling,” regardless of what we do or where we work. Solomon said even in the night his heart does not rest. He points out that we work, we think about work, and at times even stay awake because of work. Put your work in perspective. All we do has meaning if done for the glory of God. Sometimes we ask our work to do more than what it was intended to do. How has work let you down? How has it been used wrongfully to bring you identity, value, or satisfaction? How does the

fact that one day someone else will take your place and your remembrance will fade impact your work today?

4. Solomon closes out by giving hope that the only real fulfillment and satisfaction comes from God. God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy. How can you encourage one another to live in light of this? How can you encourage one another and help hold one another accountable to seek first the kingdom of God and be satisfied in Him?