

Ecclesiastes 2

In chapter one Solomon was on the search for meaning. What he found out was the reality of contentment and fulfillment “under the sun” as he put it, living on this earth and in the time we have been allotted by God, there is nothing to be found that will do the trick. It's an endless chase and will cost you time, energy and most likely everything else if we try to understand this life apart from the wisdom and satisfaction that is found in God. Solomon called this task of searching “burdensome”.. and it sure can seem that way sometimes, not because God has hidden Himself and made things hard but rather because we make it that way. Pride, selfishness, distrust, misplaced faith on and on we could go but all those things combine to cloud our vision as we try to find or at times, make up our own answers to things that only God knows.

It doesn't take long to figure out that all this searching can be completed in the person of Jesus. Realizing that our search can't be focused on a full understanding or finding the answers to questions we were never designed to ask but simply trusting Jesus and resting in the finality of Christ and His love for us... ***Matt 11:29-30 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.***

As wise as Solomon was he just couldn't stop searching for what he thought he needed. Chapter two is the next path he chose when he realized that wisdom is found in trust in God, not understanding all things but living in faith, trust, hope, etc.. all the stability we will ever need is those things only God can give, that's real wisdom .

In Chapter 2 Solomon bypasses that logic and looks elsewhere. Spoiler alert.. Just like chapter one it doesn't end well. ***1 I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure"; but surely, this also was vanity. Just as a reminder..***

Solomon summed up his second life experiment with the same word that appears all over the 12 chapters of Ecclesiastes..Vanity..the Hebrew word “hebel.” The word is nearly impossible to nail down in its essential meaning. Different Bible scholars translate the word in a variety of ways from meaningless to vanity, to emptiness.

Other times in scripture this same word refers to a vapor, something that is wispy, fleeting, elusive, and quickly gone. Doesn't matter which translation you choose, they all carry the same similar definition.. Anything we wish to substitute in our lives besides God is vanity, worthless and temporary. As he looks back on his life. Solomon uses arguably the most truthful description of the end game to any of us who may have thoughts about a life lived outside of God's design.

He was convinced there was more to life than what he saw before him and he set out to find contentment and fulfillment and whatever he could find along the way. He had the time and the money and so there was really nothing holding him back and as we read he didn't just dip a toe in the water.. he plunged in with all he had..

*2 I said of laughter — "Madness!"; and of mirth, "What does it accomplish?"
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.*

4 I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. 5 I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. 6 I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. 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. 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.

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

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.

How many times in our lives have we thought about this kind of life? What if we could live exactly the way we wanted, go where we wanted, do what we wanted and if we wanted it, we got it. It seems like a life that would be exciting and full of reward. To have the guts it would take to live that way is a pretty impressive thing. Just spending money, untold amounts of money, no restrictions what so ever, that has to be the way to go. I did some research... Lets say you had the means.. not just rich but Solomon rich.. basically unlimited funds. If you had Solomon's money.. lets just say a billion dollar and you were my age.. 25 good years left.. don't really want to leave any behind, just spend it all. you would have to spend 40 million dollars each and every year. That would mean spending over 3 million dollars each month. Breaking it down even farther, it means you would have to spend over \$100,000 every day for the next 25 years in order to spend one billion dollars. In other words.. it almost cant be done unless you're an idiot..

That's the life Solomon is describing for us here in chapter 2. Properties, vineyards, countless herds, an enormous staff to keep everything moving.. He was hosting parties, throwing concerts for himself and no doubt his 700 wives and 300 girlfriends got in on the gifts....(how much do you think they cost him?)

Look there at vs 10.. *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.* This guy had it all.. literally.. had it all..

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. After all that.. the wisdom he had came back around to him and he realized it was empty, just chasing the wind. All that effort and look.. no profit, no gains, once again, nothing can satisfy us.. "under the sun".. the world and all it has to offer is just a waste of time..

We tend to think that we would be immune to this sort of thing. If I won the lottery most likely I would build only what I needed and spend but only on widows and orphans and really just bless others.. ya know.. buy the world a Coke..its a great concept but I'm guessing we would fail almost immediately..Its just our nature to lose focus

The opposite side of this equation i'snt a safe road either. Lets face it, most of us will never have to face the moral dilemma of this kind of fortune or fame. That's OK, it still doesn't make us immune from letting our eyes look to the wrong things. There can be a stockpiling of sorts of spiritual things as well. Great Experiences that require no money and yet they were amazing. We can fall into a trap of **“i don't have to worry about spending too much, my energies are spent doing what God has called me to do”**.. sounds great and it might be true but we still need to be careful..distractions come in every size and shape...

In Luke's Gospel we see how easy it can be to drift off track.. **Luke 10:1-5** *10 After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. 2 Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. 3 Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. 4 Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road.*

So the 70 are sent out.. Note.. by Jesus Himself..ya think that would inspire ya a little bit..He sent them but with a slight catch.. no cash, no provisions just go and preach the Gospel.. Go to the houses, go to the churches, preach repentance, preach Christ and boldly teach them the name of Jesus. They did just that just as the Lord sent them, they, no doubt had some amazing things happen to them on this trip and they returned to Jesus excited and ready to bless the Lord with their report.. **Luke 10:17** *17 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."*

Isn't that the way we would do it? (we still retell all the stories that happen to us on the mission field, its why we went).That seems like a win but the Lord was quick to re-center the group.. **Luke 10:18-2** *And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."*

There is a warning there for us not to get caught up in the successes the Lord brings into our lives. Don't get all twisted over the times that God uses you to bless another. He gave you the authority to do those things, what did you think was gonna happen? In a very short time these 70 began to show the signs of victory check boxes in their lives. Things are happening, lives are changing and even demons are subject.

Keeping in our **context today they are simply amassing a form of spiritual wealth..listen, don't do it.. keep the focus in our lives where it needs to be, not success or events but that Jesus came to save..period.. Paul.. the great Apostle, was one who could have easily built a storehouse of accomplishments and yet you see him over and over again returning to that center circle of Jesus..nothing else.**

1 Tim 1:12-16 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, 13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

Solomon learned his lesson, recorded for us with the hope that we do not have to go through this same mindset. Of course we are talking about the money and the stuff that got Solomon in trouble but we have to understand that even though our financial picture and our social status is completely different, our minds and heart, sinful and imperfect, are the same. The common ground we share with all men great and small, rich and poor, the tie that binds us all is a need for wisdom, Godly wisdom, Jesus at the wheel and in control.

Rom 3:23 For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Col 3:11 there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. One more just in case you haven't got it yet.. *PS 64:9-10 All men shall fear, And shall declare the work of God;*

For they shall wisely consider His doing. 10 The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and trust in Him. And all the upright in heart shall glory.

Why is it so important that we understand this commonality? *Eccl 2:12-17 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. 13 Then I saw that wisdom excels folly As light excels darkness. 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.*

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." 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!

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.

Vs 15 hits us right in the face.. Its the feel good moment of our time together today..rich, poor, famous or almost unnoticed. You can build an empire or just sit around and wait but it doesn't matter.. **We are all going to die.**

I remember idolizing baseball and football players as a kid.. Those goals seemed so reachable. I had plenty of years to practice and a with just a few breaks here and there I could reach that goal of professional athlete. Flash forward.. I see these children who play baseball for a living and I'm struggling each morning to put on my shirt..what happened..

52..Not sure where I am on the scale of life but I'm certain I am way closer to death than birth. The wisdom to know how this all ends for everyone of us is a key foundational point for us to learn.

James 4:13-16 "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." That type of Godly wisdom leads us to an urgent decision...

Deut 29:10-13 "All of you stand today before the Lord your God: your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, 11 your little ones and your wives — also the stranger who is in your camp, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water — 12 that you may enter into covenant with the Lord your God, and into His oath, which the Lord your God makes with you today, 13 that He may establish you today as a people for Himself, and that He may be God to you, Did you catch it?...**2 Cor 6:2** Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

This vanity that Solomon writes about, the fleeting moments and the vapor of our lives is the reality to all of us will face, its not to terrify us or scare us, its simply to enlighten us to the real reason and substance for our lives....eternity with each other and the God who loves us more than we could ever know. Hopefully today we can see that as we continue we find that Solomon did not..**Eccl 2:18-26** 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. 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. Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun. 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. 22 For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun? 23 For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.

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. 25 For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I? 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.

Most definitely at this point in his life, Solomon would be the life of any party.. he knows its all going to end, someone else will take his place and may or may not continue in all he had gained and it threw him into a tail spin..**20** Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun.

He really had lost sight of God's purpose for his life...so much so that the love of God, love that was and is for each one of us, that perfect love was almost out of his view...Sinners and save alike were to expect nothing in this life but emptiness and vanity..

Ecclesiastes follows that "learn from my mistake" style of teaching. We all could use direction and help but in this case Solomon chooses to instruct us by showing us the futility of a too much thought.

The picture Solomon chooses to paint for us recalls the life of a person (himself) who has decided to do things from their own understanding and try to figure out of the equation of this life we all have been called into. He didn't find satisfaction in anything he put his hand to and life became a daunting and at times even depressing existence.

If we understand what Solomon is saying we can clearly see a life without God is not a life that anyone would want to live. Near the end of Paul's life he was squaring things up with the churches that would continue on with the Gospel of Christ that he loved so much. Paul understood that his life was used up and that it was next gen that would have to carry it forward. He makes sure we find a much clearer path than Solomon.. *Col 2:6-10 6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.*

8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

It's very simple, beware of too much thought into this temporary life, (things do not make sense) the promises of the world (which cannot fulfill) and understand that all we need, repeat that.. all we need is found in the person of Jesus Christ. It's amazing to think what Solomon went through to get to this point but you can read ahead if ya like.. he finally did come to that conclusion but there were some dark days in his life to say the least. It's best to stay in the wisdom of God and not let any of our mind grab a foothold.. ***Phil 3:12-15 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.***

15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you