

WEEK 2 - Ecclesiastes 2

1 I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. 2 I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? 3 I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. 4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: 5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: 6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: 7 I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: 8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. 9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. 10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. 11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun. 12 And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done. 13 Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. 14 The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all. 15 Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to

me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. 16 For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool. 17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. 18 Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. 19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity. 20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. 21 For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil. 22 For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? 23 For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity. 24 There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. 25 For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I? 26 For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Theme: The emptiness of pleasure, projects, and personal achievement - and the joy that only God can give.

Main Point 1 - The Pursuit of Pleasure Cannot Satisfy

Theme: Pleasure promises joy but delivers only momentary escape.

- Pleasure is “meaningless” without God — Solomon tested laughter, wine, and entertainment (2:1–2).

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? (Luke 12:19–20 KJV)

- Pleasure distracts but cannot heal the soul - It offers escape but not transformation.

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (John 4:13–14 KJV)

- Pleasure cannot fill spiritual hunger - The heart always wants “more.”

6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. (Matthew 5:6 KJV)

- Pleasure becomes empty and exhausting without God - It becomes addictive and hollow.

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (Ephesians 4:19 KJV)

- God gives joy, not mere pleasure - Joy lasts longer than any earthly thrill.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. (John 15:11 KJV)

Main Point 2 - Work and Accomplishment Cannot Create Meaning

Theme: *Achievement is good, but it cannot carry the weight of identity.*

- Solomon built great projects yet felt empty - Houses, vineyards, gardens (2:4–6).

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, (Philippians 3:7–8 KJV)

- Work becomes meaningless when it becomes identity - Work is good, but not ultimate.

23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. (Colossians 3:23–24 KJV)

- Human achievements fade over time - They break down or are forgotten.

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

(1 Corinthians 3:12–13 KJV)

- We cannot control who inherits our work - Others may misuse or waste it (2:18–19).

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:16–21 KJV)

- God values faithfulness more than productivity - He cares about the heart.

21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

(Matthew 25:21 KJV)

Main Point 3 — Wisdom Is Better Than Folly, but Still Limited

Theme: *Wisdom helps us live well, but it cannot remove life's frustrations.*

- Wisdom gives light; folly leads to darkness - Wisdom is valuable (2:13).

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. (James 3:17 KJV)

- Even the wise face death and disappointment - Wisdom cannot prevent mortality (2:14–16).

27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: (Hebrews 9:27 KJV)

- Wisdom cannot guarantee success - Life remains unpredictable.

13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. (James 4:13–15 KJV)

- Wisdom is a gift, but not a savior - It cannot redeem the soul.

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (1 Corinthians 1:30 KJV)

- Only God gives meaning beyond wisdom - Wisdom alone is not enough.

***10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy:
I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it
more abundantly. (John 10:10 KJV)***

Discussion Questions

1. Why do pleasure and entertainment feel satisfying at first but empty later?
2. Which accomplishments in your life once felt important but now seem less central?
3. How have you seen work become either life-giving or life-draining?
4. Why is wisdom valuable even though it cannot solve every problem?
5. What does this chapter teach us about the limits of human control?
6. Where have you personally experienced God giving joy in simple, daily things?

Practical Applications

1. Choose one daily activity (a meal, a walk, a conversation) to enjoy as a gift from God.
2. Release the pressure to “prove yourself” through productivity or achievement.
3. Identify one pleasure that has become a distraction and bring it honestly before God.
4. Practice gratitude for small blessings rather than chasing bigger thrills.
5. Ask God for wisdom to navigate frustrations without becoming discouraged.
6. Remember that joy is a gift — not something you manufacture through effort.

Everyday Earthly Pleasures Seniors Commonly Pursue

1. Comfort Food & Treats

Enjoying desserts, snacks, coffee socials, and special meals.

- Ice cream socials
- Holiday feasts
- Daily coffee gatherings

Ecclesiastes connection: Food is a gift, but chasing indulgence for escape becomes “vanity.”

2. Entertainment & Distraction

Filling time with TV, movies, endless news cycles, or games.

- Hallmark movies
- Cable news
- Bingo, puzzles, card games

Ecclesiastes connection: Pleasure alone cannot satisfy the soul (Ecclesiastes 2:1).

3. Social Popularity

Seeking to be well-liked, included, or admired.

- Being the “life of the room”
- Wanting more visitors than others
- Being known as the fun or witty resident

Ecclesiastes connection: Solomon warns that chasing approval is chasing the wind.