

Just a Breath | Pursuit of Happiness

Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26

Shane Freeman

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*It is better to go to the house of mourning
than to go to the house of feasting,
for this is the end of all mankind,
and the living will lay it to heart.*

—Ecclesiastes 7:2

***I. The bad news of death is actually good news for
our soul. (Eccl. 7:2; Heb. 9:27)***

*Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.*

—Ecclesiastes 1:2

II. The Pursuit of Happiness (1:12-2:26)

I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

—Ecclesiastes 1:12

*a. Our status doesn't determine our happiness. (1:12-18)
And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by
wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy
business that God has given to the children of man to be
busy with. 14I have seen everything that is done under the
sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.*

—Ecclesiastes 1:13-14

*For in much wisdom is much vexation,
and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.*

—Ecclesiastes 1:18

b. The more ferently we pursue happiness the more frustration we'll
experience. [2:1-23]

...But behold, this also was vanity.

—Ecclesiastes 2:1b

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. 8I 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.

—Ecclesiastes 2:7-8

So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. 10And 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. 11Then 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.

—Ecclesiastes 2:9-11

The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. 15Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?"

—Ecclesiastes 2:14-15

For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! 17So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

—Ecclesiastes 2:16-17

I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing

*that I must leave it to the man who will come after me,
19and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet
he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my
wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.*

—Ecclesiastes 2:18-19

*There is nothing better for a person than that he should
eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I
saw, is from the hand of God, 25for apart from him who
can eat or who can have enjoyment? 26For to the one
who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge
and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of
gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases
God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.*

—Ecclesiastes 2:24-26

c. True happiness is not found by pursuing happiness; instead, it's
found by pursuing God. (2:24-26)

*For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom
and knowledge and joy*

—Ecclesiastes 2:26a

*There is nothing better for a person than that he should
eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil.*

—Ecclesiastes 2:24a

*There is nothing better for a person than that he should
eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I
saw, is from the hand of God,*

—Ecclesiastes 2:24

*I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have
revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned
for me, but you had no opportunity. 11Not that I am
speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever
situation I am to be content. 12I know how to be brought
low, and I know how to abound. In any and every
circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty
and hunger, abundance and need. 13I can do all things*

through him who strengthens me.

—Philippians 4:10-13

III. “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him”. (John Piper) (Phil. 4:10-13)

Study Questions

1. Spend a few minutes making a Bucket List. If you knew you weren't going to live but a short period of time, what are the 4-5 things you would most want to do? Once you've made your list...share it with your group. Then, discuss what's holding you back from living your list now. In other words, seeing that life IS short (no matter how long we live) - why do you think we put off these things as if we've got lots of time? Explain.
2. Think about how you personally measure happiness. In your own opinion, what are the key components to finding happiness in life? Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11. How does Solomon's experience compare to your own? Meaning: What are some things you've pursued in your pursuit of happiness? Be specific. Looking back, how did those pursuits end for you? In other words, did they ever finally do for you what you thought they might? Explain.
3. Solomon doesn't mention God much at all in this first part of Ecclesiastes. In fact, it's not until Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 that we hear anything about God. Explain why you think Solomon left God out of his writing up to this point. Then, in your own words, explain what Solomon is teaching us about God in vv24-26. How might this affect your pursuit of happiness? Explain. Finally, talk about the challenges to simply enjoying what you do have instead of always desiring more. How might a change in perspective change our appreciation for what God has given us?