

Where Can We Find Fulfillment?

JANUARY 22 - ECCLESIASTES 2:1-26
STUDY TWO

MEMORY VERSE

Ecclesiastes 2:11, "Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind: nothing was gained under the sun."

INTRODUCTION

Solomon conducted his search for the meaning of life as an experiment. In chapter two, he describes how he poured himself into the pursuit of pleasures, gaining more wisdom and achieving goals through hard work. He summarizes his pursuit in each of these areas as being completely meaningless. None of these endeavors brought him lasting satisfaction or fulfillment. In his final comments in chapter two, Solomon states that part of the meaning of life is to live and enjoy it as a gift from God.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

- 1. Read 2:1-16. List the various avenues Solomon pursued in his quest to find fulfillment and meaning in life. How does he expect to find fulfillment through these things?*
- 2. In verses 12-16, Solomon describes two approaches in his journey to discover the meaning of life. What are the advantages and limitations of each approach?*
- 3. The view of the writer changes in verses 14-16. What prompts his change in perspective?*

4. *Read 2:17-26. How would you describe Solomon's emotional state as a result of his quest to find the meaning of life?*

5. *The phrase "under the sun" appears twice in this passage (verses 17 and 22). Describe in your own words what the writer is attempting to convey by the use of this phrase. Where do you see this "under the sun" mentality and thinking around you?*

6. *What does Solomon say about work in verses 21-23?*

7. *How do verses 24-26 contrast with the preceding three verses? What does it mean to "please God" in this context?*

OUR WALK WITH GOD

1. *Why is it so tempting for us to pursue pleasure? List and discuss some of the lies we hear daily regarding what will bring us satisfaction and fulfillment? Why won't these worldly pursuits ever result in lasting fulfillment and meaning in our lives?*

2. *How does knowing God help us understand the world around us? How does this help us with the temptation towards empty pursuits?*

3. *Why do we work? If we were to view work as a gift from God to be enjoyed, how might this change our attitude about it?*

4. *How does a passage like this help you to focus on the truly important things in life? What would help you turn your desire for life's meaning into a wholehearted pursuit of God?*

GOING DEEPER

1. *Earlier in his life, Solomon had discussed the benefits of wisdom in the book of Proverbs. Read the following verses and note some of the benefits of wisdom that Solomon describes. (Proverbs 2:9-11, 3:13-17, 4:7-9, 8:32-36, 15:2, 17:2, 19:8-11, 24:3). What is the difference between how Solomon discusses wisdom in Proverbs and how he portrays it in Ecclesiastes?*

2. *Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:10. What do these verses tell us about wisdom and foolishness? Explain how verse 25 is so true. According to Paul, what is the true source of wisdom?*

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

*"There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man."
Blaise Pascal*