

Ecclesiastes 2 The Futility of Pleasure and Possessions

I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself." And behold, it too was futility. 2 I said of laughter, "It is senseless," and of pleasure, "What does this accomplish?" 3 I explored with my mind how to refresh my body with wine while my mind was guiding me wisely; and how to seize foolishness, until I could see what good there is for the sons of mankind to do under heaven for the few years of their lives.

4 I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself; 5 I made gardens and parks for myself, and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; 6 I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees. 7 I bought male and female slaves, and I had slaves born at home. I also possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. 8 I also amassed for myself silver and gold, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers, and the pleasures of the sons of mankind: many concubines.

9 Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me. 10 All that my eyes desired, I did not refuse them. I did not restrain my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor; and this was my reward for all my labor. 11 So I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold, all was futility and striving after wind, and there was no benefit under the sun.

Wisdom Surpasses Foolishness

12 So I turned to consider wisdom, insanity, and foolishness; for what will the man do who will come after the king, except what has already been done? 13 Then I saw that wisdom surpasses foolishness as light surpasses darkness. 14 The wise person's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one and the same fate happens to both of them.

15 Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also happen to me. Why then have I been extremely wise?" So I said to myself, "This too is futility." 16 For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise, along with the fool, since in the coming days everything will soon be forgotten. And how the wise and the fool alike die! 17 So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was unhappy to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind.

The Futility of Labor

18 So I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored 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 have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too

is futility. 20 Therefore I completely despaired over all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun.

21 When there is a person who has labored with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and then gives his legacy to one who has not labored for it; this too is futility and a great evil. 22 For what does a person get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun? 23 Because all his days his activity is painful and irritating; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is futility.

24 There is nothing better for a person than to eat and drink, and show himself some good in his trouble. This too I have seen, that it is from the hand of God. 25 For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him? 26 For to a person who is good in His sight, He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is futility and striving after wind.

What is a concubine?

In the Bible, a concubine was a woman acquired by a man as a secondary wife.

Her purpose was to provide a male heir in the case of a barren wife, to provide more children in general to enhance the family's workforce and wealth, and to satisfy the man's sexual desires.

A concubine was endowed with rights and protections by Hebrew law but was not equal in status to a wife.

We will use five tools on our expedition that are built around five questions

1. What questions were provoked within you?
2. Did anything confuse you?
3. Did anything move you emotionally?
4. Did God instruct you to do something?
5. Did you gain any insight into God's character?

Paul's observations and insight

1. Who is doing the talking, the listening and the answering?
2. What makes someone a self-indulger and someone else a sacrificial giver?
3. Should we be guided by our minds or our spirits?
4. What is the benefit of applying wisdom over foolishness?
5. Solomon's self-pleasure left him feeling pointless.
6. Why do human beings laugh?
7. Solomon obtained everything a man could have obtained and yet he was left feeling empty! Why?
8. Solomon visited every known pleasure to man in his time and yet it leaves him feeling empty, why?

9. Solomon's excessive exposure provided for him a genuine, reflected perspective, as he had been there and done it.
10. Can you imagine going through life not denying yourself anything?
11. There was no restraint on Solomon's heart/spirit.
12. Despite all this self-gratification he was left feeling empty! Why?
13. Having served his flesh with excess, Solomon now turns to seek satisfaction for life through his mind and through his soul.
14. He learnt wisdom was greater than foolishness, as the light is greater than the darkness.
15. Despite this revelation he is still left feeling empty as both of their ends are the same .
16. All the pleasure of 'doing' meant nothing to Solomon, it was all about the prize, but it still left him empty of joy.
17. Solomon knows everything he has gained will go to another at his death!
18. Whether he is a fool, or whether he is wise, Solomon does not know. This revelation leaves him feeling empty.
19. To leave a great inheritance to a fool, Solomon concludes is a great evil.
20. The mind of the wise finds rest difficult. Why?
21. Is life about food and drink? Do you eat to live or live to eat?
22. What does it mean to show yourself some good?
23. Solomon discovers life without God has no meaning, but life with God is everything.
24. So why do so many, in these days, choose to live life without God.
25. For Solomon, wisdom, knowledge and joy are high privileges. Why?
26. The sinner is cursed because he serves the well-being of his soul.
27. What does it mean to strive after the wind?