



BETTER

Sorting Out Life

#npbetter

Week 2

2 of 12

June 14, 2020

Bottom Line: Enjoyment is a gift from God.

Icebreaker: What is a tangible thing you have that you would like to leave to someone special? Why? What is a characteristic you have that you would like to leave as a legacy?

Key Verse: *So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that these pleasures are from the hand of God. For who can eat or enjoy anything apart from him? God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him.* Ecclesiastes 2:24-26a

Solomon was pensive and reflective. He was asking deep questions. In the first chapter of Ecclesiastes, Solomon says that life is a boring rut. In the second chapter, he says that life is wrong, and we are incapable of making it right because we are inherently wrong too. His decision then was, "I will just go and have fun—I will try it all and see if it helps."

And he sure tried. As king he ruled with complete authority—no one would go against him. Not a single person would tell him no. He lacked no resource. He wanted to **experience** it all. He says he tried alcohol, real estate, owning great herds of the best animals, servants, more money than we can imagine, entertainment and comedy, sex, fame, education, all kinds of pleasure, and even work. Take that in, and then imagine for a moment that there is no limitation between *your* desires and experiences—no gap between what you want and what you could have. What would your life be like if anything or anyone could be yours without any restrictions? Wise Solomon says your experience would end up at the same place he landed. Solomon reported that everything he tried was meaningless—so meaningless that he says it 38 times. Then Solomon **evaluated** all of his experiences. He concluded that death is inevitable for both the wise and the foolish, the rich and the poor. Nothing matters. Achievements and accomplishments are futile. You can't take them with you when you die, and people who didn't work for them, your successors, will have them. You won't be able to control how they manage them. Not exactly uplifting thoughts. Solomon worked his way through to **enlightenment**. He concluded that satisfaction can never come from our experiences or our stuff. It comes from the One who gives us the stuff. True enjoyment can never be had apart from God. Enjoyment is a gift from God. We will never find it apart from Him, but we can pursue God so that we understand life under the sun for what it is, and not bemoan what it is not. We can enjoy life and hold it loosely as a gift from God.

THINK IT OVER >>>

What impacted you most from the message?

Which of Solomon's experiences have you personally found to be less satisfying than you hoped? Why?

"So I came to hate life because everything done here under the sun is so troubling. Everything is meaningless—like chasing the wind." This quote from Solomon could have been made by numerous comedians who we have learned were very unhappy people. Think of a time when your own laughter was hollow and hiding pain. How did you get out of that place?

A diversion is something we use to divert our focus from the pains and problems of life in order to keep us from losing all hope. Discuss diversions that you battle.

A diversion can give relief from life but not meaning to life. How so?

Money can't buy the things that matter most. Discuss.

LOOK IT OVER <<<

Complete this sentence with what would most likely be your answer without Christ: "If I had or was _____, I would be happy."

What are you tempted to think would be a side benefit of that achievement?

Many of Solomon's experiences are immediately dismissed as no-brainers, but a few can sound like wisdom. Workaholism, for instance, is actually endorsed and commended sometimes. How can otherwise good things become a diversion from the pursuit of God?

Are you an optimist or a pessimist? Explain.

Stuff and satisfaction are two different things. Reflect and discuss.

What "enlightenment" could you share that God has helped you to see about the meaning of life? How did He teach you?

NEXT STEPS

1. Evaluate your experiences and goals. Are they fulfilling and purposeful?
2. Evaluate your life to see what diversion might be keeping you from the real purpose of your journey now.
3. Thank God for the pleasures He has given you.

EVALUTION/ACTION

Realizing and reaching your full potential in Christ

Bottom Line: Enjoyment is a gift from God.

Rate yourself from 1 to 10 1 (never), 10 (always)	1	2	3	4		6	7	8	9	10
Why did you give yourself this rating?										
What benefits will you obtain by raising your rating?										
Do you know someone who demonstrates this bottom line well? What do you admire about that person?										
What specific action can you put into practice to raise your rating?										
At the end of this week, reflect - where did you see the bottom line show up in your actions throughout the week?										

PRAYER

List group members and their prayer requests for this week:

DAILY STUDY

Want to dig deeper? Check out **The Daily** this week at newpointe.org/daily:

Monday: Mark 8:36

Tuesday: Isaiah 58:10-11

Wednesday: Psalm 112:1

Thursday: Genesis 1:26-28

Friday: Luke 12:15; Matthew 6:33

Don't let the conversation stop here. Keep talking it over with others throughout the week.

(Don't forget to bring this paper to your next small group meeting)