

Message #5**Ecclesiastes 2:1-11**

To most people in this world, their thinking is if I had an unlimited supply of something I deem important, then I would really have unlimited satisfaction, fulfillment and meaning.

Most people are looking for answers and just want some meaning, pleasure and happiness in life and the “if only” philosophy keeps nagging at their soul.

TRY TO FIND MEANING AND FULFILLMENT IN PURE PLEASURE AND YOU WILL WIND UP MISERABLE AND EMPTY AND DEPRESSED .

The paradox of hedonism is that the more you hunt for pleasure, the less of it you really find.

The Hebrew word for “pleasure” is one that suggests Solomon was going to examine every pleasure that seems to bring one to a level of verbal joyfulness (Gesenius, p. 791). Pleasures people talk about as being joyful and meaningful. The Hebrew word “enjoy” implies Solomon was going to look at every pleasure that people deem as good that makes a cheerful heart (*Ibid.*, p. 319). This was going to be a thorough pursuit of pleasure. He could do what others talk about and dream about. Before he begins his journey, he concludes it was “futility.” In other words, this turned out to be another dead-end street, it did not leave him happy, it did not leave him fulfilled, and it left him empty.

AREA OF PLEASURE #1 – The pleasure of wit . **2:2**

Most people love to laugh. In fact, most people will pay big money to laugh.

Back in Solomon’s day, Solomon knew that people liked to laugh. So he brought in the biggest, the brightest, and the best of comedians. The merry-makers who could tell the funniest one-liners were paid to appear before him. He could literally afford to have a sitcom put on before him every night. Night after night Solomon went to his own comedy club to laugh and eventually he concluded it didn’t fulfill. It didn’t make him happy. In fact, the word “madness” indicates his final conclusion was that it was a foolish pursuit that didn’t accomplish anything (Gesenius, p. 226).

Laughter can be a good medicine for the soul, but it is not a cure-all for life. Try to find meaning in laughter and, just like Solomon, you’ll eventually conclude it is futility.

AREA OF PLEASURE #2 – The pleasure of wine . **2:3**

The words of verse 3 do not describe Solomon as a drunken bum. They describe a man who used wine to stimulate his pleasure. He carefully determined how much he would drink to see if he could find meaning and joy in life in alcohol. This was a man who kept all of his mental faculties. He used just enough wine to stimulate pleasure. He was not out to get bombed, but to have a good time.

If you really learn how to use alcoholic stimulants to the point where it enhances pleasure, can you find meaning and fulfillment? Ask Solomon and he'll tell you his conclusion: it is all empty.

AREA OF PLEASURE #3 – The pleasure of wealth. **2:4-8a**

Solomon was the richest and most powerful man to ever live. If Solomon wanted it, he could buy it or build it. You and I could not even afford his food expense for one day (i.e. I Kings 4:22-23).

Enlargement #1 - Solomon built houses . **2:4a**

He had one house built for himself that took 13 years (I Kings 9 :10). He had another house built in the forest of Lebanon (I Kings 10:17). As if his mansion in Jerusalem weren't enough, he built one in a beautiful forest setting. He had another house built for Pharaoh's daughter (I Kings 9:24).

Enlargement #2 - Solomon developed land . **2:4b-5**

He planted vineyards, he made gardens and parks that were lush, featuring all kinds of fruit trees.

Enlargement #3 - Solomon made ponds . **2:6a**

Most people dream about having their own lake or pond. Most would be content to live on property that has a stream through it. Not Solomon, he did better than that—he had his own ponds made. He made his own irrigation system, causing streams and ponds to be exactly where he wanted them.

Enlargement #4 - Solomon wanted forests . **2:6b**

Solomon loved trees. He had a home built in the “forest of Lebanon” (I Kings 10:17).

Enlargement #5 - Solomon bought servants . **2:7a**

He had male and female servants that took care of everything and anything. Every whim was fully met. In fact, he had 12,000 men whose job it was just to take care of and ride his horses (I Kings 10:26).. Solomon employed, just for building, more than 150,000 men (II Chron. 2:2).

Enlargement #6 - Solomon purchased animals . **2:7b**

Solomon had more flocks and herds of animals than any other man who ever lived. We aren't talking about a few head of cattle. Solomon's brand was literally on thousands and thousands of animals. In fact, he even imported his horses (I Kings 10:28).

If one visits Jerusalem today, I have read you can still see the ruins of the stables Solomon built. He had 40,000 stalls of horses (I Kings 4:26).

Enlargement #7 - Solomon collected wealth . **2:8a**

The Hebrew word used here is one that means Solomon was a collector or a gatherer of wealth (Gesenius, p. 404). Collecting wealth was a hobby. This man was not concerned about having money last until the next payday, as a hobby he collected gold and made things out of it (I Kings 10:14-22). He was richer than any other king in the world (I Kings 10:23).

Enlargement #8 - Solomon had music . **2:8b**

He surrounded himself with the finest musicians in the world, both male and female.

We know that Solomon himself wrote 1005 songs (I Kings 4:32). Think of it; he could write a song and have the best musician in the world sing it. He could sit in his mansion, on his furniture of gold, look out his window at his ponds and forests and animals, with servants waiting on him while he was listening to the most beautiful music being performed in his own living room.

Life “under the sun” for Solomon was good, but it was also empty!

AREA OF PLEASURE #4 – The pleasure of women . **2:8b**

Solomon had the most beautiful women in the world at his disposal. We don't even know the numbers of women that he had sexual relations with. If there were a pleasure to be tried, he tried it with them. We know he had many foreign women (I Kings 11:3). We know he had 700 wives and 300 concubines at his disposal (I Kings 11:3).

Josephus writes: “He grew mad in his love for women, and laid not restraint on himself in his lusts; nor was he satisfied with the women of his country alone, but he married many wives of foreign nations: Sidonians, and Tyrians, and Ammonites and Edomites; and he transgressed the laws of Moses which forbade Jews to marry any but these that were of their own people... Solomon was fallen headlong into unreasonable pleasure.”

Verses 9-10 inform us that Solomon's fame spread all over the world. He was “The” pleasure seeker of the known world. Whatever he wanted to experience, he did. Whatever he wanted to own he bought. He had everything under the sun. But he could not get the one thing that is found above the sun—meaning and fulfillment to life.

What was Solomon's conclusion? Look carefully at **verse 11**. After considering everything that he had done, he determined it was all empty. It could not give meaning and fulfillment to life. It was a big zilch.

Let us remember when Solomon went looking for meaning, he was a believer. It is possible for a seasoned believer to get off track if he doesn't keep looking "above the sun." Get your focus "under the sun" and you'll wind up empty. It won't matter who you are or what you have—it will mean zero. Keep your focus above the sun, for that is where we will find meaning to life.