Crossroads International Church Dr. Rick Griffith

Title

20 July 2014 Message 3 of 17

NLT 40 Minutes

**Wisdom About Work**

***Ecclesiastes 2:12-26***

**Topic:** Satisfaction

**Subject:** Wisdom and work don’t satisfy

**Complement:** unless you please God.

**Purpose:** The listeners will commit to please God above all else.

**Meditation:** The God who is wise

**Reading:** Psalm 127

**Song:** To God Be the Glory

# Introduction

### Interest: [You never know who will live a satisfying life years from now.]

#### I’m not sure if I have ever shown you all a picture of my Dad—he looks kinda like me, doesn’t he? That’s what people tell me. He is in good health and has lived in Hawaii more than 40 years. Next year he turns 90!

Dad

#### Anyway, my Dad once told me about his 25th high school class reunion. This gathering of 43-year-olds was well attended with almost the entire class. Everyone found it interesting to hear what had happened to one another in the last 25 years.

25th Reunion

#### However, the people who did **not** come intrigued him most. The one who was voted "most likely to succeed" 25 years earlier was not able to come. He was the preeminent one in his class; nevertheless, the warden wouldn't let him out of jail for the special occasion.

• Prisoner

#### You never know who will live a successful and satisfying life years from now.

### Need: Are you satisfied with your life right now?

#### You say, “Well, yeah, basically. I’m where I want to be at this stage of my career.”

Man at desk

#### Others may be thinking, “Why do you ask? Have you heard something about me?” No, I’m only asking because this is the issue in our passage today!

Woman

#### Still others might have the attitude, “What do you mean by *satisfied*?” I’m talking about a genuine, deep sense of fulfillment in your inner being right now.

#### I suspect every one of us could be happier and more fulfilled, so let me ask this question…

### Subject: What will it take for you to be really satisfied?

Sunset

#### We might say, “Well, if I just had more free time…”

#### You may be thinking, “A little more money might really help in the satisfaction department!”

#### Or, “Wow, if only so-and-so changed, I’d be happy!”

### Background: Last week we saw that Solomon gave it his best shot to find real satisfaction.

Sheba Reception

Golden   
Age

Solomon

#### He lived during Israel’s Golden Age when there was plenty of money.

##### His fame spread through the known world.

##### His faith built and dedicated the most amazing temple ever.

Temple prayer

Gold

• 1 Kings

##### Everything he touched was gold—literally! [read 1 Ki. 10:21]

#### Solomon also had plenty of time to pursue whatever he wanted.

#### By his old age, he had tried satisfaction in five profitless pursuits. He found that:

Old Man Reflections

##### Prudence doesn’t satisfy.

Prudence

Pleasure

##### Pleasure doesn’t satisfy.

##### Projects don’t satisfy.

Projects

##### Possessions don’t satisfy, and…

Possession

##### Power doesn’t satisfy.

Power

##### He concluded in 2:10-11 that it is meaningless!

2:10-11

### Preview: Today we'll take a look at the final two profitless pursuits and his conclusion on where satisfaction can really be found.

2 Final

• Real

### Text: Let's turn to Ecclesiastes 2:12-26.

2:12-26

(So where should we ***not*** look for satisfaction?)

NOT

# I. Don’t look for satisfaction in wisdom or work (2:12-23).

MP

[Neither your knowledge nor your job will really give you joy.]

## *Wisdom doesn’t satisfy* because both the wise man and the fool die (2:12-17).

Wisdom

### Solomon saw his wisdom as unsurpassable (2:12).

SP  
• 12

### Wisdom is better than foolishness but has no ultimate advantage since all die (2:13-16).

Graves

#### Wisdom is better than stupidity since it helps us avoid failure (2:13).

13

##### A pastor come to me this week and shared about a single woman in his church. Her father borrowed on all his credit cards until they were maxed out, so he asked her to charge all hers. Not wanting to say no to her father, she did the same. She owes $5000 here and $10,000 there, and borrows so she can pay the loan sharks $100 a week. Now she is asking the church to loan her money.

Debt

##### A website called doubledebtsinglewoman.com chronicles the saga of a woman who is $145,000 in debt—and her progress in getting out of this foolishness.

##### Wisdom keeps people from making wrong decisions like this! But…

#### Even though wise people avoid pitfalls while fools stumble in their stupidity, both still die (2:14).

15

14

#### Placing confidence in wisdom is stupid since both the wise and foolish die (2:15).

Title

Title

Title

Title

##### This should keep us from getting proud about any wisdom we’ve shown!

2 Foolish faces

##### Why? Because we will be buried or cremated right next to a fool!

#### People forget about wise and foolish people alike (2:16).

16

### Confidence in life's accomplishments is troubling and futile (2:17).

17

#### There is much talk about innovation and brainy people, so we exalt the PhD (and I know many among us have them!).

Apple Logo  
• PhD

#### But others perhaps rightly joke that PhD stands for “Permanent Head Damage.” When I realize that I wrote 424 pages and only three copies were sold, it is quite sobering!

Defined & Dissertation

Transition

• Work

(So having great wisdom doesn’t satisfy. Does productivity in work provide ultimate satisfaction? No! Why not?)

## *Work doesn’t satisfy* because the fruit of one's labor may be squandered (2:18-23).

Fists of Money

### No can assure how his labor will be used after he dies (2:18-20).

18-20

### Our heirs hardly ever appreciate the fruits of our labor (2:21).

21

Rehoboam

#### Maybe Solomon had in mind his own son, Rehoboam. After 40 years of peace, within a year of Solomon’s death, his son managed to follow the foolish advice of his peers, split the kingdom, and give all the gold shields to Egypt which took advantage of his foolishness.

#### Freidrich Flick is a case in point.

Flick

##### *Newsweek* magazine reported about this German industrialist, “When West German industrialist Freidrich Flick died, he left a personal fortune estimated at $1.5 billion… a business empire that embraced all or part of some 300 firms, and a reputation as perhaps the crustiest and craftiest magnate ever to operate on the German business scene.

##### Flick was dedicated wholly to his work (he buried his wife at 3 PM one day in 1966 and was back at his desk two hours later)…

##### At his death, the Flick empire generated annual sales in excess of $3 billion… but for all his enormous power and wealth, the old man had one very human shortcoming: he could not control his family. By last week a Flick family fight over *der alter Herr’s* empire had employees, bankers and politicians alike wondering over the eventual impact it might have on the West German economy.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

#### Charles Swindoll notes, “Let me get painfully personal. I do not care how capable, how competent, how perfectly suited your children may be to continue your dream, there’s something in *you* they don’t possess and never will possess… you’re indomitable, innovative spirit. You were the original dreamer, the tough-minded pioneer. You hammered that dream out on the anvil of time. Though you had nothing, you came to something. And no matter how closely you’ve had your children work alongside you, there’s something you’ve got that they lack. And that’s what worries you, right?” (ibid.).

22-23

Bored girl

### The pains of work may prevent one from getting a good night's sleep (2:22-23).

(Verse 23 concludes this section of the book that shows that satisfaction can't be found in prudence, pleasure, projects, possessions, power, wisdom or work. After relating these seven pursuits where satisfaction **cannot** be found, Solomon finally turns his attention to the Source of **true** fulfillment…)

Review

# II. You will be satisfied only when you please God (2:24-26).

MP

[Living the way God wants is the only way to genuinely find joy.]

## God grants many benefits from work to those who please him (2:24-26).

Benefits

### God-pleasers enjoy food and drink (2:24a).

Food

#### “In his book, *The Rockefeller Billions*, Jules Abels says that John D. Rockefeller had an income of approximately a million dollars a week toward the end of his life. Yet his doctors allowed him to eat only a bare minimum. One of his biographers said he lived on a diet a pauper would have hated. ‘Now, less than 100 pounds in weight, he sampled everything (at breakfast): a drop of coffee, a spoonful of cereal, a forkful of egg, and a bit of chop the size of a pea.’ Rockefeller was the richest man in the world, but he didn’t have the ability to enjoy even his food.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Rockefeller

#### Please the Lord and you can enjoy your food!

### God-pleasers enjoy their work (2:24b).

Hebrew

Laugh

Work

### God-pleasers enjoy many good things (2:25).

### God-pleasers enjoy wisdom, knowledge and joy (2:26a).

### God-pleasers enjoy the fruits of the work of sinners (2:26b)!

Silhouette

## Can you honestly say that your highest goal in life is to please God?

Please him?

### I am summing up our study of this book as “The Fleeting Nature of Human Achievement and Wisdom.”

Our present study

### It’s not that work and wisdom are in themselves wrong. It’s just that they don’t last—and they ultimately don’t satisfy us.

### But pleasing God does satisfy. I have seen this in my own life.

#### Honestly, a lot of people that I know think my faith in Christ is ridiculous. They can’t believe that I actually base my life around a person who lived 2000 years ago.

#### Why? Their own human wisdom reasons this way. So they think their work is great but my service for Christ is stupid.

#### What gets me through the day—thousands of times—is knowing that what I do for Christ will last and having a desire to please Him!

#### Can you relate to this?

(So how can we sum up Solomon’s point in today’s passage?)

# Conclusion

### Wisdom and work don’t satisfy unless you please God (MI).

MI

### How do you think a person pleases God? By faith!

How please  
• By Faith

### Hebrews 11:6 says that without faith it is impossible to please God!

Heb. 11:6

### Wisdom is a worthy goal, but are you seeking fulfillment in wisdom—or in pleasing God?

Wisdom

#### Do you believe that doing well in school will bring satisfaction?

#### Do you feel that holding a significant position at church will satisfy?

### Working hard is also admirable, but do you seek fulfillment in work—or in pleasing God?

Work

#### Do you really have to work as hard as you do?

#### How much do you serve your goals? (Who is the master—you or your goals?)

### I think John Hagee says it well: “You will either offend the world and please God, or please the world and offend God.”

Hagee

### Tell God now that you wish to please Him as your highest goal.

Highest goal

### Prayer

Black

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### He first noted in 1:1-11 the theme of the book—all human endeavors are fleeting (NIV “meaningless”) as seen in various repetitive cycles in life.

### Then he listed five profitless pursuits that he had tried but never satisfied: prudence, pleasure, projects, possessions and power.

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### This section completes the section on the profitless pursuits that Solomon tried.

### In it he shows that both wisdom and work have the same fate of ultimately being worthless.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### Maslow’s hierarchy of needs has some truth to it. When we have been satisfied in our basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter, at that point we begin to think about larger issues such as meaning in life.

### Solomon “had it all” in the most prosperous time of Israel’s history. One might think then that he would have been pleased, but he asked for life’s meaning in light of the foolishness of his own heart and while looking at those around him.

# Questions

### What does Solomon mean by wisdom here (1:12a)?

### Who is the king’s successor (1:12b)?

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Text

# Possible Illustrations

### 85-year-old bookie

### The Bible lists many God-ordained occupations for his servants (adapted from Dan Collins, WV article):

#### Farmers: Adam, Eve (Gen. 2:15)

#### Zookeepers: Noah & family (Gen. 6-7)

#### Ranchers: Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Job, Genesis)

#### Midwives: Shiphrah & Puah (Exod. 1:15-21)

#### Beauty / Fashion: Esther, Lydia (Esther 4:14; Acts 16:14)

#### Politicians: Joseph, Esther, Mordecai, Daniel (Gen. 41; Esther, Daniel)

#### Craftsmen / Trade workers: Bezalel, Oholiab, Priscilla & Aquila (Exod. 31:1-6 ; Acts 18:2-3)

#### Military / Police: David and his mighty men (2 Samuel 23)

#### Construction: Nehemiah (Nehemiah)

#### Musicians: David, Asaph, Sons of Korah (1 Sam. 16:16, Psalms)

#### Fishermen: Peter, Andrew, James, John (Matt. 4:18-21; John 21)

#### Higher Education: Solomon, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, Paul (1 Kings 4:29-34; Dan. 1:6; Acts 22:3)

#### Pastors: Peter, Paul, Timothy (Eph. 4:11; 1 Peter 5:1-2)

#### Administrators-Managers-Leaders: Joseph, Moses, Jethro (Gen. 39; Exod. 3, 18; Romans 12:8)

#### Teachers (Rom. 12:7; Eph. 4:11)

# Possible Applications

### Text

**Wisdom About Work**

***Ecclesiastes 2:12-26***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*: The way to true satisfaction is not by wisdom or work but by pleasing God.

# I. Preeminent wisdom doesn't satisfy because both the wise man and the fool die (2:12-17).

## Solomon sought preeminence in wisdom because he viewed his pursuits as unsurpassable (2:12).

## Wisdom is better than foolishness but has no ultimate advantage since all die (2:13-16).

### Wisdom is better than stupidity since it helps us avoid failure (2:13).

### Even though wise people avoid pitfalls while fools stumble in their stupidity, both still die (2:14).

### Placing confidence in wisdom is stupid since both the wise and foolish die (2:15).

### People forget about wise and foolish people alike (2:16).

## Confidence in life's accomplishments is troubling and futile (2:17).

# II. Since one's productive work may be squandered, those who please God have true satisfaction (2:18-26).

## Work does not satisfy because the fruit of one's labor may be squandered (2:18-23).

### No can assure how his labor will be used after he dies (2:18-20).

### Our heirs hardly ever appreciate the fruits of our labor (2:21).

### The pains of work may prevent one from getting a good night's sleep (2:22-23).

## God grants many benefits from work to those who please him (2:24-26).

### God-pleasers enjoy food and drink (2:24a).

### God-pleasers enjoy their work (2:24b).

### God-pleasers enjoy many good things (2:25).

### God-pleasers enjoy wisdom, knowledge and joy (2:26a).

### God-pleasers enjoy the fruits of the work of sinners (2:26b)!

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will commit to please God above all else

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: You never know who will live a satisfying life years from now.

### Need: Are you satisfied with your life right now?

### Subject: What will it take for you to be satisfied?

### Background: Last week we saw five of Solomon's profitless pursuits in his quest for real satisfaction in life.

### Preview: Today we'll take a look at the final two profitless pursuits and his conclusion on where satisfaction can really be found.

### Text: Let's turn to Ecclesiastes 2:12-26.

# I. Don’t look for satisfaction in wisdom or work (2:12-23).

## *Wisdom doesn’t satisfy* because both the wise man and the fool die (2:12-17).

### Solomon saw his wisdom as unsurpassable (2:12).

### Wisdom is better than foolishness but has no ultimate advantage since all die (2:13-16).

#### Wisdom is better than stupidity since it helps us avoid failure (2:13).

#### Even though wise people avoid pitfalls while fools stumble in their stupidity, both still die (2:14).

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## *Work doesn’t satisfy* because the fruit of one's labor may be squandered (2:18-23).

### No can assure how his labor will be used after he dies (2:18-20).

### Our heirs hardly ever appreciate the fruits of our labor (2:21).

### The pains of work may prevent one from getting a good night's sleep (2:22-23).

# II. You will be satisfied only when you please God (2:24-26).

## God grants many benefits from work to those who please him (2:24-26).

### God-pleasers enjoy food and drink (2:24a).

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### God-pleasers enjoy wisdom, knowledge and joy (2:26a).

### God-pleasers enjoy the fruits of the work of sinners (2:26b)!

## Can you honestly say that your highest goal in life is to please God?

# Conclusion

### Wisdom and work don’t satisfy unless you please God (MI).

### How do you think a person pleases God? By faith! Hebrews 11:6

### Wisdom is a worthy goal, but are you seeking fulfillment in wisdom—or in pleasing God?

### Working hard is also admirable, but do you seek fulfillment in work—or in pleasing God?

### Tell God now that you wish to please Him as your highest goal.

### Prayer



**Rick Griffith**

20 July 2014

Message 3 of 17

**Wisdom About Work**

***Ecclesiastes 2:12-26***

# Introduction

### You never know who will live a satisfying life years from now.

### Are you satisfied with your life right now?

### What will it take for you to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

### Last week we saw five of Solomon's profitless pursuits for satisfaction.

### Today we'll take a look at the final two profitless pursuits and his conclusion on where satisfaction can really be found.

# I. Don’t look for satisfaction in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (2:12-23).

## *Wisdom doesn’t satisfy* because both the wise man and the fool die (2:12-17).

### Solomon saw his wisdom as unsurpassable (2:12).

### Wisdom is better than foolishness but has no ultimate advantage since all die (2:13-16).

#### Wisdom is better than stupidity since it helps us avoid failure (2:13).

#### Even though wise people avoid pitfalls while fools stumble in their stupidity, both still die (2:14).

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## *Work doesn’t satisfy* because the fruit of one's labor may be squandered (2:18-23).

### No can assure how his labor will be used after he dies (2:18-20).

### Our heirs hardly ever appreciate the fruits of our labor (2:21).

### The pains of work may prevent one from getting a good night's sleep (2:22-23).

# II. You will be satisfied only when you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (2:24-26).

## God grants many benefits from work to those who please him (2:24-26).

### God-pleasers enjoy food and drink (2:24a).

### God-pleasers enjoy their work (2:24b).

### God-pleasers enjoy many good things (2:25).

### God-pleasers enjoy wisdom, knowledge and joy (2:26a).

### God-pleasers enjoy the fruits of the work of sinners (2:26b)!

## Can you honestly say that your highest goal in life is to please God?

# Conclusion

### Wisdom and work don’t \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ unless you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God (Main Idea).

### How do you think a person pleases God?

### Wisdom is a worthy goal, but do you seek fulfillment in wisdom—or in pleasing God?

### Working hard is admirable, but do you seek fulfillment in work—or in pleasing God?

### "You will either offend the world and please God, or please the world and offend God” —John Hagee

### Tell God now that you wish to please Him as your highest goal.

**Thought Questions**

1. Read Ecclesiastes 2:12-26 aloud. List as many ways as you can in verses 12-16 that the wise man and the fool are alike.

Both can be compared (12).

Both walk though the wise walk in the light and the fool in the dark (13-14).

Both have the same events—birth, marriage, death, etc. (14, 16 ESV).

Both cause us to question the value of wisdom (15).

Both are forgotten after death (16b).

Both humble us in realizing that the world will continue without us.

1. Why did Solomon begin to hate the things for which he had worked (2:17-23)?

Work doesn’t lead to happiness but to grief (17).

The fruits of work can’t be brought with us at death—no U-Hauls after a hearse (18)!

Hard work led to grief, anxiety and sleeplessness for him evidently (23).

1. What advice in 2:24-26 do you “need to heed” most now? How?

I need greater joy in preparing messages from Friday to Sunday (24).

I need a better “want to” rather than “have to” serve Christ

1. *Newsweek* magazine, 25 Sept 1972; cited by Charles R. Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge* [Waco, Texas: Word, 1985], 59-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1985),62. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)