Crossroads International Church Dr. Rick Griffith

13 July 2014 Message 2 of 17

NLT 40 Minutes

**Profitless Pursuits**

Title

***Ecclesiastes 1:12–2:11***

**Topic:** Satisfaction

**Subject:** Prudence, pleasure, projects, possessions or power

**Complement:** are profitless pursuits that do not satisfy.

**Main Idea:** Our pursuits never profit.

**Purpose:** The listeners will seek God’s rather than their own pursuits.

**Meditation:** Eternality

# Introduction

### Interest: [Howard Hughes had everything most people seek but lived a dejected, lonely, miserable life.]

#### Howard Hughes, Jr. (December 24, 1905 – April 5, 1976) was an American businessman, investor, aviator, aerospace engineer, filmmaker and philanthropist. He was one of the wealthiest people in the world.

H-4

Hughes

#### He is best known for his interest in aviation, having founded Hughes Aircraft. This company sought to help the WWII effort by making the largest plane in history designed to transport 700 troops across the Atlantic. Its wingspan was 97 meters, compared to the 80 meters of today’s A380! Unfortunately, the prototype wasn’t finished until 1947—after the War had ended. It was dubbed “The Spruce Goose” even though it was made out of birch as War laws prohibited aluminum planes.

Spruce Goose

Wingspan

#### Hughes had everything most men seek— money, power, women, and opportunities.

##### "Hughes dated many famous women, including Billie Dove, Bette Davis, Ava Gardner, Olivia de Havilland, Katharine Hepburn, Ginger Rogers and Gene Tierney. He also proposed to Joan Fontaine several times" (wikipedia).

8 women

##### Bessie Love was a mistress during his first marriage, but it’s still unknown whether he was actually married to Terry Moore for 27 years! Jean Peters, his third wife, refused to talk about their marriage.

3 women

##### His obsessive-compulsive behavior especially plagued Hughes in his later years. "On November 24, 1966 (Thanksgiving Day),[58] Hughes arrived in Las Vegas by railroad car and moved into the Desert Inn. Because he refused to leave the hotel, and to avoid further conflicts with the owners, Hughes bought the Desert Inn in early 1967" (wikipedia).

Desert Inn

#### Although he had anything anyone wanted, he ended his life in despair.

##### He spent most of his days living alone naked in his penthouse watching movies. He watched one movie 150 times! "His reclusive activities (and possibly his drug use) made him practically unrecognizable; his hair, beard, fingernails, and toenails were long (possibly caused by [a disease] making him averse to touch), his tall 6 ft 4 in (193 cm) frame now weighed barely 90 pounds (41 kg)" (wikipedia) and he had a fixation with Kleenex boxes that he kept everywhere to keep from collecting germs.

Naked

##### "The FBI had to resort to fingerprints to identify the body… X-rays revealed five broken-off hypodermic needles in the flesh of his arms" (Wikipedia).

Tombstone

### Need:

Title

Title

#### Why was Hughes so unfulfilled? Was it because he had money? fame? possessions untold? No, it wasn't because he had or didn't have anything. It was because he sought satisfaction in things that don’t last. So I’ve called our study, “The Fleeting Nature of Human Achievement and Wisdom.”

Fleeting Nature

#### Wouldn’t it be great to have a list of the stuff that doesn’t work—that which doesn’t satisfy or last?

### Subject: What are the profitless pursuits that we should avoid?

Rock

### Background: Solomon had the same problem as Howard Hughes—he had everything but nothing.

Old Solomon

#### Fortunately, we have some lessons from him on this subject in Ecclesiastes 1:12–2:11.

#### He says that all of our pursuits don’t satisfy (1:12-15).

##### As king, Solomon had the ideal position to investigate the value of human achievement (1:12).

###### "Seek" means "to investigate the roots of the matter."

###### What was he seeking? “Everything being done under heaven” (1:13) and “everything going on under the sun” (1:14) is pretty all-inclusive!

###### For the first time in a long time, the king has time on his hands.

Golden Age

Grief  
13

Fleeting  
14

Profitless

5 of them

We have entered the “Golden Age” of Israel’s history. Solomon’s father, David, has won the battles on every side.

The result? Energy and money need not be spent so much on warfare, so peace and prosperity abounded on every side!

##### Solomon concluded three things about all human achievement (1:13-15).

###### Every pursuit brings grief (1:13).

###### Every pursuit expends effort with no lasting results (1:14).

Have you ever tried to chase the wind? Useless, right?

When I was a kid, my family had a dog named Peppy. He loved to go in the car with us, as long as he could stick his head out the window. He always bit at the wind, chasing it with all his might! I wonder what he was thinking.

###### Every pursuit doesn’t really improve things (1:15).

“Human achievements leave much to be desired. Human effort and action cannot remedy all the irregularities or counteract all the deficiencies observable in the nature of things” (BKC).

This is not fatalism—it is reality that you can’t resolve all of the world’s problems. Trying to do so is a profitless pursuit.

### Preview: So, specifically, what might be some of these profitless pursuits? In this passage we'll observe five pursuits of the king, all which ended in dissatisfaction. We'll see five empty avenues of King Solomon's quest for fulfillment in life.

Title

Title

Title

Title

Title

Title

Title

(So let's look at the first pursuit that doesn’t satisfy...)

# I. Prudence doesn’t satisfy (1:16-18).

MP

[Wisdom is a profitless pursuit.]

## Many—like the Queen of Sheba—sought out his wisdom.

Sheba

## Solomon's wisdom was unsurpassed by anyone of his time and perhaps by anyone in history (1:16; 1 Kings 4:29-34).

1 Kings 10:1

## His pursuit of wisdom (human intellect), madness and folly (i.e., foolish ideas and pleasures-BKC) resulted in frustration (1:17b) and even wisdom came with grief and pain (1:18).

Fleeting

### This reminds me of my father, who was one of the highest-ranking officers in the US Navy. He was the first American in the Vietnam Way, he was in charge of navy POWs at the end of the War, he worked in the Pentagon, and is privy to many secrets.

### Millions would love to be in his position, but he can relate to verse 18—“the greater my wisdom, the greater my grief”! At age 88, he is very quiet about the wisdom he’s gained—and very disillusioned with what he knows.

Pain

### Solomon was as well. Solomon knew more than anyone about nearly anything, but found it like chasing wind.

Doubt to Pride

### Perhaps this is why many today such as the new atheists take pride in their doubt, though that leads to pride!

(Unsatisfied with intellectualism, he turned to an “eat, drink & be merry” lifestyle but learned that…)

# II. Pleasure doesn’t satisfy (2:1-3).

MP

[Play and partying isn’t the ultimate source of fulfillment.]

## Chuck Swindoll aptly describes Solomon’s lifestyle (read LOTRESG (Living on the Ragged Edge Study Guide), 10.

Bohol Air

### “Fast-lane living is not limited to Century Twenty citizens. Solomon cut that swath centuries ago. Pushing aside all restraints, ignoring every twinge of guilt, the man set out on a quest for pleasure that would make Harrah’s of Reno, the Playboy Club, and thus splashy lifestyle at Vegas pale into insignificance. Solomon’s world was a cafeteria of pleasure. Hedonism was *never* pursued with greater commitment. When he laughed, it was nothing short of an uproar. When he drank, it was with limitless intensity. His voluptuous sexual escapades knew no bounds. Even his meals became lavish, luxurious feasts. The sensual lure of self-gratification was never embraced with greater determination. He wrote the script for “Wine, Women, and Song.” No project was too lavish, no dream a mere fantasy, no feeling remained a mental image. We’re talking maximum involvement! And, as we shall discover, maximum emptiness.”

### In other words, we may think that the pursuit of pleasure in our 21st century is unparalleled. It is not!

## Solomon lists three means of pleasure which he personally experienced:

### Solomon tried pleasure in humor (2:2).

Humor

#### I like humor (show slides).

Stupid, Moses, Baby

#### Is this an outright discouragement from having a good sense of humor? If not, then what?

#### A man once went to a counselor to help him with his depression. Over the weeks the counselor tried many attempts to help him get out of his depression, but nothing worked. The man repeatedly came into his office with his head hanging low. Finally, one week the counselor advised, “Actually, my last bit of advice is this. Last week I took my family to the circus where we saw Garbonzo the clown. He is the funniest person I have ever seen. Why don’t you buy a ticket and go to the show yourself?” The man still kept his head low and said, “I *am* Garbonzo the Clown!” Emptiness!

Garbonzo

#### What matters is what we laugh at. As the poet Goethe noted, “By nothing do men show their character more than by the things they laugh at.”

Goethe

### Solomon tried pleasure in wine (2:3a).

3 wine slides

Wine

#### Personally, I’m not a drinker—partly because my mother is an alcoholic—but most adults try to find some satisfaction in drinking.

#### Wine jokes can remind us of the joy and wine, but ultimately it’s fleeting too.

### Solomon tried pleasure in foolishness (2:3b).

Foolish-ness

#### We have our thrill seekers today—whether on rides or body piercings…

#### Solomon tried his own types of frivolous lifestyle antics, but found them all meaningless.

(Solomon, unfulfilled with pursuing pleasure, turned to building great works, and came to the same conclusion…)

# III. Projects don’t satisfy (2:4-6).

MP

[Building stuff is also a profitless pursuit.]

## His greatest project was the most magnificent temple ever built!

Temple

## Solomon built homes for himself (2:4a; 1 Kings 7:1-12).

Vineyards

Homes

## Solomon planted vineyards for himself (2:4b; Song of Solomon 8:10-11).

## Solomon made gardens and parks for himself (2:5a).

## Solomon produced food for himself (2:5b).

Gardens

Food

## Solomon built irrigation ponds for himself (2:6; Neh. 2:14; 3:15-16).

Ponds

## Did you notice in verses 4-8 what phrase appears most?

Most used word

### Yes! He said, “I did all these things ‘for myself’” over and over.

• I

• PRIDE

### In verses 4-8 he mentions himself 35 times—but never once mentions God.

(Solomon also had possessions so numerous that he was the richest man in the world, but he discovered that…)

MP

# IV. Possessions don’t satisfy (2:7-8).

Winning

[Owning stuff isn’t where it’s at either.]

## Solomon had numerous servants/slaves (2:7a; 1 Kings 4:22-23; 10:4-7).

2:7

Title

Title

Title

Title

Title

### Many of these slaves operated his fleet of ships (1 Kings 9:26-28).

## Solomon possessed more flocks and herds than anyone in Israel's history (2:7b).

Flocks

1 Kings 10:14-15

### Sheep and goats provided wool, meat, and milk more than anyone would ever need.

More Flocks

### He had 40,000 stalls of horses and 12,000 horsemen (1 Kings 4:26)!

## Solomon had money for any material desire (2:8a; 1 Kings 10:14,15, 27).

Money

### 1 Kings 10:14-15 notes, “Each year Solomon received about 25 tons of gold. This did not include the additional revenue he received from merchants and traders, all the kings of Arabia, and the governors of the land.”

### 1 Kings 10:27 says that “The king made silver as plentiful in Jerusalem as stone. And valuable cedar timber was as common as the sycamore-fig trees that grow in the foothills of Judah.”

Money =Happiness

## Solomon had musicians for his aesthetic desires (2:8b).

Musicians

## Solomon had 1000 women for his sexual desires (2:8c; 1 Kings 11:1-8).

1000

### Here is a picture of them (oops, wrong picture)!

Old ladies

### They turned his heart away.

Turned

### He dispelled the lie that more women = more happiness

Cake

(All his wisdom, projects, and possessions gave him enormous power, but he discovered that…)

# V. Power doesn’t satisfy (2:9).

MP

[Becoming “great” with incredible influence over others doesn’t cut it.]

## Why do so many men seek power? Honestly, I wonder why so many people want to be a head of state—or corporate president or top leader in any way. Sure, there are perks that come with leadership, but this always comes with a price tag too!

## No one had ever been more powerful than Solomon.

Title

(So how did *Solomon* sum up all that he learned in this passage today?)

# Conclusion

### Solomon concluded that although he could buy anything his heart desired and indulge in any pleasure (2:10), it was all a profitless and empty pursuit (2:11).

2:10-11

### So how can we sum up what Solomon said in today’s text? Our pursuits never profit (MI).

MI

#### They are all like a breath, wind, or vapor.

Hebel

#### We have seen five pursuits today as a list of stuff that Hughes and Solomon tried and found wanting!

Hebel

3 slides

5 Ps

• Hughes

#### *Hebel* means not vanity but futile or without substance.

29:13

### Today in my Bible reading I noticed that two 29:13 have opposite pursuits. We either fake seeking God while actually seeking self (Isa.) or seek Him and find Him (Jer.).

### What steps in Solomon's direction in your life need to be reversed?

Which way?

### Prayer

Black

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

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

### He has already started his book with the theme of the fleeting nature of everything (1:2).

### He then showed this in the many cycles of life where things don’t really change after ceaseless revolutions (1:3-11).

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### We try Solomon’s same profitless pursuits in our day.

### It’s nice to have a list of the stuff that ultimately doesn’t satisfy!

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

### We have entered the “Golden Age” of Israel’s history. Solomon’s father, David, has won the battles on every side.

### The result? Energy and money need not be spent so much on warfare, so peace and prosperity abounded on every side!

# Questions

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Text

# Possible Illustrations

### Listen to the talk show hosts like Stephen Colbert. He “is an American political satirist, writer, comedian, television host, and actor” (Wikipedia). He hosts Comedy Central's *The Colbert Report*, a satirical news show where he makes fun of about everyone who disagrees with him.” Empty laughter!

### Solomon tried pleasure in foolishness (2:3b).

Foolish-ness

#### Back when I was young, streaking was in style. We even had a streaker at my high school graduation—a man who ran across the stage naked!

# Possible Applications

### Text

**Profitless Pursuits**

***Ecclesiastes 1:12–2:11***

Solomon shows the transience of all human achievement and recommends the enjoyment of life and fear of God to warn others not to see work as an end in itself (1:12–6:9).

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

# *Exegetical Idea:* The result *of* Solomon’s worldly pursuits was that they did not satisfy*.*

# I. No human pursuit satisfies (1:12-15).

## As king, Solomon had the ideal position to investigate the value of human achievement (1:12).

## Solomon came to three conclusions concerning all human achievement (1:13-15).

### Every pursuit brings grief (1:13).

### Every pursuit expends effort with no lasting results (1:14).

### Every pursuit doesn’t really improve things (1:15).

# II. Solomon lists several of his pursuits that did not satisfy (1:16–2:11).

## Prudence doesn’t satisfy (1:16-18).

### Solomon's wisdom was unsurpassed by anyone of his time and perhaps by anyone in history (1:16; cf. 1 Kings 4:29-34).

### b. His pursuit of wisdom (human intellect), madness (foolish ideas) and folly (pleasures) resulted in frustration (1:17).

### Even when he achieved wisdom it was accompanied with mental grief and emotional pain (1:18).

## Pleasure doesn’t satisfy (2:1-3).

### Solomon tried pleasure in humor (2:2).

### Solomon tried pleasure in wine (2:3a).

### Solomon tried pleasure in foolishness (2:3b).

## Projects do not satisfy (2:4-6).

### Solomon built homes for himself (2:4a; cf. 1 Kings 7:1-12).

### Solomon planted vineyards for himself (2:4b; cf. Song 8:10, 11).

### Solomon made gardens and parks for himself (2:5a).

### Solomon had food production for himself (2:5b).

### Solomon built irrigation ponds for himself (2:6; cf. Neh. 2:14; 3:15,16).

## Possessions do not satisfy (2:7-8).

### Solomon had numerous servants/slaves (2:7a).

#### Many of these slaves operated his fleet of ships (1 Kings 9:26-28).

#### The amount of daily food required to feed all of these servants was enormous (1 Kings 4:22-23; 10:4-7).

### Solomon possessed more flocks and herds than anyone in Israel's history (2:7b).

#### He had 40,000 stalls of horses and 12,000 horsemen (1 Kings 4:26)!

#### This was in direct disobedience to the Law (Deut. 17:16).

### Solomon had incalculable money for any material desire (2:8a; 1 Kings 10:14, 15, 27).

#### Many even added to his wealth (1 Kings 10:10, 23-25)!

#### This was in direct disobedience to the Law (Deut. 17:17b).

### Solomon had musicians for his aesthetic desires (2:8b).

### Solomon had a harem for his sexual desires (2:8c; cf. 1 Kings 11:1-8).

## Power doesn’t satisfy (2:9).

## Solomon's conclusion is that all the preceding pursuits brought no ultimate satisfaction or lasting value (2:10-11).

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

The listeners will seek God’s rather than their own pursuits.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: Howard Hughes had everything most people seek but lived a dejected, lonely, miserable life.

### Need:

#### Why was Hughes so unfulfilled? Was it because he had money? fame? possessions untold? No, it wasn't because he had or didn't have anything. It was because he sought satisfaction in the wrong pursuits.

#### What do you think satisfies *you*?

### Subject: What are the profitless pursuits that we should avoid?

### Background: Solomon had the same problem as Howard Hughes—he had everything but nothing. He says that none of our pursuits satisfy (1:12-15).

#### Every pursuit brings grief (1:13).

#### Every pursuit expends effort with no lasting results (1:14).

#### Every pursuit doesn’t really improve things (1:15).

### Text: Let's see what he pursued in Ecclesiastes 1:12–2:11.

# I. Prudence doesn’t satisfy (1:16-18).

## God gave Solomon wisdom because he requested it (1 Kings 3:3-14).

## Solomon's wisdom was unsurpassed by anyone of his time and perhaps by anyone in history (1:16; 1 Kings 4:29-34).

## His pursuit of wisdom (human intellect), madness and folly (i.e., foolish ideas and pleasures-BKC) resulted in frustration (1:17b) and even wisdom came with grief and pain (1:18).

# II. Pleasure doesn’t satisfy (2:1-3).

## Solomon tried pleasure in humor (2:2).

## Solomon tried pleasure in wine (2:3a).

## Solomon tried pleasure in foolishness (2:3b).

# III. Projects don’t satisfy (2:4-6).

## Solomon built homes for himself (2:4a; cf. 1 Kings 7:1-12).

## Solomon planted vineyards for himself (2:4b; cf. Song 8:10, 11).

## Solomon made gardens and parks for himself (2:5a).

## Solomon had food production for himself (2:5b).

## Solomon built irrigation ponds for himself (2:6; cf. Neh. 2:14; 3:15,16).

# IV. Possessions don’t satisfy (2:7-8).

## Solomon had numerous servants/slaves (2:7a; 1 Kings 4:22-23; 10:4-7).

## Solomon possessed more flocks and herds than anyone in Israel's history (2:7b).

## Solomon had money for any material desire (2:8a; 1 Kings 10:14,15, 27).

## Solomon had musicians for his aesthetic desires (2:8b).

## Solomon had 1000 women for his sexual desires (2:8c; 1 Kings 11:1-8).

# V. Power doesn’t satisfy (2:9).

## Why do so many men seek power?

## No one had ever been more powerful than Solomon.

Title

# Conclusion

### Solomon concluded that although he could buy anything his heart desired and indulge in any pleasure (2:10), it was all a profitless and empty pursuit (2:11).

### Now how can *we* sum up all that Solomon learned in this passage today? Our pursuits never profit (MI).

### Today in my Bible reading I noticed that two 29:13 have opposite pursuits.

### What steps in Solomon's direction in your life need to be reversed?



**Rick Griffith**

13 July 2014

Message 2 of 17

**Profitless Pursuits**

***Ecclesiastes 1:12–2:11***

# Introduction

### Howard Hughes had everything most people seek but lived a dejected, lonely, miserable life.

### What are the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ pursuits that we should avoid?

### Solomon had the same problem as Howard Hughes—he had everything but nothing. He says that none of our pursuits satisfy (1:12-15).

#### Every pursuit brings grief (1:13).

#### Every pursuit expends effort with no lasting results (1:14).

#### Every pursuit doesn’t really improve things (1:15).

# I. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ doesn’t satisfy (1:16-18).

## Solomon's wisdom was unsurpassed by anyone of his time and perhaps by anyone in history (1:16; 1 Kings 4:29-34).

## His pursuit of wisdom (human intellect), madness and folly (i.e., foolish ideas and pleasures-BKC) resulted in frustration (1:17b) and even wisdom came with grief and pain (1:18).

# II. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ doesn’t satisfy (2:1-3).

## Solomon tried pleasure in humor (2:2).

## Solomon tried pleasure in wine (2:3a).

## Solomon tried pleasure in foolishness (2:3b).

# III. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ don’t satisfy (2:4-6).

## Solomon built homes for himself (2:4a; cf. 1 Kings 7:1-12).

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## Solomon built irrigation ponds for himself (2:6; cf. Neh. 2:14; 3:15,16).

# IV. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ don’t satisfy (2:7-8).

## Solomon had numerous servants/slaves (2:7a; 1 Kings 4:22-23; 10:4-7).

## Solomon possessed more flocks and herds than anyone in Israel's history (2:7b).

## Solomon had money for any material desire (2:8a; 1 Kings 10:14,15, 27).

## Solomon had musicians for his aesthetic desires (2:8b).

## Solomon had 1000 women for his sexual desires (2:8c; 1 Kings 11:1-8).

# V. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ doesn’t satisfy (2:9).

## Why do so many men seek power?

## No one had ever been more powerful than Solomon.

Title

# Conclusion

### Solomon concluded that although he could buy anything his heart desired and indulge in any pleasure (2:10), it was all a profitless and empty pursuit (2:11).

### Our \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ never \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Main Idea).

### Two texts at 29:13 have opposite pursuits.

### What steps in Solomon's direction in your life need to be reversed?

**Thought Questions**

1. Read the passage aloud. Contrast man’s and God’s view on the five pursuits:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Man’s View** | **God’s View** |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |

1. Which verse in the passage can you best relate to? Share your story.

Text

Text

1. How does God want you respond to this passage in own Christian experience?

Text

Text