

# ETERNITY IN THE HEART

## *Ecclesiastes...The Search for a Christian Worldview*



## THE PLEASURE TEST *Ecclesiastes 2*

*“With everything imaginable working in his favor, at first it seemed Solomon would gratefully follow God. His prayer of dedication for the temple...is one of the most majestic ever prayed. Yet by the end of his reign Solomon had squandered away nearly every advantage.”*—Philip Yancey, *Disappointment with God*

Great King Solomon’s search for meaning is quickly revealed in the text of Ecclesiastes. His unique position as wise and affluent ruler gave him resources for testing every life experience. He recites his quest via favor, fun, folly, and frustration—coming at last, to faith as the foundation. His worldview was that for which many slave today—to have the ability to explore every channel of gratification. And like many today, he found that life without God can only eventuate in despair.



### I. PLEASURES ARE MEANINGLESS (2:1-11)

- A. Pleasure-seeking (vs. 1-3)
- B. Project pursuits (vs. 4-9)
- C. Personal enrichment (vs. 10, 11)

*“The river of pleasure, though it flows through lush meadows and beautiful glens, contains no healing for the soul.”*—Billy Graham

### II. WISDOM AND FOLLY ARE MEANINGLESS (2:12-16)

- A. Wisdom, madness and folly from a human standpoint (vs. 12-14)
- B. The prospect of death and the meaning of life (vs. 15, 16)

*“He that thinks himself the happiest man really is so; but he that thinks himself the wisest is usually the greatest fool.”*  
—Charles Caleb Colton (1780-1832)

### III. TOIL IS MEANINGLESS (2:17-26)

- A. The folly and waste of laying up earthly wealth (vs. 17-23)
- B. Present gratification as the only human conclusion (vs. 24-26)

*“There is a burden of care in getting riches; fear in keeping them; temptation in using them; guilt in abusing them; sorrow in losing them; and a burden of account at last to be given concerning them.”* —Matthew Henry

**SOLOMON AND THE VOICE OF THE SOUL** The human soul—sometimes called “the seat of the emotions”—is not the sole base for all that we are. Comprised basically of *mind, will, emotions, conscience, and humanness*, it comes up lacking without the *spirit*. Someone suggested that each human being has a God-shaped vacuum that only Jesus Christ can fill through redemption. King Solomon’s search for meaning, in spite of having all the right stuff to do it with, could only end in disappointment. Even with his insightful wisdom he could not reason or experience himself to fulfillment. All was a “chasing after the wind.” His evaluations of meaninglessness in many things were not fully true. There is good in laughter, learning, and labor, but minus regeneration and God in the spirit, they cannot be fulfilling.

### FOR REFLECTION...

1. Augustine wrote of God, “Thou hast created us for thyself, and our heart cannot be quieted till it may find repose in thee.” What do you think that he meant by this statement?
2. Solomon’s indictments of wisdom, knowledge, pleasure, projects, and achievements seem unusually negative. To what end was he taking his argument?