

Chapter summary – [Solomon’s] *intellectual faculties having failed him, the author turned to pleasure as a possible source of complete satisfaction. He provided himself with wine, women, and song, with luxuries and buildings and gardens. And although these brought him pleasures for the moment, they also brought him no enduring satisfaction, for he was always seeking something new to do.*¹

§ § § § § § § § § § § § § § §

II. In Solomon’s search for an answer to his question he examines secularism—but finds that it only leads to vanity, (Ch. 1:12-2:26)

2. HE INVESTIGATED PLEASURABLE EXPERIENCES, (2:1-11)

1) He investigated festive joy, (1, 2)

 **INTERPRETATION:**

¹ **I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you** (I will see if I can find lasting satisfaction for filling this seemingly infinite void), **with mirth** (festive joy); **therefore enjoy pleasure**”² (whatever feels good or looks good, do it [cp. Gen. 31:27; Neh. 8:12]); **but surely,** (I found that), **this also was vanity,** (Solomon says that he didn’t find any “lasting” value in this attempt. I might as well chase after the wind as to think merriment will fill this grievous void in my life).

² **I said of laughter—“Madness!”** (“madness” is related to a fool, so he’s saying to us that a fool wouldn’t even be satisfied with constant laughter); **and of mirth, “What does it accomplish?”** (of any lasting value? The little value it does supply dissolves quickly like a vapor, like soap bubbles that leave nothing behind [Pro. 14:13; 21:17])

F APPLICATION:

Now he's off on another investigation! “Solomon decides to laugh his way through life: "Laughter, I'll try that! Bring on the jesters, show me the clowns, the comedians! Let's hear those funny one-liners . . . let's laugh at those comedy acts, those wild 'n' crazy little sitcoms!" And out they came with their silly burlesque skits, their slapstick routines, their funny-face masks, their jokes, and their endless stream of

NOTES:

 **COMMENTARY:**

¹ Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Old Testament*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1962, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

² Eight times in Ecclesiastes, Solomon used the Hebrew word meaning “pleasure,” so it is obvious that he did not consider God a celestial spoilsport [or kill-joy], who watched closely to make certain nobody was having a good time. (Wiersbe, *Be Satisfied*, Logos Library System) Pleasure has a purpose, a good purpose, but is that purpose to fill man’s deepest void? Is pleasure to fulfill man’s greatest inner longings? No.

zany humor. Solomon paid good money, and plenty of it, to get ultimate pleasure: "Bring on the fun 'n' games-let's live it up' After all, it feels good to laugh and have a great time in life. Surely, that's going to bring me the satisfaction I long for. Maybe that's the secret."

But it didn't. (v. 2)³

Today's world is pleasure-mad. Millions of people will pay almost any amount of money to "buy experiences" and temporarily escape the burdens of life. While there is nothing wrong with innocent fun, the person who builds his or her life only on seeking pleasure is bound to be disappointed in the end.⁴

2) He investigated drinking, (3)

³ **I searched in my heart how to gratify** (stimulate and cheer), **my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom** (i.e., while being careful not to become stone drunk and loose my wits), **and how to lay hold on** (or embrace), **folly** (foolishness), **till I might see what was good** (beneficial or advantageous), **for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives**, (is alcohol the answer to man's void).

3) He investigated building projects [Before he gives and answer], (4-6)

⁴ **I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards.**

⁵ **I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.**

⁶ **I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove.**

4) [Still, before Solomon gives and answer], He investigated possessions, (7-11)

⁷ **I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me.** (I had the biggest spread anyone had ever seen.)

⁸ **I also gathered for myself silver** (so much that it was as common as stones [1 Ki. 10:27]), **and gold and the special** (i.e., rare and exotic), **treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men** (a harem of women), **and musical instruments of all kinds.**

⁹ **So** (in the process of all these investigations [OK, here comes the answer]), **I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me**, (I didn't forget what the purpose of all of this investigation was all about and kept my mind clear and focused on the goal [sounds good so far]).

³ Charles Swindoll, *Living on the Raged Edge*, (Texas: Word Books), 1985, p. 43-44.

⁴ Wiersbe, *Be Satisfied*, Logos Library System

¹⁰ **Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them**, (if I wanted it, I acquired it or experienced it [A man who had everything]). **I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure** (whether passion or ambition, whether easy or difficult, whether cheap or costly, whether common or rare), **for my heart rejoiced** (took great delight), **in all my** (investigative), **labor; and** (while it lasted), **this** (delight I experienced), **was my reward from all my labor**. [It still sounds positive... We may have a winner here.]

¹¹ **Then** (reflecting on my investigative undertaking), **I** (stood back and), **looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor** (energy), **in which I had toiled; and** (my conclusion was...[drum role please!]), **indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind**. (AGH!!!) **There was no** (permanent), **profit under the sun**, (lasting satisfaction eluded me again. I might as well chase after the wind as to think festive joy, drinking, music, sex, building projects or acquiring possessions will be able to fill this void in my life.)

F APPLICATION:

The journey was a pleasure, but the final destination brought pain. “Success is full of promise until men get it,” said the American preacher Henry Ward Beecher, “and then it is a last-year’s nest from which the birds have flown.” [The party is over and so is the pleasure it brought.]

We’ll never acquire or experience all that Solomon did, and if all that did not bring lasting satisfaction, fulfillment in his life...what hope do we have in the little bit we have doing so?!

We must not conclude [though] that Solomon was condemning [pleasurable experiences or] work itself, because work is a blessing from God. Adam had work to do in the Garden even before he sinned. “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (Gen. 2:15, NIV). In the Book of Proverbs, Solomon exalted diligence and condemned laziness; for he knew that any honest employment can be done to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). But work *alone* cannot satisfy the human heart, no matter how successful that work may be (Isa. 55:2).

This helps us to understand why many achievers are unhappy people. Ambrose Bierce called achievement “the death of endeavor and the birth of disgust.” This is often the case. The overachiever is often a person who is trying to escape himself or herself by becoming a workaholic, and this only results in disappointment. When workaholics retire, they often feel useless and sometimes die from lack of meaningful activity.

Solomon tested life, and his heart said, “Vanity!”⁵

- Are you trying to “*buy experiences*” to help you find some temporary happiness or peace of mind? I’m not talking about your vaca-

⁵ Wiersbe, *Be Satisfied*, Logos Library System.

tion or a good balance of some innocent fun. I'm talking about the person who needs to buy some experience in order to survive. One who needs these experiences like a drug addict needs his fix. Are you addicted to these experiences? If you don't get some kind of a fix, do you start crashing? If you are, you are trying to find happiness and cope with life in a way that will never satisfy. You are trying to fill a void that nothing but God can fill. God doesn't give you a lot of little things to fill this void. He gives you one major thing; an intimate and eternal relationship with Himself, (initiated by following #1 above). Everything you experience without God is temporary and disappointing. Everything you experience with God has eternal significance and thus always inspires hope. Spend your time and other resource on getting to know Him. You will probably find that your life doesn't become any simpler, but you will find that your attitudes and motivations concerning life will change. In this change you will find true happiness and peace. You'll find it because you are no longer looking to things "*under the sun*" (all that's on this earth), but to the One who lives "*above the sun*" (God, our Creator in Heaven). God intentionally created the void so it would drive us to Him, in order to fill it. He won't allow anyone or anything else to fill it.

- Talk to a friend, your spouse or your children about the things that sensual pleasures promise to supply. Talk about the truth and the lies concerning the promise. Talk about how the sensual pleasures can be used for good or bad like a credit card, (if indeed it can be, as some things can't be used for good). Talk about what God could supply that the sensual pleasure could not. Talk about why we are so quick to turn to the sensual pleasure rather than to God. Even though we know that the sensual pleasure will lack staying power, blind us to reality and cause us to put on a mask. Knowing deep down inside that God is the only real hope. Talk about why it is so easy to turn to what we know will not satisfy and ignore God who will. After you discuss these questions, each of you make a commitment to God on how you will try to develop a stronger relationship with Him. Also, ask your friend, spouse, or child to keep you in prayer and accountable.

Let me give you three insights about sensual pleasures.

1. ***The world and its sensual pleasures hold out promises that lack staying power.*** For instance, the marijuana (or some other drug), that someone offers you comes with a promise. "Take this and you can leave your problems and the world behind you. This will make you feel great. This will make things better. This will help you cope."

And when you take it, it does make you feel good. You do find that you can escape your world and enter into another. The promise holds true...temporally. The problem is that it doesn't have staying power, so it takes more of the same. And so it gets more

expensive. By and by you start caring less and less about the game you're playing of keeping your habit secret, or the job you're trying to keep, or the grades you're trying to maintain, or the home you're trying to run, or the business, or the practice, or the marriage you're trying to hold together, or the kids you're trying to raise. And all the while, the feelgood promise lacks more and more of its staying power. As one user admitted . . . , "I could never get a feeling as good as the first time, but I kept trying."

Illicit sensual pleasures hold out promises that lack additional staying power because there is always a bad taste afterwards to deal with.

2. ***The world and its sensual pleasures offer to open our eyes, but in reality they blind us to the things that we have or should set our sights on.*** They say like the devil did to Adam and Eve in the garden, "If you do this, your eyes will be open. You'll see a new and exciting world that you never even knew existed. A world that you're missing out on." But, in fact, entering that world blinds you of all the things that are important and truly satisfying. Entering into the world's sensual pleasures is like a black hole in outer space that sucks everything you have into it. Your time, your resources, your energy, your creativity, your conscience, your happiness, your dreams, your hope, your family, your future. How many times have you said, "If I could only do it over again."
3. ***The world and its sensual pleasures disillusion us, making us cover-up artists.*** We give everyone the impression that we've got life by the tail. Or, we tell everyone how happy we would be if we only had a certain something. Then, we get it, and we're still not satisfied. It lets us down. It doesn't fulfill our expectations and now we feel we have to fake it. We wear a mask so we won't be humiliated before everyone, as well as collapse inside. We create a cover-up because we refuse to tell ourselves and others the truth about our emptiness. How easy it is to forget that, "If it feels good, do it" has a flip side, which is neither attractive nor satisfying.

Sensual pleasures that are godly (i.e., legal, moral, ethical and timely), are more than OK, they are great! They are God designed. They are instruments that God provides us, for recreation, refreshment and encouragement. They are like the occasional oasis that the weary traveler comes across on his long and burdensome journey. Godly pleasures are what we need as we journey through our time on this earth. God provides pleasures, but He has not designed them, nor will He allow them to fill a void, an emptiness that He alone wants and can fill. God especially never meant for sensual pleasures to become our gods. They are a quick pick me up; nothing more, and nothing less. They have a place, but not God's place! As important as they are, they are never all important. We must live above the sun, not below it!

3. HE REEVALUATES EARTHLY WISDOM AND FOLLY, (2:12-16)

NOTES:

INTERPRETATION:

¹² **Then** (following my investigation of pleasure), **I turned myself to consider** (again), **wisdom and madness and folly; for** (the reason being), **what can the man do who succeeds the king** (what different or more could anyone who follows me be able to do)?—**Only what he has already done**, (at best he could only repeat what Solomon has done).

¹³ **Then I saw that wisdom** (even though it is worldly), **excels** (or has an advantage over), **folly** (foolish pleasure [even though it does not provide the answer to what makes life worth living]), **as light excels** (or is more advantageous than), **darkness**, (you can see what you are doing at least in the light, you know where you are going).

¹⁴ **The wise man's eyes are in his head** (he sees what is ahead of him and can make a wise choice concerning how he will meet it—making the best of his opportunities), **but the fool** (on the other hand), **walks in darkness**, (he's blind to what lies ahead, he stumbles through life and misses out on a lot of its good opportunities).

F APPLICATION:

A serviceman stationed at the Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, tells about an inspection that was being conducted by a full colonel. Everything went smoothly until the officer came to a soldier who had overlooked one small detail about his uniform.

The colonel stopped, looked the man up and down and snapped, "Button that pocket, trooper!"

The soldier, more than a little rattled, stammered, "Right now, sir?"

"Of course, right now!" was the reply.

Whereupon the soldier very carefully reached over and buttoned the flap on the colonel's shirt pocket.

**Faults in others I can see;
But praise the Lord,
There's none in me.**

We are sometimes not only blind to our own faults, but we are blind to many other things as well. Have you ever said or heard said:

- He came around that corner blind as a bat.
- You're blind if you think this guy really loves you!
- You're blind if you think this world owes you a living!
- You're blind if you think life is always fair.
- Don't be so blind to the facts! Get out of your dream world.
- He was so blind that he didn't even know that he was looking a gift horse in the mouth.

That is what walking in darkness is. You and I have all done it.

Solomon is telling us here that the wise person has a decided advantage over the fool. He is not blind to the real world and the opportunities around him. He doesn't stick his foot in his mouth as often. He doesn't make a practice of saying things that he regrets later. It's hard to catch him off guard. He rarely misses a good opportunity. He is not often taken advantage of. The wise person is more than likely to make something of himself in society; be more influential, prosperous and envied. The wise person definitely has an advantage.

This is having your eyes in your head.

Yet (even so), **I myself** (who exercise wisdom), **perceived that the same event** (death), **happens to them all**, (the wise and foolish alike).

¹⁵ **So I said in my heart, "As it happens to the fool, it also happens to me** (he dies and I die), **and why was I then more wise** (even if I capitalized on my opportunities, what advantage did it provide me? If I should gain the whole world yet die having lived a life under the sun, what have I gained above the fool?)?" **Then I said in my heart, "This also is vanity**, (being the wisest person in the world does nothing in filling my inner emptiness and answering the question as to what makes life worth living)."

¹⁶ **For** (another thing), **there is no more remembrance of the wise** (after he dies), **than of the fool forever, since all that now is** (what is now taking place in our life and through us), **will be forgotten in the days to come**, (when we die so does the memory of our person and our contribution to life). **And** (then), **how does a wise man die? As the fool**, (in the end, living under the earth, there is no difference)!

F APPLICATION:

Matthew Henry says commenting on this passage, "What was much talked of in one generation is, in the next, as if it had never been."⁶

Solomon recognizes that wisdom is better than folly on one hand, but on the other is it? Seeing that the wise and the fool all die alike and are remembered equally well in the end—who is really better off?! The wise and responsible person who has exhibited self discipline, hard work, personal sacrifice and fought to build and maintain his integrity—or—the foolish and irresponsible person who basically didn't care about anything, saw life as one big party and just let it all hang out!

The question here is:

- What's the difference ***if I get good grades at school or not?!***
- What's the difference ***if I ever go to college or not?!***
- What's the difference ***if remain a virgin or not?!***
- What's the difference ***if I take drugs or not?!***
- What's the difference ***if I stay faithful to my mate or not?!***

⁶ Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

- What's the difference *if I work hard at my job or not?!*
- What's the difference *if I save any money or not?!*
- What's the difference *if I am up to my ears in debt or not?!*
- What's the difference *if I treat my friends right or not?!*
- What's the difference *if I raise my kids right or not?!*
- What's the difference *if I plan for retirement or not?!*

What's the difference! It's all vanity!! What's all vanity? Wisdom and folly that is what...? Lived **UNDER** the sun. God says that fear is the beginning of wisdom? What's up with that? That is wisdom that is lived, not under the sun, **but ABOVE the sun**; wisdom that is from above. There is no folly that is lived above the sun. There are no godly fools.

Our Lord Jesus describes wisdom that is lived above the sun this way.

Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. (Matthew 16:24-27)

Our being remembered long after we die is not all that important. Remembrance is primary for those who live under the sun. It's not primary to those who live above it. What is primary is being prepared to go home to heaven when we die, and that takes heavenly wisdom.

What difference does it make if I do this or that? It makes all the difference in the world when I live above the sun.

4. HIS FINAL EVALUATION OF ALL HIS PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS, (2:17-23)

INTERPRETATION:

¹⁷ **Therefore** (as a result of my final evaluation of the many aspects of my investigation and especially seeing we all die alike), **I hated life** (I became disgusted with it; I saw no value in it; I didn't care if I lived or died), **because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for** (after all the hours and money spent, after all the scrimping and hard work, after all the plans and expectations, I came to the conclusion that), **all is vanity and grasping for the wind**, (it was all filled with emptiness and futility—it still left a significant void in my life; I still needed more).

¹⁸ **Then I** (also concluded that even though I chose to exercise worldly wisdom rather than folly during my life, I), **hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me**, (the one who will inherit the fruit of my labor after I die).

- ¹⁹ **And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool**, (I chose wisdom, but what choice will he make)? **Yet** (regardless of his choice), **he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity**, (nothing but wind, futility, emptiness, dissatisfaction).
- ²⁰ **Therefore** (because there was no permanence in the fruit of my life), **I turned my heart** (from the hope that I anticipated my labor would achieve), **and** (instead), **despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun**, (What good is my labor? What have I really accomplished? The fruit of my labor is here today, but will be gone tomorrow. This stinks!)
- ²¹ **For** (the reason it stinks is that), **there is a man** (such as me), **whose labor is with** (worldly), **wisdom, knowledge, and skill** (i.e., success); **yet** (after he spends his entire life building his personal empire—and can finally look back upon his wondrous achievements), **he must leave his heritage to a man who has not labored for it**, (and thus one who can never appreciate it like you, who will never sacrifice for it like you, who will never develop it like you, who will never care for it like you, who may not want even anything to do with it, unlike you). **This also is vanity** (futile, meaningless), **and a great evil**, (that one should toil so long and hard only to have his work end with him).

F APPLICATION:

After forty years of hard work, Smith retired in the early '50's with a comfortable fortune of \$90,000 which he had gained through courage, diligence, initiative, skill, devotion to duty, thrift, efficiency, shrewd investment, and the death of an uncle who left him \$89,999.50.

Get the picture? How can anyone miss it? Work, work, work. Think. Compete. Strategize. Plan. Sacrifice. Travel. Worry. Skip vacations. Add hours. Increase responsibility. Scratch the right back. Invest. Save. Risk. Work, work, work! Then, when everything is in place, when all the ducks are in a row, wham!⁷ You die and it all goes to some fool whose life savings amounts to 50 cents.

A little girl said to her mother, "Mom, you know that vase you said had been handed down from generation to generation?"

"Yes," her mother replied.

"Well, this generation just dropped it."

Solomon says this stinks. You work your entire life to make something of yourself and for yourself, and in one moment of time it's obliterated. Smashed to pieces.

- ²² (Solomon asks a rhetorical question next,) **For what** (of any permanence), **has man for all his labor** (his human efforts), **and**

⁷ Swindoll, *Living on the Edge*, p. 58

(what of any permanence has a man) **for the striving of his heart** (for the hopes and dreams he has embraced), **with which he has toiled under the sun?** (None! There is no permanence in it. It all comes to a frustrating end. It is an injustice to all that a man is, and has lived and died for.)

²³ **For** (if a man is deprived of significance, and LASTING fulfillment), **all his days** (lived under the sun), **are sorrowful** (are filled with one disappointment after another), **and his work burdensome** (a pain in the butt, joyless, simply a necessary evil); **even in the night his heart takes no rest**, (worrying about his work or dreading about returning to his work). **This also is vanity**, (good-for-nothing, empty).

F APPLICATION:

This is great stuff isn't it?! It just sort of makes you want to throw up. Just remember to stay focused though, God is trying to get something across to us. There is something here that God wants us to understand that will make our present life (as well as our eternity), better if we see it and apply it. OK, back we go to the despair.

5. HIS ANSWER TO HIS INVESTIGATIONS, (2:17-23)

1) **What makes life profitable is not found in man and what he can do, (24a)**

INTERPRETATION:

²⁴ **Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink** (which is symbolic of the so called good life and the pleasures it offers), **and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor**, ([is a bad translation.] The Hebrew says, “It is *not good* for man that he should eat, and should make his soul see good” [Another way of saying it is] “It is not good that a man should feast himself, and falsely make as though his soul were happy”; he thus refers to a false *pretending* of happiness *acquired by and for one's self*;) ⁸

⁸ **24.** *English Version* gives a seemingly Epicurean sense, contrary to the general scope. The *Hebrew*, literally is, “It is *not good* for man that he should eat,” &c., “and should make his soul see good” (or “*show* his soul, that is, himself, happy”), &c. [WEISS]. According to HOLDEN and WEISS, Ec 3:12, 22 differ from this verse in the text and meaning; here he means, “It is not good that a man should feast himself, and falsely make as though his soul were happy”; he thus refers to a false *pretending* of happiness *acquired by and for one's self*; in Ec 3:12, 22, to *real seeing*, or *finding* pleasure *when God gives it*. There it is said to be *good* for a man to enjoy with satisfaction and thankfulness the blessings which God gives; here it is said *not* to be *good* to take an unreal pleasure to one's self by feasting, &c.

This also I saw—I perceived by experience that good (real pleasure) is not to be taken at will, but comes only from the hand of God [WEISS] (Ps 4:6; Is 57:19–21). Or as HOLDEN, “It is the appointment from the hand of God, that the sensualist has no solid satisfaction” (good). Jamieson; Fausset; and Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, Logos Library System.

2) What makes life profitable is found in God and what he can do through man or in spite of man, (24b)

This also (meaning the genuine good life and the lasting pleasures that I sought), **I saw** (having performed this investigation), **was** (not to be attained by my resources or will, but), **from** (what?), **the hand of God**, (Only God alone can provide man with what he hungers most for. A life that is full of labor and experiences that leave him personally fulfilled and at peace with himself, his fellow man, as well as his Creator. Only God alone can provide man with a life full of labor and experiences that remains behind him and that he carries into eternity with him as well.)

3) What makes life profitable is found in those who are saved and reunited with God, (25-26)

(1) A personal example, (25)

²⁵ **For** (think about it), **who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I**, (Solomon? And what did it get me? Nothing! Before God entered the picture and my life, it was all vanity, empty, futile, worthless. Finding what made life worth living and fulfilling was like grasping after the wind. I couldn't find it even with all of my resources).

(2) A divine principle, (26)

²⁶ **For God** (alone), **gives** (heavenly), **wisdom and knowledge and** (eternal), **joy to a man who is good** (i.e., forgiven and purified), **in His sight; but to the sinner** (the one who is unforgiven because he leaves God out of his life and chooses to live a life under the sun), **He** (God), **gives the** (life long), **work of gathering and collecting** (an inheritance), **that he may** (by God's unstoppable overseeing hand), **give to him who is good before God**, (who will see it as from the hand of God to be used for the glory of God). **This** (choosing to remain in one's sin, preferring to live under the sun, remain in one's sin), **also is vanity and grasping for the wind**, (it leads to hopelessness, futility).

F APPLICATION:

An anonymous author, who chose to disregard Jesus' admonition and live instead for the fleeting things of this world, penned the following lines in great remorse: "How foolishly I have employed myself! In what delusion has my life been passed! How I've wasted my life while the sun in its race and the stars in their courses have lent their beams-perhaps only to light me to damnation! I have pursued shadows and entertained myself with dreams. I have been treasuring up dust and sporting myself with the wind. I might have grazed with the beasts of the fields, or sung with the birds of the woods, to much better purposes than any for which I have lived. I am filled with emptiness and sorrow."

Are you asking the question, *"What's the difference if I _____ or not?"* Well if you are living under the sun, purely on a human level for human reasons, it may not matter a whole lot in the end.

Certainly exercising worldly wisdom will have its benefits, but they will still be short-term blessings. Even if you should gain the whole world, but lose your own soul, you have gained nothing and lost everything. God tells us that if we are going to ever find the meaning of life we first have to lose our life, surrender it to Him, (Matt. 16:25). God tells us that it is only as we first, find forgiveness of our sin through the work of Christ, and then allow Christ to live in and through us that we will find meaning, fulfillment in life, (living above the sun). God says through Solomon that you can live your life for yourself if you want (under the sun), but you are a fool if you do. Are you living life under or above the sun? Answer the question and back it up with sincere practical proof. Talk about this with others and work it through with them. If you want to live above the sun, share ways that you could do this and help each other to do so. Share with each other as days go by how you feel fulfilled by living above the sun and what you are learning.

NOTES: