

## Solomon Examines “Happiness”

We live in an age where people do not feel themselves bound by honor, commitment, and principle. Instead, they live their lives looking for what makes them “happy.” They will argue that all God really wants is for them to be happy, or if they are happy God must be as well.

The book of Ecclesiastes may be the single most applicable book of the Old Testament to our lives today. It is the account of Solomon’s search for truth and the purpose of our existence on this earth. It details the various ways and means by which he tested what had value in life and how it all brought him back to the conclusion that the ultimate purpose of a life that would not end empty (in vanity) is to: “Fear God, and keep his commandments” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Within his trials and studies, Solomon focuses one section on pleasure and happiness. Notice what he said: “I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.” But behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, “It is mad,” and of pleasure, “What use is it?” I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine... I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools... I bought male and female slaves... I had also great possessions of herds and flocks... I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the children of man. So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem... And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11).

Solomon examined the notion that the purpose of life was found in “happiness.” He luxuriated himself in all the things that brought him pleasure, yet he still found it to be empty. We must understand that a fulfilling purpose in life is not found in the happiness that the things of this world provide, whether that is possessions, sexuality, work, or other physical things. It is for this reason that so many people waste their lives looking for “true happiness” and never find it. Instead, true happiness with purpose is only found when I lay up treasures in Heaven (Matthew 6:19-21), seek after God’s will, and fulfill his word. This is the only measure of life that extends beyond this empty existence and leaves a man’s life full and complete. It is the measure of a “blessed” life (the term in the original Greek simply meaning “happy”) according to Jesus (Matthew 5:3-12) and David (Psalm 1:1-3).

Can we serve God and be happy? Absolutely. But we must observe, as Solomon did, that any happiness which leaves God and his will out of the picture is empty and will leave man feeling so. ~~ *Adam Cozort*