

Satisfaction Sold Separately

Ecclesiastes Part 8

Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:9 1-12-2014

Summary: Don't fret about corruption in government. And don't love money. Loving money decreases satisfaction. Plus, having money increases costs, takes away sleep, brings harm, and the money disappears when you need it most, resulting in darkness, sorrow, sickness, and anger (when greed is unfulfilled it causes anger). There is not as much injustice as it seems, because if God gives an unrighteous person money and possessions but not the ability to enjoy them, and gives a poor righteous person the gift of enjoyment, that is not unjust. So enjoy your lot by experiencing the good in what God has given you.

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Ecclesiastes 5:8 If you see oppression of the poor and perversion of justice and righteousness in the province, don't be astonished at the situation, because one official protects another official, and higher officials protect them. **9** The profit from the land is taken by all; the king is served by the field. **10** The one who loves money is never satisfied with money, and whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with income. This too is futile. **11** When good things increase, the ones who consume them multiply; what, then, is the profit to the owner, except to gaze at them with his eyes? **12** The sleep of the worker is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of the rich permits him no sleep. **13** There is a sickening tragedy I have seen under the sun: wealth kept by its owner to his harm. **14** That wealth was lost in a bad venture, so when he fathered a son, he was empty-handed. **15** As he came from his mother's womb, so he will go again, naked as he came; he will take nothing for his efforts that he can carry in his hands. **16** This too is a sickening tragedy: exactly as he comes, so he will go. What does the one gain who struggles for the wind? **17** What is more, he eats in darkness all his days, with much sorrow, sickness, and anger. **18** Here is what I have seen to be good: it is appropriate to eat, drink, and experience good in all the labor one does under the sun during the few days of his life God has given him, because that is his reward. **19** God has also given riches and wealth to every man, and He has allowed him to enjoy them, take his reward, and rejoice in his labor. This is a gift of God, **20** for he does not often consider the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with the joy of his heart.

6:1 Here is a tragedy I have observed under the sun, and it weighs heavily on humanity: 2 God gives a man riches, wealth, and honor so that he lacks nothing of all he desires for himself, but God does not allow him to enjoy them. Instead, a stranger will enjoy them. This is futile and a sickening tragedy. 3 A man may father a hundred children and live many years. No matter how long he lives, if he is not satisfied by good things and does not even have a proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. 4 For he comes in futility and he goes in darkness, and his name is shrouded in darkness. 5 Though a stillborn child does not see the sun and is not conscious, it has more rest than he. 6 And if he lives a thousand years twice, but does not experience happiness, do not both go to the same place? 7 All man's labor is for his stomach, yet the appetite is never satisfied. 8 What advantage then does the wise man have over the fool? What advantage is there for the poor person who knows how to conduct himself before others? 9 Better what the eyes see than wandering desire. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

Introduction

We have a video of opening presents at Christmas when Nikki was just one or two years old. In the box there was a bunch of tissue paper, and then some kind of clothes – socks or something like that. Nikki was so eager to get it open that she was just throwing the tissue paper, alternating hands so she could get it all out of there, and in the process threw the actual gift along with the paper without knowing it and found herself staring at an empty box. One of the primary purposes of the book of Ecclesiastes is to teach us how to avoid doing that with God's gifts. Very often we miss God's gifts for a host of reasons. Sometimes it is because we are distracted with disappointments and hardships. Painful things happen and we don't notice gifts from God because we are so focused on getting that hardship over with. Other times we miss His gifts because we want different gifts. We get so focused on the grass on the other side of the fence that we miss out on enjoying the pasture God gave us. In this section, Solomon is going to help us with both of those problems. First, the distraction of the disappointments in life. The example he uses is the problem of corrupt politicians.

Don't Let the Fall Get You Down

News Flash: Corruption in Politics

Ecclesiastes 5:8 If you see oppression of the poor and perversion of justice and righteousness in the province, don't be astonished at the situation, because one official protects another official, and higher officials protect them. 9 The profit from the land is taken by all; the king is served by the field.

The point of that is not to just complain about corruption in government. He is giving us a command. The command is in verse 8 – **Don't be astonished.** (Your Bible might say **surprised** or **amazed**.) That word means to get worked up or upset about something you didn't expect. To put this in our vernacular it is the same meaning as our phrase "freaked out." When you see political corruption, don't freak out over it. Don't get worked up. Don't get upset. Don't get angry. It is not something that should ruin your day or make you lose any sleep. This is the norm in a fallen, cursed, futile world. Politicians have power, power tends to corrupt, so don't be shocked when you find that a lot of the people who are in charge are corrupt. Of course that is going to happen. You do not have to like it. In fact, you should not like it. But it is not worth getting all worked up over. There are lots of things you don't like, but you don't get all upset about them. Cars need oil changes every few thousand miles. That stinks, but we don't lose sleep over it. If you buy a pair of running shoes and eventually they wear out and you have to replace them. That's a bummer. It is a bad situation that things wear out, and we don't like it, but we don't get all freaked out over it. We

just accept it as part of life in a fallen, cursed world. And when the guy you cannot stand gets elected, or you hear about a law that is totally unjust, or you find out there is corruption in the IRS, don't let that ruin your day. Of course those things are going to happen in a cursed, fallen, futile world. Just expect it and get on with your day. If you have power to act, then act. But the things that are out of your control – don't fret about those things.

And if you find that to be easier said than done, it is probably an indication that somewhere in your heart you have developed a belief that your ability to enjoy life is dependent upon the government operating in a certain way. You think you have to have a fair tax code or a reasonable health care system or strong economy in order to enjoy life. So when the politicians mess those things up, you can't take it in stride because you think your happiness is in jeopardy. But he is going to show us later how things like that do not diminish your ability to enjoy life – not even a little bit.

And you could say the same about any aspect of the fall. Yes, we live in a fallen world. But don't let the fall get you down. Don't be shocked when things go bad. Things are supposed to go bad in a cursed world – that is what curses are for. That is a reality, and it's bad, but it does not have to throw us off the track of joy and enjoyment of God's gifts. Why? We will know the answer to that by the end of this sermon. But first the Preacher is going to bring up another thing that tends to distract our ability to enjoy God's gifts: money.

Don't Let Money Get Your Heart

Loving Money Decreases Satisfaction

Most of us think that money is a factor in our ability to enjoy life, and as a result we end up loving money. But loving money actually decreases enjoyment of life.

10 The one who loves money is never satisfied with money, and whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with income. This too is futile.

Money can be an extremely useful, valuable thing that can bring you much good. But the moment you start loving it, you destroy its ability to bring you good. Your wealth will actually make you miserable, because it will make satisfaction impossible. Imagine they invented a chemical that they could put in food that would increase hunger pangs, and make you feel less and less satisfied the more you ate it. Would you order that in a restaurant? Would you buy some and sprinkle it on your food each day? I don't think there is a chemical like that for food, but there is one for money. There is something you can sprinkle on your money that will make it utterly unsatisfying. It is called love. Fall in love with money and possessions and you will ruin their ability to do their job. Loving money makes you feel poor. No matter how much you get, it will never seem like enough.

Riches Raise the Rent

That is one reason not to love money. In verse 11 he gives another one.

11 When good things increase, the ones who consume them multiply; what, then, is the profit to the owner, except to gaze at them with his eyes?

As your income goes up, so do your bills. It puts you in a higher tax bracket, so that takes a big chunk. Then there are all kinds of other bills that arise when you have more money. I remember when I went from making \$40,000/yr to \$55,000, and we had no more disposable income than we had before. It is amazing how when your income goes up the bills go right up with it.

Not only that, but the more money you get the more leeches you attract. Relatives come out of the woodwork. And needy friends start to multiply. When people look at you instead of seeing you as a person, many of them will just see dollar signs, and they will try to figure out what it will take to get some

of your money. We hear so many stories of athletes or lottery winners who have millions and millions of dollars, and a short time later they are broke. When you are rich the whole world wants some of your money, and even if you devote your full time just to trying to keep it, sometimes that's not enough.

Riches Rob Rest

Verse 12 is a third problem with wealth.

12 The sleep of the worker is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of the rich permits him no sleep.

The more money you have, the less sleep you get. With money comes lots of decisions, lots of troubles, lots of pressure. If you have a high paying job, in most cases, the higher the income, the greater the pressure. You are getting paid a lot because you are handling important things, and so when those things go bad, it is on you. And the result of that is a lot of late nights at work, and a lot of sleepless nights trying to figure out impossible problems. In the meantime the guy who is out there working with his hands goes to work, punches the clock, works hard all day, comes home, thoroughly enjoys a nice dinner, and sleeps like a baby. And when he is spending time with his wife and his kids, that ditch he is digging at work is the farthest thing from his mind. Meanwhile the rich guy has to take even more time away so he can go to the gym and undo some of the damage caused by all his comfort and ease he worked so hard to get.

And not only does he have anxiety about work, but he has anxiety about all his stuff. The more stuff you get, the more problems you have because the second law of thermodynamics is at work on all of them. Or as Jesus put it, **moth and rust corrupt and thieves break in and steal** (Mt.6:19). The curse affects all your stuff, so if you have a cabin in the mountains and a vacation home in the Bahamas and your home here, you take all the payments and maintenance and repairs and tax issues and paperwork and all the problems a normal person has and multiply it times three. How many hours of our lives are spent just managing our massive stockpile of stuff?

Hording Harms

13 There is a sickening tragedy I have seen under the sun: wealth horded to the harm of its owner.

Some people are too quick to spend money. They do not know how to save – and that is foolish. But there are other people who have the opposite problem – they horde their money. They think the whole objective with money is to accumulate as much as possible and to hang on to it as long as possible. That is *really* foolish, because it makes your money worthless. If you are not going to use it, isn't that the same as not having it? What good is money that is never used? Solomon can only think of one answer to that question. The only thing you can do with money, besides spend it, is look at it.

11 ... what is the profit to the owner, except to gaze at them with his eyes?

You can stack it all up in a pile and sit down in a chair and look at it. Or you can get your investment update and look down at the bottom line of your net worth and just sit there and look at the number. That's it. If you are not going to use that money, then there is no other value to it.

In fact, not only does it become worthless, but it becomes harmful. Look at verse 13 again. He speaks of **wealth horded to the harm of its owner**. When you horde money that should be being used for something, that money actually makes your life worse, because hording is hard work. A little kid who has not learned how to share yet will forfeit all the pleasure he could have from playing with a toy just so he can avoid sharing. There are ten toys on the floor, and some other kid starts playing with one of them.

“No, that's mine!”

So the other kid turns to something else.

“That's mine too!”

And pretty soon he has all the toys gathered up in his arms. And he can't enjoy any of them or play with any of them because it takes all he has just to hold on to them all. What benefit is he getting? None. He would be so much happier if he just picked one and actually played with it and enjoyed it. That seems so ridiculous to us when we see a little kid do that, but we do the same thing. We generate so much anxiety trying to hang on to everything we think we need, that we cannot even enjoy any of it.

Hording causes you harm. And not just you...

Proverbs 15:27 The greedy man brings harm to his family.

How? Well, for one thing, people who are focused on money tend to put possessions and money ahead of people as a priority, and that provokes constant conflict.

Proverbs 28:25 A greedy person provokes conflict

If you are greedy, what is going to happen when your wife spends a bunch of money? Or your kids do something that costs you money? Or some expensive treasure that you paid a lot of money for breaks? It is going to affect your mood. You will be grumpy or maybe even hostile and angry because you lost something that you love. And you will find that you are constantly at odds with your kids, your spouse – even God. Look again at Proverbs 28:25. According to that verse, what is the opposite of greed? - trust in the LORD. Greedy people do not trust God; they trust money. And so not only do they create strife and conflict in the home, but they are at odds with God too.

Assets Evaporate

Solomon looked around and saw these tragic figures who ruin their own lives just by hording wealth. And then, to add insult to injury, look what happens:

14 That wealth was lost in a bad venture, so when he fathered a son, he was empty-handed. 15 As he came from his mother's womb, so he will go again, naked as he came; he will take nothing for his efforts that he can carry in his hands. 16 This too is a sickening tragedy: exactly as he comes, so he will go. What does the one gain who struggles for the wind?

First that money ruins all his relationships, then it sprouts wings and flies away! All that money ruined his life three times. First in the gaining of it, then in the effort to keep it, and finally in the loss of it. That is yet another problem with money – it disappears when you need it most. This guy loses all his money right before his wife has a baby. Is there anybody in this room who is so foolish as to think that you can hold on to money that God has decided you are going to lose? I do not care if it is FDIC insured, you have it locked in an underground safe, you have taken every precaution imaginable – if God decides you are going broke, you are going broke. And that very likely will be what God will decide if you fall in love with your money. God is a jealous God, and He will not share your love with money or anything else. And so if you start to love money, God is going to take action to sever that relationship.

Wealth is something that costs so much to get, it costs so much to keep, it costs you so much sleep, and can bring you so much harm, and is so unreliable, and it yields so little satisfaction, what's to love about it?

Darkness, Sorrow, Sickness, and Anger

So this poor guy – first he ruins his life trying to hold on to his money, then he ends up losing it anyway, and then...

17 What is more, he eats in darkness all his days, with much sorrow, sickness, and anger.

That is what life is like for the greedy person after his greed runs its course. You end up with a dark, miserable life filled with a whole lot of sorrow and sickness and anger. You are sad because of how miserable your life is, it affects your health, and you are angry all the time.

Anger

Why anger? How does greed in the heart cause an anger problem? Here is how it works (and if you struggle with anger, make sure you get this, because this principle is crucial for understanding how to overcome anger): Greed is any time you look to some earthly thing for your happiness or satisfaction. If you look to money for your happiness, then you are greedy for money. But you can be greedy for anything. Some people are greedy for comfort or convenience. Others are greedy for relationships. Some are greedy for respect or kindness from others. You can even be greedy for a godly spouse. A woman might have a desire for her husband to be a spiritual leader, and that desire can actually cross the line into greed. The moment she starts thinking of that as something that will make her happy – something she needs in order to have happiness, then it is greed.

And greed always results in anger. Why? Because whenever someone stands in the way between you and what you think you need to be happy, the natural response is to get upset with that person. And if circumstances take away the thing you think you need to be happy, you get mad at the circumstances. If you find yourself getting upset with your spouse all the time – what causes that? It is caused by the greedy desires in your heart.

James 4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from the greedy desires that battle within you? 2 You want something and you don't get it. ... you quarrel and fight.

Suppose you drive by a big mansion and you think, “Man, I would love to live in a place like that,” but you know you’re not going to get it, and you’re not angry. Why? Because that desire had not crossed the line into greed. If you think, “Boy, it would be nice if my spouse did this for me,” but when it doesn’t happen, you are not angry or upset at all – why is that? It is because the desire is just a desire and not greed. But what happens when I think I need my spouse to do this thing for me in order for me to be happy? If I think that, then I have crossed the line into greed. I am greedy for that treatment from my spouse. And so what happens if she does not do it? Anger. Anger and sorrow and sadness and darkness and in some cases even sickness. You get so stressed out over it that you become physically ill.

Anger is a very helpful symptom because it exposes greed, which is otherwise very difficult to spot. It is hard to tell if a desire is just a regular desire or if it is a greedy desire. But one way you can tell is if you get angry when that desire is not fulfilled.

If you want to overcome an anger problem, after each episode of anger just ask yourself, “What desire is in my heart that has become a greedy desire?” If you find yourself giving someone the cold shoulder, or you have some underlying resentment toward someone because of how they have hurt you, ask yourself, “Okay, what was it I was wanting and didn’t get?” And whatever it is, you have just found some cancerous greed in your heart. And if you do not get it out, it will infect your life and you will end with a life of darkness, sorrow, sickness, and anger.

If that is the life you want, go ahead and hoard your money. No amount of money is worth ending up like that. No amount of respect or kind treatment from people is worth ending up like that. No amount of any earthly thing is worth that.

Satisfaction Sold Separately

6:1 Here is a tragedy I have observed under the sun, and it weighs heavily on humanity: 2 God gives a man riches, wealth, and honor so that he lacks nothing of all he desires for himself, but God does not allow him to enjoy them. Instead, a stranger will enjoy them. This is futile and a sickening tragedy.

He just keeps reminding us of this principle – riches, wealth, and honor and enjoyment of riches wealth and honor are two different things. It is possible to get everything your heart desires and still be unable to find joy in it. When people scratch and claw to get money, so often it does not even occur to them that they could get all the money they are seeking and if God does not also give them the ability to enjoy it, it is worthless. You get all the problems associated with wealth, but none of the enjoyment –

what good is that? He wants us to realize how dependent we are on God for enjoyment. What good is a dollar that God is going to let you lose before you have a chance to spend it? Some of the dollars you get, God is going to let someone take them away from you. And some of the dollars you get, God is going to let them go toward a bad business deal. And some of the dollars God is going to allow them to be lost to a huge repair bill that you would not have otherwise had. And some of the dollars you get, God will let you keep, but He won't grant you the ability to enjoy them. They will bring you hardship and no joy. And my question is, what good are all those kinds of dollars? The ones that will be lost, the ones you can't use, the ones you can't enjoy – what good are they? They are worthless.

Applies to All Earthly Gifts

And just as we saw two weeks ago, all these principles about money apply not just to money, but to all earthly, temporal gifts – even things like family and health and a long life.

3 A man may father a hundred children and live many years. No matter how long he lives, if he is not satisfied by good things and does not even have a proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.

A hundred children and a long life is a description of the epitome of earthly blessing. Our culture does not understand the value of children but in Scripture children are always a blessing from God, and the more the better. So when he says **a hundred children** and living **many years**, that is just a way of saying, “The utmost in earthly, temporal blessing.” Whether it be money or a great family or good health or a long life or power or success or comfort or leisure or respect or honor – none of it has any ability to make you happy unless God grants both that gift and the ability to enjoy it. You can get all those things and still die all alone. You can end up passing from this world and your death will go unnoticed and unlamented.

So no matter what you gain in this life, it is all worthless unless God grants the gift of enjoyment. And to teach us that, God very often grants the gift but does not grant the ability to enjoy it.

And if that is all you have, you are worse off than a stillborn child.

4 For he comes in futility and he goes in darkness, and his name is shrouded in darkness.

That is your life. All the things you want – the marriage you want, the money you want, the comfort you want – if you got every bit of it, but not the gift of enjoyment, your life would come in futility and go in darkness. It would be a horrible life.

5 Though a stillborn child does not see the sun and is not conscious, it has more rest than he. 6 And if he lives a thousand years twice, but does not experience happiness, do not both go to the same place?

Rethinking Injustice

The treasures of this world really are not all they are cracked up to be, are they? And that has huge implications for how we calculate injustice. The Preacher is very concerned in this book to deal with the problem of injustice, and one thing he is showing us is that there is not nearly as much injustice as it seems. When you see some ungodly person who has a great job and a beautiful wife and a huge house and all the rest, and there you are, working hard and being honest and you have a crummy job and a leaky roof and a piece of junk car – it seems like injustice. But if you could see the whole story you would realize that it isn't. What if God has not granted that other guy the gift of enjoyment? He has all that stuff, but he can't enjoy it - whereas God has made the gift of enjoyment accessible to you. So is that unjust?

It is like if you found out that a coworker is making \$50/hr and you only get \$20/hr. And you are a better employee. So you go to your boss and ask about that, and he says, “Yes, you are definitely the better employee. And yes, that other guy's wage is \$50/hr, but what you don't know is this – he doesn't get to enjoy that money. We require him to pay for a lot of the shop expenses, which takes up 90% of his

money. So all that money he is making – he never actually gets to use it. He is still in the higher tax bracket and still has all the headaches associated with making more money, but he does not get to enjoy it. But you, on the other hand, you get to keep your whole paycheck.”

So it is not as unfair as you thought it was. There is nothing unjust about God giving those people a whole lot of stuff that remains locked behind a door so they can't enjoy it, and He gives you only a little, but He also gives you the gift of enjoyment. Which would you rather have? Isn't it far better to have happiness with a little than unhappiness with a lot?

Did you ever get a toy when you were a kid that you were all excited to play with, but when you get it out of the box it says, “Batteries sold separately”? That happened a few times to us at Christmas time when we were kids, and so finally Mom just started buying a whole stockpile of batteries just in case. These people you are so envious of because they have so much money or whatever – what you don't see is that they got the toy but not the batteries. When God gives earthly gifts, He often gives them with satisfaction sold separately.

Stuff Does Not Satisfy

7 All man's labor is for his stomach, yet the appetite is never satisfied.

That is an illustration. Think about how much food you have consumed in your lifetime. If you put it all in a big pile, how large would that pile be? The USDA says that the average adult in America eats about 2000 pounds per year, so in my case, I'm 46 years old, so that's 46 tons - minus about 6 tons to account for my childhood, which brings it down to a nice, even 40 tons. So there I am, staring at a 40-ton pile of food. That is how much I have eaten ... so far. And guess what – guess what I am planning on doing the minute we are done here today? I am going right back to the dinner table and I am going to put another whole meal in me. Instead of 80,000 pounds, pretty soon it's going to be 80,001. The average human stomach can only hold a maximum of about eight pounds. I have an eight pound capacity and I have eaten over 40 tons – how does that work? And if you are just thinking, “Oh, that's easy. You burn calories and there is the elimination process and...” – that is missing the point. The point is simply to make an illustration. He is saying, “Just as you can put 40 tons of food into your little stomach and it's still not satisfied, so it is with the soul.” Do you think having children is going to satisfy you? Getting married? A new job? Do you think a six-figure income would satisfy you? Or a seven-figure income? A different spouse? All the things your soul is so hungry for – you can get all of it and your soul would be just as restless and just as empty and unsatisfied as it is now.

Not Even Wisdom Satisfies

This even applies to wisdom.

8 What advantage then does the wise man have over the fool? What advantage is there for the poor person who knows how to conduct himself before others?

“Wait a minute – he already told us that wisdom is an advantage in life.”

Yes, wisdom is tremendously valuable if it is used for the purpose of helping you please God. But in and of itself, if you think just gaining knowledge and wisdom and education is going to bring you happiness and satisfaction, you are going to be sorely disappointed. Wisdom can do a lot of things, but it cannot do that.

Your Grass is Greenest

9 Better what the eyes see than wandering desire. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

Wandering desire refers to that grass that looks so green on the other side of the fence. And **what the eye sees** refers to what you already have in your possession on your side of the fence. That is what God has given you, and that is better. For you, the greenest, best grass is the grass God has placed right

under your feet. What is on your side of the fence is better for you than what is over there. And letting your desires wander, looking for something better than what God has given you, is a futile chasing after the wind. Doing that will make your life empty and unhappy. You see that woman at the gym or in the advertisement who has a perfect body, and your desires start wandering (*What would it be like to have a wife like that?*) – welcome to emptiness and futility. All those things that are out of your reach that you think would make your life better – if you knew the whole story about those things you would see they wouldn't make you happier. Life with those things would be worse than what God has given you. The greenest grass, for you, is the grass God has given you.

Enjoy Your Lot

So we live in a fallen, cursed world full of injustice and political corruption. We cannot do anything about that. We cannot put our hope in government. Nor can we put our hope in money. Being rich creates even more problems than it solves, and loving and trusting money ends in disaster. So what should we do? What is the key to happiness in life?

5:18 Here is what I have seen to be good: it is appropriate to eat, drink, and experience good in all the labor one does under the sun during the few days of his life God has given him, because that is his lot.

That word **appropriate** (your Bible might say **proper** or **fitting**) – is the same word translated **beautiful** in chapter 3 where it says God makes all things beautiful in their time. That is the top of the tapestry – the part that makes sense and that looks beautiful. Everything God does is beautiful, but this is something that is not only beautiful, but it seems beautiful to us. It feels right – and it is right, when you **eat and drink and experience good** in all your labor.

Experience the Good

That phrase **experience good** (your Bible might say **find satisfaction** or **find enjoyment**), but the Holman I think gets it best. Literally it is **see good**, but it is seeing in the sense of experiencing. Whatever your labor is – that job is from God and there is good in it. There is something there to be enjoyed if you are willing to see it. If you are a kid, your job is school and your responsibilities at home. If you are a housewife, that is your job. Or maybe you are the breadwinner. Whatever it is, it is from God and the goal is not to find a different occupation that does not have difficulty. If you can find a job that is more conducive to the ministry God has called you to, great. But happiness is not found in getting a job that has no hardship. There is good and enjoyment to be experienced in the job God has given you, even with all the hardship. But so often we miss that, because we are unwilling to accept our lot in life.

Enjoy Your Work

But Solomon says, “Experience the good in what God has given you because that is your lot in life.” God situated you on this side of the fence and created that grass just for you. Enjoy it. And that job you have – God gave you that job. And if you are willing to accept the gift of enjoyment, God will give it to you. He will enable you to enjoy that job if you are open to enjoying it. You won't be rich, and you won't be powerful, but you will be happy.

So often we treat God's gifts like Nikki opening that gift with all the tissue paper. We are so eager to get on to the next thing that we miss the gift God is giving us. When you have those moments of discontent, when you are just kind of unhappy with your life, stop and look around you and see if there is a gift laying there in all the tissue paper that you have thrown aside. Whatever your task in life is – don't resent that. And don't take it for granted. That laundry, the dishes, the diapers – that's not drudgery. It is a gift from God. The commute to work, the paperwork, the emails – it is green grass under your feet. And there is a huge amount of enjoyment to be had in it if you are willing. Don't miss it.

Enjoy Your Money

Enjoy your work, enjoy your spouse, enjoy your kids, and enjoy your money too.

19 God has also given riches and wealth to every man, and He has allowed him to enjoy them, take his reward, and rejoice in his labor. This is a gift of God, 20 for he does not often consider the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with the joy of his heart.

There are some Christians who feel guilty about ever enjoying their wealth. They think unless they give away every dime to the poor, they are being unspiritual. That is not true. One hundred percent of your money should be set aside for glorifying God – no question about that. But one of the ways God expects you to use your money to glorify Him is by enjoying it. If you receive it as a gift from Him, and you allow your enjoyment of your money to occupy your heart with thoughts of God’s love and kindness, that is money well spent.

Don’t love money – love God. And don’t use God – use money. Use your money to love your God (rather than loving money and using God to get it). We use our money to glorify God by supporting the work of Christ through His body, the Church. We use our money to glorify God by taking care of our family. Anyone who is not willing to use his money to take care of his family is worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim.5:8). We bring glory and honor to God with our money when we use it to fulfill our responsibilities in this world, like paying our taxes (Mt.12:21, Ro.13:7). Some of the money you earn belongs to the government, and so God instructs us to pay our taxes. And when you have given God the firstfruits of your money, and you have poured your resources into the work of the kingdom, and you have taken care of your family members, it is fine to also use some of your money to glorify God by enjoying fellowship with Him through some of His earthly gifts. And let God keep you occupied with gladness of heart.

Benediction: Psalm 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but You? And earth has nothing I desire besides You. My heart and my flesh may fail, but you are the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Application Questions (James 1:25)

1. Judging from which things tend to make you mad, what desires in your heart tend to cross the line into greed (you get mad or frustrated if you don’t get them)? Ask the group to help you think through what it would look like to set enjoyment of God as a higher desire during those moments.
2. Which of God’s gifts to you tend to throw out with the “tissue paper” (failing to notice the gift is even there)? Talk with the group about how you could become more alert to those gifts.