

## The Pursuit of Happiness: What are You Pursuing?

- Pray for Pastor Dennis → New 3-week series
- Wind down the ‘Journey’ we’ve been on this past year → Towards Christlikeness: God’s Desire/Target for us
- Reflections from Ecclesiastes → What does he say?
  - Solomon’s Life Journey → **Who was he?**
  - The Benefit of ‘Hindsight’ (20/20 = QB)

**Opens with a bang! Eccl. 1:1-4** (pg. 472) - “Generations come and generations go, but the Earth remains forever.”

→ *Tell me what you really think!*

- Looking back on the month of June
  - A ‘season’ of funerals - A Time to Die (**Eccl. 3:2**)
  - The perspective that a funeral provides
    - My sister’s passing (**never visited – 30**)
    - Family memories; generation ‘gaps’
- **Video Clip** – Perpetual Pursuit – Look familiar?
  - What exactly are we pursuing?
  - According to the Declaration of Independence
    - Our ‘Inalienable Right’ as Americans
      - Always pursuing and yet never arriving
      - **Color Quiz – Optical Illusion**
  - Solomon - “Chasing After the Wind” (**Eccl. 1:14**)
    - Busy vs. Hurried (Jesus) - Simplicity
- What are we aiming at? What’s our Target? Is it God’s?
  - What is the object of our pursuit?
  - ‘Man on the Street’ interviews...
    - Success? Happiness?
    - What does that really look like?

*Prime Minister of Bhutan → ‘Gross National Happiness’*

**Eccl. 4:7-8** – “There was a man all alone... he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. **For whom am I toiling?**”

**Eccl. 7:29** – “This only have I found: God made mankind upright, but men have *gone in search of many schemes.*”

**Our Common Pursuits** (*striving for, going after something*):

1. Knowledge/Education
2. Possessions/Stuff
3. Power/Position/Celebrity
4. Pleasure/Experience
5. Accomplishments/Projects

→ *Capture our Hearts; Become the Object of our Affections*

**Tour # 1 - Solomon’s Resume – Qualified?** (Page 238)

- Wisdom (**I Kings 3:5, 9-12; 4:29-31**)
- Wealth (**I Kings 3:13; 10:26-27**)

- Position (**I Kings 10:1-7, 24-25**; Visiting\_Dignitaries)
- Pleasure (**I Kings 11:1-4**; 1,000 Wives)
- Accomplishments (**I Kings 6:37-38; 7:1**; Temple)

**Tour # 2 - Solomon's Assessment - Expert:** (Page 472)

- Wisdom (**Eccl. 1:12-13, 16-18**)
- Wealth (**Eccl. 2:7-10a; 5:10-12**)
- Position (**Eccl. 2:12b-14**)
- Pleasure (**Eccl. 2:1**)
- Accomplishments (**Eccl. 2:4-6, 11**)

**My Personal Journey (20 years 'Pre-Ministry')**

- I've done some 'Wind Chasing' (Success/Happiness)
- Circuit City – 11 years (1983-1994)
  - Top performer (NYSE/80's) – 'Good to Great'
  - High Growth (\$250M → \$6B) – Lots of Projects
    - 'Chasing the Corporate Ladder'
    - 15 years later → Where now? Bankrupt!
- Crown Books/Dart Group – 3 years (1995-1998)
  - VP/CIO → SVP/CIO = 'Chasing a Position'
  - 11 years later → Where are they now? Sold!
- MARS Music – 2 ½ years (1998-2000)
  - 'Chasing an IPO' in Boca Raton, FL
  - Lots of people 'Chasing the 'Good Life'
  - 9 years later → Where are they now? Gone!

→ Confessions of a Reformed Wind-Chaser!

**Solomon's Conclusion/His 'Final Answer'** (Regis)

- **Eccl. 12:8-14 = The Most Vain Thing!**
- 'That which is unsubstantial or without real meaning'
- 'That which is fleeting or transitory' - Hebrew
- **It's all Smoke!** (The *Message*) (Smoke and Mirrors!)

→ ***Fear God and keep his commandments***, for this is the whole duty of man." (**Eccl. 12:13**)

**Solomon's Advice** to all of us → Life should be lived in complete trust in God, be received and enjoyed as a gift from His good hand, and be lived in the light of His future judgment.

**What is it that we should we be pursuing?** (*Not happiness!*)

→ "The Lord detests the way of the wicked but loves those who ***pursue righteousness***" (**Prov. 15:9**)

**Pursuing Righteousness** (*Not 'Self-Righteousness'*)

"But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness" (**1 Tim. 6:11**)

## Lessons (4) to be learned from Solomon's Life Journey

### **1. Starting Well doesn't necessarily translate into Finishing Well**

→ **Gal. 3:3** - *Solomon began in grace, but didn't live in grace or grow in grace* - 'After beginning with the Spirit, are you know trying to attain your goal by human effort?'

→ *Everyday is a new day that begins with our need to recognize our dependence upon God and ask for His grace*

### **2. Knowing the Right Thing to do doesn't mean that we will necessarily Do the Right Thing**

→ **Micah 6:8** - "What Does the Lord require of you? To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God"

→ *We need to submit to God's Authority/Obey His Word*

### **3. Pride does indeed come before a Fall**

→ **Prov. 16:18** - "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."

→ **Jer. 9:23-24** - "Let not the wise man boast... strong... rich... boast about this: that he understands and knows me, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness... For in these I delight, declares the Lord."

→ *Always remember the true source of every good gift and blessing in your life; Give God the glory!*

### **4. A Lack of Contentment/Satisfaction today will often lead you somewhere you don't want to go/end up tomorrow**

→ *Content/Satisfied doesn't mean 'settle for'*

→ **Matt 22:36-39** - "Love God... Love Others..."

→ *Being Present and Making the most of every moment because it is a gift of God; Value and cultivate the Relationships that you have been given, for they are God's gift to you as well*

**True Happiness** → “*To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness.*” (**Eccl. 2:26a**)

**Matt. 6:27-33** (Jesus/Sermon on the Mount)

“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”

“I tell you *not even Solomon* in all his splendor was dressed like one of these”

“For the pagans *run after all these things...*”

“But *seek first his kingdom and his righteousness*, and all these things (e.g. Happiness) will be given to you as well”

**How Will You Live Out and Finish Your Journey?**

**What Is It That You Are Really Chasing? Aiming At?**

- Just this past week...
- Michael Jackson had big plans to start his comeback tour...
  - *He was getting ready for a series of 10 comeback shows in London set to launch next month. He rehearsed at the Staples Center on June 24 in Los Angeles, the day before.*
- John and Kate (plus 8) never intended to end up separated/divorced...
  - *The wait is over – and so is the marriage. Monday night, Jon and Kate Gosselin, parents of eight young children and stars of the TLC reality show Jon & Kate Plus Eight, publicly announced that they will separate on the same day they filed for divorce in a PA court.*
- Is God’s Desire/Target for You in Clear View?