

Ecclesiastes (7 sections)
Enjoyment and Joy Under the Sun—with the Good Giver

“The Preacher sought to find **words of delight**,
and uprightly he wrote **words of truth**.
The words of the wise are like **goads**,
and like **nails** firmly fixed are the collected sayings;
they are given by **one Shepherd**.”
(Ecclesiastes 12:10-11)

“...do not be grieved,
for **the joy of the Lord is your strength**.” (Nehemiah 8:10b)

“What health is to the body,
happiness is to soul.” (Bobby Jamieson)

“A **joyful heart** is **good medicine**,
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.” (Pr 17:22)

**Thinking about enjoyment/joy/happiness/rejoicing
in TWO DIMENSIONS:**

We are to enjoy **Part A—temporal material** gifts in this **earthly** life
(that are *good*, given us by God **for happiness in this life**
(though **vanity** in/of themselves)

Far more, we are to enjoy **Part B—eternal spiritual** gifts/blessings for **spiritual** life
(that are amazing, beyond comprehension in goodness, “riches”)
that are received from God by faith, in Christ, for **eternal happiness**

Is the JOY of God is one of the lesser understood (& appreciated) qualities of God?

“In God’s world, enjoyment is a clue to reality’s deepest, brightest secret:
that the universe is **the gleeful invention of an unassailably happy God**.” (Bobby Jamieson)

“Splendor and majesty are before him;
strength and **joy** are in his place.” (1 Chron 16:27)

“Joy is the **most infallible sign of the presence of God**.” (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin? or
Leon Bloy?)

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking
but of righteousness and peace and **joy in the Holy Spirit**.” (Romans 15:13)

Is the JOY the Spirit produces in believers one of the lesser experienced “fruits”/gifts?

Remember Jesus' words at Last Supper:

“These things I have spoken to you,
that **my joy may be in you**,
and that **your joy may be full**.” (John 15:11)

God “richly provides us with **everything to enjoy**.” (1 Timothy 6:17b)

a consistent theme/emphasis in Ecclesiastes

“**There is nothing better for a person than**
that he should **eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil**.
This also, I saw, is **from the hand of God**,
for **apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?**
For to **the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy...**” (2:24-26a)

“I perceived that **there is nothing better for them than**
to **be joyful and to do good** as long as they live;
also that everyone should eat and drink and **take pleasure in all his toil—**
this is God's gift to man.” (3:12-13)

“So I saw that **there is nothing better than**
that a man should **rejoice in his work**, for **that is his lot....**” (3:22a)

“Behold, what I have seen to **be good and fitting is**
to **eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil** with which one toils
under the sun the few days of his **life that God has given him**, for **this is his lot**.
Everyone also to whom **God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them**,
and to **accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God**.
For he will not much remember the days of his life
because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.” (5:18-20)

“And I commend **joy**,
for **man has nothing better under the sun**
but to **eat and drink and be joyful**,
for this will go with him **in his toil**
through **the days of his life that God has given him** under the sun.” (8:15)

“Go, **eat your bread with joy**, and **drink your wine with a merry heart**,
for **God has already approved what you do**.
Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.
Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of **your vain life**
that he has given you under the sun, because that is **your portion in life**
and **in your toil** at which you toil under the sun.
Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might,
for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol,
to which you are going.” (9:7-10)

“So if a person lives many years, let him **rejoice in them all**;
but let him remember that **the days of darkness will be many**.
All that comes is vanity.

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth,
and **let your heart cheer you** in the days of your youth.
Walk in the ways of your heart and **the sight of your eyes**.
But know that **for all these things God will bring you into judgment**.
Remove vexation from your heart,
and **put away pain from your body**,
for **youth and the dawn of life are vanity**.” (11:8-9)

What is God’s even greater **PURPOSE**
in all of His **generosity...goodness...gift-giving...grace?**

that His creation would **seek** Him as the Giver/Source of all good

find Him in faith

grow to know Him

and ultimately **enjoy and finding lasting joy** in Him

and in His gifts to us

“God is the highest good of the reasonable creature.
The enjoyment of him is **our proper**;
and is **the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied**.
To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant
accommodations here. Better than **fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children, or
the company of any, or all earthly friends**.

These are but shadows ;	but the enjoyment of God is the substance .
These are but scattered beams ;	but God is the sun .
These are but streams ;	but God is the fountain .
These are but drops ,	but God is the ocean .” (Jonathan Edwards)

“He who **has God and everything else**
has no more than he who has God only.” (C.S. Lewis)

“**Delight yourself in the Lord**,
and he will **give** you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4)

“Whom have I in heaven **but you**?
And **there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you**.” (Psalm 73:25)

“There are many who say, “Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!” You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.” (Psalm 4:6-7)

“You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalm 16:11)

“For you make him most blessed forever; you make him glad with the joy of your presence.” (Psalm 21:6)

“Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy,
and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.” (Psalm 43:4)

“Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.” (Psalm 51:8)

“May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you!
May those who love your salvation say evermore, ‘God is great!’” (Psalm 70:4)

“Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.” (Psalm 90:14)

“Though the fig tree should not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the deer’s;
he makes me tread on my high places.” (Habakkuk 3:17-19)

“Rejoice always,
pray without ceasing,
give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

“Rejoice in the Lord always;
again I will say, rejoice.” (Philippians 4:4)

“Though you have not seen him, you love him.
Though you do not now see him, you believe in him
and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,” (1 Peter 1:8)

'joy-stealers'
(when God's gifts do not bring the joy intended)

sin

"Joy and sorrow often coexist,
but joy and bitterness cannot." (*Vaneetha Randall Risner*)

a sense of entitlement

anxiety

"Do not be **anxious** about **anything...**" (*Philippians 4:4*)
"Therefore I tell you, do not be **anxious about your life...**" (*Matthew 6:25a*)

people

expectations

"We yearn for the world to give us something it can't." (*Bobby Jamieson*)

idolatry

"If you inordinately desire material goods,
they become **your owner** rather than **you being theirs.**" (*Bobby Jamieson*)

"Repeatedly does Solomon remind us that the blessings of the creature,
when used for the glory of God, are lawful in themselves,
and become the source of **rich and legitimate enjoyment.**
But here lies the evil. Man buries his heart in their vanity.
He makes them his chief good, his happiness and rest...." (*Charles Bridges*)

time warp: when the past and/or the future cloud the present

"How can you enjoy life as a gift, and enjoy life's gifts as gifts?
Be present to the present's presents.
Present your full self fully to what the present presents you,
and you will **receive its full helping of enjoyment....**
Enjoyment is **only a present experience,**
not an item you can **stockpile for future use.**" (*Bobby Jamieson*)
"In order to enjoy these goods rather than scorn, ignore, or crush them,
it is crucial to **respect their limits and yours.**
These goods cannot be **guaranteed or controlled.**
They cannot be **perpetually protected** from destruction or loss.
They cannot be **hoarded,** preserved in vacuum-sealed bags until a **future** day of enjoyment
finally arrives....
They're here, they're yours, and the **only** time to enjoy them is **now.**" (*Bobby Jamieson*)

misperceptions

doubt

distractions

“Many Christians are overtired, and they don’t realize it. They’re too busy to observe [be aware of] their own exhaustion. Their judgment is impaired, their efficiency is diminished, and they’ve bought into a way of thinking that says we’re only effective when we’re running around from one task to another. They haven’t found their security in God alone. They haven’t learned to rest in His love and provision.” (*Alistair Begg*)

a fault-finding spirit

“The critical spirit cannot rejoice. It is blind to the goodness of God in people and situations because it is always scanning for what is wrong. It feeds on flaws, not fruit. It positions itself as the voice of wisdom and discernment, but underneath it is the voice of the orphan, always on the outside looking in, never satisfied and never secure.” (*Ben Wait*)

comparison

the sheer volume of gifts received

joy-enhancers

acceptance

contentment

gratitude

awareness

holding gifts loosely

a strong sense of dependence on God

"We need God desperately. And it is a **priceless gift to feel it**.
Anything that drives us to dependence on God...becomes a means of grace to us.
If God has allowed into your life some exquisite pain, some difficult burden, some struggle, some anguish in the secret place that drives you to him frequently, sometimes with loud cries and tears because you feel your need for him so desperately, do not begrudge it (Hebrews 5:7).
It is likely a **gift of greater mercy than you know**.
It may be your deliverance....
Do not underestimate the power of desperation to do good for your soul." (*Jon Bloom*)

understanding what "under the sun gifts" really are

"Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists....
If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy,
the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world....
Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to **satisfy** it,
but only to **arouse** it, to **suggest** the real thing.
If that is so, I **must take care**,
on the one hand, never to despise, or be unthankful for, these earthly blessings,
and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of **copy**, or **echo**, or **mirage**.
I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country,
which I shall not find until after death." (*C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity*)

The Lord's Table

the bread the **body** of Jesus

the cup the **blood** of Jesus

REMEMBER how great a price of suffering Jesus Christ paid for your sin

CONFESS your many sins against Him and His commands and **REPENT**.

RENEW your faith in CHrist and His love, mercy and grace for you.

WORSHIP Him, awed by His greatness, His glory and His goodness

REJOICE in His victory over sin, Satan and death through His resurrection
and in the hope you have because of faith in Jesus Christ and the gospel

ANTICIPATE with even greater longing the day when His Kingdom comes in full
and we sit at His table, in perfect communion with our Lord and Savior.

Pondering Questions:

How much, how **deeply**, is your soul and your life **filled** with **joy** and **enjoyment** even with **all the hard things** and **all the sorrow life brings** you?

Do you think you are **enjoying** God's **temporal/earthly gifts** as much as He **wants** you to?

Do you think you are **enjoying** God's **eternal/spiritual gifts** in Christ to the degree you **should** be?

How might you seek **God's help** to **grow** in these ways?