



Part 2: Pursuit

May 11 & 12, 2019

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Review: PROAPT — Pray, Read, Observe, Apply, Pray, Tell

Solomon pursued pleasure, wisdom, and toil; the pursuit of those things helped him to see that that it was meaningless.

Solomon Pursues Pleasure ECCLESIASTES 2:1-11

I said to myself, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good.” But that also proved to be meaningless. ²“Laughter,” I said, “is madness. And what does pleasure accomplish?” ³

I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives.

⁴I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards.

⁵I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. ⁶I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. ⁷I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. ⁸I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well—the delights of a man’s heart.

⁹I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me.

¹⁰I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil.

¹¹Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

Observation 1: The Teacher pursued pleasure — and he owned that.

What are you pursuing? What are your expectations?

Solomon Pursues Wisdom ECCLESIASTES 2:12-16

¹²Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom, and also madness and folly. What more can the king’s successor do than what has already been done? ¹³I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness.

¹⁴The wise have eyes in their heads, while the fool walks in the darkness; but I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both.

¹⁵Then I said to myself, “The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?” I said to myself, “This too is meaningless.”

¹⁶For the wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered; the days have already come when both have been forgotten. Like the fool, the wise too must die!

Observation 2: Solomon was both wise and foolish.

Solomon Pursues Toil ECCLESIASTES 2:17-26

¹⁷So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. ¹⁸I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me.

¹⁹And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. ²⁰

So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. ²¹For a person may labor with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. ²²What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? ²³All their days their work is grief and pain; even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless.

²⁴A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, ²⁵for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? ²⁶To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

Observation 3: Solomon passes down the profit and the pain.

Observation 4: You cannot live someone else’s life for them.

Observation 5: God is the one who gives meaning to a meaningless life.

Next Steps

Application 1: Own your journey.

Solomon did the work of figuring out how he pursued pleasure, wisdom, and toil. What does your journey look like?

How do you pursue pleasure, wisdom, and toil?

Application 2: Identify what you are pursuing, your expectations and outcomes. Then release them.

Can you identify what you pursue? How could you release your expectations and outcomes?

Small Group Questions

- 1) Of these 3 pursuits (pleasure, wisdom, and work) which one is the easiest for you to identify with? Why?
- 2) Have you ever tried to walk someone else’s journey (cover their responsibilities, prevent the consequences of their choices, etc.)? If so, what was the result?
- 3) Can you identify the top one or two things you are pursuing right now? How could you release your expectations and outcomes in those pursuits?
- 4) Is there anything in your life where you were faced with your vanity and realized that this too was meaningless? Were you able to release the expectation and receive wisdom, knowledge, and happiness from God?
- 5) How can we pray for you right now and throughout the week?