

A Practical Study of ECCLESIASTES

“Where Your Heart and Treasure Meet”

Study Number Five – Snared by Materialism: The More and More Money Madness – Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12

Someone has said:

You have to learn to handle things the way they are, not the way you would like for them to be.
(source unknown)

A mid-life crisis is not being happy with things the way they are and so there is the frustration of wanting things to be different.

Someone has said that you come to middle age when you begin to talk about how things were rather than talking about how things are.

I can remember a story—it’s one of my very, very favorite—of three little old ladies in a rest home who were having a little confession session over their senility.

And one of the little ladies said “You know, I’m having an awful time remembering.” She said “I get up in the morning

and I don't know whether it's morning or night. I don't know whether to put on my dress or my nightie."

Another little lady, she said: "I have a horrible problem." She says "I go all the way to the back of the house and I forget what I go to get."

Third little lady says "Oh, I'm so thankful. I don't have that problem that you ladies have. I guess I better knock on wood." [KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK] "Somebody please go to the door."

Oh, I love it.

Solomon starts it by saying:

Ecclesiastes 1:2

"Meaningless! Meaningless!"... "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless!"

And with this thought in mind, the writer begins to say "Is this all there really is?"

And he raises **THREE BIG QUESTIONS** in chapter 1:

1. there is no gain in my labor,
2. there's nothing new under the sun, and

3. nobody's going to remember me anyway when it's all over.

This causes him in chapter 2 to PURSUE PLEASURE. Then he gets involved in a multitude of projects that are just like the projects that we get involved in. And then he faces the frustration of acquiring a lot through all these projects that he's got to leave to somebody who isn't going to appreciate it anyway.

And that led us to chapter 3 when he is CONFRONTED with the iron-fisted hand of the Father and His eternal purpose for our lives.

He says: "There is a time and a season for every activity." And it's the quiet frustration of a man who is not content with the things the way they are.

And when the study ends, you have a quiet, seething sense of being held accountable for a life that he doesn't like. And he doesn't enjoy things the way they are.

Last week we talked together as Solomon witnesses the oppression of others by those who are in authority.

We're talking about job loss because this is where it really comes in. We are oppressed by the corporation and there are tears in the eyes of those who are oppressed.

And then we talked about THE LONER—the guy who didn't have any money...I mean, he had all the money he needed, he didn't have anybody to leave it to. And he finally asked himself the question "Why am I doing all of this?"

And then Solomon says "The best thing you can do in a situation like this is not to be alone. Two are better than one."

Even three are better than just being by yourself.

We learned there's a "safety in a multitude of counselors."

And then the last thing that was kind of interesting in chapter 5 as we opened the chapter, he said this: "don't get eager about religion when you're going through a crisis."

He says: "don't let the stress of difficult circumstances make you make some promises to God that you're going to regret later. Don't go and sign the pledge card and make your big commitments when you're under all this stress because you're going to make a vow that you're going to have to keep and then you're going to be sorry for it because you're not going to be able to keep it."

Basically he says be careful about making a fox-hole decision. When the bullets are whizzing around, be so careful about what you do.

Now that leads us to today's study. If I were to title today's study I would call it the "Misfortunes of Having a Fortune" or "The More and More Money Madness."

You know, I am always amazed at the fact that God orders my curriculum the way He does. I never talk on money and both of the studies this week are on money.

In the book of Matthew when we're doing the Sermon on the Mount, the message that is coming to us in the Sermon on the Mount this week is:

Be sure you're private about your matter of your giving and your responsibility to do that.

And now, today, he's talking about it once again.

Money wouldn't be a problem if you had a right attitude toward it. But when you're in the midst of a mid-life crisis, it can be a real problem.

It's almost like:

"That's all I've got to live for and I want to get as much as I can and can all I get, and poison all the rest. And really eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow I'm going to die."

A guy in mid-life crisis, remember, views life:

1. SELFISHLY rather than socially.

He's been given his bucks for braces and for memberships and for clubs and for cars and for cabins and for boats and for entertainment. And he's finally saying "Hey! What about me? When can I enjoy something?"

And then secondly, he's viewing life:

2. **APART FROM GOD** rather than controlled by God, so it doesn't make any difference anyway.

If it's not controlled by God, then I'm just going to get all I can right now and really enjoy it because this is all I'm going to get. There's nothing after all of this.

And then thirdly, he's saying that:

3. **The GRAVE IS THE END** and that's why you say "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow I actually die."

Probably one of the neatest illustrations to describe what I'm talking about is I set the stage for today's study, comes out of the trek as the pioneers moved westward. And I quote:

More than a century ago, on the sunbaked prairie west of Topeka in Kansas, there stood an abandoned farmhouse. Next to it, in a yard overgrown with weeds, was a weather-beaten old pump from whose handle hung a tin bucket full of water. The well beneath the pump was deep. The water was cold and deliciously pure.

In those years before and after the War Between the States, thousands of settlers headed west in open and covered wagons that contained all they owned.

The pump next to the old farmhouse became a very important watering stop for the thirsty travelers and their animals.

And as the wagons turned into the yard, and the settlers wet their lips in anticipation of a cool, thirst-quenching drink of water, they saw a crudely lettered sign beside the pump: “Please, friend, don’t drink the water in the bucket. If you do, your thirst will be quenched—but all who follow you will go away thirsty. The water in the bucket must be used to prime the pump. Every drop is needed. After you prime the pump and get all the water you need, kindly refill the bucket and leave it behind so others can get water, too.”

(source unknown)

There were thousands and thousands of wagon trains that went past that well in Topeka, Kansas. And I’m here to tell you that over all of the years of those journeys, never once did any person who was moving westward ever drink the water in the bucket.

What I’m saying to you is, that when you take the focus of your money and you make it selfish rather than to use it as a servant, use it as an instrument for your own edification and the edification of others, then it becomes a problem.

Some of the wealthiest people in the world are the people who are in the Bible.

It is the love of money, the Bible describes that is the root of evil.

It is when your priorities get out of whack that you get into problems with regard to materialism. And that's why money becomes such a problem to a person in a mid-life crisis. Because he's living for the here and now—he's going to do all he can to get it.

Dobson in his book *Straight Talk to Men and Their Wives* has an interesting chapter on the men, their wives, and the money. And here are some statements that I've lifted from his book, setting the stage:

(*Straight Talk to Men and Their Wives* by James Dobson)

1. Everything you own means that much more trouble for you. [That's a Chinese proverb]
2. Ralph Waldo Emerson—the amount of a man's wealth consists in the number of things that he can do without.
3. The best way to live happily ever after is not to be after too much.
4. Desire is like a river. As long as it flows within the banks of God's will, be the current strong or weak, all is well. But when it flows over those boundaries and seeks other

channels, then disaster lurks in the rampage. (James Dobson, Sr.)

5. Here's Jesus:

Mark 8:36

For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul.

6. The only thing you can take to heaven with you is your children and others that you have told about Jesus Christ.
7. The love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10)
8. The greatest secret of life is to spend it on something that will outlast it. (Anonymous)

I like that.

9. God is entitled to a portion of our income, not because He needs it but because we need to give it. (James Dobson, Jr.)
10. Why spend your money on foodstuffs that don't give you strength? Why pay for groceries that don't do you any good? Listen and I'll tell you where to get food that fattens your soul. (Isaiah 55:2, *The Living Bible*)

11. But they that will be rich fall into the temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. (1 Timothy 6:9)

Here's Mark Twain—this is a classic.

12. Such is the human race. Often it does seem a pity that Noah and his party didn't miss the boat. (Mark Twain)
13. A person brings nothing into this world and takes nothing out of it. Considering the kind of world it is, he is lucky to break even. (Anonymous)
14. Someone says there are seven ages to every man:
 1. First age—he's a child and sees the earth
 2. Second age—he wants it
 3. Third age—he hustles to get it
 4. Fourth age—he decides to be satisfied with about half of it.
 5. Fifth age—he decides to be satisfied with less than half of it.
 6. Sixth age—he is not content to possess a 2x6 foot section of it
 7. Seventh age—he gets it (Anonymous)

(source unknown)

I'm not here to bring a message on stewardship or on giving. I'm here to show you that in Solomon's frustration, he is turning to materialism to satisfy spiritual needs.

And like I have said on prior occasions, you and I are spiritual beings and we can never be satisfied with material things.

You cannot satisfy a cow with fresh meat, nor a lion with straw because you have violated the laws of nature and they will starve.

God made you a spiritual person and when you settle for materialistic goals, you have literally starved the spiritual man in your life that makes all things beautiful in His time.

So I'm not haranguing about money. I'm simply coming to you with a message from the richest man who ever lived. And he's telling you part of the problem that he's going through in facing this trauma in his life.

Now having said that, let's just take the verses here. Again you're going to be amazed they're here. They just fall out of the text just as easy as can be.

We're going to pick up at chapter 5 and verse 8.

v. 8 If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still.

Now what does money and where you work do? It's pressing to get the big job, to get the big bucks.

You know, I'm related to enough corporations around this town and in several others because of just having classes that I see constant new faces in the corporation—plugging new holes and taking new jobs and others going other places.

And you say, what happened? “We’ve had a shakeup in the top! Somebody else’s got my job and I’ve got somebody else’s job!”

It’s almost like we’re playing musical chairs and it’s a constant matter of oppression and people going from one place to another.

Solomon says don’t be surprised at this sort of thing. It happens. Money creates this kind of an environment. It is a constant power struggle.

I’m going to quote from a politician in illustrating this verse.

Probably one of my favorite politicians of our day is a man that I have grown up with. He is a man who is as far away from me, politically, as he could be. And I will never know why and how a man can be a born again Christian and be such a liberal politically, but Mark Hatfield happens to be that man. He was the president of Willamette University while I was growing up in Salem, Oregon, went to our church, became the governor of the state, and has since become a U.S. Senator. And it does not surprise me that he has written a book called *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, because that certainly where I think I would find him with the divergence of opinions

and ideas that he has in his liberal political views and his very conservative Christian views as far as ones relationship to the Lord.

This is what he says about power and politics. I love this. If this happened by those who we elected, man we'd have a revolution in Washington.

(Between a Rock and a Hard Place by Mark O. Hatfield)

More prestige and power a man gains, the harder it is for him to admit he is wrong. He also tends to lose an awareness of his culpability before God. Whenever power becomes the aim of a man's life, he unconsciously places himself above the laws of God and his fellow men...Every man who has a prominent position is under the continual temptation to use all means available, both lawful and unlawful to maintain and augment his power and prestige. He is in a place of very grave and moral danger.

(source unknown)

And then he comes across. Why do we elect these guys to political office? So they can fight for the power and get to the top and use it for their own personal benefit? Sometimes that's the feeling you get. All they're interested in is us right now going and pushing the right plug or pulling the right crank so they can exercise their power for personal advantage for another four years and forget about us until next time.

He says that is not the way leadership ought to be exercised.

And this is the best part of the book.

He uses Jesus of Nazareth in talking about SERVANT LEADERSHIP rather than selfish prestige and power and oppression. Listen to what he says:

(Between a Rock and a Hard Place by Mark O. Hatfield)

Service to others, solely for their own benefit and entailing deep sacrifice is the true essence of leadership and the ultimate form of power. There is a power in servanthood which transcends all notions of power sought after so avidly, in the secular political sphere of life....Jesus of Nazareth...exercised a form of power which changed totally the course of history...It was a form of seeming powerlessness, expressed in self-sacrificial love and service on the behalf of others. His leadership was the surrendering of his personal prerogatives, the giving up of his ego...But rather also to surrender in utter faithfulness to God's will, exemplifying through a total self-giving love the heart and the message of his mission.

(source unknown)

And of course he takes that classic illustration that I'm working on right now of Christ coming into a room filled with a bunch of His own men who are arguing about who's going to be Secretary of State in the kingdom. Their hearts are so filled with pride, they got dirty feet, and He takes the towel and the bucket and redefines leadership and authority and power by beginning to wash each one of their feet in the circle.

Wouldn't it be something that if these guys that we're going to elect pretty quick went to Washington to wash our feet? I mean, and to serve our interests rather than their own.

Solomon says money creates that kind of environment! It's a dog-eat-dog world boy! And I mean, you go for it! And you hurt. And the concept of leadership is the concept described here. It's the ministry to one another and that can involve sacrifice.

Verse 9.

v. 9 The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields.

Of course, through taxation.

Solomon also gets in part of the action.

v.10 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.

“Whoever loves money never has money enough;”—would you look at that. There it is. You didn't know that was there, did you?—“whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.”

He's “never satisfied with his income.”

Now, that wouldn't sound very much would it for me? I mean, here I am, I can't talk on this. But here's the richest guy in the world talking. He's got more bucks than any of us could ever dream of having.

And he's saying "Let me tell you something, if you love it you'll never have enough of it. And if you love wealth, you'll never be satisfied with your income. And this is a meaningless rat race."

Gail Sheehy has written a book called *Passages* which talks about the passages that every adult male goes through. It's a great book on the mid-life crisis because she has a whole section on it.

And she has a questionnaire that she sent out to a lot of young businessmen who are going the corporate route and who are really struggling in our society to try to make it.

And she summarizes her questionnaire with the following two observations. She says:

(*Passages* by Gail Sheehy)

Young men of our generation have two major fears and they are as follows:

1. the fear of not having enough money and
2. the fear of being locked in by the pursuit of money.

(source unknown)

1. The fear of not having enough of it.
2. The fear of being in bondage to it—to have to pursue it.

And Solomon says it's dangerous, that can happen.

Now there's a classic passage that Paul writes to young Timothy on the subject of money and the dangers of it. And I would put it right here beside this verse. And that's 1 Timothy 6:6-17. I'll read just a few of those verses:

1 Timothy 6:6-18

But godliness with contentment is great gain. We brought nothing into the world so that, as a result, we can take nothing out of it. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who are desiring to be rich fall into the temptation and snare and many useless and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the root of all the evils is the love of money, which certain ones in reaching for it have been led astray from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. But as for you, O man of God, be fleeing these things. Be going after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith and take hold of eternal life to which you were called and confess the good confession before many witnesses. To those who are wealthy in the present age charge them not

to be proud, neither to have their hopes set upon the uncertainty of wealth, but upon God the One who is continually providing us all things abundantly for our enjoyment. To be doing good, to be wealthy in good works, to be generous, sharers with others.

So he's writing to this young man and he says "Now look, there are some dangers here. Be careful about that."

What I'm saying to you, I guess, in this study and what Solomon is trying to tell us is, it's not wrong to be wealthy. You look at a guy like Abraham, you look at a guy like Job, look at a guy like Joseph, you look at a guy like Isaac—those are the patriarchs.

In fact, an evidence of God's blessing upon the life is wealth many, many times.

It's just that, it is aggravated when you are in the midst of a crisis rebelling against a God who is wanting to feed the spiritual part of you, for you to be content to come back and settle in on the materialistic aspects of your behavior.

Verse 11.

v.11 As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?

“As goods increase, so do those who consume them.”—Isn’t that the way it is? You’ve got a lot of money, you’ve got a lot of friends. You don’t have much money, then you don’t have any friends.—“And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?”

And then he takes a look and they’re gone! Everybody’s got his hand out! Everybody wants to enjoy this with him.

One writer says:

Money talks, we have been told since childhood. Listen to this dollar speak. You hold me in your hand and you call me yours, yet may I not as well call you mine? See how easily I rule you. To gain me you would all but die. I am impersonal as rain, essential as water. Without me men in institutions would die. Yet I do not hold the power of life for them. I am futile without the stamp of your desire. I go nowhere unless you send me. I keep strange company. For me men mock, love and scorn character. Yet I am appointed to the service of saints, to give education to the growing mind and food to the starving bodies of the poor. My power is terrific. Handle me carefully and wisely lest you become my servant, rather than I yours.
(source unknown)

You know Will Rogers has said some great things. And when he’s talking about money, he’s got a classic:

“Too many people spend money they haven’t earned to buy things they don’t want, to impress people they don’t like.”

(source unknown)

Isn't that great?

“Too many people spend money they haven't earned to buy things they don't want, to impress people they don't like.”

Verse 12.

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

Why?

He's just like you. You're caught up in this thing. You're shook about the market—it goes up 20 points one day and drops out of sight the next and so do you.

I told everybody in the class at OneMain Place that. We spoke about money and praying and fasting today. And I said next week we're going to talk about worry and I'm hoping the market will drop off about 50 points so all of you'll be here.

The level of your anxiety is based upon what the market does—or whether people are buying your goods—or whether they're using your services. And you've got a knot inside as big as all outdoors if it's not going to well right now. And you find that your whole emotional well-being is dependent upon material things. Shame on you! That's what he's saying.

“The sleep of a laborer is sweet,”—man he knows how much he’s going to make and he just goes to the house after a hard day’s work and hits the sack. He gets up in the morning to do the same thing again.

“whether he eats a little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep.”

v.13 I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner,

And then he CONTRASTS that in verse 14.

v.14 or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him.

See when it’s everything and you hoard it to your own harm and detriment, or you can lose it so you don’t have anything to pass on to your family.

In the *Tyler Morning Telegraph* a couple of years ago there was an article carried about a woman in Switzerland who everybody thought was a witch.

She lived in a little old hut and I quote:

(*Tyler Morning Telegraph*, October 14, 1980)

Maddalena Borella lived like a beggar. She never washed or

changed her clothes and slept on straw in a broken-down hut. Local children in Gorduno, a village near the town of Bellinzona in the Italian-speaking southern part of Switzerland, were afraid of the 88-year-old woman. They called her a witch. Last January, Maddalena collapsed on the road. Doctors said she was so weak because she hardly ate, just one small meal a day. The old woman was placed in a home for the aged after hospital treatment but she died in April. The hut was sealed and authorities began searching for the only relative, a nephew living in the United States. The nephew has now been traced and authorities went through the hut to see what, if anything, was of value. They found a bank savings book showing that Maddalena had \$312,000 in an account. There was also the key to a safe deposit box which was found to hold gold coins worth \$1.25 million dollars. (source unknown)

Wealth hoarded to the detriment.

We know countless stories of people who do that. Who, as wealth increases, become increasingly selfish and who hoard it.

There is a museum in South Dakota that displays the following inscription left by a beleaguered prospector. I love this:

“I lost my gun, I lost my horse. I am out of food. The Indians are after me but I’ve got all the gold I can carry.”
(source unknown)

Solomon is really coming to grips with some things. Look at verse 15.

v.15 Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand.

Someone has said, there are no pockets in a shroud and there are no Brinks armored cars in a funeral procession.

When you leave, you leave all of it.

Jesus said that in Luke 12:19, 20. Here's a guy, who's really made it.

Luke 12:19, 20

I will say to my soul, soul, Thou has much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whose shall those things be which thou has provided?

He's already spoken of the frustration of acquiring wealth back in chapter 2:18. He's touched on that because it's a source of irritation to him. He says:

Ecclesiastes 2:18

I hated all the things I toiled for under the sun, because I have got to leave them to one who comes after me.

And then this quote is almost exactly to what Job says when he loses everything in chapter 1. Remember? He gets the word that his family is gone. He gets the word that his house has been destroyed and all of his servants and he's destitute and poverty-stricken. And in Job chapter 1 he says:

Job 1:21

Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

One of the days God is going to sing with Don Meredith, "Turn out the lights, the party's over!" And you're going to have to stand in His presence.

Belshazzar had to face that. Man he's whooping it up with Babylon and this unseen hand comes into the room and begins to right on the wall and he can't understand it. And they call Daniel and Daniel says "That says Belshazzar you are weighed in the balances and found wanting! Baby, it's all over. Tomorrow morning you'll be no more."

You know I have found so many illustrations of this I cannot give you a number.

I was going to my file again—to my funeral file—because this

has been another one of those heartbreaking weeks for me.

I was telling my secretary that my file is bulging and evidently heaven is too.

I minister to two retirement communities on Sunday, if you were not aware of this. Emerald Bay is a “Mwah!” elite. That’s where the big bucks and Garner Ted Armstrong and all the big boys live.

And then Hide-a-way Lake is a little bit more conservative. It has three lakes and 1,900 lots and wonderful homes but extremes in income. Many young couples with children live there.

But I can tell you in the 7 or 8 years that I’ve been ministering to those two churches of hundreds of illustrations of people who have finally retired, built their house, and one of them dies. Within a week! Within a month!

“We just got it together and we discover he’s got cancer!” Or “We just finally made it and he’s gone!” He drops dead of a heart attack.

I don’t know how many of those funerals that I’ve had of people who just go on living life as though God doesn’t exist and they’re going to get all they can out of it. And finally comes the time for retirement and they fold under the pressure. They can’t take being free from the stress and all of the scheduling and the pressure that’s been involved in

acquiring all of this. And they've got to leave the whole thing tragically behind them.

One writer said it this way:

He always said he would retire
when he'd made a million clear.
And so he toiled into the dusk,
from day to day, from year to year.

At last he put his ledgers up
and laid his stock reports aside,
And when he started out to live,
he found he had already died.

(source unknown)

That's the story.

Verse 16.

**v.16 This too is a grievous evil: As a man comes, so he
departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for
the wind?**

That is if he just lives for money and material things.

**v.17 All his days he eats in darkness, with great
frustration, affliction and anger.**

Boy! I looked at that and I said I don't want those kind of friends for company—"frustration, affliction and anger."

Somebody says:

Make money your god and it will plague you like the devil."
(source unknown)

Money will not buy...money will buy a bed but not sleep; books but not brains; food but not appetite; finery but not beauty; a house but not a home; medicine but not health; luxuries but not culture; amusement but not happiness.
(source unknown)

Verse 18.

v.18 Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him—for this is his lot.

He has come back to the realization of how you put things together. I love that verse!

He says "I began to think about this. It's right for a man to eat, to live, to enjoy life, to be and find satisfaction in his labor." But would you notice two phrases in that verse:

1. "during the few days of life [that] God has given him"

and then

2. “this is his lot.”

Alright, now you know where Solomon is. “There’s just a few days left. I’ve lived more than I’ve got left to live—that’s what’s really making this crisis in the first place. And so, I’ve only got some days left and they’re few in comparison to what I’ve already lived.” And then secondly, he’s decided he is fighting against the sovereign purpose of God, which is to really bless him if he’d just let God work it out in his life. And be content with what God has provided.

You know, sometimes I have funny feelings when it comes to money and talking about it. And I was sharing with the people at OneMain Place today a humorous thought I had driving down the freeway from Camden back to Tyler on Monday night. One of the things that really gets me is Christian organizations that are so unhappy with their position, as far as money is concerned.

I get flat fuming when these guys used the Lord’s money that’s been sacrificially given to get on the television set and for 25 minutes beg you for money for a project that’s not going to get done unless you do it. And they begin to cry. And then they tell you a little 5 minute story of somebody who came to know Jesus at the end and ask you to do the same. But also to write your check, to sign your pledge card to keep us from going under.

What an epitome of joy and fulfillment the Christian servant on the tube, begging for the bucks! Oh that just drives me up the wall!

And so I told the guys at OneMain Place, I had a thought. Let's take the TV cameras today and let's put them in a jail in Rome. I mean none of these big mountains and Patmos and the Holy Land and beautiful trees and streams and fountains and million dollar sets that slide back and forth and give you the feeling that it's professional television. Let's go to the Roman prison and let's have Paul as our Bible teacher today. And let's focus in on the apostle and let him tell us that he has some needs. Ok? And see what he does about money.

And as the camera comes in on the old man sitting there, in the shadows of the prison with the sewer system of the city flowing just a hundred yards away, he says:

Philippians 4:11-13

I have learned in whatever state I am therewith to be content. I have learned to be hungry and I've learned to have much. Whether in poverty or in plenty, I have learned that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Then he writes to the Macedonians and he says:

Stop giving! You've given too much! Y'all can't afford it!

What's happened to us? We've created a bunch of Christian people that are so materialistically oriented that they got to get their name on some big project before they die or they haven't been a success, while the world is dying without Jesus.

And I'll tell you, they're going to be held accountable just as much as you and I are for the money that we spend and what has come through our hands.

May God help us in the day which we're living because we have made money and giving as something such a vital part of Christianity, we're almost scared to go to a meeting lest somebody's going to talk about it again and again and again.

"Then I realized it's good and proper for a man to eat and to drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun..."

The Lord wants you to have a good time. He wants you to live it up. He just wants you to have right priorities, that's all, and not let that be number one in your life.

Verse 19.

This is the neatest verse in today's study.

v.19 Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God.

“Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions,”—there’s where it comes from.

“and enables him to enjoy them,”—ah ha!

“to accept his lot”—that’s chapter 3 again, whatever God’s purpose is.

“and be happy in his work”—because that’s his lot.

“—this is a gift of God.”

Now I want to look at four statements in that letter, in that verse. “...when God”:

1. “gives any man wealth and possessions”

There are two verses of scripture that go alongside of that:

Matthew 6:33

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness;
and all these things shall be added unto you.

God is interested and concerned about your material well-being. Matthew 6:33—just get your priorities straight.

Secondly:

Joshua 1:8

This Book of the Law shall not depart out of your mouth but you shall meditate therein day and night and be careful to observe all that is written therein. And then you will make your way prosperous and then you'll have good success.

It is something which God gives to those that He can trust, that will keep it straight.

2. “and enables him to enjoy them”

I was talking to one guy I led to the Lord here not too long ago and he's president of a company. He says “You know, I'm having the hardest time in the whole world. I'm making more money than I have ever made in my whole life but I don't have time to enjoy it.”

Caught up in all of the stresses and activities of making it and the success of the company, but the frustration is he's not able to enjoy it.

3. “to accept his lot”

And wrote after that:

SUBMISSION and SURRENDER to the sovereign purpose of God for my life.

If you're fighting this tonight, if you're struggling against it, may God help you to make the decision to surrender.

I had the neatest time at OneMain Place. You know, the little popcorn man that pops out there. He's always...he and I have a common denominator. He'd just gotten back from running the New York marathon last week and he was so excited about it. And so we had to talk running today. But you know what he said to me at the end of it?

He says "Do you got any tapes down there to tell me how to become a Christian?"

I said "Man, have I got some tapes!" And I stumbled down the escalator to get them. I came back up with two sets.

He says "Contribution?"

I said "No, these are yours."

He says "I'm right on the verge. I just need to have some input."

I thought to myself, there are people all over the place that are really seeking and searching to find their lot in life, realizing that what they have done and what they are doing really does not have all the meaning that it ought to have. And there's something in a relationship that they need to find

And it is submission and surrender to God's sovereign purpose that's going to bring the blessing to you. And He's not going to take your money away from you, nor your fun. Some people have always got the idea that they got to give up a bunch! You don't have to give up anything. You've got to take what He's ready to give you! Just humble yourself in brokenness and say "Ok God! I'll take it! I give up! Do it Your way!" That's all that's involved.

And then he says:

4. "be happy in his work—this is a gift of God."

Isn't that the neatest verse you ever saw in your long-legged life? Verse 19.

Verse 20. I love the twentieth one too! Man, this is neat!

v.20 He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.

You've heard, "my how time flies when you're having fun?"

Man, he is so excited about everyday he can't stand it!

John 10:10

I am come, that they might have life and they might have it more abundant.

There's an article called "The Three Supreme Blessings" and in it several people are interviewed. They're giving the privilege of choosing the three things they want.

The student first was asked "what would you have if you could have it?" And he says "Give me books, health and a quiet place.

The miser was asked and he said "Money, money, money."

The pauper was asked and he said "bread, bread, bread."

The drunkard was asked and he said "drink, drink, drink."

And the multitude said "wealth, fame, and pleasure."

Then a poor Christian was asked "what would you like?" He says three things: "I want to be found IN Christ. I want to be LIKE Christ. And ultimately I want to be WITH Christ."
(source unknown)

May I say that might sound old foggy and outdated. Some of you young bucks better listen because I've been down this road a tad bit further than you have and I want to tell you, there's the secret. It's to be found in Christ when you flick it

in. That's the most important. And to become more like Him on a daily basis is only going to make you more satisfied and happy because soon you're going to be like Him anyway if you name His name. And third, ultimately you'll want to be with Him when it's all over.

Verse 1 of chapter 6.

6:v. 1 I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on men:

v. 2 God gives a man wealth, possessions and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God does not enable him to enjoy them, and a stranger enjoys them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil.

He gets it all and he dies at retirement. That's basically what we were saying earlier.

v. 3 A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.

Now he is talking some strong language here.

v. 4 It comes without meaning, it departs in darkness, and in darkness its name is shrouded.

v. 5 Though it never saw the sun or knew anything, it has more rest than does that man—

v. 6 even if he lives a thousand years twice over but fails to enjoy his prosperity. Do not all go to the same place?

Oh! My goodness how down and depressed and distorted can come your vision when this is all you're living for.

v. 7 All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.

What a verse!

v. 8 What advantage has a wise man over a fool? What does a poor man gain by knowing how to conduct himself before others?

v. 9 Better what the eye sees than the roving of the appetite. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

v.10 Whatever exists has already been named, and what man is has been known; no man can contend with one who is stronger than he.

v.11 The more the words, the less the meaning, and how does that profit anyone?

Boy that was a convicting verse!

v.12 For who knows what is good for a man in life, during the few and meaningless days he passes through like a shadow? Who can tell him what will happen under the sun after he is gone?

The answer to that question is God.

And it's interesting, he takes this verse—as he comes to a conclusion—and if you tie it into the book of James, you've got the key to it.

He says in:

James 4:14-17

Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that. But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to the one who knows what is right to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Now let me take those verses and give you the lessons I got in summarizing the study, and then I want to just make a couple of closing observations.

Here are the lessons I got out of that section of the Word.

Lesson #1: Oppression is a way of life when money is concerned.

Some of you faced that in inheritance, don't you? Even blood brothers and sisters become oppressive when there is some money involved in an estate. It's almost like they don't even relate to one another.

Oppression is a way of life where money is involved.

Lesson #2: It is the love of money that creates the problem.

If you're a Christian and you're out of whack in this area, I want to predict something for you, ok? If you love money tonight, as a Christian, more than you love your Lord and you're spending more time on that than you are your relationship to the Lord, I can guarantee you something. God's going to take it away from you.

In Genesis 22 God tested Abraham because Abraham waited 25 years for a son Isaac to come into his life. And just to see whether Isaac was more important than the Lord who gave him, He asked Abraham to take that child and offer him as a sacrifice.

Abraham passed the test.

May I say to you, when something becomes more important than your relationship to Him, as a believer, you are running in a great possibility of losing all that you have acquired. And He is the sovereign God of the universe and is capable of getting your attention very quickly by what He's able to do.

Lesson #3: Wealth that is hoarded does harm to its owner.

Wealth that is hoarded—possessed, acquired, kept selfishly—does harm to its owner.

Out of today's study we have learned:

Lesson #4: You cannot take your wealth with you to the next world.

Lesson #5: Wealth and possessions and the ability to enjoy them are a gift from God.

Lesson #6: God is the One who keeps us occupied with gladness of heart.

And then the last lesson comes out of that last verse.

Lesson #7: God is the One who knows what's good for you and He also knows how many days you've got to live.

Alright, you're saying what shall I do to honor the Lord?
You're ready to give your stewardship message.

Maybe I should turn Baptist and say "Bring all your tithes into the storehouse!"

Well I'm sorry. I'm under grace and not under the Law so I don't live under the tithe.

Then what should I do?

There are three verses that I throw at you today, just to consider the possibility of your attitude toward these things.

First of all:

2 Corinthians 9:7

Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

You know, don't sign your pledge cards. Don't yield to these turkeys that are putting all those pressure tactics on you and grudging give—like sucking blood out of a turnip. Forget it. God is not impressed and you're not going to get anything from the sacrifice you make anyway.

If God has laid a burden and a concern on your heart then go for it man. Make it a very private matter.

As you purpose in your heart, do it. Not grudgingly or of necessity.

On the top of our little receipt from gifts that come into the ministries, we have put two verses:

Proverbs 11:24-26

There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more. And there is one who withholds what is justly due, but it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous and he who waters will himself be watered. He withholds grain, the people will curse him, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it.

Zephaniah 1:18 is the other one:

Zephaniah 1:18

Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath. But the whole land shall be devoured.

Before the Lord you've got a responsibility.

One of the things I always like is for somebody to tell me what the questions are going to be on the final exam. And when you meet the Lord, you're going to be hit in **FOUR AREAS**:

1. You are going to be held responsible for the condition of your MARRIAGE—that's the number one responsibility for the man before the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ. You're going to be asked about that.
2. going to get some questions on the MONEY you made and what you did with it, and how you handled it as a steward.
3. the condition of your CHILDREN and your FAMILY.
4. the use of your TIME.

It's your MARRIAGE,

your MONEY,

your FAMILY and

your TIME.

The hardest thing in the world is for a man to have to face the possibility that he's got more time and more money than he can use. That leads to tremendous frustration.

See to it that you're disciplined and you order well those areas of your life.

I told you this was a very difficult week.

I arrived home Thursday night to find that my friend was still unconscious that I asked you to pray for. And he continued that way Friday and I went into the room several times to tell him that I was there but he did not respond.

Saturday night about 11:30 I stood and looked at a shell that was once my friend. He'd gone to be with the Lord.

As I stood in that room I had a lot of bitterness inside, I've got to confess to you.

You know there's some people who come into your life that really mean a lot to you. And I've had three or four in the last three or four months leave. I mean it when I say the folder is bulging.

And I feel a great loss. Some people that I know, of course you know, are people that I meet like you when I teach in North Dallas, and I don't see you for another year.

I love you and I enjoy the fellowship we have during the weeks but it's like we both say *Que será, será*, goodbye at the end of eight weeks for another 9 or 10 months, unless I see you at a conference or in a camp.

With Doug it was different. Doug was almost a part of our staff. He's printed everything we've ever put out for the 10 years we've existed. He said one day: "Can my printing be used in the ministry?" And I said "Boy you asked a loaded question."

This guy and I've had more fun playing volleyball, softball, racquetball, you name it we've done it. I always gave him 4 strokes a hole when we golfed. And we had tons of fun together.

There was a hardly a day gone by that I did not call this guy and ask him whether the newsletter was ready or just stop by his shop down here in the industrial district when I was over here.

It was hard today because I couldn't go down there because he wasn't there and he isn't going to be there anymore. Because he's gone.

Forty-three years of age—his life is over. It was like while I was standing there, he was such a competitor, and I always was beating him. I could just hear him say "This time I beat you Anderson. I'm there ahead of you."

And I had to say "Doug you did it babe. You fought a good fight. You finished the course, you kept the faith."

Really a neat man. I've got some treasured memories now and I've gotten over it. Part of the reason because I know where he is and I'm going to see him again soon. And it won't be long.

But I wish I could say that about every one of you sitting in this room. Because I know that guy received Christ one night at a conference. He wanted to make a public demonstration of

it so I baptized him in the lake at Hide-a-Way one Sunday. It's because he wanted to tell people that Jesus came into his life.

That's the comfort I have tonight. And I would pray for you. You've come into my class, you're here and now you've been here for several weeks. Do you really know Jesus as Savior?

If we had your funeral tomorrow, would there be testimonies of people sitting around who would say yes, they knew Christ. They ran a good race. They finished the course. Even if it was 35 or 40 or 50 years—whatever God allotted to you in His time.

Solomon's coming right down to it when he says it. It's not all these material things. It's being able to have those things and to enjoy them and to accept the lot that God has given me in life. That's fulfillment.

Father, I thank You for Jesus and I thank You for the fact that He waits right now to come into the lives of anyone who would like to come to know Him as Savior. And I would pray this night that before some of these folks go to bed, maybe a husband and wife team would pray together and meaningfully exchange their vows with you to come to know Christ in a personal way. Let this be a spiritual birthday for them. I would pray that they're rejoicing in their sense of burden released, would be lifted. And from this moment on they'd begin to enjoy the life that is going to be theirs eternally when finally they step into Your presence and the race is over and the time with You is forever. We love You and praise You for

tonight and for the privilege of looking into Your Word. Now encourage us from the time we've had. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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Study Number Five – Snared by Materialism: The More and More Money Madness – Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12

NOTES

v. 8 If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still.

v. 9 The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields.

v.10 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.

v.11 As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?

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

v.13 I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner,

v.14 or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him.

v.15 Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand.

v.16 This too is a grievous evil: As a man comes, so he departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind?

v.17 All his days he eats in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger.

v.18 Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him—for this is his lot.

v.19 Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God.

v.20 He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.

6:v. 1 I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on men:

v. 2 God gives a man wealth, possessions and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God does not enable him to enjoy them, and a stranger enjoys them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil.

NOTES

v. 3 A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.

v. 4 It comes without meaning, it departs in darkness, and in darkness its name is shrouded.

v. 5 Though it never saw the sun or knew anything, it has more rest than does that man—

v. 6 even if he lives a thousand years twice over but fails to enjoy his prosperity. Do not all go to the same place?

v. 7 All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.

v. 8 What advantage has a wise man over a fool? What does a poor man gain by knowing how to conduct himself before others?

v. 9 Better what the eye sees than the roving of the appetite. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

v.10 Whatever exists has already been named, and what man is has been known; no man can contend with one who is stronger than he.

v.11 The more the words, the less the meaning, and how does that profit anyone?

v.12 For who knows what is good for a man in life, during the few and meaningless days he passes through like a shadow? Who can tell him what will happen under the sun after he is gone?

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. State the frustration of love misplaced, according to verse 10. Please read 1 Timothy 6:6-17 with this question.

3. What is the frustration of verse 12?

4. State the two extremes in verses 13-15 and the end result.

5. What is a gift of God, according to verse 19?

6. What else does Solomon see, according to chapter 6:1, 2?

7. State Solomon's frustration, according to verses 3-6.

8. Can you answer Solomon's two questions in verse 12?

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Oppression is a way of life where money is involved.

LESSON #2: It is the love of money that creates the problem.

LESSON #3: Wealth that is hoarded does harm to its owner.

LESSON #4: You cannot take your wealth with you to the next world.

LESSON #5: Wealth and possessions and the ability to enjoy them are a gift from God.

LESSON #6: God is the One who keeps us occupied with gladness of heart.

LESSON #7: God is the One who knows what is good for man and He also knows the days of our lives.