



[Ecclesiastes 6:9](#)

(9) Better *is* the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire.
This also *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.

New King James Version

One commentator compared our desires to being like a tramp, a word not used much today but used frequently during the Great Depression of the 1930s. A tramp is a person who wanders aimlessly about and never settles down in one place to hold a job, put down roots, and prosper. He is never content to stay at home. Thus personified, carnal desire loves to “window shop,” always eager to find or do something new “to make life more fulfilling.” It is as though our desires are always traveling but never arriving.

Another commentator illustrates how quickly a person's attention can latch on to a desire, even in the face of grave danger. During the famous eruption of Mount Vesuvius just outside of Pompeii, Italy, in AD 79, the gases and lava flows moved so rapidly that they caught people in the midst of various activities, entombing them right in those acts as though they had been sculpted.

One woman so “caught in the act” was apparently fleeing the eruption. Interestingly, her feet pointed in one direction, that is, apparently in the direction of escape from the dangers of the eruption, but her head, one arm, and hand were pointed behind her. It seems that even as she fled for her life, something behind her caught her attention. She reached back to grab it, but in that very instant, she died and was covered by the eruption's debris, evidently not even falling to the ground. Was she reaching for a beautiful piece of jewelry that she did not want to leave behind? Nobody knows, but her desire was never fulfilled. It appears to have destroyed her life.

Without saying it frequently or directly, [God](#) is gradually showing through Solomon's illustrations that it is He, giving His gifts within the relationship, who adds purpose and

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Ecclesiastes 6:9 (<http://www.theberean.org>) fulfillment to mere living. He has the power to gift us with what truly builds a life of satisfying and contented fulfillment.

Solomon is getting at something that is keenly important. Most of us live in areas where we can watch birds. Birds seem to spend all their waking hours looking for food to eat. All animals have this same characteristic. Their activity provides helpful insight: The birds are alive but not really living as we understand living. They merely exist. Yet, at the same time, they are fulfilling a purpose for which God created them, and they even sing about it.

Solomon is not suggesting at all that it is wrong to work or eat, nor is it [sin](#) that we should have desires, of and by themselves. Working, eating, and having desires can be quite enjoyable and profitable. But if that is all we do, we merely exist at an animal level. We must do something with our lives that is positive and purposeful and conforms to God's purpose, or we will waste them, achieving nothing within His purpose.

We are part of God's spiritual creation. A person being spiritually created in the [image of God](#) must not drift but deliberately choose to live for goals far higher, goals that God establishes. Solomon is not belittling anybody, but simply teaching a [truth](#), a reality that material things of themselves cannot make life richly satisfying. A Christian's life must be rightly balanced toward his [relationship with God](#), and he must strive to follow God by living in the same loving manner as Christ did as a human and continues doing eternally.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living \(Part Seven\): Contentment](#)

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