

Ecclesiastes Resumed (Part Fourteen)

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 01-Mar-14; Sermon #1200

I have a question for you. It is a question that only you can answer because it is something that is very personal for every one of us to respond to. The question is, is life as futile as it seems to be at least on the surface? This is what Solomon seems to suggest as he begins his teaching in chapter one of Ecclesiastes.

I ask you because you are a church member. Moses, Job, Elijah, and Jonah became so discouraged or fearful that they wished they had not been born! Even Paul despaired in a particularly rough time that he was going through. With big names like those high on the list, is it any wonder that we have difficulty with our attitudes? We are no where near the stratosphere of membership in the Church of God through history and yet these great personages ran into rough patches where they did not feel very good about life. Do we suffer from discouragement because there are too many mysteries, too many puzzles that we cannot fathom, or because they never seem to end? Is life truly meant to be a dead end street that Solomon sometimes gives the impression of in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Is life merely a 'here today and gone tomorrow' misadventure with no purpose or future? Can life be satisfying when it does not seem to make sense? Those that we deem to be good, die young with few of life's blessings. Those we consider to be evil, live long lives with wealth and seeming comfort. How often are we frustrated as we look for enjoyment? It is no easy task to walk this earth and find peace.

Inside of us, it seems as though something is at odds with the very rhythm of things and we are forever restless, dissatisfied, frustrated, and emotionally aching. Are we, all too frequently seeking satisfaction driven by the desire for things? We have reached close to the midpoint of the Book of Ecclesiastes. We are in Ecclesiastes 6, which is the shortest chapter in the book. It seems to serve the purpose of being a summary or perhaps a concluding statement regarding the instruction he has given so far. We are learning, especially from chapters four, five, and six, that one must seriously ask himself the question as to whether we can truly enjoy the gifts of God without a personal relationship with Him. Many of the gifts He has strewn, almost literally and profusely strewn at us, with an achieved satisfaction in life.

I believe that Solomon is teaching us that the relationship with God and true enjoyment, or maybe a better term would be at least satisfaction with life, cannot be separated. They go together. That is what Solomon is inferring as we go through these last four or five chapters. That point is becoming clearer and it is a major theme in the central

portion of this book.

How many times have you heard of some famous personality that has made adjustments in their life because they want to devote more time to their family? Something of that nature is what is involved in this chapter. As children in the relationship that we have been talking about here in Ecclesiastes, we bear some responsibility by responding to the other part of that relationship. That part is God Himself.

Recall that chapter one began with Solomon essentially saying that human life is meaningless with his famous overall statement saying, 'vanity of vanity, all is vanity'. That seems like an all-inclusive statement. It is, in a sense, to his purpose. He then sets out to evaluate many aspects essential to living life, to give his readers a clearer view of what is going on, on earth.

I do not believe that Solomon is truly what we might call 'down on life'. He is being realistic by showing that most people are living unfulfilled, dissatisfied, and even mystifying, frustrated lives because of making poor choices. It is not that God intended it that way. It is the way, beginning with Adam and Eve, that we have chosen! Solomon, more than a thousand years after creation, reaches this same conclusion. We have to understand that Solomon does not explore deeply why this is so. He sees it. He is reporting on it. I think one of the reasons he does not directly report on it, is that he assumes that those people reading his book already knows the reason. The overall reason that this condition that Solomon is reporting on exists is because many are not making a serious effort to make God a living reality in their daily life. In the lives of the overwhelming majority of people on earth, God receives only 'token' acknowledgment. They do not give Him devoted admiration and determined submission to Him in their life. They may believe that God exists, but they are not really giving themselves over to what He says to do.

The theme of this part of the book and a title that fits within the context for the overwhelming majority of people, is that most people are unwittingly living 'under the sun' lives. You have heard that phrase before. People are living that way. They are 'choosing' to live that way.

The cause of the way of life most lived slowly begins to become clarified in Ecclesiastes chapter four. It is not directly titled by Solomon. Please turn to Proverbs 16. Solomon gives us a very clear reason as to why things are this way.

Proverbs 16:25 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the

Ecclesiastes Resumed (Part Fourteen) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)
way of death.

This verse summarizes and succinctly describes the essential issue of what is wrong in life and why life is lived with long periods of dissatisfaction and ultimately death without the people ever realizing what is missing. Mankind keeps choosing ways of life that are going to end in death. Along the way to death, life is not very satisfying at all. Solomon does not directly name this, but he expects his readers to understand what is causing the problem. That is us.

It is in Ecclesiastes 4 that Solomon begins describing and analyzing the quality of the cultures we live in and the pursuits that people are involved in. People largely center in on their efforts to attain higher levels of wealth as the answer to life's desire for a sense of satisfaction and well-being. Oh, if I just had more money! That would straighten everything out. That is a common way of thinking. He is blowing that way of thinking to shreds. Solomon does not give a succinct overall solution until the final half dozen scriptures of the book. We can point to a New Testament scripture that summarizes mankind's needs in just two verses. Mankind *needs* a relationship with our Creator God so that we live life with spiritual understanding of its purpose. Lets turn back to II Timothy 1:6-7.

II Timothy 1:6-7 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

II Timothy 1:9 Who has saved us (God) and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

Twice in that ninth verse, Paul refers to us as being given a gift. The reason for the giving of that gift, which God gave to us as a sheer gift, is so that we might have a relationship with Him. It gives us a spiritual outlook on life, which mankind does not have by nature. That is what is missing in the overwhelming majority of people's lives and why they cannot live life the way we have the opportunity to live it. They keep choosing the wrong things almost all of the time. We have been freed from slavery to that choice. We have the opportunity to choose the way that will produce satisfaction in life. This opportunity, this gift, was given to us! It is a gift, not based on any good deeds that we have performed at all! God simply decided to give it to us on His own. Of course, with that comes the test. The test is to use it to glorify God. From that, we will receive the

benefits of what God can then give us. This broad statement in 1 Timothy 1, is the overall solution to man's dilemma in his pursuit of happiness.

Solomon mentions God's gifts in various ways in Ecclesiastes. A clear example is that our relationship with Him is shown as a gift right from the get-go, beginning with His calling of us. As I just mentioned, it is not something we have earned. It is simply a gift that God has given. Through our calling, we are given the gift of a spiritual life. This is over and above the gift of physical life. We receive two major gifts in life! The gift of physical life in the first place and the gift of spiritual life in the second place. It is that gift of spiritual life that makes it possible for us to make good use of the physical life. It enables us to receive wisdom from God and a far more balanced perspective on life. That enables us to realize that nothing physical has within it the power to produce a sustained sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in life. To put it bluntly, God has never given anything physical, I mean anything physical, to give a sustained - - that is the keyword - - a sustained satisfaction with life! Do not get me wrong. Physical things do make us feel good. Physical things do give us satisfaction. But they cannot sustain that satisfaction. There is a big difference there.

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon does not delve into the why's of mankind not possessing this relationship. Knowledge of the truth that we are directly and personally called, helps us to understand. Ecclesiastes is written to those already having the relationship with God. Please understand this. It is written to those who already have the gift of a spiritual relationship with God. People without a relationship with God can look at Ecclesiastes and they miss the point. They think that this book is a 'downer' on life. It looks like a 'downer' because that is the way they are living. Solomon is approaching this issue from the 'inverse' perspective. Do not do this; do this. Ecclesiastes shows us a great deal about, 'do not do this'! Do not live an 'under the sun' life. We have the opportunity to avoid that by choosing to live an 'over the sun' life. A life that has God as central to our sense of satisfaction and what He wants to do with our life.

God expects us to respond to Him. He is writing the book for our benefit. We have to seek Him as in Isaiah 55. God tells us to seek Him while He may be found. He can be found by us because He has already revealed Himself to us. We do not have any trouble seeking Him to find Him because He took care of that in our calling. Our seeking of Him has to be done energetically. It is a seeking to be like Him rather than to find Him. It is those who know God who are given eternal life. We know Him and we want to enhance our understanding of Him. Our seeking is not to find Him. He has already taken care of this by revealing Himself. Our focus in our seeking is to be like Him. Here comes, in a sense, a catch. This catch you do not need to worry about though. In order to seek Him and be like Him, you have to have a relationship with him by means of His

spirit. That is why Paul says what he says in 1 Timothy 1. We already have the gift that enables us to do this. We can fulfill the instruction that is given to us here in the book of Ecclesiastes. As I have told you so many times, Ecclesiastes focuses on what is practical for a person who already has God's spirit. To those who do not, the purpose of the book is missed. All it is to them is a 'downer'. He is describing the kind of life they are living.

Chapter six focuses on circumstances that produce this satisfaction with life. It is organized thusly. Verses one and two can be titled, 'No satisfaction in wealth'. It is not that wealth is no good. It is just that wealth will not sustain satisfaction. It is a material thing. Verses three through six are titled, 'No satisfaction in children'. Verses seven through eight are titled, 'No satisfaction in labor'. That is the work that we do. Remember, we are talking about sustained satisfaction. Then in verses nine through twelve, they can be titled, 'No satisfaction in the future'. Solomon does not delve into these areas in great detail. He is merely giving overviews in order to show that through the circumstances addressed, though they can give some satisfaction, none of them can be relied upon to deliver a sustained satisfaction that we all desire to have in life.

Why? I have mentioned this before, but it is helpful to understand this. It is because they do not fit what our Creator wants to be produced in our relationship with Him. He is not concerned about us producing money/finances in our relationship with Him. It does not fit what our Creator wants to be produced in our relationship with Him. Remember 1 Corinthians 5:17 says that we are a new creation. There is work going on in us by the Creator God. He has a purpose for each one of our lives. There are things that He wants created within us. Money does not answer what He wants created within us. It is because money does not really fit into His purpose. His chief aim or major goal is His spiritual creation underway in our life. What are the things that are going to produce satisfaction in life? I am going to give you a very brief answer. A brief overview, but that answer is found in the book of Galatians.

Galatians 5:22-26 The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

God gave us His Spirit so that we can produce the fruit within a relationship with Him. Here is what He is aiming for. Walking in the Spirit or conducting our life in the Spirit, will help produce the fruit that God wants. You do not see money, houses, automobiles, or

anything like that in the list. This is what God wants produced in us. He wants us growing and developing His character and personality attributes.

Notice in verse 26, the term conceited. Paul wrote that because he is focusing on a major hindrance to these fruits being produced which causes dissatisfaction with life. Do you know what conceited means? Conceited means having a high opinion of ones own person or accomplishments, overweening self esteem, vain. Conceit, as the apostle Paul is using it there in verse 26, is like a wall that keeps God at bay. That is why Paul does not want us to become conceited. It is a hindrance to God creating His fruits within us. It is like a wall that keeps God at bay. It is the opposite of humility and it is destructive. Conceit is destructive to any human relationship as well. In other words, conceit does not just stop or hinder a relationship with God. It hinders a relationships with other human beings as well. Mark this well in your mind. Both conceit and humility are choices. We can choose either one. Lets go from here to the book of Isaiah to a very familiar scripture for most of you.

Isaiah 66:1-2 Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? Where is the place of My rest? (Where does God find peace, contentment, and satisfaction?) For all those things My hand has made and all those things exist," says the Lord. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.

This is important. Humility is the antonym, the opposite, of conceit. Here is where it becomes very important. Paul warned, if we are conceited, it will very greatly hinder our relationship with God and with other people. The solution to conceit is to be humble. God says in Isaiah 66:2, that to this one I will look: to the person that is humble. What does He mean by this? We are bringing this subject around to the place that it is personally important to you and to me. What God means is the person who is humble is one that He will look to having a relationship with. Conceit will keep Him away. It keeps Him at arm's length. God wants to bring the humble person into a closer relationship with Him. In addition to that, it becomes very important because the closer God is to us, the more willing He is to give us gifts. If we are holding Him at bay by a lack of humility and by our conceit, He gives that person no gifts.

I bring this to our attention because Solomon has been talking about God's gifts right along. This is exceedingly important to you and to me. God is our creator. Because He is our Creator, He is in a position to build within our character, personality, and mind, the very traits that He wants to be in us. It is as though He takes them from Himself and He

gives them to us as a gift. A Creator can do that. Is that not what a sculptor does to a sculpture or what an artist does to what he is painting? It is the artistry of the artist that makes the beautiful object that we look at. He is in a position to be able to do that. That is what God means when He says 'to this one will I look'. I can then paint that person or sculpt that person in the way that I want them to be. Anything we get from God is going to be beautiful to our character and to our mind. Do you know why? Because it is going to look just like God! Let us make man in our image.

Are you beginning to see clearly why physical things, even though they are very nice, cannot do to us or for us what God wants to do with our creation? He only knows what He wants out of us. He only knows what He is creating us to be like for the position that He is preparing us for. Our relationship has to come with God first and foremost. It does not mean that we do not have relationships with other people. It just means that if we want to be like Him, we have to give Him free access to us. Conceit holds Him away. Humility draws Him to us. Here is a person who loves Me and I will do something.

Conceit is a fruit of pride. The loss of humility will break a relationship with God perhaps more seriously than any other aspect of our carnal nature. Remember, I am telling you this so you will see that I am not just 'blowing smoke' here. It was pride that destroyed Satan's relationship with God. You can see that in Ezekiel 28. There was pride that was found in him. It was built up to the place where his conceit was so great

that he said, 'I will be God'! It led to all of this mess that we see on earth. We do not want to go in that direction. That is why so many of these practical things that are listed in Ecclesiastes fit into this milieu that God wants to create within us. I want to go to Proverbs 16:4. Chapter 16 in the book of Proverbs is one great chapter. This shows us, hopefully clearly, why this relationship with God is so important. It brings God into a position where He is 'free' to gift us.

Proverbs 16:3 Commit your works to the Lord and your thoughts will be established. The Lord has made all things for Himself. Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.

'Works' is a metaphor for Christian living. Do you see what it is saying? God will give us the ability to think in the right parameters. 'Works' suggest our attitude and activities within the relationship. A strong inference is that it is within the relationship that it is made possible.

Proverbs 16:4 The Lord has made all things for Himself. Yes, even the

Ecclesiastes Resumed (Part Fourteen) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)
wicked for the day of doom.

This is exceedingly important! God has gifted us with a relationship with Him. He has gifted us with His Spirit. He wants to have access to us. We have to contribute. We have to seek Him. We have to commit our works to Him. It puts the relationship between God and us into a position that He will look at us, see our needs, and make it up to us by creating this within us. He creates it by gifting us so we are enabled to do these things.

Proverbs 16:7 When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

We saw in Isaiah 66 what pleases God. It is humility. Humility pleases God. When man is humble before God, he will respond to God. He is doing the right works. He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. God is able to do this! He is willing to do it! He gives us peace. He gives us satisfaction in life. This is why we need this relationship. God is a 'gifter'! He wants to give us gifts.

Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.

What if God is not part of the relationship? He will not be directing that person's steps. Within that relationship, because we are responding to Him, God will direct our life so that we have a far better chance to make the right choices. He will give us the right thoughts. Think the right things and then we are free to choose the right way of life. That is being withheld from other people who do not have that relationship.

All of these proverbs, and there are even more, fit snugly into the themes of Solomon's illustrations that are given in chapters 5 and 6. There is an over-all lesson to all of this. It is an important lesson and principle for you and me. We will go back to I Corinthians 3:5-7 where we will see this principle succinctly stated.

I Corinthians 3:5-7 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.

Notice the people's names here. Who is Paul? What kind of a guy is he? Is he anything

at all in this? It is as though Paul is down-grading both himself and Apollos so that we can see them in the right perspective. He then uses the adversative, but. He still puts himself and Apollos in the right category by the title of minister. That shows the way we should look at them. The Lord gave to Paul and Apollos what they needed to teach the people. The Lord gave to the people that were converted through their preaching, the ability to grasp the preaching of Paul and Apollos. Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase! Are you getting it? This is why this relationship has been given to us! It is so that God has a chance to be close to us and to work with us, as it were, with His very own hands! It is so that God can produce in us what He wants! This is why Jesus said, 'Without Me, you can do nothing'! He is either a part of our lives, or we are just playing games. It is like He cannot create from a distance. God is like the potter who has to have His hands on our life in order to produce what He wants. 'Let us make man in our image'. The word 'make' implies work. That is what God is doing. He is working to create us in His image and it is being done within the relationship that we have with Him. We have this relationship because He gave it to us.

Our understanding, our approach, everything depends upon God being a part of our life. He has not kept Himself distant from us. We would not be here for very long without Him. God can see if there is conceit holding Him off from doing His job. This is why we have to voluntarily respond. If we do not do it, we are keeping God away. You get the point here. This is one of the key elements of Ecclesiastes. God has a purpose. He is a 'hands-on' God. If we do not get it, then we keep Him away. That is not good.

In Ecclesiastes 6, Solomon shows us that, by nature, we tend to seek satisfaction through the areas he briefly explores. Human nature tends to influence us toward self-centered, material desires. We already covered verses one through four, but there is so much there that I want to go through them a little bit once again.

Ecclesiastes 6:2 A man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor, so that he lacks nothing for himself of all he desires; yet God does not give him power to eat of it, but a foreigner consumes it. This is vanity, and it is an evil affliction.

God does not give the man power to eat of it. That is interesting. A stranger, probably not a member of the family, consumes his riches and wealth. On one hand, it is a clear reinforcement of Jesus' declaration in John 15, that without Him, you can do nothing. God did not give the man the ability to eat of his wealth. Solomon says that is evil. It is a very bad affliction. We know from the story, that the man lost the wealth that he had without any hope of recovery.

There is a second meaning to the phrase, 'God gave him no power to eat of it'. Solomon is not talking about physical power. The man's life was consumed, in a way working, so he was eating of his wealth. The words, 'eating of it' means something more than appears on the surface. You know very well that eating is enjoyable. It is used in the scriptures quite a number of times as a symbol of enjoying life. Now things are beginning to take shape here. He gave the man no power to enjoy life, like eating is enjoyable. In this case, the man did not enjoy the use of his wealth. My emphasis is now in regard to God's part in the enjoyment. Contentment in a relationship with God is most definitely a gift God would not withhold from anybody! Especially from one who has a good relationship with Him.

That is what Solomon was saying. Something was seriously wrong within the relationship with God and the man in verse two. God was not the problem! The problem was the wealthy man's conceit. There was a wall between the man and God. It was rebuffing God so that they could not have a good relationship. In a right relationship with God, He would have protected the one He made wealthy from losing that God-given wealth by any number of means. Reflect back on Proverbs 16. We saw several things, and there are many more that I did not cover, that God is willing to 'gift' those who have a relationship with Him. God has the power to soften the bad affects of any calamity that He permits to hit our life. God could have guided or inspired the enjoyment of the wealth. The man would not let him. God does not hide or keep these things from us. God could have forewarned the man or protected him from the loss all together. He could have given the man wisdom on how to handle the situation. He could even help the man deal with it emotionally. God can do any of those things. He did not give the man power to enjoy what God had originally given him. The man seems to have a lack of appreciation for what he had. Instead, he lost what he had because no further gifting by God was given. This affected Solomon is such a way that he called it an evil affliction. He had all of that wealth but got no enjoyment from it.

There was a period of time in Evelyn's life when she lost her sense of taste. She could not taste anything. How do you think that made her feel about eating? She said she only ate because she had to. It was no longer enjoyable. God restored her sense of taste after a while. You can see in the 'word picture' that Solomon is giving us, that God never restored this man's ability to enjoy the wealth that God, Himself, had given to him. In a sense, it was almost like it was useless to him. That is why Solomon says that this is an evil affliction! This is bad! It is almost like he is saying, I hope this never happens to me!

I think we can understand what was happening in the relationship. It fits a cliché that we American's have and I am sure that other people do too. That is, within the relationship, this man was 'shooting himself in the foot'! His attitude toward God was such that God

could not afford to bless him any further. The man lost it.

The lesson here for you and me is, do not allow ourselves to get into this predicament. If it fits the parameters in this example that God gives, there is probably something wrong with our relationship with God. There is a very good possibility that Solomon might be saying without directly saying it, that we had better be living righteously and in a Godly way NOW! In the example the man could have been saying, I will have fun later, I will enjoy it later, or something of that nature.

Ecclesiastes 6:3-6 illustrates by means of exaggeration. Notice that there is no indication of God's involvement whatsoever in these three verses. Without God in this person's life, there is no hope of Godly love. That is important. In fact, the lack of love was so severe that Solomon compared it to being stillborn.

Ecclesiastes 6:3-6 If a man begets a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul (life) is not satisfied with goodness, or indeed he has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better than he—for it comes in vanity and departs in darkness, and its name is covered with darkness. Though it has not seen the sun or known anything, this has more rest than that man, even if he lives a thousand years twice over—but has not seen goodness. Do not all go to one place?

That last verse is very interesting. We see that God was not at all involved in this person's life. He had not seen 'goodness' at all.

One of the major points of this exaggeration is that satisfaction in life is not guaranteed through material possessions. This guy had so much money. He had a huge family and he lived a long time. All of these exaggerations and God was not even involved with Him. This is an important principle. No matter how much money you have, how much family you have, how long you live, a life without God will never be satisfying! It just cannot be achieved. People are alive, but there is no satisfaction with life and no hope of living a Godly life. Therefore, satisfaction will be lacking. That is why Solomon came up with this illustration. This type of life is so stressfully draining, one would have been better off not to have ever been born.

It says in verse three that this man that lived a long time and had a lot of money was not buried. That is a 'Hebraism', another metaphor, which means that he was not lamented at his death. This is strong evidence that there is no love in this man's relationships. Everybody shared their mutual disrespect for him. Wealth did not do him any good at all.

That wealthy man did not enjoy his money. He did not enjoy his family. He did not even enjoy his own life. That is really evil!

Part of what we can learn from the examples given in this chapter is that somehow people never learn that enjoyment and satisfaction in life is generated from within. Thus they never reach the state of contentment necessary for true satisfaction because they continually grasp for it elsewhere. This is largely because God is really not a part of their life. It is God who imparts love in a relationship. Some would argue that existence is better than non-existence and that a difficult life is better than no life at all. I wrote this because of what Solomon said. He said it would have been better if this man had not even been born. Solomon might agree with the person who argues that existence is better than non-existence at times, because even he says that a living dog is better than a dead lion.

The key is whether purpose for life exists, the person knows what that purpose is, and that they embrace the purpose in their life. All three of those have to be joined together within one's life. All of this is in the scripture that Solomon is saying here. It is God within the relationship that provides the comfort and gives hope in the face of life's trials. It is He, our Creator, that has deemed that we must face hardship with Him involved in our life. The Days of Unleavened Bread are coming. We can look back and see that Israel faced hardship, under God, in the Wilderness. Brethren, hardship in life can come from a hundred different directions. If we do not have God in our lives, we are probably going to get all twisted up.

Ecclesiastes 6:7-9 All the labor of man is for his mouth, yet the soul (life) is not satisfied. For what more has the wise man than the fool? What does the poor man have? Who knows how to walk before the living? Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

Solomon comes close as anywhere to directly naming the cause of the dissatisfaction problems. The answer is in verse seven.

Ecclesiastes 6:7 All the labor of man is for his mouth, yet the soul (life) is not satisfied.

What we have here is an indirect revelation that must be thought through. He is using 'eating', as his metaphor. Let me go to Proverbs 16 once again.

Proverbs 16:26 The person who labors, labors for himself, for his hungry mouth drives him on.

His hungry mouth drives him on. That is an easy picture to understand. Why do we work? We work to earn money. Why are we doing this? We want to eat and we want to live. If we are not growing the food we eat ourselves, money is the means to possess the food, which gives us life and energy. This is why Solomon says that all of the labor of man, whether he is rich or poor, is for his mouth.

This is not the real point that Solomon is getting at. The point is a lot more clever than that. This labor and the eating is a metaphor for something far more serious. In this case, it can unfortunately, be destructive to our life. All we have to do is lift this thought of our stomach to our mind. When our stomach is empty, we say my appetite is eating me up here. I have got to take care of that and put food in my stomach. What if the appetite is not in the stomach? What if the appetite is in the mind? What will feed the mind in the way in which Solomon is inferring here? It is our desires. Our desires are the appetite, metaphorically, that keeps life moving. This begins to become quite serious. If we are physically eating the wrong things, our appetites can drive us to the grave. If we are taking the wrong things into our minds, then that appetite that is in our mind, can also destroy us just as surely as what we are eating. Only, what is it destroying? It is destroying our mind. It is destroying our character. This is where it begins to be somewhat serious.

Remember the overall subject in this chapter is 'satisfaction in life'. What is it, within the context of this chapter, that produces 'dissatisfaction in life'? Within the context of this chapter, Solomon is saying that the appetite of the mind is what produces the dissatisfaction. This is because our mind is like our stomachs. Our mind has to be filled. Then what happens? If the desire that is in our mind is not filled, we are restless, dissatisfied, nervous, impatient, and frustrated until that mind is filled with what we think that it needs. This is something that you must think through. It is very important to understand. It provides, almost like a cap, what Solomon is talking about in this chapter.

Lets change the term 'appetite' to 'cravings'. This may help you to understand a little bit better. 'Cravings', in the mind like the appetite cravings in the stomach, are only briefly satisfied for a period of time and return as if they have never been filled. We eat a beautiful meal in the evening, but by the time we get up in the morning our stomachs need to be filled again. You are beginning to see the metaphor that is here. What is it that keeps people dissatisfied with life? It is that they are not eating the right things in their mind. The things that will really fill them with the right kind of accomplishment and

satisfaction can only come from God.

Much of what I have said about this chapter is that physical things are not fulfilling. They give us a momentary sense of satisfaction. I say momentary because that is what it is when compared to eternity. It is only momentary. I said something to my wife and then kind of dropped the subject. I do not know how many new cars I have had in my life. I have not had them because I have deserved them, but because I was a minister in the Worldwide Church of God. I would get a new one about every 60,000 or 70,000 miles that I put on a car. Because I was driving so many miles as a minister, I was getting a new car every 12 to 18 months. In 12 to 18 months over many years of being a pastor in the Worldwide Church of God, I do not know how many new cars I received. I can tell you from my own experience that it was always exciting and fulfilling. I got a new car! But, it was not long before I began to realize that it is just a tool. Then it was not fulfilling. When I was getting close to getting another new car, my excitement would come back. My desire would be filled for a while and then it would go away. Do you see what I am getting at? Nothing physical gives anything except momentary fulfillment. Kids in the world look forward to Christmas. Christmas comes, they unwrap gifts, and in many cases the fulfillment and excitement they get lasts maybe one week. Then it is 'old hat'! It does not fulfill anymore. This is the way of all physical things. It is the life.

This is why Solomon says what he says in verses 7 through 9.

Ecclesiastes 6:7-9 All the labor of man is for his mouth, yet the soul is not satisfied. For what more has the wise man than the fool? What does the poor man have? Who knows how to walk before the living? Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

'All the labor of man is for his mouth'. That is physical. Yet the 'soul' means his life. What it really means is that his life is not satisfied. In the next two verses Solomon says, it really does not matter whether you are rich or poor, wise or a fool, and any other category that you can look at in life out in the public. Every single person has a problem with the appetite and desires of the mind.

We can see some people getting married four, five, six times. The marriage lasts for a short period of time because they do not have the correct resources in the first place, so they divorce and remarry again. It just goes on and on and on. These verses point out the need for mankind to have a God who gives us something that satisfies the problem. We might change the word 'desires' to 'cravings' to 'lusts.' It never is fulfilling.

II Timothy 1:6-7 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

II Timothy 1:9 Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

We have seen the answer. God has given us that gift. He has called us. He has given us His Holy Spirit. We have the opportunity to have a relationship with Him. He can fulfill our desires in a way that produces stability in our lives. He creates Himself in us. That is the answer to satisfaction in life.

As long as God is not a part of our life, as long as we are not fulfilling our responsibilities to seek Him out and really diligently build the relationship, it will not work. We are going to marry the One that we have a relationship with. We are having the opportunity now, before our future husband comes, to make sure that we show Him that we love Him. He will make life satisfying because He makes us like He is. That is a marriage that will never, ever break up. We will be satisfied with Him always.