

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF SOLOMON

STUDY 19 – ECCLESIASTES 2:1-11

When we come to the life of King Solomon many people just explain the problem with Solomon as the women in his life and what more relevant study could you have, at this particular time. This is so much on the surface that it really doesn't address the major issue in Solomon's life. It has been our purpose through these studies of Solomon's life to try to help us understand the consequences of violating certain principles that God has set down in His word. It is far bigger than just that simplistic answer.

This particular piece of Edgar A. Guest really explains to me, far more, the problem that Solomon has in being able to negotiate life effectively to the finish.

(Collected Verse of Edgar A. Guest by Edgar A. Guest)

The Mortgage and the Man

This is the tale of a mortgage and a dead man and his son,

A father who left to his only child a duty that must be done.

And the neighbors said as they gathered round in the neighbor's curious way:

“Too bad, too bad that he left his boy so heavy a debt

to pay.”

Day by day through the years that came, the
mortgage
held him fast—
Straight and true to his task he went, and he paid the
debt at last;
And his arm grew strong and his eye kept bright, and
although he never knew,
The thing that fashioned a man of him was the task
he
had to do.

Honor and fortune crowned his brow till the day he
came to die,
But he said: “My boy shall never work against such
odds as I.
I have planned his years, I have made them safe, I
have paid his journey
through.”
And the boy looked out on a world wherein there was
nothing for him to do.

His hands grew soft and his eyes went dull and his
cheeks
turned ashy pale,
For strength which isn’t employed by day, with
idleness
grows stale,
“He is not the man that his father was,” the neighbors
often said,

“And better for him had he been left to work for his meat and bread.”

Oh, the race dies out and the clan departs, and feeble grows the son

When they come at last to the dreadful day when all the work is done.

For a manhood dies on the roads of ease where the skies are ever blue,

And each of us needs, if we shall grow strong, some difficult thing to do.

pp. 434-5

To me that explains Solomon more than almost anything else I could say. David had a deep longing for Solomon to have a lot easier time than he did. David was a man after God's own heart that established and welded together the kingdom, and by his military promise extended it to the furthest borders. So giving his son a gift of the kingdom would have been enough. On top of that he wanted to build a temple, and make that temple a statement that the living God lives in this land. God said NO you are a man of law you are not going to do that, YOUR SON is going to do it. Then, “good old daddy David” decides that his kid is not going to have to do any of the work to get it together. Before he dies, he has collected all of the gold, silver and all of the precious stones. He has negotiated with Hiram, the king of Tyre in the north, to get all of the timber. On top of that he organizes all of the work, craftsmen and the nation to do

the job that Solomon is going to administrate. Everything was there. He really did not have to do anything but come on board and do the job as king of the land.

In order for you to get a feel of where we are in the study Solomon reigned for forty years. If you take that forty year reign and just kind of break it apart for a minute it will help you know right where we are and where Ecclesiastes Chapter 2 is where we are going to be studying today.

First of all as soon as he becomes king there is a rivalry within the family that has to be put down. Because Adonijah happened to be David's fourth born son. The other three boys were already dead so he was actually in line for the throne. God had made it quite clear that he wanted Solomon, the son of peace, to be the next king. During the time David is on his death bed, Adonijah organizes the troops and tries to take the kingdom before Solomon gets it. After Solomon becomes king it takes him the first four years of his administration to consolidate the kingdom. Everything has to be put in place. There has to be some executions and some other things that have to take place in order for Solomon to fulfill his reign as king. So the first four years is spent trying to get the kingdom together. At year four, he begins the project of building the temple. This takes seven years. He has twenty-nine years left. When you finally finish the project that you were designed to finish what else is there to do but to try to make a statement to

the people of “how big” you are and “how important” you are. That is exactly what he does for the next thirteen years. He builds a house and I use “HOUSE” with tongue and cheek because it is a “College Campus”. There is a huge armory on the property, a Hall of State that has an ivory throne covered in gold where he judges and rules. There is a beautiful home for Pharaoh’s daughter, the king of Egypt. This marriage was considered a political marriage. There also is a home for him. This huge armory has all of these shields and depicts much of the history of his Dad. This is what he does for thirteen years. How many years does he have left? We are in the last sixteen. The difference between David and Solomon is David never had his “eyes off the LORD”. Solomon did and had his eyes on himself and material things. Everything he did was to make a statement of how successful he was. How important he was!

As the curtain dropped on Study #18 Solomon was at the top of his game. The queen of Sheba had come to visit. People from around the world came on diplomatic missions to learn and to witness and, to see this very wealthy king. Look at 1 Kings 10:23-24:

1 Kings 10:23-24 King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.

You say WOW! The guy is going to make it. He only has sixteen years left and everybody is listening to his

wisdom. He is ruling and reigning and the kingdom is at peace. But, there are some major concerns and it is these major concerns that I want to address. As I look at the Law of God in the Book of Deuteronomy, Solomon, at this moment is guilty of **FOUR DIRECT VIOLATIONS** of the Law. Let me tell you why he is in trouble. Deuteronomy 17:16-17:

Deuteronomy 17:16-17 The king, moreover, must not acquire a great number of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them for the Lord has told you, “You are not to go back that way again. He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.

He has entered into an alliance with Hiram of Tyre and he has a whole fleet of ships that are going all over the unknown world to accumulate gold. He personally is being paid \$872,000,000 per year. That is a pretty good salary without all the diplomatic fringe benefits for being king. So he has multiplied SILVER and GOLD.

Secondly, the Law stipulates in those two verses “never to multiply wives unto yourself.” We know he is already on that road. He wrote a sweet little book called “Song of Songs”, a tribute to the sweet Lebanese princess that he met on one of his visits to the north, Shunammite. Now he has entered into this diplomatic marriage with Pharaoh in order to have his daughter and she is center stage. You are going to see her in this particular study.

We know there are a ton of other women too before this is over. He is multiplying wives.

Third, the scripture says clearly, in the Law, not to multiply horses. In the last count he has between 12,000 to 14,000 head of horses. In the Law, for some reason says, DON'T IMPORT those horses from Egypt. He is in an import-export business with these other nations in the horse business. I am going to go back and look at what the Law says. If you are living the kind of life where you have some blind spots and are excusing your disobedience, God is not going to bless you. God is in the business of blessing the obedient heart. Far better to address those things now than have to face them at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

It is these four things that bring me great concern as we launch into this last segment of this man's life.

Nehemiah 13:26 Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women.

So Nehemiah comes along and says that some of these personal compromises are going to create a problem. Wouldn't it be great if Solomon would have taken down some of his Daddy's writings in the Psalms and read a little of those? It would have made all the difference in

his life if he would had just listened to what his Dad wrote under divine inspiration in the Psalms. Let me give you two illustrations:

Psalm 119:37 Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.

You see what he has done? He has put his eyes on worthless things instead of being totally focused on the Lord. David's prayer is THIS IS WHAT I WANT. I would like to be like this.

Psalm 16:11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

“Enjoyment without God, is only entertainment, not enrichment and you cannot live long just on entertainment”! We are going to see now as we get ready to get into the text that Solomon is as guilty as the children of Israel were when Jeremiah 2:13 said:

Jeremiah 2:13 My people have committed two sins; They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

The futility of where Solomon is going is graphically described by Jesus in Luke 12:19-20.

Luke 12:19-20 And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself.

We're in that last little section; those sixteen years before his demise. In this section we are going to Ecclesiastes because he is going to tell you what he did. It is going to be very clear.

v. 1 I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless.

He hasn't found the fulfillment he should find in a relationship that is focused with the Lord. He is rummaging around to try to find what it is that is going to give him satisfaction in his life. He admits it! As a man thinks in his heart so is he, Jesus said. Is it any wonder that Proverbs 4:23 when Solomon writes back on these matters he would say:

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

If you took the little word I, ME, MY and MYSELF, it occurs thirty-five times in these eleven verses. It doesn't give you any question as to where his focus is for these

sixteen years. ***“I THOUGHT IN MY HEART.”*** Listen to his Daddy:

Psalm 57:7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make music.

Psalm 86:12 I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever.

The word ***“PLEASURE”*** covers a whole lot of bases and he is going to define this for you. Solomon is like a little kid that has six months of allowance bulging in his pockets and he has gone to the County Fair. He is going to all the different booths and makes sure that he doesn't miss anything. He wants to try everything. Look at the last thing he says in the verse:

“that also proved to be meaningless.”

There was no lasting benefit. Nothing accrued to me as a result of living a pleasure filled life! It was of absolute no lasting value. This explains a lot of the reasons we have so many workaholics here in the United States of America. We have a nation that has taken its eyes off of the God that inspired the founders of this land and gave very careful biblical principles for the foundation of this country. They have gotten their eyes on their own personal pleasure and pursuit of that pleasure. Moral values and principles of integrity don't count anymore as long as we are putting enough money in the bank to have as much pleasure as we possibly can. It is like an

insatiable passion to get into the “success syndrome” to accumulate. Be a workaholic to get as much as you can and then you can taste the “good things” of life. I love what Andy Rooney said:

“Go to bed for heaven’s sake! What you’re staying up for isn’t worth it!

Some of these guys are just killing themselves. They need to realize that it really isn’t that good.

Solomon said I tried this and it was meaningless. Moses, on the other hand Hebrews 11:25:

Hebrews 11:25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.

v. 2 “Laughter,” I said, “is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?”

Now when he is talking about “laughter” he is not talking about Godly laughter, if anything, Christians need to laugh. We need to have a lot of fun and enjoy life. He’s talking about that giddy laughter that is on the surface that comes with a few cocktails and all the other stuff that goes with it. That’s “foolish” he says. What does pleasure accomplish is his question?

His VERDICT is: Laughter I said, is foolish.

His QUESTION is: What does pleasure accomplish.

I got this off of the internet.

What Man Will Do for Fun:

Human beings are the only creatures who will voluntarily leave an air-conditioned home and drive 500 miles to spend a week with spiders in a musty cabin, wearing damp bathing suits and eating food that tastes like charcoal lighter. They are the only ones who will get out of a perfectly comfortable bed at four o'clock in the morning load \$600 worth of equipment into a \$12,000 boat and tow it to a lake so they can spend an entire day trying to catch a fish they have no intention of eating.

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

v. 3 I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.

So he says, in the pursuit of pleasure I decided to see if wine held any answers. Is there a joy in the bottom of the bottle? It was Shakespeare who said:

(Breaking Free – From the Bondage of Sin by Henry Brandt)

O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains.” Drunkenness is a sin against God.

p. 59

(Inspiring Quotations complied by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

Drink has drained more blood, hung more crepes, sold homes, plunged more people into bankruptcy, armed more villains, slain more children, snapped more wedding rings, defiled more innocence, blinded more eyes, twisted more limbs, dethroned more reason, wrecked more manhood, dishonored more womanhood, broken more hearts, driven more to suicide and dug more graves than any other poisonous scourge that ever swept its death-dealing waves across the world.

EVANGELINE BOOTH

p. 6

Now, Solomon wants to make it quite clear that he is not a drunkard. He says, “my wisdom stayed with me”. This phrase occurs one more time before we are done and want to come back and address that because I am not going to let that pass.

(The Power of Personal Integrity: Becoming a Person of Character in a Drifting World by Charles Dyer)

I grew up listening to the music of Peter, Paul and Mary. I did not always agree with their political views, but I appreciated their candor. In their twenty-fifth anniversary concert Noel Paul Stookey delivered a monologue on our growing obsession with ourselves, and he did so by observing the ever diminishing focus of attention as represented in the titles of our most popular magazines.

In the 1950's the magazine of choice was Life. The name represented the breadth of interest in our society. We focused on all of life. Then in the 1960's another new magazine appeared: People. While it is true that people are a large part of life, they are not everything there is in life. In the 1970'S another new magazine appeared and the trend should have been obvious. The new magazine was Us. Stookey so humorously notes, "Now, 'us' is still people, too. Only it's not 'them' it's only 'us'. Then in the 1980's Self hit the newsstands. Stookey comments that any day he expects a new magazine called Me. All it will be is twenty pages of aluminum foil in which you can watch your reflection!

pp. 22-23

In essence he's saying; I have tried everything to satisfy my own heart in life. To find what....was worthwhile! But look at that last phrase...during the few days of their lives.

James 4:14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

You have invested this day. This is a treasure that God gave you. This is the day the Lord has made. Have you rejoiced and been glad in it? Are you happy to go to bed tonight with the satisfaction that this was a good day? You started with Him in the Word and you lived in it. I think in my heart that Solomon is really having a hard time to try to get as much out of life as he can but, he is making a mistake of getting his eyes off of the Lord and pleasing Him and on himself and his own self gratification.

In the next verses I want you to circle the VERBS. It kind of makes you see where he spends his time.

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

- 1) “I tried” (verse 3),
- 2) “I undertook” (verse 4),
- 3) “I built” (verse 4),
- 4) “[I] planted” (verses 4 & 5)
- 5) “I made” (verses 5 & 6)
- 6) “I bought” (verse 7),
- 7) “I owned” (verse 7),
- 8) “I amassed” (verse 8),
- 9) “I acquired” (verse 8), and

10) “I became” (verse 9).

When you back off of these verses just look at the projects. There are eight of them that he is involved in.

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

Here come the projects. These are the things that consumed these sixteen years of his life before he is finished.

A SLOWER GROUP

A first-grader became curious because her father brought home a briefcase full of papers every evening. Her mother explained, “Daddy has so much to do that he can’t finish it all at the office. that’s why he has to bring work home at night.” “Well, then,” asked the child innocently, “why don’t they put him in a slower group?”

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

v. 5 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

v. 6 I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees.

v. 7 I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves

who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.

v. 8 I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well—the delights of the heart of man.

Everybody was bringing him diplomatic gifts. I never saw this before but remember when Job was in such pain and his three buddies came and are suppose to comfort him and they don't. Eliphaz is the senior spokesman in the group and in Job 22:24-25 he is very mad at Job and he says:

Job 22:24-25 and assign your nuggets to the dust, your gold of Ophir to the rocks in the ravines, then the Almighty will be your gold, the choices silver for you.

In essence he is telling Job it is because of that, that he has been having such a hard time. Of course, you know all three of the guys struck out as far as trying to explain what Job was going through. In verse 8 I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well—the delights of the heart of man. You see he had his own entertainment. The harem of women to delight the hearts of any man. That came to about one thousand women and we are going to see that in the historical record.

I think that Solomon wrote a lot of his Proverbs because

of this and I see so much more of it now, here are just a couple.

Proverbs 5:23 He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly.

Proverbs 27:19 As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man.

(To Follow Him: The Seven Marks of a Disciple by Mark Bailey)

A young man had a passion for Porsches, and every day he would glance through the classified ads and look for Porsches offered for sale, even though he knew he could never afford one.

One day he was shocked to see an ad offering a brand-new Porsche for only five hundred dollars. Quickly he came to his senses and realized it was just a typo; brand-new Porsches do not sell for five hundred dollars.

But the next day, the same ad ran again. The man decided to call the number in the ad, although he felt quite foolish because he knew the whole thing had to be a mistake.

The woman who answered the phone assured him that

the ad was correct: a brand-new Porsche for five hundred dollars.

The man just couldn't believe it, but upon arriving at the house, he saw a beautiful new Porsche sitting in the driveway. He got out and examined it carefully, thinking, it must not have an engine in it.

The woman came out of the house and again assured him it was a Porsche, it was for sale, it was brand new,

and yes, five hundred dollars was all she was asking. He test-drove it, and the car ran beautifully. He couldn't believe it. He paid her five hundred dollars and left as quickly as he could, fearing she might have second thoughts.

The car was in mint condition, but it kept bothering him to think he had paid the woman only five hundred dollars. So after driving the Porsche for a week, he called her, identified himself and said, "Ma'am, are you aware that the book listing on this car is thirty-five thousand dollars?!

Yes, she responded. "Well", he asked, "why did you

sell it to me for only five hundred dollars?”

Without pausing a moment, she answered, “I’ll tell you why. Three weeks ago my husband ran off to Bermuda with his secretary, and the last thing he said to me was ‘Sell the Porsche and send me the money.’ So I did!”

pp. 119-20

(Cow Pies & Candle Lights by G.T. Burton)

THE CUP BEARER

They brought a Grand Prize muley bull
To give their herd some class,
But the lazy thing just rolled his eyes
When ‘ary cow would pass.
Then Randy Jones and Bugger Red
Rode in to see the vet.
They explained to him their problem,
And asked what they could get.

He mixed ‘em up a tonic,
And they drenched the bull down good,
Next spring each critter dropped a calf
Like the doctor said they would
Randy mused: “what was that stuff,
The veterinary sent”.
“I don’t know”, was Red’s response,

“But it tastes like peppermint”.

p. 80

There’s a phrase in that verse, did you get it? The phrase in that verse that bites you is the delights of the heart of man. But it is not the delights of the heart of God. David said:

Psalm 37:4 Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

The delight of Solomon is to impress you with all of the things he has accomplished and all of the things he has gotten done. It is to delight his heart, not God’s heart. Our business is to find meaning and purpose in life to delight His heart and not our own.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Proverbs 23:26 My son, give me your heart and let your eyes keep to my ways,

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

I’m going to come back to that. How accurate is self-analysis? The last person you trust is yourself when it comes to your own analysis because of our blind spots.

We rationalize and close our eyes to the truth. We excuse and deny. I wonder if you are going to lose wisdom? If you do, you will probably be the last one to know it. I really believe, because of the pursuit that Solomon is making, he is skating on the brink of losing it all. I question whether the wisdom of God is involved in this pursuit but He calls it twice and says that such is the case. Remember when Samson was asleep in the lap of Delilah and she had given him that haircut because he basically told her the secret of his strength. Listen to this:

Judges 16:20 Then she called, “Samson, the Philistines

are upon you! He awoke from his sleep and thought, “I’ll go out as before and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the Lord had left him.

You see he lost it while he was asleep and he didn’t even know it. I’m saying many of us are losing opportunities and the cutting edge in our lives because we are letting it up and laying down when we should be lightening up and laying it on. It is such a critical time in our culture and in our own personal lives.

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

Those words, **I, ME, MY** and **MYSELF** occur eight times right there in **verse 10**. He said this is the bottom line,

anything I looked at and I wanted I went for it so the **It's**
are mentioned and then the heart is mentioned. **I**
REFUSE MY HEART NO PLEASURE! He certainly didn't
have a heart for God.

I went back in my Concordance and looked at all the
verses that talk about the heart. I just wrote down
several little phrases out of these verses and titled it:

“GUARD YOUR HEART”

1 Samuel 12:24 Be sure to fear the Lord and serve
him faithfully with all your HEART consider what
great things he has done for you.

1 Samuel 16:7 But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not
consider his appearance or his height, for I have
rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things
man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance,
but the Lord looks at the HEART.”

2 Kings 22:19 Because your HEART was responsive
and you humbled yourself before the Lord when
you heard what I have spoken against this place
and its people, that they would become accursed
and laid waste, and because you tore your robes
and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares
the Lord.

Psalms 19:14 May the words of my mouth and the
meditation of my HEART be pleasing in your sight,

O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Psalm 26:2-3 Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my HEART and my mind; for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth.

Psalm 37:4 Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your HEART.

Psalm 51:10 Create in me a pure HEART, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Psalm 66:18 If I had cherished sin in my HEART, the Lord would not have listened;

Psalm 86:11-12 Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided HEART, that I may fear your name. I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my HEART.

Psalm 95:8 do not harden your HEARTS as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert

Psalm 111:1 Praise the Lord. I will extol the Lord with all my HEART in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

Psalm 112:7-8 He will have no fear of bad news; his HEART is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. His HEART

is secure, he will have no fear; in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.

Psalm 119:10-11 I seek you with all my HEART; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my HEART that I might not sin against you.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your HEART and lean not on your own understanding;

You can go on and on, the verses are just fabulous that describe all of this and help us understand. Daniel 1:8:

Daniel 1:8 But Daniel resolved {purposed in his HEART] not to defile himself with the royal food and wine and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself in this way.

Acts 5:3 Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your HEART that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received before it was sold?

Samuel Johnson said, “that it is these very things, the pursuit of pleasure and the acquisition of personal

possessions are the very things that make it so hard to die.” Why? Because you have to leave behind everything you have been accumulating and everything you have been living for. Somebody said, “hard work is the soundest investment. It provides a neat security for your widow’s next husband.”

Look at the last verse, all three of the key phrases are in there:

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

- 1) [It] was MEANINGLESS,
- 2) [It is] a CHASING AFTER THE WIND, and
- 3) NOTHING WAS GAINED UNDER THE SUN.

Swindoll says:

Stop and think about some of those super-duper perks.

Your own parking spot. Your own bathroom attached to your office. A little thicker pad underneath your carpet. A chair you can lean way back in. Maybe a Sofa. I mean, just think of a sofa in light of eternity! Drapes—big window. A company car. Tax write-offs. A boat to get in and pilot around a harbor twice a year. People calling you “president” or “doctor.”

p. 15

But Paul said:

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

(Fenelon: Mediations on the Heart of God by Francois Fenelon)

It is easier to keep our heart in a state of repentance and burning desire for God than to bring it back to him once it has gone down the slope of pleasure and laxity.

pp. 55-56

Solomon is not going to come back and he has gone far enough that we, in these next five episodes, are going to witness his personal demise.

CONCLUSION:

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

LESSON #1: “Above all else, guard your heart for it affects everything you do” (Proverbs 4:23 NLB).

LESSON #2: “Where your treasure is, there will your

heart be also” (Matthew 6:21 NASB).

LESSON #3: The pursuit of pleasure will only leave you thirsty for more and more.

LESSON #4: Cheering oneself with wine and folly will end in futility.

LESSON #5: There is no real purpose in becoming a workaholic.

LESSON #6: There is no lasting satisfaction in possessions and pleasures.

LESSON #7: Make it your mission to delight the heart of God not the heart of man.

LESSON #8: Recognize the fact that our lives, in view of eternity, are really just “a vapor that appears for a few days and then passes away” (James 4:14 paraphrased).

LESSON #9: Solomon’s summary of his experience is three- fold: (1) “it was meaningless”; (2) “it was chasing after the wind”; and (3) “there was nothing gained under the sun.”

LESSON #10: Make it your motto that you are going to “live for Christ and then to die would be to gain” (Philippians 1:21 paraphrased).

(A Heart Like His: The Shaping of Character in the

Choices of Life by Rebecca Manley Pippert)

Throughout history God's people have been willing to pay the price for truth and loyalty. A gray-haired woman of sixty with a heavy German accent spoke to a congregation in Tennessee. She was a Jew who had been captured as a teenager and sent to prison camp during the second world war. Her story was not unlike other stories of the tragic suffering of prisoners inside German concentration camps.

After months of abuse and malnutrition that led to starvation, she realized that if she had any hope of escaping she had to do it while she still had some strength. Having just graduated from high school, she saw women just a few years older than her who already looked elderly. They plotted an escape carefully, and tried to leave no detail to chance.

On the night of her escape she had maneuvered every challenge successfully. There was only one hurdle left—a literal one. She had to scale a barbed wire fence to get outside the compound. She was halfway up the fence when the S.S. guard on duty spotted her. He screamed for her to stop, and at gunpoint demanded that she drop down. She did, her knees and legs badly bleeding. She began sobbing, realizing that her only hope of escape

had just vanished.

But to her astonishment she heard the guard say, “Ellie? Is that you? It can’t be possible!” She looked into his face and realized it was Rolf, a fellow classmate who had been her best friend in middle school. They had shared so many secret dreams and aspirations then. But now it was wartime, and they were on opposite sides. “Oh, Rolf, go ahead and kill me. Please! I have no reason to live. I have lost all hope. Get it over with and let me die now. There’s nothing to live for anyway.”

Ellie, you are so wrong. There is everything to live for so long as you know who to live for. I’m going to let you go. I’ll guard you until you climb the wall and get on the other side. But would you promise me one thing?”

“Ellie looked at him incredulously, thinking he must be joking, but she could see his intensity and knew he meant every word. “What is it Rolf?” she asked.

Promise me when you get on the other side and become free, that you will ask one question continuously until someone answers it for you. Ask “Why does Jesus Christ make life worth living?” Promise me Ellie! He’s the only reason to live.

Promise
me you’ll ask until you get the answer.”

“Yes, I promise, I promise!” she shouted. As she furiously climbed the fence she felt guilty. I would have said anything, she thought to herself, to get out of this hellhole.

As she dropped to the other side into freedom, she heard several deafening shots. She turned to look as she ran, convinced that Rolf had changed his mind and

amazed that his bullets had missed. Too her horror, she saw that other S.S. guards, having realized that Rolf allowed and aided her escape, had killed him on the spot. It was as she ran to her freedom that it dawned on her that Rolf died for her that she might know this Jesus. She wondered who this Jesus Christ

was, that someone would lay down his own life so that she could know him.

“And so, I did exactly as Rolf told me to do. I kept asking and asking, until one day I met someone who answered his question. I am a Christian today because Rolf sacrificed his life for me.”

That’s exactly what Jesus Christ did for you and me! That is why he has the right to have sovereign control and to have your heart.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF SOLOMON

STUDY NUMBER NINETEEN — ECCLESIASTES 2:1-11

Notes

2:1 I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless.

2:2 "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?"

2:3 I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.

2:4 I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards.

2:5 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

2:6 I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees.

2:7 I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.

2:8 I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well—the delights of the heart of man.

2:9 I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me.

2:10 I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor.

2:11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE

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

LESSON #1: “Above all else, guard your heart for it affects everything you do” (Proverbs 4:23 NLB).

LESSON #2: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21 NASB).

LESSON #3: The pursuit of pleasure will only leave you thirsty for more and more.

LESSON #4: Cheering oneself with wine and folly will end in futility.

LESSON #5: There is no real purpose in becoming a workaholic.

LESSON #6: There is no lasting satisfaction in possessions and pleasures.

LESSON #7: Make it your mission to delight the heart of God not the heart of man.

LESSON #8: Recognize the fact that our lives, in view of eternity, are really just “a vapor that appears for a few days and then passes away” (James 4:14 paraphrased)

LESSON #9: Solomon’s summary of his experience is

three- fold: (1) “it was meaningless”; (2) “it was chasing after the wind”; and (3) “there was nothing gained under the sun.”

LESSON #10: Make it your motto that you are going to “live for Christ and then to die would be to gain” (Philippians 1:21 paraphrased).

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What kind of test is Solomon taking and why? What is his verdict, according to verse 1?

3. What did he try, according to verse 3?

4. Outline the projects that Solomon undertook in verses 4-6.

5. Outline the other things that he did, according to verses 7 & 8.

6. What were the results of all of his endeavors, according to verse 9?

7. Outline what he did for himself, according to verse 10.

8. What is his three-fold verdict from this experiment, according to verse 11?

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

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?
