



The Vanity of Wandering Desire – Ecclesiastes 6:9

9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite: this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

You are likely well familiar with the saying “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” We all know it, but how many of us have placed that truth behind that saying in our hearts? The concept of wandering desire paints a vivid picture of a person unable to be satisfied with what is at hand, always searching out what else might be. Some people chase after things, others chase after friendships, still others after experiences. In each of these cases, those involved neglect to appreciate what they already have in their desire to gain what they do not.

Some people are naturally social, they make friends everywhere they go. This is a wonderful gift, but can lead to an indulgence in seeking after the excitement of the new friend to the neglect of deepening of older relationships. In a way, this is a safer bet. Getting to know many people at a surface level is less threatening than getting to know a few at a truly deeper level.

Chasing after the next job or promotion can rob us of the enjoyment of the work at hand. Looking ahead to when our kids are older can rob us of the joy of who they are in this moment (trust me the time flies by). Our appetites remind us to eat, but they do not always remind us what is wise for us to eat. Our appetites can be corrupted. We may develop deep desires for things that have no lasting value to us. If we are talking about food, that can harm us physiologically as we might not receive all the nutrients that we need.

If we are talking more about the formation of our characters, this chasing after the new and the novel, can result in our inability to form depth of character and the commitments necessary to stand firm when life gets difficult. In Romans 5:3-5, Paul states that “we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” When we develop Christ-like character we pursue what Paul describes in Philippians 4:8 as “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

Thoughts for Reflection

How have you been caught up in chasing after the birds in the bush rather than the one in your hand and how can Christ aid you in focusing on what He has already blessed you with instead?