

## Uncontrolled Appetites

Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

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September 14-15, 2024

Several years ago, Beth and I watched a season of “Alone,” which took place in the Arctic. The show tests the survival instincts of humans by pushing them to their limits in extreme conditions while isolating them from others. In Season 7, anyone who lasted 100 days would receive \$1 million. One man, who was struggling with the horrible weather, lack of food, and missing his family, finally tapped out. As he contemplated turning his back on one million dollars, he made this startling statement: *“I realized everything I want I already have!”* He pulled out of the competition and went home to his family.

Here’s a question. How can you become satisfied in every situation so you can say, *“Everything I want I already have?”* You might want to lean forward to hear the answer because it’s a secret: *God has so ordered the world and your personal circumstances that no matter what situation you are in right now, you have everything you truly need to be content.*

As we’ve been learning in Ecclesiastes, it’s a myth that you always need more.

Capitalizing on our inherent dissatisfaction, the worldwide marketing machine spends approximately \$250 billion annually to make us unhappy with who we are, what we have, how we look, and what we do.

- In the 1970s, the average person viewed between 500-1,600 ads per day.
- In 2007, an individual was exposed to approximately 5,000 ads daily.
- With the explosion of the internet and social media, studies now estimate up to 10,000 ads bombard us each day!

We’re being sold stuff all the time...and it’s not all that difficult to do because most of us are already dissatisfied due to our default setting of discontentment. While some advertising is altruistic, it’s fair to say most advertising strives to influence us to spend money we do not have on things we do not need.

I’m reminded of something Will Rogers often said: *“We buy things we don’t need, with money we don’t have, to impress people we don’t like.”*

Today we come to the halfway mark of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Chapter 5 ends with a positive and upbeat focus as Solomon links the peace of Jehovah with the presence of joy as we saw in verse 20: ***“For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy.”*** I hope you’ve been occupied with joy this week by living in light of God’s good gifts to you. Let’s pray the prayer we were challenged to pray last week: *“Heavenly Father, you are in charge of everything that is going to happen to me today, whether it is good or bad. Please make me to be occupied with joy so I can live on mission for you.”*

As we come to chapter six, one would think Solomon would continue on a positive note, but instead, we come face-to-face with one of the darkest chapters in the Bible as he describes how dissatisfaction can literally decimate and derail our lives. Our uncontrolled appetites will end up consuming us.

Let’s stand and read Ecclesiastes 6:1-12: ***“There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind: <sup>2</sup> a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them. This is vanity; it is a grievous evil. <sup>3</sup> If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life’s good things, and he also has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. <sup>4</sup> For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered. <sup>5</sup> Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he. <sup>6</sup> Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good—do not all go to the one place? <sup>7</sup> All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied. <sup>8</sup> For what advantage has the wise man over the fool? And what does the poor man have who knows how to conduct himself before the living? <sup>9</sup> Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite: this also is vanity and a striving after wind. <sup>10</sup> Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he. <sup>11</sup> The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man? <sup>12</sup> For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?”***

Here’s a summary of the sermon: *Your soul will only be satisfied when you surrender to the Savior.*

I see five life lessons for us.

**1. You can possess everything and still be empty.** In verse 1, Solomon described a miserable misfortune which weighed him down: ***“There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind.”*** As he surveyed what he saw under the sun, he could have brought up injustice and oppression again, or the decadence in his culture. Instead, he is burdened and bothered by how someone can have it all and still be empty.

He’s actually describing himself in verse 2: ***“A man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them. This is vanity; it is a grievous evil.”*** He had all his heart wished for, but he still wanted more. This makes me think of a compelling quote by Charles Spurgeon: *“If you are not content with what you have, you would not be satisfied if it were doubled.”*

In 2 Chronicles 1:11, Solomon didn’t ask for wealth, possessions or honor, but he was given them because he initially requested wisdom: ***“Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked for possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked for long life, but have asked for wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may govern my people.”*** Unfortunately, Solomon tried to squeeze satisfaction out of these things and was left feeling empty. God is the giver of all good things, and He is also the source of our satisfaction. Because Solomon did not put God first, God did not give him the ability to enjoy what he had been given.

On top of that, his wealth, possessions, and honor were eventually enjoyed by a ***“stranger.”*** Lamentations 5:2 describes what happened when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem: ***“Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to foreigners.”*** He refers to this as ***“vanity; it is a grievous evil,”*** which means, *“to make sick.”* It makes him feel hollow and causes him to heave. He is so repulsed that it makes him retch.

In contrast to this emptiness, I was struck by a comment made by two of our newest members. After this husband and wife were both overwhelmed with a sense of God’s awe in a recent worship service, both of them individually realized *“they were now home.”* In searching for words to describe how excited they are to be at Edgewood, the wife remarked: *“We’re growing in Christ. The more we take ourselves out of the picture the more life is right.”* Friends, life will only be right when Christ is at the center of your life.

*Your soul will only be satisfied when you surrender to the Savior.*

**2. You can have a large family and still be lonely.** Next, Solomon used some very strong words in verses 3-5: ***“If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life’s good things, and he also has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered. Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he.”***

While we don’t know how many children Solomon had, he likely had a lot because he had 700 wives and 300 mistresses. His son Rehoboam had 88 children but that’s nothing like Genghis Khan, who reportedly fathered 3,000.

Solomon describes a man with a large family with a huge hole in his soul: ***“his soul is not satisfied with life’s good things.”*** The word ***“satisfied”*** means, ***“to be full.”*** This man was not honored in life or death. In the Ancient Near East not to have a burial is the greatest degradation possible. Next, Solomon references a ***“stillborn child”*** being better off than this unsatisfied man. I’ll admit that when I first read this verse I reacted strongly because I know some who have had stillborn children and many others who have lost children through miscarriages or abortion.

Since 1 in 4 pregnancies end in miscarriage, stillbirth, or neonatal death, this is a deeply personal topic for many of you. I want to point out a few things from this passage that will help us see the sanctity of life and find hope in the assurance of Heaven for these little ones.

- This little one is called a ***“child”*** in verse 3. The preborn is a person according to Luke 1:41, 44: ***“And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb...For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.”***
- This little one has a ***“name”*** according to verse 4. A name refers to ***“reputation or fame”*** and is more evidence of personhood. We see this in Jeremiah 1:5 where the word ***“you”*** is used five times to refer to the preborn prophet when he was in his mother’s womb: ***“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”***

To call something by name in biblical Hebrew is to designate its nature and define its being. Many who seek healing from an abortion end up naming their child and have a memorial service to affirm their baby's personhood. If you've had an abortion and you need help processing this loss, Pregnancy Resources offers a post-abortion recovery program for men and women. There's more information available in the women's restrooms.

- This little one finds “**rest**” in the arms of Jesus according to verse 5. This word refers to “*calmness and quiet.*” This gave David comfort in 2 Samuel 12:23 when he said these words after his baby died: “***But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.***”

Our daughter Lydia had a miscarriage four years ago and wrote about it in the hopes it will help others who are hurting. I have her permission to share this.

*I don't usually share personal things on social media, but I believe that miscarriage needs to be talked about. The more we know about it, the better we can love and care for those who are grieving. I know that I have been thankful to brave mommas who have shared their stories and have opened my eyes to the reality and pain of them...*

*Many of you know the statistics of miscarriages. I know I did. But I thought it wouldn't happen to me. Miscarrying your baby is emotionally heartbreaking and devastating. It is physically distressing. It has changed me forever. I miss my baby and always will.*

*If you go through a miscarriage, you do not have to grieve alone. Our family and friends held us up as we grieved. Sweet friends shared their own stories and were full of compassion. I am so glad we told our family and Virginia friends. It is not a road to walk alone.*

*I believe all life has value and therefore the loss of any life can and should be grieved. If you have lost a baby by miscarriage, don't think you can't grieve because you “were still early” or whatever lies you may hear or tell yourself. This loss of life is worthy of grief. If you think you should “be back to normal by now,” but find yourself struggling to keep up with daily tasks, be gentle with yourself and rest. Your body and soul need to heal.*

*We have been blessed with another pregnancy and are in awe of the gift of life now more than ever before. Finding out I was pregnant this time brought fear and anxiety. The first few months were so emotionally difficult. Balancing the joy of the life growing inside of me with the heartbreak for the life that we lost. I was afraid of feeling like we were “moving on too quickly.” The truth is, we will never “move on.” There was a new space in our hearts for that baby and now there is emptiness there. We look forward to the day we will be with the baby we lost (2 Samuel 12:23).*

*These verses have brought comfort and healing to me: Hebrews 4:16; Micah 7:8; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 139:13-16; Psalm 61:1-3; Lamentations 3:21-24; and Psalm 147:3*

*I close with the lyrics to a song called, “Always Good” by Andrew Peterson: “Somehow this sorrow is shaping my heart like it should and you’re always good...will you help us to trust your intentions for us are still good? ‘Cause you laid down your life and you suffered like I never could, you’re always good.”*

Sometimes the excitement of a new pregnancy ends with devastating, heartbreaking, and unexpected loss. If you’re struggling in this way, Pregnancy Resources is now offering Reproductive Loss Support. To learn more, go to [qcpregnancy.org](http://qcpregnancy.org).

Let’s go back to our passage. Solomon uses the morbid illustration of a miscarriage to make the point that a stillborn infant is better off than the person who goes through life without finding satisfaction.

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**3. You can live a long time, and you’ll still die.** We see this in verse 6: ***“Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good – do not all go to the one place?”*** That ***“one place”*** is the grave. The vanity of a long but empty life is also described in the middle of verse 3: ***“...and lives many years, so that the days of his life are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life’s good things...”*** The oldest person in the Bible was Methuselah, who lived to be 969 years old. Solomon more than doubles this and imagines someone living 2,000 years. The oldest living person today is Tomiko Itooka, who is 116 years old.

Friend, you can live an extended life and end up not enjoying life. You can live a long time, and you'll still die.

This week, I read a post called, "Efforts to Expand the Lifespan Ignore What it's Like to Get Old" by Robert Gable. He's a psychology professor at Claremont College and serves as a hospice volunteer. Here are a few excerpts:

*Everyone dies some time...it has been said that wherever old people gather there is an 'organ recital' of malfunctioning body organs and parts. I, too, have a recital...Biophysicists have calculated that, with maximal improvement in health care, the biological clock for humans must stop between 120-150 years. Biotechnology firms...are putting this to the test by scrambling to extend our normal lifespan as far as they can. However, a basic problem, at least thus far, is that a sustained quality of life has not been extended to keep up with our expanded longevity...preventing death is not always more important than promoting the quality of life. What value is there in existing if the ability to do and experience what you most value becomes unavailable? It is, indeed, possible to live too long.*

Are you aware there are cryonics companies that will freeze your body once you die? For only \$200,000 you can have the hope you might be revived in the future through medical advancements. It's better to hold on to what the Bible teaches. We come from dust, and our bodies go back to dust, which is exactly what Genesis 3:19 says: ***"For you are dust, and to dust you shall return."*** While our earthly bodies will decay, our true selves will live forever in either Heaven or Hell.

Friend, what good is a long life if you don't live it for the Lord? If you were able to extend your life by 10 years and those years end up being empty, and you still end up in Hell, what good is that? As one person writes, *"The dust of both the one who lives briefly and the one who lives long intermingles and lies undistinguished."*

Death is the great equalizer. I was reminded of this again while leading a graveside service on Monday. While the gravestones in the cemetery are different shapes and sizes, everybody in the cemetery, whether cremated or not, is in the process of turning into dust, no matter what each of them possessed when they were alive. Ecclesiastes 3:20: ***"All go to one place. All are from dust, and to dust all return."***

This past Thursday, Pastor Ray Pritchard spoke via video to over 220 people at SecondWinders. His message came from a booklet he wrote called, “When Cancer Slows You Down.” He entitled his talk, “7 Lessons I learned From My Cancer Journey.”

Here’s part of what he said, *“I’ve been reminded in a forceful way about my own mortality...I’m going to be 72 soon...I’m closer to the end than the beginning. People ask, ‘Do you think about your own death?’ Ray responded, ‘Oh, only morning, noon, and night...I think about it more at night.’ I’ve had to face my own mortality.”*

Let’s listen to a brief clip from Pastor Ray.

### **Play Clip.**

BTW, this booklet is available at our Welcome Center and the entire message is up on our YouTube Channel and our Facebook page. You can also access this video and more free resources at [keepbelieving.com](http://keepbelieving.com).

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**4. You can be successful and still be unsatisfied.** Solomon is Exhibit A for this truth. He had everything he could ask for and was still empty. He worked hard and yet was hollow. We see this in verse 7: ***“All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied.”*** The word ***“appetite”*** literally means, ***“soul.”*** He labored to put food in his stomach while remaining famished in his soul.

It could be said that covetousness is the gateway to all other sins because whoever allows covetousness free reign in his soul will become ensnared by all kinds of sins. Covetousness is desiring something so much that you lose your contentment in God. I’m reminded of what someone greater than Solomon said in John 6:27: ***“Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”***

In verse 8, Solomon asked two rhetorical questions: ***“For what advantage has the wise man over the fool? And what does the poor man have who knows how to conduct himself before the living?”*** It’s possible for both the wise and the foolish to find themselves empty and unsatisfied. You can be poor or rich and still be bankrupt in your soul. David Hubbard writes: ***“It is His grace, not our gain, that***

*leads us beyond the frustrations of earthly wealth to the riches that bring full satisfaction: the riches of fellowship with God now and forever.”*

Verse 9 describes the individual who has a voracious desire for more: ***“Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite: this also is vanity and a striving after the wind.”*** It’s better to see God’s blessings than to allow yourself to wander around, controlled by your insatiable appetite. The word ***“wandering”*** has the idea of *“constantly craving more.”* This always ends in frustration and futility, like trying to capture the wind.

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**5. You can think you’re something and still pass like a shadow.** In verse 10, Solomon realizes there is a sovereign God who is much stronger than He is: ***“Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he.”*** The word for ***“man”*** is *Adam* and refers to being from the dust.

We are not to argue with the Almighty, nor seek our satisfaction apart from His sovereignty. Because we’re made from dust, we have no right to dispute anything with Him. I’m reminded of what God said to Job in Job 38:2-3: ***“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.”***

Verse 11 shows us that multiplying our words or formulating arguments against God brings no advantage: ***“The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man.”*** Proverbs 10:19 says, ***“When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.”***

Solomon developed a sense that he had an appointment with death as we see in verse 12: ***“For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?”*** On our own, we’re ultimately ignorant about what is best for us today and we struggle to know what will happen tomorrow. Our understanding is limited, our days are short, and we’ll end up passing like a shadow. Let’s allow some passages from Psalms to percolate in our souls:

- Psalm 90:9: ***“For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh.”***

- Psalm 102:11: *“My days are like an evening shadow; I wither away like grass.”*
- Psalm 109:23: *“I am gone like a shadow at evening. I am shaken off like a locust.”*
- Psalm 144:4: *“Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.”*

Friends, we must live like we’re dying, because we are. I’ve said this several times before, but it bears repeating: *“We often think that this is the land of the living, and that when we die, we go to the land of the dead. The opposite is really true – this is the land of the dying. When our life here is over, we are transferred to the place of the living – either to a place of eternal joy or to a place of terrible torment.”*

Life is brief and unpredictable. James 4:14 says, *“Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.”* We count our lives in years, but God tells us in Psalm 90:12 to number our days. The truth is we’re all just one heartbeat away from eternity. In 1 Samuel 20:3, David said, *“But truly, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death.”* Our lives are here one minute and gone the next.

Have you learned these four truths about your life?

- It is fast.
- It is fragile.
- It is futile apart from Christ.
- It is final.

Let’s summarize what we learned today.

- 1. You can possess everything and still be empty.**
- 2. You can have a large family and still be lonely.**
- 3. You can live a long time, and you’ll still die.**
- 4. You can be successful and still be unsatisfied.**
- 5. You can think you’re something and still pass like a shadow.**

This week, Aaron Langworthy encouraged me to listen to a podcast about a missionary named John G. Paton, who ministered to the unreached cannibals in the New Hebrides Islands. Paton received a lot of criticism from respected elders when he announced he was going to take the gospel to these people. A man named

Mr. Dickson exploded, “*The cannibals! You will be eaten by cannibals!*” But to this, Paton responded:

*Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my Resurrection body will rise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer.*

Another missionary named C.T. Studd is famous for saying these words: “*Only one life, ’twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.*” This phrase is only part of a poem he wrote called, “*Only One Life.*”

*Two little lines I heard one day, traveling along life’s busy way;  
Bringing conviction to my heart, and from my mind would not depart;  
Only one life, ’twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, yes only one, soon will its fleeting hours be done;  
Then, in ‘that day’ my Lord to meet, and stand before His Judgment seat;  
Only one life, ’twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, the still small voice, gently pleads for a better choice  
Bidding me selfish aims to leave, and to God’s holy will to cleave;  
Only one life, ’twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, a few brief years, each with its burdens, hopes, and fears;  
Each with its days I must fulfill, living for self or in His will;  
Only one life, ’twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.*

*When this bright world would tempt me sore, when Satan would a victory  
score;  
When self would seek to have its way, then help me Lord with joy to say;  
Only one life, ’twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.*

*Give me Father, a purpose deep, in joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;  
Faithful and true what e’er the strife, pleasing Thee in my daily life;  
Only one life, ’twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.*

*Oh let my love with fervor burn, and from the world now let me turn;  
Living for Thee, and Thee alone, bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, yes only one, now let me say, "Thy will be done";  
And when at last I'll hear the call, I know I'll say 'twas worth it all";  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Your soul will only be satisfied when you surrender to the Savior.*

Will you surrender right now? If you're not yet saved, it's time to surrender to salvation. If you are saved, it's time to surrender to service.

**Surrender Time.**

**New Members Saturday Night**

Jon and Tabatha Estes

**New Members Sunday at 10:45**

Dale and Jan Adamson

Larry and Kay Tice

Pastor Daniel and Dee Dee Barrett

**Sign Up for Holy Sexuality**