

**PRACTICAL LIVING SERIES FOUR**  
**THE PURSUIT OF PLEASURE**  
**Pastor Jack Schull**  
**Ecclesiastes 2:1-11**

Good morning ...how many of you don't like windy days (aka: bad hair days), bald people: no hands up

Story:

-I don't know if this has ever happened to you; you get out of your car in the parking lot somewhere – it's a windy day already, but somehow the door being opened at that particular moment forms a vortex and a funnel cloud forms within your car that comes jetting out and causes you to drop something from your hand or that was on your seat and suddenly it's whisked away and ...unexpectedly this piece of paper with HER number on it, this ticket, this once-in-a-lifetime coupon, this school paper or important report – is tumbling across the parking lot and the CHASE BEGINS...

- It starts with the sauntering after, nonchalantly bending over to pick it up again, only to have it laugh at you and continue it's cross country tour of the entire length of the parking lot
- You start picking up pace – skippy / jog after – you've given up on the hand – gone to the stomp out approach, but soon your doing a new invention of the "Texas two step" across the parking lot and you've not noticed the crowd of onlookers that are beginning to gather to give whispered commentary on your plight...
- Now at an all out sprint: you narrow your eyes, furrow your brow, focus your attention on this object that will be captured if it's the last thing you do...
- You finally grasp it – as you fling yourself at it like some kind of human cheetah stalking its prey
- You realize you are now some 200 yrds from your car and complete strangers are applauding you...you acknowledge your crowd, begin walking again, only to drop this piece of paper, as you went to fix your hair and watch as it fades over the horizon ...

Maybe you've experienced a portion of this CHASE SCENE

→ keep this in mind as we explore what Solomon has to say about a CHASE that he went on: this chasing after – this pursuit of pleasure.

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But before we read from his life: let me ask you a TRUE/FALSE type question and you answer in your mind

Q Our culture seems obsessed with the pursuit of pleasure & happiness?

→ I don't think many of us would disagree with that pursuit being of high value and an undercurrent within the world in which you and I live and move...

- It's the TGIF
- Advertising that promises pleasure @ every swipe of your card, click of you mouse or
- Infomercials hawking what will finally fulfill your life...
- The great musician/theologian Cindy Loper said: Girls, just want to have FUN...

Think about what we do everyday – the ways we try to find enjoyment:

Q how many of you enjoy going to the movies? Went to a movie over the holidays? In the last two weeks?

PPT EXERCISE

- Movies: 9.6 billion
- Spectator Sports:
- Eating out:

**Q** how many of you enjoy a starbucks coffee?

(there's someone here on staff that really enjoys it), I do too; but not as much as **Rafael Lozano** a.k.a. 'Winter' (according to USA today October '05) is on a quest to visit every starbucks establishment in the world. He began in 1997 when there were 1,304 stores. He's has (as of yr ago – been to 4,918 in US, 213 others around the globe) → problem is Starbucks is on pace of opening about 3 ½ stores every day worldwide.

He's in a chase scene...and the paper is quickly blowing out of sight...  
It's a chasing after the wind...

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Review: last week Glenn pulled from Solomon's lesson this notion of finding enjoyment in the time of life you're in and not getting caught up in desiring it to be different and missing life...

This week: I'd like you to take your bibles and turn to ECC chapter 2...as we examine this chase that Solomon went on toward pursuing pleasure, accomplishment, happiness to find the satisfaction he was looking for...

ECC backdrop:

- Some have said that ECC is a depressing book, it's hard to read, seems like a big downer..
- You have to understand that Solomon is writing ECC like it's a reflection back on his diary...it's a reflection back on times in life, those things tried and his thoughts about them know...
- ECC chronicles his search for meaning and satisfaction
- This phrase "a chasing after the wind" appears

ECC 2:1-11

- Solomon tried a lot of things to find the pleasure and satisfaction he was looking for
  - Laughter
  - Drinking (connoisseur of the best)
  - Amazing gardens/vineyards/oasis – Garden of Eden language
  - Built homes, bldgs
  - Bought cattle, herds (I'm not sure how that works?)
  - Women – 700 wives (which before you get too excited, means 700 motherinlaws)
  - Bands and singers
  - Collected money – gobs of wealth

Help you get mind around what he tried: Q's

What's the best band/singer?

Comedian?

Best restaurant?

Best actor?

Solomon had:

-U2 and the Rolling Stones performing every night  
 -comedy by: Jay Leno would stroll out to the bottom of his bed and do his routine  
 -ate food from The Melting Pot, North, -- didn't have boring ice cream – he had had gelato from Frost  
 -had Tom Hanks to hang out with, and he'd bring friends ...

- Mtv Cribs was showing his palace, then his summer palace, then the vacation palace
- Ralph Lauren designing his clothes
- Married to Ms. Jerusalem, Ms. Galilee, Ms. Judah, Ms Israel, etc
- Donald Trump called him for assistance and advise
- Oprah's chef and Emerill was cooking in his kitchen
- Steve Jobs called him to give him the 1<sup>st</sup> I-brickphone
- Rode around the city in his H2 chariot and Lincoln stretch chariot on wknds

He had the best of the best – he snapped his fingers and it was done – he had it all!

Yet, this same guy – in diary form of reflecting back, said:

**ECC 2:1**

→ it didn't bring him lasting meaning that he was searching for...

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That's a search we're all on...I believe that all of us deep down – desire to discover meaning, purpose, significance in life...

→ and yet at the same time of searching for those deeper things...

→ we have all these popup ads that come across the screen of our lives – all this junk mail that gets lodged in our hearts – and they are alluring to the eye and heart – with their fancy phrases and catchy promises – telling us that they'll truly satisfy...only to lead us on a futile chase...

Here's the point:

Solomon is saying: don't get all wrapped up in the pursuit of pleasure and the 'good life'; pursue after God and enjoy the pleasures and meaning he alone can bring! Because He alone can satisfy!

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**If that's the point: how do you go about fostering that kind of life - that kind of heart :**

→ b/c we live in a world where there is this fork in the road – and this neon sign blinking come of here for fulfillment and meaning...and this other road that isn't so glitzy and full of glamour...but it doesn't end in heartache...

can I offer a few takeaways for your consideration...

### **1 Keep pleasure in balance b/c it's appetite is unending**

→ we have an undercurrent in our culture that is constantly urging us to gain more, better, bigger – continually upgrade all things in life!

...The lie is: if we do, then we'll find true satisfaction and we really don't...it never ultimately satisfies

Charles Swindoll said it this way:

“Sensual pleasure holds out promises that lack staying power...there's always another rush needed.”

It's like we become pleasure junkies – needing another rush of emotionally charged experiences to keep us going on our chase...

**NOW – LET ME BOOKMARK RIGHT HERE FOR A MINUTE..**

Let me tell you what the pursuit of pleasure is NOT!

Solomon is not saying: avoid any ounce of pleasure, fun or enjoyment in life...

He's not advocating abandonment to living like a monk in a cave and exercising extreme poverty...

I've even felt it conveyed by some well intentioned, but misguided people that:

**NO FUN = very spiritual life...**

**Q** ever run into a Christian like that? Maybe you have...

- Solomon is saying: don't get caught up in the chasing after pleasure – pursuing it as the answer, b/c it's a chasing after the wind – it won't ultimately satisfy;
- But he's also saying: don't run from the wind either and negate the good things in this world that God has allowed and brings your way...

ECC 2:24

→ we serve a God who is not down on pleasure, or finding enjoyment in life...

Jesus said that he's come that we might have life in all it's fullness.. (jn 10:10)

God has created us with nerve endings, emotions → he's not an OGRE who is standing over us trying to squash remaining fun out of life... he's given us the ability to enjoy food, relationships, adventures, children, love, careers...

**Everyone of us has this tendency of drifting toward one end of the spectrum or the other – you gotta know where you have a tendency to drift → and you go for balance...**

→ You can enjoy the pleasures and enjoyments of this life – but when it begins to drift toward the full out pursuit of pleasure as the number #1 thing in life...

→ if it becomes your driving force in life, where God fades into the background or never makes it on your radar screen...

→ the bible has a word for that: it's called idolatry. And it is something that God doesn't take lightly...He says very clearly in scripture: I won't be 2<sup>nd</sup> fiddle or runner-up...I created you to be in relationship with me...

Solomon would say, if you're all out on the pursuit of pleasure, and it's easy to begin drifting that way, than you're chasing after something that ultimately will not satisfy! Chasing the wind...

**Quote: (Patricia Meyer Spacks) professor, author:**

She refers to studies by sociologists and psychologists and offers some intriguing reasons for why she believes boredom is at an all-time intensity high...

→ she says "it's not wealth or increased leisure that has led to heightened boredom. She says it is a metaphysical void, a lack of ultimate meaning. People pursue pleasure in harmful and destructive ways to fill the void. They don't know God. They think this life is all there is – so pleasure must be all that is available.

It becomes then very important to try to enjoy every second of life, filling the black hole inside with every possible pleasure. However, since pleasure is a false God, tantalizing us but never fulfilling us, we find ourselves sucked into this obsessive and addictive pursuit of the rush of a good feeling. After that feeling wanes we are on to the next.”

→ its an endless cycle

Giving in to the pursuit of pleasure in life has a way of knocking our lives out of balance.  
b/c the truth is: pleasure had an unquenchable craving...

At the Core: this is a perception issue that Solomon is trying to get us to recognize!  
The lie we all are influenced to entertain... “that, I just need that – then I’ll be satisfied...or maybe I just need just a little more of that -

→ this hunger for more grows if we allow it to lodge within our hearts

Richard Foster (wrote: Celebration of Discipline) buy the book – read one chapter on Simplicity

Simplicity has a way of fighting against the immense appetite of false & shallow pleasures and at the same time allowing us to enjoy the deeper delights of life

- Times where my children are playing together (without fighting)
- Conversations and long meals with friends
- Adventures shared with friends and family

Richard Foster writes about discipline of simplicity:

Quote:

**Simplicity is freedom. Simplicity brings joy and balance. Simplicity sets possessions in proper perspective...and rejoices in the gracious provision from the hand of God.**

I marvel at people who have attained the ‘good life’ – they may own a lot, but they are NOT owned by it. They have got God squarely in the center of life and

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Another observation on carving out the allure of the pursuit of pleasure over pursuing God...

## 2 don’t get stuck in the middle of life – and miss yours...

Q answer the question: my life would be better IF...?

*LIFE CEREAL BOX*

→ we all are given a life...we have things we can enjoy in this life...

And then here’s what can happen...we can find ourselves in the “living in the LAND OF IF”

- ...if only I had this, if only they liked me, if only I could...

We end up missing out on our LIFE b/c we can’t break away from living in the land of IF...

So, we pursue all the IF’S, only to find that we’ve still got more to pursue...and we’re not becoming satisfied...

→ when pleasure alone is the center of life, the result will ultimately be disappointment and emptiness

**ECC 2:10a, 11a**

Solomon denied himself nothing, he chased after all the IF'S, got 'em → and yet still such despair. I mean, if you really, truly have it ALL – wouldn't it produce a grateful heart? a heart that is satisfied? **NO!**

→ There is this mental habit that you and I need to engage in: it fights against, what I'll call:

**THE IF SYNDROME**

And this infection runs rampant across our country...

- IF I could only get the new Iphone than all would be right and aligned in my life...
- IF only I could...

When you're infected with the IF syndrome – there will be only momentary happiness, and then the cycle will repeat

**The problem is: our mind never gets to rest and enjoy the blessings and pleasures we do have !**

Solomon is saying: hey, you gotta recognize the IF syndrome at play within you...

→ I need to come and say about my life – what Solomon said about all of life...this chase is a no-win...

As you're walking thru BEST BUY and the 1,040 inch flat panel TV is calling too you...and your heart gets racing...you gotta catch yourself, check your perception and say: "if I buy you, you're not going to ultimately satisfy me...I may still get ya, but I'm not looking to you to bring me fulfillment."

- You don't need a new marriage – you need to redeem and fix the one you have
- You may not need that car – you may be alright with something less or the one you have

→ what Solomon did for all of life – I need to practice in mine: I need to recognize my drift, the IF syndrome at work – name it and place it back in proper balance...

T \_\_\_\_\_ you know the movie star/actor Jim Carrey:

**Quote:** (jim carrey)

"I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer." (reader's digest march 2006)

*Sound familiar?*

→ We can spend our time chasing things across our lives – only to discover they weren't the things worth chasing...

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I'd like to anchor us on some of the words of Jesus...

Let me read this too you → as you close your eyes and just listen

- Sometimes simply– listening can secure us as we swim among the visual sea we're in...advertising dominates us – it distracts us from the main thing...blinds us...

**Matthew 6:24-33**

Open eyes – Jesus is saying keep the first thing first. Keep your focus and energy on pursuing after God and his Kingdom and heart and not getting distracted after other pursuits...

Jesus later says (7:11)

If you broken/sinful, fathers are able to give good gifts...how much more will your heavenly Father...give good gifts to his kids...

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God isn't down on pleasure, enjoyment in life → he says pursue me first, keep me first, don't let me fade into the background or get crowded out. Focus on pursuing me and enjoy the significance, meaning, purpose and pleasures I'll bring along to you...

### **Conclusion:**

Q how many of you have ever had an action figure doll?

In England (coming here I believe) you can now buy an INVISIBLE JIM.

Invisible Jim was originally mailed back by stores, b/c they thought it was a mistake...

It's a non-action figure: it's got great marketing schemes, pretty intense packaging = but no product!  
Good marketing, good packaging = but it's an empty box!!

Maybe you're here today and you're not a believer:

- Have you perhaps been pursuing the things with good marketing, packaging – but time and time again they leave you with an emptiness in life. Jesus promised a life lived in relationship with him would bring fulfillment and meaning
- → Solomon tried it all and concluded that it was a pointless chase...

Maybe you're here and you are a Christ-follower:

- Have you noticed a drift in your life...b/c there is constant tug one way or the other...there is no stagnant existence
- Has the "IF syndrome" been plaguing you...and you feel stuck, empty

We've built in some time to allow this lesson to marinate our hearts a bit – to realign ourselves this morning a bit...maybe you're here and during this last two worship songs your heart needs to have some work done on it...

### **Worship set**

Benediction: