

**“The Problem With Pleasure”**  
**Ecclesiastes 2:1-11**  
**Sermon Series: “Unsatisfied”**

**Introduction:** I would like to talk to you this morning about the problem of pleasure. Hearing this title and message may invoke two opposite reactions. Some of you may be like, “You have to be a no-fun, religious fundamentalist to even think there’s a problem with pleasure.” You are pursuing hedonism, which is the philosophy that says that pleasure is the ultimate goal of life (life should be a perpetual spring break at the beach). On the other hand, as you hear me say in this message that pleasure is not bad but is actually from God if it is righteous, you may think I’m a liberal compromiser if you came from certain religious backgrounds. I want us to not fall into the ditch on either side of the road, but view pleasure in a biblical way, which is:

**Main Idea: The problem with pleasure is that, apart from God, it is fleeting, and therefore, unsatisfying.**

**The Problem With Pleasure**

**1. The pursuit of pleasure is often selfish.**

- Uses I, me, my, myself around 39 times in the passage
- Think of how he used women, he had slaves (what selfishness is that)
- Pat Riley: “the disease of me”
- Warren Wiersbe: “Today’s world is pleasure-mad. Millions of people will pay almost any amount of money to ‘buy experiences’ and temporarily escape the burdens of life. While there is nothing wrong with innocent fun, the person who builds his or her life only on seeking pleasure is bound to be disappointed in the end. Why? For one thing, pleasure-seeking usually becomes a selfish endeavor; and selfishness destroys true joy. People who live for pleasure often exploit others to get what they want, and they end up with broken relationships as well as empty hearts.”

**2. The pursuit of pleasure leads to glorifying self instead of God.**

**3. The pursuit of pleasure has the law of diminishing returns built into it so it can lead to brokenness and addiction.**

(Akins) “The problem is that we are all sinful and broken, and that hurts. So, we try to find ways out of our brokenness, but we just end up more and more broken. For example, some people think gender reassignment will fix their brokenness, but that only makes suicide 20 times more likely. Some people think intimacy will fix their brokenness so they go from relationship to relationship trying to fill the void, but they

end up hurt and unsatisfied each time as they look harder and harder for something they will not find. Others look to success in a job, or making lots of money, or hundreds of other things, but these things never bring lasting satisfaction. So much of our futility and brokenness is due to our own sin and our own idolatry in which we turn good things into ultimate things. We worship money, pleasure, sex, success, power, and much more. Instead of seeing those things as gifts from God to be used as He intended, we see them as ultimate and seek to get from them what they cannot give. So often the things we think we want so badly fail to provide what we think they will, and we end up empty. That is the brokenness of departing from God's good design. We all sin, and we are all broken."

**4. The pursuit of pleasure causes us to have the wrong priorities which can wreck our lives.**

**5. The pursuit of pleasure keeps us from dealing with the real issues but does not work at numbing the pain of life .**

**6. The pursuit of pleasure does not ultimately and permanently make us happy or satisfied.**

### **Solutions To The Problem With Pleasure**

**1. See righteous pleasure as a gift from God that we are content with and thank Him for.**

-Ecclesiastes 2:24

(Akin) "The creation of humanity and the fall into sin are the background to Solomon's observations of life in this broken world. God created the world good with a design for everything. God created the world as a perfect home for His children—humanity—and gave good gifts like food, drink, relationships, and sex. God designed these gifts to be used as He intended and not as ends in and of themselves. They were designed to cause our hearts to worship our Creator. So when we eat, drink, or enjoy sex with our spouse, these activities are intended to elicit a reaction of praise and gratitude to God for His good gifts.

Instead, we rebelled against God's good design and began using His gifts in ways He did not intend. We turned them into ends rather than means. We sought to find satisfaction in the created things rather than the Creator God, and that brought a curse on the world (Rom 1:18-32). Now there are death and brokenness, and things do not work right. We abuse the gifts so that now food becomes gluttony, drink becomes drunkenness, and sex becomes adultery. We reject our God-given roles in marriage. Labor to provide for our families is now frustrating and difficult. Genesis 3 says sweat

and frustrating fruit production will characterize our work. And we will ultimately return to the dust from which we were created (Gen 3:8-19). Thus Ecclesiastes describes the meaningless and frustration of life in a Genesis 3 world.”

**2. Choose to forsake the temporary pleasures of sin for the greater treasure of Jesus Christ.**

Hebrews 11:24-26

**3. Define our lives through the resurrection of Jesus instead of the pursuit of pleasure.**

-1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 20-22, 29-32, 57-58

**4. Live for the glory of God (Isaiah 43:7, 1 Corinthians 10:31).**

-hevel vs. kabod; vapor vs. weighty

-John Piper says, “God is most glorified *in us* when we are most satisfied in him.”

**5. Know that God intends for us to enjoy pleasure with Him forever.**

-Psalm 16:8-11

-This means that we are hard wired by God for pleasure in Him. C.S. Lewis said, “It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

**Conclusion: True, eternal pleasure that is ultimately satisfying and not vain or empty is found in Jesus Christ.**

**Surrender to Jesus by faith and find real joy. Stop settling for unsatisfying substitutes.**

