

Power Lunch Series

The Search for Satisfaction #6

May 8, 2002 • The Secret To A Satisfied Life • Ecclesiastes

Dr. David McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message *The Secret To A Satisfied Life*]

Praise the Lord. [applause] Well that is just a taste of what we get to hear on Sundays here at Prestonwood because a..., Larry Bra...Brubaker is the a..., director of all of our instrumental music here and a..., I'm just telling you it is incredible and his energy and ability to play that horn is just out of this world and Larry I appreciate you playing for us today. That was absolutely fabulous and a great encouragement and boy speaking of encouragement seeing you here is incredible. Why don't you just give yourself a hand for comin today and bein here [applause] and a..., makin this such a great day. I'm so glad each and every one of you are here. How many of you have been with us through all 6 of these weeks on *The Search For Satisfaction*? A number of you have been. Thank you for being here and then for all of those of you who are here for the first time today we are so grateful that you've come and we hope that a..., in the days to come Power Lunch will be habit forming in your life and that you'll be here, you'll be a part of it.

Probably, many of you had the experience, I did, in childhood of learning to read and the early characters that you became familiar with in a..., you're earliest days of ready were Dick and Jane and Spot. How many of you read about Dick, Jane and Spot? Well, you know, I did too and I have to admit after a while a..., Jane got plain and a..., I didn't a..., I didn't a..., all that much enjoy reading about Dick, Jane and Spot. But let me tell you, when I was a kid I started a..., being exposed to and familiar with the writings of Dr. Zeus and that was when reading changed for me. Ma...most of you are very well aware of the writings of Dr. Zeus, a..., very colorful, very unusual type animation that he used in his books and the thing that I loved the most was that so many of those books would rhyme. A..., some of my favorites, one of my all times favorites is *Green Eggs And Ham* and if you've never, if you've never had it, you've never tried it, if you go to a..., Orlando into the new islands of adventure, the Universal Studio there, you can actually go to a little booth and eat green eggs and ham and a..., it's incredible, a day about 95° sun coming down in Central Florida, green eggs and ham, just what you're looking for but a..., I love *Green Eggs And Ham*, the book and then a..., maybe you remember a book called a..., *Horton Has A Who?*, *A Hop On Pop*, *Cat In The Hat* a..., *1 Fish, 2 Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*, a..., probably my all time favorite and it probably is for you too is *How The Grinch Stole Christmas* and a..., I love all of those Zeus writings and I've always been fascinated with the ability that anyone would have to take so many concepts, put em together in such a creative and a..., a, a way in which it would be...have this rhyming meter and a..., quality to it.

Well, some time ago I came across a little story a..., where someone a..., in, in all good endeavor attempted to take Zeus's style and to sorta provide a zeusation of the familiar poem or the familiar article entitled, *The Road Less Traveled*, and a..., it was simply entitled, *The Guy Who Couldn't Make Up His Mind*, and I wanna take just a moment and share that with you today because I think it provides a great background to what we are going to do in this concluding study today in the book of Ecclesiastes because we've been dealing with Solomon on a search for life and all of the ideas, all of the a..., perspectives that he's brought to this life management seminar about how to live your life. So let me read to you about the guy who couldn't make up his mind.

"Did I ever tell you about the young Zoad who came to the sign at a fork in the road? One said to place 1 and the other to place 2, so the Zoad couldn't make up his mind what to do. Well, the Zoad scratched his head and his chin and his pants and he said to himself, 'Now I'll be taking a change. If I go to place 1, that place may be hot so I do not know if I'll like it or not. On the other hand though I'll feel like such a fool if I go to place 2 and I find that it's too cool. I may catch a chill and turn blue. So place 1 may be best, not place 2. On the other hand though if place 1 is too high I may get a terrible earache and die. On the other hand though what might happen to me if I go to place 2 and I find it's too low I could catch a terrible strange pain down in my toe, so place 1 may be best.' So he started to go and he stopped and said, 'On the other hand though, on the other hand, on the other hand, on the other hand though' and for 36 and 1 half hours the Zoad made starts and made stops at that fork in the road saying, 'No, don't take a chance, you may not be right.' Then he got an idea which seemed so wonderful, so bright, 'Play it safe,' cried the Zoad, 'I'll play it safe because I am no dunce, I'll simply start off to both places at once.' And that's how the Zoad who could not take a chance got to no place at all with a split in his pants."

Heh, heh! [pause for audience laughter and applause] Well, that's a pretty incredible a..., little piece, but I tell you I think that's where I lot of people end up in life. They're always on a search to find connection, meaning all of these things in life, but the reality is they basically get no where at all except with a split in their pants and so a..., I think that's a great little statement, a great little, a picture of where so many people live life. Now we've been looking at Solomon's perspective of life and to a large degree Solomon tried all the different roads and in the end he really came to this conclusion, I've got no place at all and I have a split in my pants. I've tried it all. I've done it all. I've seen it all. I've experienced it all and so what he did was at the very beginning of his life management seminar in the entry of his journal he gave us the conclusion that he basically said, life is empty, life is meaningless and he said this having tried the things that so many people are trying today. I know the a..., word "spam" is a hot word today. I remember a different kind of Spam, that we used to have in a can. But of course you get all of this mail today this "spam" but there was some "spam" in his life and I just wanna take a moment and just remind you,

those of you who are here maybe for the first time today that the guy who's life we've been studying and examining is a guy who tried all of these venues to try to find satisfaction and he really dove in to these experiences and engaged himself in them in life. The "spam," that a..., made up his life was first of course sex, a..., that is the, the number one, the item that is a..., everywhere, all pervasive, a..., supposedly all embracing, all encompassing, all fulfilling and he tried sex but he found that to be empty and then he tried a..., after sex, power. He tried to accomplish many things, to climb the ladder, to get to the top, to be known, to have notoriety and then not only that he tried all kinds of achievements and adventures in his life, just moving, not only from a position of power but to an experience of power in his life and achieving things and adventuring in life. And then ultimately to money, to money, to all the things that he could have, that he could amass and all the things that money could buy and this was really sort of the "spam" experience of Solomon's life as he tried and tasted and tested all of these things. But when he did all of this he still said, you know what? No matter how intense the activity was in my life, no matter how broad the diversity of, of a..., things were that I tried to explore, no matter a..., what it may be, he said, the honest truth is that it is all empty.

But now today we come to chapter 12, which is the last chapter of his life journal and I have to tell you at the outset that there's some good news. Because he ends in a much better fashion than he began. He began with a downer, with a negative, with a conclusion that simply says life is empty and I think if you'll remember the day we read that those of you who were here I said, boy you read that and you wanna say pass the Prozac, you know, you, you just, you know, that's not the idea that motivates and maximizes and encourages your life. But the reality is, is in the end everything changed for Solomon and he ended the journal having reckoned with the conclusion that he gave us at the beginning but giving us a completely new direction in the end. And so lets read, let's see what he has to say at the end of the journal, Ecclesiastes chapter 12, verse 1, this is what he said:

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have not pleasure in them."

You see in the end he has a completely different focal point. In the beginning his focus was life under the sun is empty and I've got the "spam" to prove it. I've tasted, I've tested, I've done it, but in the end, he said, you know what? The thing that was wrong with my life from the beginning is I started with the wrong focal point, I had a wrong perspective, I thought that fulfillment was gonna be found under the sun, somewhere in the things around me in life. He said, but in the end of my life here's what I've discovered:

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth,...

Before all of the life is wasted and the evil days have come and the emptiness has set in and come to the place that you realize that what

matters in life is looking at life, not from our vantage point under the sun, but changing the whole perspective to look beyond the sun. I believe that in that issue comes the first of 3 secrets today, 3 secrets that I wanna talk to you about for a satisfied life. If you want satisfaction in your life it will be in direct proportion to your ability to answer these 3 questions because this is the issue of life for every one of us living in this society, in this day, in this time, in this culture, in this generation, in this nation. These are the 3 questions that every one of us has to answer if we're gonna have a satisfied life.

Number 1: WHAT IS YOUR FOCAL POINT? What is your focal point? What is the focus of your life? What is it that determines all other perspectives. Everybody has a focal point. Everybody has a center. Everybody has a place, a baseline of measure as a point of reference in life and Solomon said, for so many days my point of reference was me. My point of reference was what was in the world around me. He said, and it wasn't until I came to the place in my life that the point of reference for my life was the Creator, that everything else in my life began to change and to come together and he realized the importance of this. You may know that many years ago in the early days of astronomy there was a man by the name of Ptolemy who said that the earth was at the center of our ~~sol~~...of our universe and for years all of the astronomers would try to develop calculations for being able to understand the placement of the planets and all that had to do with that and they were constantly frustrated because it wasn't until the 4th Century, some nearly a thousand years later when Copernicus came along and said, you now what? We've got it all wrong. It's not the earth, it's the sun and when the sun began to be the right pinpoint in the solar system then everything else began to be developed and between the 14th Century and the day in which we live we've literally been able to send out space probes, put someone on the moon, begin to develop all of these things because they began to get the center right. That's exactly what has to happen in every life. And for Solomon he said, I had to come to the place where I understood that the most important thing was having the right focal point. Now, interestingly enough here in Ecclesiastes 12, the remainder of the verses are verses about ageing and about what happens as you get older in life and so you can tell that he's at a stage in his life where he's experienced a lot, done a lot, now he's looking back and he said the one thing I realize, the big mistake I made is that I tried to find everything under the sun and I left the Creator out and he said, I had to change the focal point and I would tell you that the focal point has to be God. It has to be God. Now in my own personal life I would share with you that this is very significant to me, because in my own life this has become the center point in my life. I stand before you today as someone who has a confident, complete, absolute belief in a Creator and a personal God and it is that relationship that I have with God that has made all the difference in my life. In fact I would just share with you that I personally believe in God because of 3 things.

Number 1: I BELIEVE IN GOD BECAUSE OF CREATION. When I look at everything in this world around me, the wonder, the beauty, the symmetry, the, the chemistry of this world, I am absolutely amazed by all of the precision

and of the order that is there and I simply for one cannot and do not in any way buy into the idea that all this here is just here because of random chance and some sort of a violent explosion in a cosmic universe years ago and just poof we were all here. I mean I don't believe in that any more than you would believe that if I told you this ~~wris...watch~~, wrist watch I'm wearing is the result ~~and the...~~of an explosion in a parts factory. I mean who would believe that? Oh yeah it just blew up and then I just put it on my arm and it's been tickin ever since and tells me exactly the time of day and wear it you know, clock, calendar, the whole thing. You're gonna tell me the seasons, the precision of the sun of the universe, this amazing place in which we live, planet earth, that all of that is just somehow the result of some kind of a random choice, some kind of just a, a collision of nature, that this is all just a freak. You see that's exactly what many people believe in our world is that it's all just a freak and they spend the rest of their lives trying to understand why it's so freaky. [pause for slight audience laughter] But the reality is, is that, while I don't have all of the explanations, I believe that everything around me demands and determines that I put my confidence in the fact that there is order, that there is symmetry and that there is a creation that therefore demands the need for a Creator and that's why Solomon said:

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth,...

But not only do I believe in God because of creation, **I BELIEVE IN GOD BECAUSE OF MY OWN SENSE OF CONSCIENCE**, the fact that I have a personal sense of conscience that is in me. It is present in every human being. There is a sense in every one of us that demands some things to be right and some things to be wrong. There's a sense of needing law and order in life. Every society, every civilization, though it may vary in it's values has some basic core of laws and of order because man has a sense, mankind has this incredible sense that there is some moral relevance in life and it is the very existence of human consciousness that causes us to struggle with the issues of good and evil in the world and that causes me to believe in the reality of God. The Bible says, we've looked at it in the book of Ecclesiastes, God has put eternity in our hearts. God has made us unique and distinct and we live our lives by codes and rules and order because we believe that deep down inside that there are things that, that are right and that are wrong.

It was the Cambridge scholar, C. S. Lewis who said this in a way that I just think is so incredibly profound and if you'll permit me to delve into just a moment of philosophy here a..., I think it will be good for all of us, listen to what he says, he said:

"My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust, but how had I gotten this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? If the whole show was bad and senseless from A to Z, so to speak, why did I who was supposed to be part of the show find myself in violent reaction against it? A man

feels wet when he falls into water, because a man is not a water animal. A fish would not feel wet. Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that then my argument against God collapsed too. For the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust. That is God is unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my private fantasies."

And then he said:

"Thus the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist; in other words, the whole reality of this world was senseless. I found I was forced to assume that one part of reality, namely the idea of justice was full of sense, consequently atheism turned out to be too simple."

He said, as easy as it is to look back and to say, I just can't believe in God because so much is wrong in the world. He said, the problem is the very fact that I feel somethin's wrong makes me believe in God, because I have to have a sense that, that there is some order, there is some balance, there is some meaning to all of this and so I think that's an incredible perspective and, and it's a part of my own perspective and then ultimately I not only believe in God because of the reality of creation and because of the inward sense of conscience...

But **I DO ABSOLUTELY BELIEVE IN GOD BECAUSE OF THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST.**

I believe that God revealed Himself to humanity, when he stepped out of heaven and stepped into planet earth 2000 years ago and while there have been many religious teachers and many who have been philosophers who have lived, you cannot put Jesus Christ in the same category as all of these. Jesus didn't simply talk about a good life He lived a good and a perfect life. Jesus died, but He rose again from the dead and the reality of who Christ is and what Christ came to do has ultimately been the defining reality of my own life and I would simply have to say that it is the fact that Jesus was prophesized, the fact that Jesus has continued to influence the world like no other person who had ever lived in the history of the world, that all of the world basically finds it's definition in the process of BC and AD that I look to the person of Jesus Christ and I believe God has shown us what He is like. So Creator and conscience and Christ are the reasons that I believe and that is why I put the focal point of my life on God the Creator. I believe that's why many years ago Solomon put the focal point of his life on God the Creator, because he realized that satisfaction in life was based on answering the question; What is the focal point of my life? And so that is so very important for each and for every one of us. But not only do we need to ask the question today, what is the focal point of life? But there's another question that we have to ask today and that we have to address today and that is...

WHAT IS YOUR TRUTH SOURCE IN LIFE? What is your truth source in life? You see here again in chapter 12, not only did he say:

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth,...

But he also said a..., as he continued here that there was a need for us to understand where we were going to measure and establish the basis of truth for living every day. Now I realize this is a bit of a challenging concept in a world of post-modern era that has basically thrown away the idea of absolutes. You know what, I didn't think this clock was workin up here. That is absolutely incredible, I still have exactly as much time right now as it did when I started earlier. [pause for audience laughter] Man I thought I've never talked this fast in my whole life. [more laughter] All right, here's the other one, I'll put this one over here. This is my friend, this is my enemy and so I'll try to find a balance somewhere in between here. I mean I'm telling you this second hands just tickin away and I'm still sittin, well actually I'm sittin at 11:16, so if you'll give me another hour and 45 minutes I'm sure we're get through with this. Man I couldn't figure that out, I knew something was goin on. I was talking to you about a truth source and the importance of defining it and being in a day and a age in which we simply have tried to say that there are no absolutes. The problem with saying that there are no absolute in the world in which we live is that everything in the world speaks against that. There are some absolutes in life. A..., obviously there are absolutes in the physical laws that govern the physical universe. Gravity is a law, it an absolute. I can stand up here all day long and tell you that I don't believe in gravity because I can't see it and I don't understand it and I can talk to you and I mean I literally could be so persuasive as to let all us to just dismiss the idea of gravity. But let me tell you somethin if I get too close to the edge of this platform and I take one more step, I will not defy it I will prove it, just like that. I'll be right there, because you see the reality is, is that gravity is here and it is present and it is a physical property and a physical law and the only way that you ever overcome it is with a higher law, like the laws of aerodynamics that help us to lift and to rise above, but that again is because of an absolute of a dynamic called aerodynamics. You see there's also the reality in this world, not only of physical laws that are real and that are present but then there's also the realm of mathematics. Mathematics is a realm of truth and of absolute. $1 + 1 = 2$, it always equals 2. $2 + 2 = 4$ and always equals 4. You see truth real truth is narrow and whether we like it or not the reality is, is that truth exists and truth is all around us in the physical world, in the mathematical world and then ultimately in the human world. Death is an absolute did you know that? I mean I know I've been reminding you of this and I'm not necessarily becoming your best friend because of it but it is a living viable current statistic, 1 out of 1 persons dies and that's just the reality of life and so you see there are absolutes in the world around us and we have to understand that, that life is lived in accordance with that which is true and that which is right.

In, in Ecclesiastes chapter 12, in ~~verse 12~~ **[should be verse 11]**, this is what Solomon said, he said:

The words of wise men are life goads and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. And further my son be admonished by these, Of the making of many books there is no end, and much study is

wearisome to the flesh.

Now what was he saying? He said I've spent my life searching and searching and searching for truth, but I had to finally determine that in of the words and in all of the information that was out there in the world that I had to move back just from words and information to ask the simple question what is truth? And he said, in my life the truth, the true source of my life had to become something that was real and something that was lasting and something that was absolute. I personally have staked my life on the foundation that I believe that the book called the Bible is a truth source for life and that you can depend on it and that you can use it and that you can believe it because while there have been so many books through the years that have filled libraries, that have come and gone and been revised and edited and updated and science has changed and history has changed and geography has changed, the amazing thing is, is that the Bible has never been revised and yet it's never been more relevant than it is today. History, prophecy, principles of living, it's absolutely incredible, it's a phenomenal book.

I recently was in a Barnes and Noble store and asked the question, how many volumes do you have in this store? And to the best of their ability to tell me, they felt that they had somewhere in the vicinity of 250,000 books in the Barnes and Noble store. I tell you, you gotta drink a lot of Starbucks to cruse all those books. I'm tellin you, and yet the reality is you can read and read and read and if all we're reading is words and gaining information and we've never come to the place in life where we've been able to build our lives on something that is reliable and something that is stable and something that is a truth source, we'll still be empty and that's where Solomon ended up, empty. That is until he chose the right truth source in his life and the secret of satisfaction is answering, one, what is your focal point? Number 2, what is your truth source? And then...

Number 3: **WHAT IS YOUR LIFE QUEST?** What are you gonna do with your life? What are you gonna give your energies to? What are you gonna focus your priorities upon? What are you gonna do with your schedule from day to day? What is gonna be the point of examination and of measure as to how you're doing and how your life is going? Well, Solomon ultimately said, let me give you the bottom line and he did, just as he gave us a real straight conclusion at the beginning of the journal and said in my experience life is empty. He gave us a clear answer in the end of the journal when he said:

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth,...

And then he took it to the bottom-line and here's the bottom-line of what he had to say. He said, down in the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 12, verses 13 and following:

Here is my final conclusion: Fear God and keep His commands, For this is the duty of every person. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, Whether good or bad.

He said that's it! You know what life's about, here it is, fear God, keep His commands, for this is the duty. In other words it all has to do with the relationship you have with God. And if you have a relationship with God then the quest of your life is to live your life in a way in which it would come into the accordance with the standards, the measure, the purpose for which God has made your life and he said, God will judge everything we do, whether good or bad. You see every one of us can either spend our life, waste our life or invest our life. Spend it, waste it or invest it and you have to determine what is my life quest. And Solomon said, I made the determination in my life that my life quest would now be to fear the God who made me. I wasn't gonna leave the Creator out any more I was gonna bring the Creator in to my life. In fact it's interesting that where Ecclesiastes ends Proverbs, you know that book 31 chapters, book of wisdom, incredible statements, all these little kind of sermons in a sentence? Proverbs begins where Ecclesiastes ends. You know what the first major life maxim is in the book of Proverbs? Proverbs chapter 1, verse 7 says:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,...

You're not ever gonna know what life's about or anything else is about until you let the fear of God begin to be the part of life. Does that mean just, ohhhh...God? No! The fear of God means giving God the rightful respect and honor that is due to His name and he was simply saying that this is a vital part of life. That's where it all begins and the secret to a satisfied life is ultimately answering the questions, what is my focal point? What is my truth source? What is my life quest? And you see if any one of those leaves the Creator out then it very well may be that you end up at the same empty street that Solomon did.

Some of you are probably familiar with a broadly successful novel, it was later made into a movie entitled, *The Accidental Tourist*. Ann Tyler tells a story about a young couple who had one son and their one and only son was murdered and essentially the, the movie as the novel takes the whole scene of what happens in the life of this couple as they struggle to deal with the lost of their son and they keep growing further and further apart and they're more and more driven and touched by anger in their lives. And ultimately after a legal separation this wife, mother, this husband, father have a dispute in which the wife says to the husband, "Nothing ever touches you any more. You just drift through life." And he sat and he stared and he responded. "I don't drift. I endure." He said, "I don't drift. I endure." And I've afraid that's how so many people all around you and me live, they're achievers, they're successful, but inwardly they're enduring, they're empty and the wonderful thing about this book and this study, is that it takes us back to what matters.

Listen to how Eugene Peterson summarized the life message of Ecclesiastes, he says:

"In the end, Ecclesiastes is a book that functions, not as a meal, but as

a bath. It is not nourishment, it is cleansing, it is repentance and purging. We read it to get scrubbed clean from illusion and sentiment, from ideas that are idolatrous and feelings that cloy, it is an exposé and rejection of every arrogant and ignorant expectation we can live our lives by ourselves, on our own terms. The authors cool skepticism, a refreshing negation to the lush and seductive suggestion swirling around us, promising everything and delivering nothing clears the air and once the air is cleared we are ready for reality for God."

The very first week we talked about living in the search mode and we talked about all the things that Solomon put in. But when it all came down to it there was only one search that provided satisfaction and I take you back to it. It is Jesus Christ! Christ is the answer to satisfaction in life. In contrast to Solomon saying life is empty, Jesus said in John 10:

¹⁰*"I've come that you might have life and have it abundantly."*

Jesus said again, in speaking to His disciples: [John 15:11]

"These things I've spoken to you that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be full."

And ~~John 20 and verse 21~~ says:

"These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you may have life in His name."

That's what life is all about. It's living for the Creator, being connected to the Creator and the search for satisfaction will always fall short until you find your satisfaction in the Creator and His Son Jesus Christ who made you for living with purpose.