

IDOLS



COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE WEEK THREE: "PLEASURE" | ECCLESIASTES 2:1-11

SERIES OVERVIEW

God deserves the whole world's worship. Unfortunately, unworthy substitutes are usually the recipients of that worship in our lives. From golden calves to purple and gold, our world has never had a shortage of things, people or ideas competing for the throne of our lives. In his book, *Counterfeit Gods*, Tim Keller writes, "An idol is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give." In this series, we'll identify these idols in our lives, discover how they fail, and seek to dethrone these lies that we love.

ICEBREAKER

What is something good in your life that you cut out at some point, because it wasn't best for you (i.e. a food, Facebook, Netflix, etc.)? Why did you cut it out?

THIS WEEK

We often think of idols as inherently bad, but most idols are neutral or even good. That thought makes idols dangerous though: Because they aren't necessarily bad, it is easier for us to seek them for something that only God can give. It's these "pleasures" that can easily replace God if we're not careful. This week, we'll dive into the book of Ecclesiastes and take a look at Solomon, a man who had all the pleasures anyone could ever desire. We'll see what he pursued, listen to his thoughts on those things, and begin to identify some of those pleasures in our own lives that may be idols.

READ ECCLESIASTES 2:1-11

BACKGROUND

Ecclesiastes is a book that reads like a personal memoir. Solomon, the third king of Israel, son of David, had everything a king of his time wanted. He had a tremendous amount of money, hundreds of concubines, real estate, and just about anything anyone could ever want. Solomon set out to catalog everything he could do in life to weigh the value of emotions, wisdom, and desires. He ultimately discovered only two worthy things in life: When all has been heard, fear God and keep His commandments, because these apply to every person. (Genre note: Ecclesiastes is a descriptive book, not a prescriptive, meaning, we do not look at the things Solomon did as the way we ought to live, nor do we use them to justify our behavior or desires. Like the book of Judges, they describe the events or, in this case, a personal memoir; unlike Galatians, where Paul is prescribing Christian living.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Ecc. 2:1 again. Solomon begins this section of the book with a conclusion. He concludes that pleasure is “vanity.” What does he mean when he uses this term? (Use an online Bible dictionary if you need help here)
2. According to vv. 2-3, what was Solomon ultimately seeking?
3. If someone followed you around the past week, what would they say you are most devoted to?
4. Read Ecc. 2:4-6 again. Solomon attempted to find pleasure by using his time to make things. How are you tempted to find pleasure in your work?
5. Take a moment and read 1 Timothy 6:6-10. Compare and contrast Paul’s words to his apprentice Timothy with Solomon’s words in Ecc. 2:7-8.
6. Read Ecc. 2:9-11 again. Solomon’s pursuit of pleasure seems eerily similar to the story Jesus tells about the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). As you think about these stories, how does the Gospel redeem us from the pursuit of pleasure?
7. Finally, how has the Gospel redeemed or could the Gospel redeem your idolization of pleasure?

APPLICATION

- **REMINDE YOURSELF OF THE GOSPEL:** It’s so easy to just cut idols out of our lives rather than letting God change our hearts. The Gospel says that we don’t have the ability to make those cuts apart from Christ. Therefore, we must constantly remind ourselves of Galatians 2:20.
- **TAKE AN INVENTORY OF YOUR TIME:** You may have done this a couple of weeks ago. If so, consider the progress or regression you’ve made since then. If not, this inventory is one of the best ways to determine idols in your life.
- **PRAISE GOD FOR HIS MERCY:** In our attempt to gain everything, we end up with nothing. Thankfully, God doesn’t destroy us in our futile and fleeting attempts at finding life apart from him. Therefore, take some time daily this week and praise God for his mercy.