

Week Three – *Freedom to Enjoy*
Ecclesiastes 9:7-10

Spend FIFTEEN - Day One

1. Journalist H. L. Mencken described some of the Christians of his day as having “a haunting fear that someone, somewhere might be having a good time.” Do you think this is an accurate representation of Christianity? Why?
2. Read Solomon’s bleak summary of reality in Ecclesiastes 9:1-4. What does Solomon say is the only thing that all people have in common? Would you call this a positive or a negative philosophy?
3. Then Solomon draws what might be a startling conclusion... read Ecclesiastes 9:7-10 to see what it is. What does Solomon believe we should do in the face of the inevitability of death?
4. Now read Ecclesiastes 5:18-19 for a more succinct statement of Solomon’s philosophical conclusion. Ecclesiastes has a reputation as a pretty pessimistic book of the Bible. However, if you had to sum up this passage with one word, what would it be?
5. Do you think it’s okay for Christians to enjoy the pleasures of this world or is it better to focus on the pleasures of the next world - in heaven (1 Corinthians 7:30-31)? Explain your answer.
6. End your FIFTEEN by thanking God for the many God-pleasing joys and pleasures in life that He has already given you. Ask for His help not to idolize His good gifts, but to enjoy the blessings He has given you in this life.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two

7. Reread one of the passages from yesterday, Ecclesiastes 9:7-10. Solomon calls out four areas that we should enjoy during our time in this life. What are they?
8. Look especially at verse 7. What, specifically, is Solomon telling us to enjoy?
9. What do you think this means, practically? Does it simply mean to avoid Taco Bell and eat every meal at Annie Gunn’s? Drink alcohol every night? How is this verse telling us to enjoy our meals?
10. How do you currently treat your mealtimes? Do you generally just microwave something quick? Eat whatever was on sale at the grocery store this week? Meal plan a month in advance?
11. Read Proverbs 15:17 and 17:1. What is the key element for enjoying our meals?

12. How much of this element do you have in your meals? How well do you do at appreciating it?
13. Spend some time thanking God for the family and relationships that He has given you to enjoy through the sharing of a meal.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

14. The Catholic journalist and theologian G. K. Chesterton once wrote a short poem called “Evening”:

*Here dies another day
During which I have had eyes, ears, hands
And the great world round me;
And with tomorrow begins another.
Why am I allowed two?*

15. What do you think he is saying with this poem?
16. Go back again and reread our main passage of the week, Ecclesiastes 9:7-10. These are all things we are advised to enjoy! What specifically does verse 8 call out to enjoy?
17. This could be paraphrased as: “Treat every day like it’s special.” Does this feel like an easy or a hard thing for you to do? Why?
18. How feasible is it, philosophically, to treat each day—or every moment—as special? Would this wear a person out? Or would it lead to more joy?
19. Read Philippians 4:4-8. What advice in this passage might help contribute to treating every day like it's special?
20. What are some specific ways you could put the tips in this passage into practice in your own life?
21. Close your FIFTEEN with prayer. Confess to God that you sometimes forget to delight in the mundane, hum-drum routine that can define your life. Ask for Him to give you new vision for joy in the life that He has given you to live.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

22. Start your FIFTEEN today by going back and looking at Ecclesiastes 9:7-10 again. What does verse 9 say that we should enjoy?
23. Does it seem strange that we need to be *told* to enjoy our spouse? Why do you think that needs to be said?

24. Look up Ecclesiastes 9:9 in either the NLT or NASB versions of the Bible. (You can do this online at biblehub.com) What “r” word is used to describe a wife? This is not a common way to talk about our spouses. How does this description feel to you?
25. Now look up Proverbs 5:18-19. This is poetic language, but try to put it in practical terms. What specific act is being commanded here?
26. Again, is it weird that we need to be *told* to enjoy having sex with our spouse? Why do you think this is necessary wisdom? Why might this be hard for married people to do?
27. If you are married, what are some specific examples of things you do that help you enjoy your spouse? If you are not married, how do you share in the community of married people around you?
28. Thank God for the reward that He has given you in your spouse. Spend some time in prayer listing the ways that your spouse is a delight to you.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

29. Close the final FIFTEEN this week by meditating again on Ecclesiastes 9:7-10. What activity does verse 10 call out for us to enjoy?
30. From the context of the other passages, this verse is saying that we should enjoy doing our work well. How reasonable is this expectation? How many people do you know who enjoy their work? How many have jobs with which they are “less than thrilled?”
31. On the other hand, have you or someone you know ever been unemployed? Would work be a joy to someone in that position? Why or why not?
32. Going all the way back to Genesis, we were designed to work. But what happened to take away some of the joy that comes from working? Look at Genesis 3:17-19 for the answer.
33. What things can we do to help take joy in our work? What do you do that helps remind you to think of work as a blessing?
34. Read Colossians 3:23. How does this perspective affect your attitude towards working?

35. Close in prayer thanking God for all the things He's given you the opportunity to do with your hands, whether that's paid work, volunteering or hobbies. Ask Him to help you delight in the things He's placed for you to do and ask for His help to use your talents for His glory.