

Lesson 2 — “Only God Can Give Real Joy”

Text: Ecclesiastes 1:12–2:26

Main Idea: Trying to make yourself happy never works for long. True joy comes only from God.

Key Memory Verse: “There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God.” (Ecclesiastes 2:24 ESV)

The Story Explained

1. The Teacher Tries to Be Super-Smart

The Teacher—Solomon or someone like him—wanted to understand everything.

He studied, learned, and thought about the world. He looked at how people work, build, laugh, and cry. But the more he learned, the more questions he had!

He said it felt like “chasing the wind.” You can feel the wind, but you can’t catch it.

He learned that no matter how smart you are, some things only God can understand.

2. The Teacher Tries to Have Fun All the Time

Next, he said, “I’m going to see if being happy all the time will make life good.”

He tried jokes, parties, music, good food, and beautiful gardens.

He built big houses and grew amazing crops.

He got rich—more than anyone before him!

At first, it felt exciting. But soon, he realized the fun didn’t last.

The laughter faded. The joy disappeared.

It was like eating candy—sweet for a moment, then gone.

Without God, even fun feels empty.

3. The Teacher Tries Working Really Hard

He thought, “Maybe hard work will make me happy.”

He worked day and night, building, planting, and planning.

And yes—he got a lot done! But when he stopped to think, he felt sad.

He realized that someday he would die and leave everything behind. Someone else would get what he built. What if that person didn't care about it?

He said, "It's all like chasing the wind."

Hard work is good—but it can't make you truly happy unless you work for God.

4. What the Teacher Learned

After trying everything—wisdom, fun, work, and riches—the Teacher realized something big: Only God can give real joy.

God made food taste good. God made friends and family to love.

God made work that gives us pride when we do it well.

But those things only make sense when we remember who gave them.

Without God, life feels like running in circles.

With God, even ordinary days can feel full of light.

Applications

1. Be Thankful for Every Good Thing

The Teacher says the best thing to do is enjoy what God gives—meals, friends, family, and sunshine. When you pray before eating or thank someone for helping you, you're remembering God's gifts. Every good thing is from him!

2. Work for God, Not for Glory

When you do chores, homework, or sports, do them for God. Don't try to show off or win all the time. Working with a happy heart pleases God more than being the best at everything.

3. Have Fun—but Keep God First

It's okay to laugh and play! God made joy. But fun without God gets old fast. Ask him to help you enjoy games, friends, and hobbies in ways that honor him.

4. Wisdom Means Trusting God

The Teacher learned that being smart is good, but it can't fix life's mysteries. True wisdom is knowing that God is smarter than we are—and trusting him even when we don't understand.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the Teacher called his search “chasing the wind”?
2. What kinds of fun do you enjoy? How can you enjoy them in a way that honors God?
3. Have you ever worked hard on something and felt proud when it was done?
4. What happens when we forget that God gave us everything good?
5. What's one way you can thank God for something this week?