

Contented Ambition

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As I have gotten older, the book of Ecclesiastes has become one of my favorites. It is deep and very profound, in my opinion. Solomon had a life that most of us would think was ideal. His dad had been the king, and then he became king, which afforded him fame and power. He was rich beyond measure. He was wise- said to be the wisest man to ever live. He had every opportunity that anyone would want. I can't think of one thing that he didn't have. When he was older he stopped to reflect and to teach his children about life. The book of Ecclesiastes begins with the statement "Vanity of vanities, All is vanity". Some translations say, " Everything is meaningless, completely meaningless". Some might think the book depressing but to me it is one of the most encouraging and perspective altering books in the bible. Solomon goes on to expound and clarify that statement.... I picture an elderly gentleman looking back over his life and wanting so much to pass on the lessons he learned to spare his children from making the same mistakes. He goes through a list of things that he had thought would bring meaning and happiness to his life- 1:13 I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom all that had been done under heaven. 2:1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure". 2:9 Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me. All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor. Wisdom, money, pleasure, work... I love the word picture he uses after each of these. 1:17, 2:17, 2:26 "This too is vanity and striving (chasing) after the wind". Think about that for a minute- Trying to get really smart and know and understand all the things under heaven was like chasing the wind. Giving in to every pleasure is like chasing the wind. Working hard to get lots of money is chasing the wind. Striving after and chasing are ambitious words but after the WIND?? You will never catch the wind. It will never satisfy. It will never be in your grasp. It is fleeting. It is wind. Solomon is telling us "Don't waste your life chasing after meaningless things!" He concludes - verses 2:24-25 There is nothing better for a man than to eat, drink and enjoy his labor. I have seen that it is from the hand of God. For who can have enjoyment without Him? 3:12 I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime, moreover, that every man who eats, drinks and sees good in his labor- it is a gift of God. Enjoying the lives that we have RIGHT NOW is a gift of God. Being content is brought about by recognizing that none of those 'things' that I am chasing will ever satisfy. More money will not fix everything- it is like chasing the wind. That person or relationship will not 'make me happy'- it is chasing the wind. Wisdom, popularity and all the other distractions in this life- wind!

Father, I am so easily deceived into believing that there is something that will satisfy me. Thank you for telling me the truth! Please bless me with the ability to enjoy the life you have given me and to find contentment right where I am. Help me to recognize and thank you for the many blessings you give every day. Thank you for knowing us so personally and loving us so intimately. I love you Abba!