



# Enjoying Gifts Is a Gift

## Introduction

Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

What if you have a vacation home, but you work so many hours to afford it that you can't ever spend time relaxing in it? What if you spend decades building a large retirement account, but your health keeps you from taking the trips you planned to take? What if you inherit a large beautiful yacht, but you live in Sugar Grove and don't really have anywhere to put it in the water? This week in Ecclesiastes 6, we meet a man who has gained a lot of wealth but isn't able to enjoy it.

"This story is even more tragic than the one about the rich man who lost his riches in a bad venture [Ecc. 5:13-17]. Here is a person to whom God has given wealth, possessions, and even honor. He has everything his heart desires. The other rich person had only one son; this one has a hundred children. The other rich person lived relatively few years; this one lives many years. God has richly blessed this man. Many children and a long life are what every [ancient] Israelite desired.

But there is a problem: God does not enable this person to enjoy God's daily gifts. In contrast to chapter 5:19 where God was said to enable rich people to enjoy God's gifts, [in this passage] we read that God does not enable this rich person to enjoy his wealth and possessions."<sup>1</sup>

It all seems so tragic.

## Open It

1. What's the best gift you've ever received?

## Read It

Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

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<sup>1</sup>Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2010), 153–54.

## Explore It

2. How does Solomon characterize having “wealth, possessions, and honor” that you don’t get to enjoy? (Verse 1)
3. Who gives people the power to enjoy their “wealth, possessions, and honor?” (Verse 2)
4. What kind of a person is better off than a person who does not enjoy life’s good things? (Verse 3)
5. How does Solomon describe the appetite of a person who constantly works to build wealth? (Verse 7)
6. How does Solomon describe how our lives pass?

## Apply It

### Read 2 Chronicles 1:7-13

In this passage, we see King Solomon ask God for wisdom and knowledge instead of possessions, wealth and honor. God appreciates Solomon’s humility and tells Solomon he’ll get wisdom and knowledge, but also possessions, wealth, and honor. Now look at Ecclesiastes 6:2. We see Solomon describing a man who has everything that God promised Solomon in 2 Chronicles, but the man described in Ecclesiastes can’t enjoy everything that he has been given.

What you have and the ability to enjoy it are both gifts from God. It’s not just that what you have is a gift from God, but the possibility of finding joy in it is also a gift from God. We can only enjoy possessions, people, and experiences in life if God gives us the grace of being able to appreciate them. Ecclesiastes 6 begins with the image of a man who has everything that the world says you need to be truly happy, but he can’t enjoy it. God won’t let him.<sup>2</sup>

7. Describe a possession, person, or experience you’ve had that you were unable to truly enjoy.

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel L Akin and Jonathan Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Ecclesiastes* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2016), 81–82.

**8. What kept you from enjoyment?**

We don't exactly know why the man was unable to enjoy the wealth God had given him. Solomon doesn't tell us. He may have been consumed with worry. He may have been distracted by building more wealth. He may have experienced poor health. Whatever the reason, Solomon says God didn't give this man the ability to enjoy the gifts (Ecc. 6:2). The wealth was from the Lord and so was the power to enjoy the wealth.

**9. How does your view of possessions, people, and experiences change now that you know you'll never enjoy them unless God gives you the ability?**

**10. Solomon says this man's soul was "not satisfied with life's good things" (Ecc. 6:3). How would you describe your satisfaction with the gifts God has given you?**

Solomon very strikingly compares the person who can't enjoy their wealth to a stillborn child. He's saying it's better not to live life than to live it without having our soul's satisfied.

**11. God wants us to enjoy His gifts and He clearly takes it very seriously. Why do you think God has Solomon use such strong language to make His point?**

A wise person who makes good choices and a poor person who spends every day trying to become wealthy are both going to die, just like the wealthy person who can't enjoy it. This reflects Ecclesiastes' focus on reminding us that we are all going to die.

**12. How does your view of money and possessions change in light of the reminder that we can't take it with us when we die?**

"The British essayist and poet Joseph Addison (1672–1718) wrote, 'The grand essentials to happiness in this life are something to do, someone to love, and something to hope for.' Addison probably didn't have Christianity in mind when he wrote that, but we have all three in Jesus Christ!<sup>3</sup>

**13. How does your relationship with Christ offer you the only path to true happiness and satisfaction regardless of how much wealth you have?**

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<sup>3</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Satisfied*, "Be" Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 79.

This study was compiled and questions were written by Cisco Cotto (Naperville Campus)—[www.villagebible.church/smallgroup](http://www.villagebible.church/smallgroup)