

Hey, you look good, and I'm glad because I was nervous after last week. I'm not going to lie to you, I had this vision running through my mind all week long of you on the couch, in your drawers, covered in Doritos crumbs and empty beer cans, yelling at the dog, "It don't matter!" And so, you look good. You look real good and real well. Last week we got introduced to my boy, Solomon, and we are not having him over for dinner and we don't want him at our parties. But he is doing an experiment for us that we need to pay attention to. And he's doing an experiment for us because it goes beyond our capabilities. And if you weren't here last week, here's what's going to happen. Solomon, who is king of Israel, is going to use his wealth and he's going to use his power, that's beyond what any of us can fathom, and you'll see pretty quickly how true this is, to see if there's anything worth while under the sun. So he is going to test all that you and I pursue, and he's going to come back and let us know if there's any real value to it.

And so, let's just get after it. Ecclesiastes chapter 2, starting in verse 1, "I said in my heart, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself. But behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?" I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine--my heart still guiding me with wisdom--and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life." So, the experiment just started. We have the overview of the experiment in chapter 1; the actual experiment launches in chapter 2. And here's what he said he's going to do, "I'm going to test pleasure, alright. I am going to test it. I am going all out, and I am going to saturate my life, I'm going to use all my resources, all my time, all my energy, all my creativity, to consume as much pleasure as I possibly can." And I can't, as much as I've studied this week, get my mind around the epic parties that Solomon is throwing. He's saying, "Listen, I'm going to devote myself to pleasure," and he begins to systematically throw the largest parties the world has ever seen. He is going to have comedians in, I mean he's inviting in Dave Chapelle, he's bring in Dane Cook, he's bring in the redneck guys that are so popular right now (I don't quite understand). He's pulling in comedians, he's having the best food, he's rolling out barrels of wine. I mean, he is getting after it, seven days a week for an extended period of time. No one's really sure how long he went this way, but we know it was an extended period of time and the parties were epic.

Now, there's something we gotta be careful of here through this whole series. And that is comparing ourselves to Solomon or thinking that Solomon didn't do things as well as we did. And so, I'm saying that he's throwing parties, and a lot of you are going, "He partied, but did he par-tay?" Alright, so let me show you what I mean by that. Flip over to 1 Kings. I told you everybody loves the wisdom literature because they revolve around individuals and their stores and their joys and their sorrows. People tend to not like the more historic books, but there's some good things to learn here in history. In 1 Kings, chapter 4, he's going to list what it took to throw these parties that Solomon was throwing, and it's going to tell us what he needed just for one day. This is what he needed for one day at these parties he was throwing. Verse 22, "Solomon's provision for one day was thirty cors of fine flour..." That's 220 liters for those of you who like the metric system. "...thirty cors of fine flour and sixty cors of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture-fed cattle, a hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl" or chickens, little yard birds. So you have got Solomon here throwing a feast that can feed, and every commentary I read gave the same numbers, between fifteen and twenty thousand people. So that little barbecue soiree, that little kegger you had in your backyard is preschool, alright. I mean, you look at that sad little "bring your own meat" thing you had at your house, and he would mock it, alright. He would go, "Give me a break." He threw this epic series of parties night after night after night after night after night.

Eventually, he got tired of waking up in the back of a chariot on his way to Mexico with a new tattoo, and so he moves on from there and he's going, "I've got to make something of my life. Man, all I'm doing is partying, all I'm doing is eating great food and drinking wine and being everybody's buddy. I need to make something of myself here. I can't keep sleeping to 11:00. I need to make something of myself." And so he moves on. And listen, this isn't on accident. You're going to see life stages here. Trust me, you're going to see life stages in how Solomon unpacks his pursuit of pleasure. He's going to go, "I moved on from the party scene and I wanted to make something of myself." So look at what he does, starting in verse 4, "I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees." So, Solomon starts leaving the party scene. He's still partying some, he's not doing it every night of the week and he goes, "Okay, I need to make something of myself." So he begins to build his house. Now, to give you an idea of the kind of house we're talking about here, the Temple took seven years to build. It was ornate, with gold and precious stones. It took seven years to build, one of the ancient wonders of the world. Solomon's house, in comparison, took fourteen years to build. Not only does he build himself a house that took fourteen years to build, but he builds houses for all his wives, which is an event in itself. But we'll get to more of that later on. So he builds homes, and here's what's happening here: there's some sense of pride and there's some sense of permanence that occurs when you finally own a home. When you leave the apartment and you finally get that house, there's this feeling of permanence there, alright. And he's saying, "I did that. I did that." And there's also something that happens to the soul when you work outside all day, build something, accomplish something. When you do your yard, landscape it, everything looks great and you step back and look at it, you go, "Oh man, this looks beautiful." And you sit and kind of enjoy it, sip tea on the porch, whatever. Now, Solomon once again, not to be outdone, says, "Yeah, I didn't plant a garden, I planted a forest. So, I like what you've done with the pansies and the geraniums, but I planted a forest." "What are you going to do with the back 900 acres?" "I'm going to plant a forest." Once again, he goes well beyond what most of us can comprehend. In fact, to this day, if you went to Jerusalem, southwest of Jerusalem, you would come to this place where there are all these craters in the earth and it's called "The Pools of Solomon." It's where Solomon dug these huge cavernous holes in the earth, filled them with water to water all the gardens and national parks and everything else he built out. And so, he moves on from this party scene where all he's doing is getting wasted, all he's doing is partying, all he's doing is having this feast, all he's doing is celebrating, all he's doing is laughing, and he moves on, he wants to make something of himself. So he begins to build houses, he begins to try to leave a legacy, he begins to build gardens, he begins to build things that other people can enjoy, he builds he builds his wives' houses. He puts his hand to the plow and begins to work to make something of himself.

Then, he moves on from there to enjoy all that he built. So look at what's next. And once again, this is how life progresses usually, alright. Verse 7, "I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the children of man." So, we leave the party scene and we go to the building scene. And now, we leave the building scene into a life of wealth and ease. And what he's saying here is "Listen, I had slaves and slaves of slaves and the servants of the slaves of the slaves' slaves." He's saying, "I didn't do anything for myself. I woke up about 11:00, somebody cooked breakfast for me, chewed it up for me and then fed it to me. I moved on from there to get massage number one. I moved on from there to get the facial, the pedicure..." I mean he's saying, "I did nothing by myself. It was done for me. I sat back and enjoyed my riches and my wealth." And then he says, "Listen, I had a cattle ranch, I had a horse ranch." He's saying, "Listen, I took advantage of my wealth, of my clout, of my power." He's even going to say, "Look, I didn't download music if I liked it, I bought the band." That's what he said. He's like, "No, I don't have an iPod, I own the band." And that's how he did it, "I like the band, they're blowing up down in the club district of Jerusalem." He just bought them off, "You're playing the palace, alright," and had them over. Not only that, he gets into what he's infamous for. He gets into women. Solomon had 700 wives. Now, I don't know how he did to be honest. He

had 700 wives and 300 concubines at his beck and call. Solomon experienced, in his life, uninhibited sexuality. He made Hugh Hefner look like a rookie. If you would have brought up the Playboy mansion and Hugh six little blond girlfriends to Solomon, he'd be like, "Please! Six? Pffff!!! I got married to six...in August." I mean, this is a man who had uninhibited sexual experiences. He just did. And we're going to talk about that more in a little bit.

Now, after all of this, he's going to begin to talk about the experiences of the party scene of the acquisition scene, and then in the end, the just outright hedonistic scene. He's going to talk about these three and unpack for you what happened. So look in verse 9, "So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem." That's a pretty funny text, he said "I was popular." "Yeah! I mean, you're throwing a party every night of the week for twenty thousand people. Yes, you are popular." Now, this next part is going to be a pretty big piece because this is different than how it plays out for you and I. "Also my wisdom remained with me." So, here's what he's saying here, "I never forgot what I was doing. I never got so caught up and so lost in seeking pleasure that I forgot that my goal was, from the beginning, to see if there was really anything of value out there." So, he never forgot that this was an experiment from day one. Now, if you're sitting out there tonight going, "Experiment eh?," Ecclesiastes has already been written. There is not "Part 2," okay. So, if you experiment because, "I just want to see if there's anything good out there," now that Ecclesiastes already exists, that's called sin.

Let's keep reading. There are some things in here that you're not going to like, especially if you've grown up in church, because you've been told differently. Scripture will disagree with you here. Make sure you don't rail against Scripture. Here we go, "And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil." Here's what he's going to say, and I've heard a plethora of preachers disagree with him here, but here is what he said, "The party scene...I had a good time, man. I ain't going to lie to you." I know a preacher likes to stand up and go, "That's not a good time." We like to pretend that everyone who doesn't believe like we do walks around with a club eating dead babies, you know. I mean, it's just an absurd notion that everybody outside....anyway, we'll keep going. He's going to say, "The party scene – I had a good time. The building of the houses and the acquisition and the building of the pools and the planting of the gardens – I had a great time. The wives, the concubines, the servants, the cattle ranch, the horse ranch, the palace, the comedians, the music – I had a great time, man. I had a great time." And then, he's going to move on. Starting back in verse 10, "And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil." What did I get out of all of it? Pleasure, momentary, fleeting, here for a second then gone pleasure. Verse 11, "Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun." Here's what he's going to say happened to him, and here's why I think we're in a lot of danger tonight. We're in a lot of danger tonight because we don't have Solomon's resources, but I'll get to that here in a minute. Here's what happened. He starts throwing the party, and he has a blast. I mean, that first night when they're bringing in all those cows and slaughtering them and throwing everything on the barbecue pit and wine's flowing and the comedian's up there doing his bit and the band's playing, he has a blast. That was on Monday. And then Tuesday, they do it all again, and he has a great time, probably not as fun as he had on Monday, but he still had a great time. And then on Wednesday, they did it all again, and they had a blast. On Thursday, it started to feel a little redundant, so they're like, "You know, we need to do this a little bit bigger." So they got it a little bit bigger. And so on Friday, they do it all again and have a great time. And on Saturday, they do it all again and have a great time. And then on Sunday, it kind of felt, "Yeah, haven't we done this before?" And so, it got a little bit bigger and it got a little bit grander and they got more wine and more cows. And so on Monday night, they do it again. And on Tuesday night, they do it again. And they keep getting bigger and bigger and bigger until the party couldn't get any bigger. And so, when they hit that huge level where they couldn't do anything else, they couldn't bring in any other band, they couldn't bring in any more comedians, they had all the wine they could drink, they had all the food they could eat and it couldn't get any bigger, anymore entertaining, it got predictable, it got boring, it became like a rut. And so, he's like, "This is lame. I'm going to do

something else.” So he starts building house, and so he builds his house. And for fourteen years, he works on this house. And he builds it as big as it will get. And he digs pools and he builds a forest. It doesn't get much bigger than a forest. I mean, what do you go to next after forest? Nothing, which is why you were silent there. So, he does the forest and he plants and he builds. He built 700 houses for his wives alone, plus his house and parks and gardens and vineyards. And there's nothing else to build. So he's like, “Okay, I'll just enjoy it.” And so, he starts to enjoy it, and he drinks it in. But pretty soon, he's not doing anything anymore. And there's only so many massages you can get. And then he tries it with women, and one woman doesn't satisfy, so he goes to another one and then another one and then another one, and then what's going to make the difference, a thousand and one? I mean, Solomon did not want for shape, for eye color, for hair color or for personality. Solomon ran out of fantasies. Are you tracking with me? I mean, anything else he could think up in his head, done. So, he plays it all out, and in the end, he's done everything there is to do and he's going to say he's back in the same place he was before he ever started this pursuit, feeling like life was boring, feeling like life was predictable and being a little frustrated and on edge because of it.

Alright, so we've got to talk here. There's some men that go on TV a lot, some Christian men, who do not represent us well. I won't say their names although every cell in my body but one wants to, and I'm just fighting it right now. I want to do that fake cough thing where I say their name, but I'm not going to do that. They don't represent us well, and if you're not a believer in Jesus and you're not a Christian and you haven't been to church in years and somebody just invited you in here tonight, you're hearing what I say and what I'm saying Solomon is saying, and it's just resonating with what you already believe about us. You know, that God's in the heavens and He's like this eternal killjoy, an enemy of pleasure. Like He's just up there going, “No, you're going to home school your kids, listen to lame music and stay home on Friday or I'll kill all of you and send you to hell. Cause, that's how I roll. That's how I do things. No creative ideas for your. You're going to take the creative ideas from the world and put it on a t-shirt, alright. You're going to say 'Spirit' instead of 'Sprite,' 'a bread crumb and fish' instead of 'Abercrombie and Fitch.' You're doomed to live in this little bubble of boredom all the days of your life because I'm God. I control heaven and hell. And if you don't listen to Me, I shall destroy you.” And the irony of that to me is that God is the author of every good thing. Like it was His idea. I don't know when it happened. I don't know when, all of a sudden, He became the enemy of happiness, joy and delight when He is the author. He creates Adam and Eve in the garden, wearing nothing. That's a great deal. I like the way God starts the whole deal. One man, one woman, a bunch of acreage, naked. “Go, play, frolic, have a good time.” Here's the thing, already some of you are starting to boil up because there are two risqué topics that the church never wants to talk about, and if you do talk about them, people start dropping out like flies, which I'm actually trying to do here tonight because we need some space, alright. Because we're about to add a service and I don't want to have to do it. So, you've got two things: you talk sex or you talk alcohol and people flip. But God from heaven creates two naked people in the garden and says what? “Be fruitful and multiply.” Now how does that happen? How's that going to happen? It's God's idea. It wasn't a design defect, it's His idea. Do you think God absolutely flipped out when we let the grapes go bad? Do you think He's in heaven going, “Are you gonna waste those grapes? I created...wait...mmm!” It's His idea. He's the author of such things not the enemy of it. I don't know when it happened. I don't know when the shift occurred that all of a sudden God's the cosmic killjoy, when there is not one pleasure under the sun that He did not create and ordain. Now, it's definitely been perverted by sin, but there is not one pleasure that you can name that He did not create or ordain. Not one. I don't know how He became the killjoy.

In fact, I would contend that you've been wired for pleasure. There's this deep longing in the core of who we are that cries out for happiness and delight. We pursue it from day one. How many of you have children? I know this is a young crowd, but how many of you have children? Children are a great example of this. From the second they are born, they seek their own happiness, don't they? 2:00AM, 4:00AM, middle of the afternoon, during a church service, it does not matter. “Give me a bottle. Give me my thumb. Change my diaper. Give me some food. Entertain me. Dance for me. Dance for me now. I mean, you will entertain me. You will get on the floor with me,” they will seek. Now, the funny

thing is this never changes, just the pursuit does. It just looks different the older you get, but the pursuit is always the same. We seek our own happiness, our own pleasure. It is the motivating factor behind everything you do, always.

In the 1600's, there was this kind of freak-show genius mathematician/philosopher/theologian. Sounds like a great guy to be around, doesn't he? Blaise Pascal is famous for this quote:

All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.

Even the man who takes his own life does so in the pursuit of his own happiness. It is the driving force behind everything you do. So pleasure isn't the problem nor is the pursuit of pleasure. So, what do we do with Solomon then? What do we do with Solomon who pursues pleasure with all his might and then comes back and says, "Well, you can pursue it if you want, but it's meaningless. It's chasing the wind." Well, our boy, C.S. Lewis, can help us out here. C.S. Lewis wrote a lot of good things besides "The Chronicles of Narnia." And I'm okay with half-goat/half-men coming out of closets. It's a great story. But he writes things much better than that. In fact, one of his sermons that was later published into a book called "The Weight of Glory." If you're a believer in Jesus, I think you should own that book. And in "The Weight of Glory," C.S. Lewis has one of his most famous quotes. One of the two most famous quotes is, "I didn't come to God to make me happy. I always knew a bottle of Port could do that." And then there's this one, "If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics." Immanuel Kant was a philosopher taught that to the level in which you enjoyed something, you lessened its virtue. So according to Kant, it was more virtuous for me to hate my wife but stay with her because of commitment than it was for me to love my wife and love being with her. So, his idea was that it was more virtuous for me to deplore the very existence of my wife, but because of my vow, stay with her than it was for me to love her with my whole heart. Kant needs a hug. "I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak." So God, according to C.S. Lewis, doesn't look at us and go, "I can't believe they're seeking their own pleasure," but He looks at us and goes, "They're not seeking hard enough." Now, this is the big famous part of this quote, "are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." When sin entered the world and fractured it, Romans 1 says, "What happened is that you and I exchanged the infinite creator God for His creation. And when that took place, we began to settle for temporary fleeting pleasures rather than what is eternal and soul satisfying."

Let me try to prove it to you this way. Ten years ago, you had in your mind this picture of what you wanted life to look like ten years from then, and you thought that if you could obtain it or get to it, you would be happy and satisfied. And so, for the last ten years you have put all your energy, and whether you did this consciously or subconsciously, you did this. If you're type A, then you wrote it down in your FranklinCovey planner and mapped it all out, what you had to do every day to get there. Most of you just thought, "Man, if I could just get out of school, if I could get a good job, if I could find a husband/wife, if I could have children, if I could make enough money to go on vacation, if I could get a car that actually ran half the time, if I could do this, if I could get this..." And you begin to work that ten-year plan. Now, the reality is, if you've met those goals, you probably don't even know it because you've already replaced that ten-year plan with a new ten-year plan because what you thought would satisfy you, has not. And so, what happens is, you'll work the next ten-year plan, and then you will die and be painted up like a clown and be put in the ground. That's it.

And almost all of us, whether we'll admit it or not, have bought into the philosophy that what we need to finally make us happy is more of what we already possess, and it's madness. It's why we shop, and we talked about this at length last week. You don't buy out of need, you buy out of boredom. Nobody buys a new car because theirs blew up or got stolen. I mean, listen to people talk. It's insanity. Well, I gotta get the oil changed. That's like \$29.36. I'm not wasting that kind of cash, I'm just going to get a new ride. You don't buy clothes because yours are done. I swear you don't. Nobody in this room goes, "Oh, I can't wear my jeans at all anymore. They've completely disintegrated." Instead, you go and buy jeans that have already been partially disintegrated for \$90.00. I do too. I'm not saying there's you and then there's me. I'm saying "we." And it is outright evidence that we live boring, predictable lives, and we numb it and turn it off by acquisition. But Solomon's going, "Hey man, I did it. Here's the deal. It's meaningless."

Okay, so why? Why is this happening? Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God has placed eternity into our hearts. Now, this is going to be an abstract idea, so follow me. Because I don't know how to fully explain this to you, but I believe it with all my heart and I believe that Scripture contends that this is correct. What the text means when it says that God has placed eternity into our hearts, is that at some level, in the deepest parts of our souls, our souls remember, however that happens, what life was like before the fall. So, the soul, at some really deep level, has had this groove cut into it, where it remembers what it was like before sin entered into the world. And so, we remember, at a really deep level now, that at one time, we were full and at one time, we were happy and at one time, there was nothing weighing us down. And the soul is groaning, according to Scripture, to get back there. The problem is, the groove is shaped like eternity and all that we have to fill it with is temporary. And so, we cram it with temporary, fleeting joys, and it never fills it. And so, we think if it gets bigger, if we can make it bigger, the temporary pleasure lasts a little bit longer or if we continue to get a little bit larger, we can finally fill the chasm. But it's never going to take place because it's not going to be big enough. And here's why I'm afraid for you. Solomon finally goes to the end of his goals and said it's all vanity, and you do not possess the resources to ever get there. And so, my fear for you is that you're going to spend the rest of your life chasing your tail, chasing what you already possess, that has brought you no lasting happiness, only to die on the treadmill.

Alright, so my favorite story in the Bible is in John 4. The Scriptures say that Jesus decides to go through Samaria despite the fact that nobody went through Samaria, at least not Jews. And He sits down at this well and this woman, this woman of ill repute by the way. She currently at the time of this story is exchanging sex for rent. She's showing up in the middle of the day, because if she went in the morning, she's probably get beat up. A complete social outcast. She shows up in the middle of the day, and Jesus says to her, "Hey, will you get me a drink of water?" And she scoops up some water, and she's kind of freaked out that He would even talk to her. And she hands him the water and He takes a drink, and then He starts talking to her about water. He says, "You know, I'm going to drink this, but I'm going to get thirsty again." She's like, "Do you want another cup?" He's like, "No." This is a paraphrase by the way. And He just starts talking to her about water. He's like, "People are going to come to this well all day long. In fact, the same women that were here this morning, drawing water for the day, they're going to be back because they're going to be thirsty again." And then, this is what He says to her. He says, "Listen, if you drink the water I'm offering, if you drink the water I'm bringing, you will never thirst again." And she completely misses it. Do you remember the story? She's like, "You don't even have a cup. I had to get you the water. What are you talking about, that you have water?" But this is what Jesus was saying. Jesus, at the well, to this woman, says, "I am eternal. I fill the groove. So, all those men that have taken advantage of you for years, all the people who have belittled you, all the places that you've tried to fill your soul and you've ended up broken and feeling worthless with the shame and guilt, it can be over because I fill the groove, I fill eternity. I have always been. I will always be. David called Me 'Lord.' I am eternal. I and I alone fill the groove. Come to Me and never be thirsty again."

Now, let me tell you what I'm saying and what I'm not saying, because I want to be fair here. I'm not saying that outside of Jesus, you're not going to have a good marriage. Way too many people do that. It's sad. Lauren and I have good friends in our neighborhood who do not know Christ, have no desire to be church-folk. We have them in our house all

the time. And we're just trying to let them see Jesus in us. And he's a great husband, man. I mean, he is flirty and fun and always doing real creative, cool things. I'm always stealing his junk asking his wife not to tell mine. He's just a great husband. And he's a great father. He just is. I mean, we sound ignorant when we say stuff like that. But here is the truth. He might be a good husband and a good father, but he will never know the fullness of what marriage was created to be because only those who have submitted to Christ can get to find their souls mingling with another. Dode (or dowd) is the Hebrew word, "to become one." So it's like you miss the fullness of it. It's like there's this thing that you miss the fullness of. Like you get some of the good from it. It's like taking your green beans and then putting a stick of butter in there or throwing like nine pieces of bacon in there. You're going to get the good, but you're going to get the bad. I mean, you get the good, but you don't get the fullness of it. I'm not telling you that coming home from work after a long day and uncorking a bottle of...Dr. Pepper and pouring that into a glass and sitting in your chair (I hope you have a chair) and you put some logs on the fire in January when it's 84oF out and you sit there and hear your kids playing in the background. I'm not saying that wouldn't be an enjoyable moment, but what I will say is that you will miss the holiness and the joy of understanding the provision of God over your life. There's a joy that comes from that that makes everything else in the room richer, the Dr. Pepper, the fire, the pitter-patter of little feet, the chair. There becomes this joy that swells in your heart that transcends and goes beyond anything anyone could feel who didn't understand that those things were gifts. And on and on and on, they go.

Isaiah, he would do it like this if he was here. He would stand up and just ask you, "How long are we going to do this?" That would be his question. That's what he does in Isaiah 55. He says, "How long are you going to buy bread that doesn't satisfy you? How long are you going to drink wine that makes you more thirsty? How long are you going to continue to do the same things over and over and over again in the hopes that finally you're going to find fulfillment? You're not going to." And then he gives the invitation, the same invitation that echoes out from the woman at the well. "Come, buy from Me. Come eat My bread. Come drink My wine. Come sit at My table and partake in the richest of fare. Come be filled." Okay, so all of this is really ambiguous, isn't it? I mean, this is like one of those things you can hear, but you have no clue what to do with when you leave. You're like, "Oh yeah, that's right. We're created for pleasure...I don't know what that means." We go out of here, and we've got great notes. And this is one of those kind of messages that's always frustrating for me because it's one of those that people will talk about during the week over coffee, and they don't know what to do with it. They don't know what to do, where to go.

So here's what I want us to do this week. I want us to take a step. Here's what I mean. I don't know where you are in the journey. Here's what I know. We've got a lot of people that don't believe in Jesus, but they just kind of hang out here. I love that. We had better always be that way. If we stop being that way, then we've failed somehow. And then, we've got a lot of people that grew up in church and then for the last fifteen years, kind of bailed on it. And then, they're coming back and checking it out once again. And we've got some people who have been following Jesus for forty years. And you know, we've got good church folk. What if this week, we just got serious about the pursuit of wholeness? What if this week, the one thing that's been playing in our mind over and over again, we actually put movement behind it. So, here's what I mean. Maybe, and I'll just give you an example so you can follow me, maybe you've been attending the Village for six months, but this is pretty much all you've done. I mean, you just don't know yet, and every time we talk about small groups or community or belonging, you're like, "I need to do that. I don't know." Maybe this is the week you finally go to a home group. Maybe this is the week you finally tie in to a group of people and go, "Listen, I'm trying to find Jesus. It hasn't been easy." Or maybe you go to a Bible study. I'm not even talking about here, I'm just saying get into one. Tommy Nelson does one on Tuesday mornings at Lakeland. I think it starts at 2:30AM or something, and you can go to that one. It actually starts at 7:00AM, but that's the same thing. It's 7:00AM, Tuesday morning, Lakeland. It's the one right off of I-35E with the three white crosses. Tommy's one of the best exegetical teachers out there, and he's right here, I mean he's right here! You can get into your car, drive ten minutes and you're there. Maybe you've heard me talk about Celebrate Recovery over and over again. And when I talk about that, you're going, "Man, I know I need that, but I don't

know." Maybe this is the week you finally go. And listen, here in a minute, we're going to pray, and they're going to throw up some books that you can read, some further study on this topic that I'm talking about. John Piper's "Desiring God," C.S. Lewis "The Weight of Glory," Sam Storm's "Pleasures Forevermore," John Piper's "The Dangerous Duty of Delight." They're going to throw those books up here, and maybe you're going, "Listen, I don't do people." Just take your pen and write it. But listen, be honest. If you're not a reader, don't pretend that you're going to get one of these books. We don't need another decorative book in your house. We don't need one more thing on the bathroom rack that never gets broken into. If you're not a reader, don't get a book. But if that is how you think, that is how you contemplate, then go get a book. But let's take a step, whatever that step is, whatever's been on your heart, on your mind. Maybe you finally come clean about sin. I don't know where you are, but let's take serious this call of Christ to be our fullness, and let's move. Let's take a step this week.

At the gym I work out at, as you walk upstairs, you hear this humming, and the humming's the treadmills. And you hear the feet running on the treadmills. Can you hear it in your head? It's kind of like this electronic sound, and then these feet pressing on it. It's hypnotic. I mean, even when I run on the treadmill, I only run about four minutes, so right about at the two minute mark, when I start cramping up, that sound kind of takes over, and I can go two more minutes. That sound, it's hypnotic. In fact, if I put on my headphones, I can almost pretend that I'm not on the treadmill at all. In fact, if I put on a sermon or maybe some good music or if I watch the news or the Enya video they're playing to work out to, it can maybe for just a few minutes make me forget that although I'm running, I'm not going anywhere. And listen, I know some of you, you don't like this. You know, I love you, but I don't care that you don't like it. I mean, here's the bottom line tonight. You can take that step or you can let the treadmill continue to hypnotize you into thinking that your life is forward progress. But in the end, there is nothing under the sun that brings lasting fulfillment. You have to look beyond the sun. The groove cannot be filled with the temporal. It has to be eternal. And the invitation from Jesus continues to echo throughout eternity. "Come and thirst no more."

Let's pray, "Father, I just pray that you would begin even now to see into our minds and our hearts what that one thing is. But I pray, Father, that you would cement and see in the deep parts of our heart a step, one step off the treadmill, one little step. Maybe that's starting to come back to church, maybe that's joining a home group, maybe that's finally coming clean about this double life we're leading, maybe that's Celebrate Recovery, maybe that's going to counseling. I don't know where it is or what the step is, but I pray that we would be enough of a hedonist to take the step. And so, I thank You for the unblushing promises of Scripture that Your yoke is easy and Your burden is light. Come all who are weary, come all who are tired. And I pray, Father, that You would let the scales fall off eyes of who are running mad on the treadmill. I pray, Father, that the futility that so many of us find ourselves in would be exposed and that list of goals that we're so violently pursuing right now that are only going to lead to a new set of goals that we'll violently pursue that will only lead to a new set of goals that only in the end, lead to death. Reveal, open our hearts, help us understand. May there be great conversations on the way home tonight about what needs to happen, about what our step is. I pray that friends would just e-mail friends, "Hey, what's your one step this week?" I pray there would be accountability in small group. "Hey' what's your one step this week?" I pray that from top down, we would go, "I want to get serious about my pursuit of Jesus, who alone can be my lasting joy. I thank You that You're not the enemy of pleasure, but the author of it. And You bring depth and beauty to all of life, even suffering. And I pray that we would get that. I thank You for this Book, as hard as it is, as much as it exposes and attacks us. I thank You for it and pray that with it, You'll increase our joy. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."