

“Gods of Pleasure” - Ecclesiastes 2:1-11
Pastor Burt Garwood – January 28, 2018

We all have our own unspoken formulas for happiness. So much of our energy goes into the pursuit of pleasure. What's your equation for happiness?

- King Solomon tried all sorts of forms of pleasure and yet he couldn't get the equation for happiness right. READ: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11
- The gods of pleasure often begin as good gifts from the Lord God. Food, entertainment, sex, or relaxation are not sinful when practiced within the appropriate context that God has given us. They are good things that God gave us out of his love. But too often we find that we are living for pleasure.
- It's what motivates us to get out of bed in the morning and go to work. It's what our relationships, our time, and our money often revolve around.
- Without even realizing it, we are worshiping the gods of pleasure instead of the God who has given us such gifts to enjoy.

Imagine you're a parent, and you buy your son the latest video gaming console. You help him set it up at the basement TV, then watch him play it with utter concentration. You ask him a question about the game, and he says, "Wait—can't talk," and then seems to forget you're there. Later, you ask him to come upstairs for dinner with the family, but he begs otherwise, wanting only to stay and play with his new game. He starts to tell you about some of the add-ons and games his friends have. Their version is much better than his.

- It seems as if you don't see him as much as before, and he even seems less content and happy than before you bought this console.
- How could a nice gift go so wrong? The gift was not wrong or evil, but when the gift becomes more important than the giver, that's idolatry.

Look at what happened historically when the ancient people of Israel allowed idols to have a place on the throne of their hearts, pushing their love for God to the side:

- READ: 1 Kings 16:29. Ahab married a woman named Jezebel who set up an altar and a temple for the god of Baal in Samaria. She had many prophets of the Lord killed.
- And God, who is a jealous God, eventually had enough. He sent his prophet Elijah to Ahab. READ: 1 Kings 17:1. Elijah told of a drought God was sending because of their evil.

What do we in modern times take away from this ancient text?

1. Don't expect God to bless His competition.

- Baal was originally thought of primarily as the god of weather. God is withholding his blessing in the very area where they have put a god in his place.
- Does that sound familiar? Are you the most frustrated in the very areas of life you care most about? You pursue pleasure in one area and it ends up being your greatest area of frustration.
- If you've put your marriage ahead of God...if you've put your financial status, or your career ahead of God....if you've put your sex life ahead of God, don't expect God to bless those areas. Why would he bless his competition?

After a few years Elijah comes to Ahab and sets up a cage match between The Lord God and all the gods of Baal and Asherah. READ: 1 Kings 18:19-21

- Why do you think they said nothing? It's because they wanted both. They wanted their false gods and they wanted Yahweh. If they wanted Baal and not God they would have said, "*We choose Baal.*" But they wanted both, so they were silent.
- Instead of having a throne on our hearts where God reigns we often have a love seat where God is asked to share the space with something or someone else. Often times, it's a god of pleasure that we ask him to sit next to. God ends up sitting next to whatever person or thing that is giving you the most pleasure. We don't want to choose.

READ: 1 Kings 18:25-28

- This all seems so primitive and not very relevant to us today. We would never bleed for a false god. But really?
- Have you bled for alcohol? Have you sacrificed your marriage to that god? Have you bled for food? Have you sacrificed your health to that god? Have you bled for the god of cable TV or the internet? Have you sacrificed a relationship with your children for it?
- We have given more than we realize to the gods of pleasure...but they always demand more.

READ: 1 Kings 18:29

- There is no response from their false god. What does this say to you about the gods you are chasing after? The gods take everything from you and give nothing to you.
- As King Solomon found, after trying all sorts of forms of pleasure, none of it really satisfied. None of it gave him that higher sense of purpose. It was all a bunch of short-lived highs.
- That's because nothing can give you what God gives you through his Son Jesus Christ.

2. God responds when we worship. READ: 1 Kings 18:30-39

- What's it going to take for you to let go of the pleasures in your life that have become idols?
- There was a young girl that fell in love with a set of imitation pearls. She saved her money until one day she had saved about 10 dollars and could buy the cheap, fake pearls. She wore them everywhere. No one could get those pearls off of her.
- One evening her dad sat down next to her on the couch. He asked, "Jenny, do you love me?" She told him she did. He said, "Then I'd like for you to give me your pearls." She told him that he could have her favorite toy, but not the pearls. The next night, he sat down next to her and asked the same thing. She offered him her favorite doll. But would not give him the pearls.
- The next day the girl came to her father with tears in her eyes and said, "Here, Daddy, you can have the pearls. I want you to know how much I love you."
- The father reached in his pocket and pulled out a velvet case with a genuine pearl necklace inside. He was waiting for her to give up the imitation so he could give her the real thing.

God responds when we worship. Jesus said, "*The thief comes only to steal, and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*" [John 10:10]

- Jesus is offering you life in heaven someday.
- Jesus is also offering you a full and complete life filled with pleasure the way God has originally intended it. And forgiveness of sins and a guilt free life.
- What god of pleasure are you holding onto that is keeping you from experiencing the real thing?

[Borrowed heavily from Kyle Idleman's sermon series "Gods At War", thanks for blessing us Kyle with this.]