

# Rest for the Hungry

## Introduction

*You can't rest if you're hungry.*

*\*When you're feeding yourself on all the wrong things, spend time feeding on Christ through Scripture reading.*

I want you to imagine with me...it's the end of a long day, and you're exhausted. You get ready for bed and crawl between the sheets. You've just settled onto the mattress when your stomach starts to growl. You suddenly realize that it's been a long time since dinner, and you're hungry. Instead of being able to rest, all you can think about is getting up and getting a snack. Can anyone relate to that? It's hard to go to sleep if you're hungry. It's like the hunger consumes you until you can think of nothing else except food. Hunger, though, is actually a good thing.

*How is hunger good for us?*

Without feeling hungry, we might never realize that our bodies need food. It's the hungry feeling that often causes us to stop and eat. If we didn't ever feel hungry, we could actually starve to death. Hunger is a gift that God gives us to help us survive.

In the same way, spiritual hunger is a gift that God gives us to help us recognize our need for Him. It forces us to recognize our dependence on Him. In the same way that we depend upon food for physical life, we must depend upon God for spiritual health and life. If we never felt hungry spiritually, we may never stop and spend time with God. So, spiritual hunger is a good thing.

The truth is, we all hunger for something, and I'm not just talking about a snack. We all have an emptiness or void inside that we try to fill in various ways.

*What are some things that people might do to try to fill their hunger or emptiness?*

As I thought over this question, I thought about the book of Ecclesiastes. In this book the author is examining his life, asking questions, and trying to determine what really matters. He's trying to figure out what life is all about. He mentions several ways that he sought meaning in life, or things that he did to try and fill his hunger.

Although the book is actually anonymous, Jewish and Christian tradition both have considered Solomon to be the author of Ecclesiastes.

*What are some things that we know about Solomon?*

Solomon was a prince, the son of King David. He was also David's heir, becoming king upon his father's death. Solomon had it all...wealth, women, wisdom. And he didn't just have those things in moderation. We see in 2 Chronicles 9:22 that Solomon "excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom." According to 1 Kings 11:3, he had 700 wives and 300 concubines. However, if Solomon is the author of Ecclesiastes, then we see that he didn't find fulfillment in any of those things. He still had a hunger inside that he sought to fill.

If Solomon is the author of Ecclesiastes, the book would have been written around the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C., which would have been between 1000 and 900 B.C. If I did the math correctly, that's around 3000 years ago. Some scholars believe that someone else must have written the book much later than that. However, it was written before Christ, which means it was written a long time ago.

We might be tempted to think that such an old book would have little bearing on our lives in these modern times, but as the author of Ecclesiastes writes, "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun" (1:9).

Basically, that means that people today try to fill the hunger in their lives in the same ways that the author of Ecclesiastes did, because human nature does not change. What are these ways that people try to fill their hunger? We're going to look at three, which can be found in Ecclesiastes chapter two:

1. Worldly Pleasure (2:1-11)
2. Wisdom (2:12-17)
3. Work (2:18-23)

## The Vanity of Worldly Pleasure

*Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11. What are some ways that the author sought pleasure in these verses? How might we seek fulfillment through pleasure today?*

The author sought pleasure in a number of ways. He sought laughter or entertainment (v.2). He sought pleasure through alcohol, or wine (v.3). He tried to please himself with possessions, such as a great house, vineyards, gardens and parks, slaves, herds and flocks, silver and gold (v.1-8). He surrounded himself with music (v.8). He also sought pleasure through sex, as he had "many concubines" (v.8). Basically, if he saw it and wanted it, he got it (v.10).

As I said before, human nature doesn't change. People today still seek fulfillment in very similar ways, don't they? We entertain ourselves to death with TV and movies, internet, novels, etc. Some people turn to alcohol in order to have a good time. We engage in retail therapy, enjoying the feeling we get when we buy something new, which results in an overabundance of things. And there are those who turn to indiscriminate sex with multiple partners to find fulfillment.

*Did the author find satisfaction or fulfillment in his pleasure? What conclusion did he draw?*

We see in verse 11 that these things did not satisfy his hunger. He says, "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."

The word translated "vanity" here is used 38 times in this book. It literally means "a vapor or breath."<sup>1</sup> According to John MacArthur, it "expresses the futile attempt to be satisfied in this life apart from God...all earthly goals and ambitions, when pursued as ends in themselves, produced only emptiness."<sup>2</sup>

So, the author realized that trying to find fulfillment in worldly pleasure was as pointless and impossible as trying to grab hold of a vapor, that's here one minute and gone the next.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h1892/kjv/wlc/0-1/>

<sup>2</sup>MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 732.

## The Vanity of Wisdom

*Read Ecclesiastes 2:12-17. What conclusion does the author draw about wisdom? Why?*

The author acknowledges that wisdom does bring some benefit to a person. He says in verse 13 that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly. However, he realizes that both the wise and the foolish person come to the same end. They both die, and both will eventually be forgotten. He says, “What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?” (v.15). He concludes that this also is vanity.

*How do people today seek fulfillment through wisdom?*

I think that people today often misunderstand the concept of wisdom. According to Dictionary.com, wisdom is “knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action.”<sup>3</sup> So you could say that wisdom is doing what you believe to be right in a given situation. By this definition, people might think that they can lead a satisfying life just by trying to do the right thing or by doing their best. That’s got to be enough, right?

I mentioned previously that I enjoy watching the Dick Van Dyke Show. It’s my favorite classic TV show, and Dick Van Dyke is one of my favorite actors. So, when I saw his autobiography at the library, I got it thinking it would be interesting to learn more about him. And it has been interesting. I have found a lot to respect about him, because he has tried to lead a good, moral life. He’s tried to do the right thing. What I found most interesting about him was that as he was raising his family, they regularly attended a Presbyterian church in California. However, I was taken aback by some of his views:

I was all about living a kind, righteous, moral, forgiving, and loving life seven days a week, not just the one day when you went to church...I felt—and still feel—that there’s a higher intelligence up there, something greater than us, something we might have to answer to, and most people would be wise to keep that in mind as they hurry through their day. And if there’s not a higher power, no one’s going to be worse for the wear for his or her effort.

Was there one way? No, not as far as I could tell—other than to feel loved, to love back, and to do the things that make you feel as if your life has meaning and value, which can be as simple as making sure you spend time helping make life a little better for other people.

I decided if I could manage that I wouldn’t have any serious problems were there to actually be a Judgment Day.<sup>4</sup>

Now according to the dictionary definition of wisdom, and according to the world, Dick Van Dyke would probably be considered a wise man. However, I’m afraid that when he actually gets to Judgment Day—because, make no mistake, there will be one—he’s going to realize the vanity and futility of his so-called righteous, moral life, just as Solomon did all those years ago.

## The Vanity of Work

*Read Ecclesiastes 12:18-23. What does the author conclude about work? Why?*

The author decided that he hated all the work he had done because he just had to leave everything behind to someone who may not be as wise as he. He didn’t like the idea of leaving everything to someone who

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.dictionary.com/browse/wisdom>

<sup>4</sup>Van Dyke, Dick. *My Lucky Life in and Out of Show Business*, 166-167.

didn't work for it. He writes, "What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This is also vanity" (v.22-23). So, the author found no fulfillment in work.

*How might people seek to fill their hunger through work today?*

Some people use work to simply forget about their hunger. As long as they are busy, they don't think about the emptiness inside, so they become workaholics. Others find fulfillment in the success, praise, recognition, or power that comes with their work. Still others see work as a way to earn money so they can accumulate things. However, as the author of Ecclesiastes discovered we can't take success, praise, recognition, power, or possessions with us when we die. We will leave everything behind, so working just to achieve those things is pointless.

## **Satisfying Our Hunger**

The author of Ecclesiastes discovered the vanity or futility of seeking fulfillment in worldly pleasure, wisdom, or work, but how does his story end? Does he ever find the source to satisfy the hunger in his soul?

According to Ecclesiastes 12:13, he does. This verse says, "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." When all is said and done, the author realizes that he must turn to God if he wants his hunger satisfied, not to worldly things. The same holds true for us. In fact, Psalm 107:9 says of God, "He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things."

More specifically, we read in the New Testament that Jesus is the one that fills our hunger, as we see in John 6:25-35. (*Read this passage.*)

The events in this passage actually take place the day after Jesus miraculously fed over 5000 people with the boy's five loaves and two fish (John 6:1-14). On that occasion, Jesus satisfied the people's physical hunger. He met their need for food by giving them lunch. So, the next day, when the people started to feel hungry again, they went in search of Jesus. But Jesus is onto them. He knows that they are just looking for another free meal. In fact, He tells them in verse 26, "You are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves." He's saying, "You aren't seeking me because you saw the signs I did and recognize me as the Messiah. You're just seeking me for the material things that I can give you."

They ask Him, "What kind of sign will you show us? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness." This is interesting. According to John MacArthur, the people weren't impressed by a mere feeding of a few thousand people:

The crowd's logic appeared to be that Jesus' miraculous feeding was a small miracle compared to what Moses did. In order for them to believe in Him, they would need to see Him feed the nation of Israel on the same scale that God did when He sent manna and fed the entire nation of Israel during their wilderness wanderings for forty years. They were demanding that Jesus outdo Moses, if they were to believe in Him.<sup>5</sup>

*What's wrong with the people's logic? How does Jesus react?*

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<sup>5</sup>MacArthur, John. *MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1374.

They mistakenly believe that Moses was the one who provided the manna. They don't understand that it wasn't Moses' miracle; it was God's. Jesus says, "You guys are still not getting it. God has done something much more miraculous than sending physical bread. God has sent you the true bread from heaven, one who has come from heaven to give His life to the world." But they still don't get it. They say, "Give us this bread," thinking again of physical loaves. But Jesus says, "I am that bread."

Here the people were, stuck in this physical, material mindset, and Jesus is trying to get them to see the spiritual reality. MacArthur says, "The manna God gave was temporary and perished and was only a meager shadow of what God offered them in the true bread, Jesus Christ, who gives spiritual and eternal life to mankind."<sup>6</sup> The manna was intended to point to Jesus, who is our bread. The manna only temporarily met their physical needs. But Jesus is the True Bread. According to my ESV Study Bible footnote, "He nourishes people spiritually and satisfies the deep spiritual longings of their souls."<sup>7</sup>

## How to Feed on Christ

So, if Jesus is the bread that is supposed to nourish us and satisfy our spiritual hunger, how can we feed on Him? How can we obtain that nourishment? I recently read a book on this very subject, called *Hungry: Learning to Feed Your Soul with Christ*, by Rondi Lauterbach. She says, "Jesus is our True Bread. Feeding on him means feeding on his finished work for us—his perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice...Jesus is also the True Word that we are meant to live by. We're meant to feed on his finished work in our Bibles."<sup>8</sup>

*According to this quote, how are we to feed on Christ?*

First and foremost, we feed on His obedience and sacrifice through salvation. When we are saved, we receive His record of obedience as if it were our own, and we become beneficiaries of His sacrifice as it atones for our sin. But it doesn't end there. As we talked about last time, the purpose of the Sabbath is, in part, to remember. The Israelites were to remember their salvation and redemption from slavery in Egypt. We are to remember our salvation and redemption from slavery to sin. Every time we think about that and meditate on what Christ has done for us, it feeds our soul. It refreshes us.

We also are to feed on the work of Christ through the Bible. As we read the Scriptures, it should point us to Christ. As I've said before, every single passage points us to Christ, including the Old Testament. It's easy to see Jesus on the pages of the Gospels or even the Epistles. It's much harder to find Him in the Old Testament, but He's there. We must search for Christ on each page. He may be hard to find, but we know that we can find Him because He said so Himself.

In Luke 24:13-35, we read a story about Jesus' encounter after His resurrection with two disciples walking along the road to Emmaus. While these two people were walking, they were discussing the events of Jesus' death. Jesus came alongside them, but they didn't recognize Him. When He asked what they were talking about, they told Him about the death of a man named Jesus, and how they thought He was the one who would redeem Israel. They also told Him how the women had found the tomb empty. At this point Jesus rebukes them, saying, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" (v.25). Then, in verse 27, we read, "Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>ESV Study Bible, 2035.

<sup>8</sup>Lauterbach, Rondi. *Hungry*, 94.

Jesus makes it clear these disciples should have expected the Christ to die because they knew what the prophets had written. He then uses the Old Testament to teach them about Himself. We don't know exactly what He said to them, but He started in the beginning, with the Law of Moses, and ended in the prophetic books. He obviously found many references to Himself in the Old Testament, so our goal should be to find those references ourselves.

*We all know about the clear prophecies that point to the Messiah. What are some Old Testament prophecies that point to Jesus?*

These prophecies are the easiest place to start when searching for Jesus in the Old Testament, but we can't stop there. The Old Testament is also full of what we call types of Christ. According to David Murray, a type is a real person, event, or thing that God has ordained as a predictive pattern or resemblance of Jesus' person or work. So, these are people, events, or items that God has planned and put into place to point people to the person or work of the coming Messiah.

*Can you think of any people, events, or things in the Old Testament that point to Christ?*

Joseph and David would be examples of people, the Exodus and the Passover would be events, and the Passover Lamb and the Ark are examples of things that are types of Christ. There are many, many more, things that God purposefully placed in the Old Testament story to point us to Jesus. Even things that aren't types can't turn our minds to Jesus, though. We must train ourselves to recognize these. As we do, our study of the Old Testament becomes much more vibrant and satisfying. But this is something we must learn to do. It doesn't come naturally to us.

We tend to approach the Bible as if it's about us. We're looking for what we need to do to be better Christians, or we're looking for some encouragement or something to make us feel better. But, according to Rondi Lauterbach, whom I quoted earlier, this is a dangerous way to read Scripture:

Studying our Bibles without seeing Jesus in them will do us more harm than good. Does that surprise you? We often assume that Bible reading in itself is good. We may think that reading the Bible will please God. Or we may think that if we both read and obey the Bible, it will make us better people. But it won't—not without Jesus...Scripture alone isn't the bread of life. Jesus is.<sup>9</sup>

Rondi goes on to explain that our hunger is satisfied, not by reading the Bible, but when we see Jesus there—who He is and what He came to do. She has developed eight shortcuts for seeing Jesus in any part of your Bible, and once you've found Him, she talks about how to feed on Him. We are going to spend the rest of tonight's study learning how to use her shortcuts, because I think they are so valuable.

Before we start that, though, I want to briefly mention the importance of knowing the context and background of a passage. Just reading a couple of verses may not give us the full picture of Christ in that instance. However, if we know the background behind the book or the passage, and we can see the bigger picture or context, that may provide necessary clues to help us find Jesus.

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<sup>9</sup>Lauterbach, 182-183.

## Shortcuts to Christ<sup>10</sup>

The first four shortcuts start with God and lead us to Christ:

1. Do I see a character quality of God in this passage?
  - a. When we see an attribute of God, we ask “How does Jesus make this aspect of God’s character visible?”
  - b. Example: God’s holiness—Isaiah 6:1-4; Matthew 17:1-7; Jesus came to bear our sins so that we need not fear God’s holiness
2. Do I see a command of God in this passage?
  - a. When we see a command of God, we ask “How does Jesus make this command beautiful, not crushing?”
  - b. Example: Leviticus 19:18; Jesus loved His neighbors 24/7, even when they were demanding and needy. He never became impatient. He had compassion for them.
  - c. We can look at each command through Jesus and see:
    - i. The specific righteousness He earned for us by obeying the command
    - ii. The beauty of His obedience, which make us want to obey it too
    - iii. The confidence of a cleansed conscience that removes our fear about trying again
    - iv. The certainty of help from the indwelling Holy Spirit
3. Do I see a promise of God in this passage?
  - a. When we see a promise of God, we ask “How does Jesus guarantee this promise?”
  - b. Example: Exodus 33:12-14; When Moses sought God’s continued presence, God promised to be with him and give Him rest. Because of the work of Christ, we have the continual presence of the Holy Spirit and Christ Himself promises us rest.
4. Do I see a mercy of God in this passage?
  - a. When we see a mercy of God, we ask “How does Jesus satisfy God’s justice so that God can show mercy here?”
  - b. Example: 2 Samuel 12:13; The just punishment for David’s sin with Bathsheba was the death penalty, according to the Mosaic Law. However, God grants David mercy. David had faith in the coming Messiah. Because of that, God placed his sin on Jesus when He hung on the cross, thus satisfying God’s justice so that David could receive mercy.

The last four shortcuts start with people and lead us to Christ:

5. Do I see a man or woman as hero here?
  - a. When we see a hero, we ask “How does Jesus exceed this person’s words, actions, or virtues?”
  - b. Example: 1 Samuel 17; The Israelite army was facing an enemy that it could not defeat. They needed someone to fight for them. David arose as the hero, defeating the enemy with God’s power. We are facing an enemy in Satan that we can’t defeat, and we need Jesus to defeat this enemy for us.
6. Do I see a man or woman as villain here?
  - a. When we see a villain, we ask “How does Jesus show that His way is much better?”

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<sup>10</sup>ibid., 194-204.

- b. Example: 1 Samuel 15:10-11, 24-26; Saul failed to obey God, fearing people instead of God. God rejected Saul and took the kingdom away. Jesus always feared and obeyed God instead of man. God accepted and exalted Jesus and has given Him and eternal kingdom.
- 7. Do I see a man or woman as sinner here?
  - a. When we see a sinner, we ask “How does Jesus bear this sin and its consequence away?”
  - b. Example: 2 Samuel 11; Psalm 51; David sinned against God by committing adultery and having Uriah killed. However, when confronted, David sincerely repented, and God forgave him because Jesus bore that sin upon the cross. David could still be considered man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22), because through Christ, our relationship with God is restored.
  - c. Every sin cries out for a Savior. Every sinner needs forgiveness.
- 8. Do I see a man or woman as sufferer here?
  - a. When we see a sufferer, we ask “How does Jesus experience, endure, and redeem this suffering?”
  - b. Example: Genesis 37:12-28; Joseph was rejected and suffered at the hands of his own brothers; Jesus was rejected and suffered at the hands of His own people; God used Joseph’s suffering to bring about the salvation of His people in the same way that Jesus’ suffering brought our salvation

## Time to Eat

Now that you’ve found Jesus in the Scriptures, it’s time to feed on Him. Rondi refers to this as a three-course meal:

1. First Course: Gospel Praise
  - a. This comes as we see an aspect of Jesus’ person or work that we find so beautiful or wonderful that we can’t help but worship Him
  - b. God becomes the center of our attention and our affection, and He is the satisfaction of our hunger
2. Second Course: Gospel Perspective
  - a. This comes as we begin to see the world as Jesus sees it, we begin to think as Jesus thinks, and we begin to develop the wisdom of Christ
3. Third Course: Gospel Provision
  - a. This comes as we begin to be strengthened by God’s grace as we realize what Christ has done for us and what He is continuing to do in us

As long as we’re seeking to fill our hunger through worldly things like pleasure, wisdom, or work, we’ll never find the rest that our souls crave. I see chasing after those like a hamster on wheel. You run and run and run after them, but you don’t get anywhere. Do you remember when we talked about the Sabbath, how it was to be a day of rest, remembrance, and refreshment? When we take a break from these worldly things and rest in Christ through the Scriptures, and when we remember who He is and what He’s done for us, then we’ll find refreshment for our souls. We need this every day.