



The Emptiness of Living for Me

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

Got it made in Manistee: Young, trim, healthy, attractive, smart, sophisticated, experienced, well-traveled, independently wealthy, tanned, got-it-all, living on a yacht...

The Problem: Self-absorbed living is actually the emptiest of all possible lives.

The Evidence: Qoheleth already tried self-absorbed living—tried it at a level that no modern person can rival—and found it wanting.

The Insanity: We keep trying (at amateur levels) what Qoheleth already demonstrated (at a professional level) to be utter emptiness.

Opening Bookend: Self-absorbed living is utter emptiness! (v 1)

- **Exhibit A:** The futility and utter emptiness of hedonism. (vv 2, 3)
- **Exhibit B:** The futility and utter emptiness of creating. (vv 4-6)
- **Exhibit C:** The futility and utter emptiness of collecting. (vv 7, 8)
- **Exhibit D:** The futility and utter emptiness of greatness. (vv 9)
- **Exhibit E:** The futility and utter emptiness of self-indulgence. (vv 10)

Closing Bookend: Self-absorbed living is utter emptiness! (v 11)

For Instance: Around the world in 1,095 days as opposed to Luke 9:23-25.

The Idea: Self-absorbed living is utter emptiness.

Application A: Having just heard Qoheleth's verdict please examine your life at a "soul-level" and determine your "Self-absorption Quotient." (See back)

Application B: Commit to one act of substantial service to another person this week. In order to begin the escape from emptiness I will serve someone by _____

“Walking Papers”

Practical helps for walking the Christian walk each day this week.

Basic Idea: Self-absorbed living is utter and absolute emptiness.

- **Today:** Calculate your “Self-absorption Quotient.” In the last month I have:
 - ...done a substantial act of service for someone.
 - ...prayed repeatedly for someone.
 - ...given a financial gift to meet a need.
 - ...given of my time to help with a need.
 - ...given a personal possession to someone who needed it.
 - ...written a note of encouragement to someone.
 - ...spoken words of encouragement to a struggling person.
 - ...given an anonymous gift to someone in need.
 - ...given up a personal preference, plan, or outing to bless someone.
 - ...intentionally asked someone how I could help them.
 - **Scoring:** 0-1=self-absorbed. 2-3=self-focused. 4-10=selfless.
 - **Note Well:** this evaluation is based on zero research—absolutely zero!
- **Monday:** Read and reflect on Luke 9:23-25. Any applications for your life?
- **Tuesday:** How can your “creating” be disconnected from God? Connected?
- **Wednesday:** Can your “collecting” be connected to God?
- **Thursday:** What are the most costly acts of “self-absorption” in your life?
- **Friday:** Do you have ways in which you are seeking joy and fulfillment through personal pleasure? How is it working? What do you need to do beyond quit?
- **Saturday:** Are there ways in which you are trying to create the Garden of Eden?

“Connection Group Papers”

Dialogue questions for helping each other in the Christian walk this week.

- Have you known people who were extremely self-absorbed? What was the fruit of their lives?
- Have you known people who were extremely selfless? What was the fruit of their lives?
- Read Luke 9:23-25. How do we “lose our lives for Jesus’ sake?”
- Read Philippians 2:1-4. How do we “regard others as more important than ourselves?”
- Read Eccl 2:1-11. How many times is “for myself” used and implied? What is the interpretation of this phrase being used repeatedly?
- How would you consolidate Eccl 2:10, 11 in a single sentence? How do verses 2-9 relate to verses 10, 11? What is the point of verses 1 and 11 having virtually the same meaning?
- How did you score on the “Self-absorption Quotient” above? Any applications?
- Will you commit to one act of substantial service to another person this week? In order to begin the escape from emptiness I will serve someone by _____