

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

The Hollow Quest for Achievement

Hollow Series

April 14/15, 2018

Main Idea:

“A person can do nothing better than to...find satisfaction in their own toil” (Ecclesiastes 2:24).

Discovery Questions

1. What’s a favorite or treasured object that has been passed down to you by someone else—your parents, grandparents, or another loved one?

This week, we continue our series “Hollow,” exploring the source of meaning, purpose, and satisfaction in this life with the book of Ecclesiastes as our guide. Today we’ll consider sections of Ecclesiastes 2 that talk about pleasure, work, and where true fulfillment can be found in this life.

2. Read Ecclesiastes 2:4-11, 17-26. As Solomon goes on a quest to find meaning and purpose in work and achievement, what observations does he make and what lessons does he learn? List as many as you can find.

- 3. a. What are some signs that money, possessions and achievement have become a top priority in someone’s life?**
b. Have you ever known someone that seemed to be “obsessed” with work and achievement? How was that revealed, and what were the results in that person’s life?

4. One of the key lessons of this passage is that we are to enjoy our work, apart from concern about how much we make or how high we climb in this life.

- a. How do you view work? (This can include anything you spend the majority of your day doing, including raising a family, serving in volunteer organizations, etc.) Do you see it as a blessing from God? A way to prove yourself? A burden? An endless ladder? An obsession? Why do you think you view work in that way?**
b. What parts of your work do you enjoy? What gets in the way of enjoying other parts of work?
c. What can you do to better enjoy your “work” as a blessing from God and enjoy what God has given you?

5. Part of Solomon’s concern is that younger generations will receive the work of our hands and won’t know what to do with it. How can we teach younger generations to have a healthy and God-honoring attitude towards work, money, and possessions? For those of you who are parents, how are you instilling into your children a healthy view of these things?

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DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Leader Guide

1. What's a favorite or treasured object that has been passed down to you by someone else—your parents, grandparents, or another loved one?

This is a "lighter" question designed to get the conversation going. Spend about 5-7 minutes on this question.

This week, we continue our series "Hollow," exploring the source of meaning, purpose, and satisfaction in this life with the book of Ecclesiastes as our guide. Today we'll consider sections of Ecclesiastes 2 that talk about pleasure, work, and where true fulfillment can be found in this life.

2. Read Ecclesiastes 2:4-11, 17-26. As Solomon goes on a quest to find meaning and purpose in work and achievement, what observations does he make and what lessons does he learn? List as many as you can find.

*This passage is concerned with the futility of work **if** we are working simply to achieve more in this life. If our only goal is to achieve more in our work, then this is "meaningless," Solomon says, because all that we achieve will be given to another, and who know what they will do with it after we leave (Ecclesiastes 2:19)? This is definitely a true-to-life observation; the day we retire or leave our job is the day that the quest for a replacement for us starts. Work is important, Solomon concludes, but the right perspective towards work is to enjoy what we are doing in the moment, rather than worry about achievement, money, etc. (Ecclesiastes 2:24).*

Spend 7-10 minutes on this question.

**3. a. What are some signs that money, possessions and achievement have become a top priority in someone's life?
b. Have you ever known someone that seemed to be "obsessed" with work and achievement? How was that revealed, and what were the results in that person's life?**

For part "a," it's clear that money, possessions and achievement have become a top priority when everything is sacrificed for the sake of these things and decisions are made largely based on what will further one's career, bring in more money, etc. These people also often like to flaunt what they have, working their achievements into every conversation.

Spend 7-10 minutes on this question in its entirety.

4. One of the key lessons of this passage is that we are to enjoy our work, apart from concern about how much we make or how high we climb in this life.

a. How do you view work? (This can include anything you spend the majority of your day doing, including raising a family, serving in volunteer organizations, etc.) Do you see it as a blessing from God? A way to prove yourself? A burden? An endless ladder? An obsession? Why do you think you view work in that way?

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- b. What parts of your work do you enjoy? What gets in the way of enjoying other parts of work?**
- c. What can you do to better enjoy your work as a blessing from God and enjoy what God has given you?**

For part “c,” while it’s true that every job has aspects that might be difficult to enjoy, it’s also true that many jobs have aspects that are enjoyable. Finding ways to focus on the enjoyable parts—like interacting with people or reminding ourselves why we chose this profession—can help us to enjoy what God has given us. Freeing ourselves up from worrying about office politics or jockeying for position (realizing all of that is in God’s hands) also helps in this regard. Another key is to express attitude to God regularly for what He has given us, and the ability we have to work in the first place. And finally, working as for the Lord and not for men (Colossians 3:23) can help us have the right perspective.

Spend about 10-12 minutes on this question in its entirety.

- 5. Part of Solomon’s concern is that younger generations will receive the work of our hands and won’t know what to do with it. How can we teach younger generations to have a healthy and God-honoring attitude towards work, money, and possessions? For those of you who are parents, how are you instilling into your children a healthy view of these things?**

It’s important to teach the younger generations a right attitude towards money and possessions early on. This includes teaching them the value of hard work (through things like chores), the importance of giving a portion of our income to God (through tithing from their allowance), and that money and possessions are not the chief end and goal of this life (as we resist “spoiling” our children by giving them everything they ask for).

Spend 7-10 minutes on this question.