



Discussion Guide

"Pleasures Stink!"

Week of 2/19/2012

The Point: Real Joy Can't Be Manufactured

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

Discussion Questions

- What are two things that stood out to you from this week's Point? (they can be silly, serious, stupid, or spiritual)
- What kinds of things do people pursue to make them feel good (they don't have to be "bad" things)?
- Why do you think we *want* to feel good? What about us drives us toward pleasure?
- What was Solomon's conclusion related to pleasure (Ecc.2:1-11)?
- Pleasure is different from joy. Do you agree? Why or why not? How is it different?
- Psalm 98 is one example of acknowledging that everything that we have comes from God? How often to you practice this attitude?
- Given that Paul wrote Philippians 4:4 from prison while awaiting possible execution, how can he say this? What is his perspective?
- Looking at James 1:2-4 & 1 Peter 1:6-7 (on back), how are we supposed to approach hardships/difficulties? Why??
- Do the previous two passages and Matt. 5:11-12 encourage some kind of self-destruction or masochism? How can we keep from falling into that trap? Where is the balance in joy vs. *seeking out* pain?
- Where do you find your joy? How do you cope with difficult situations? Take a moment to share your experience with your group.
- How can you pray for your group this week? Is anyone hurting? In need of finding real joy?

Thinking Outside the Box

Give everyone in your group some candy. While you are enjoying it, discuss/share stories of a time when you overindulged in candy/food and either ended up sick, or with a cavity, etc.

Bible References

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 (NIV) ¹ I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless.² "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?"....

Psalm 98 [Too long to print here]

Philippians 4:4 (NIV) ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

James 1:2-4 (NIV) ² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

1 Peter 1:6-7 (NIV) ⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Matthew 5:11-12 (NIV) ¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you..

Nehemiah 8:9-10 (NLT) ⁹ Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were interpreting for the people said to them, "Don't mourn or weep on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the LORD your God." For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. ¹⁰ And Nehemiah continued, "Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the LORD is your strength!"