

**Introduction:**

1. When did you long to get to a goal, only to reach it and discover that it was not such a big deal after all?
2. What have you binged on--whether food, a TV series, etc., that became less and less satisfying and yet you could not stop?

**Understanding:**

3. Read Psalm 127. It's amazing that this Psalm was written over 2,000 years ago and yet speaks to Northern New Jersey today. Describe the contrasts between when a project is done the Lord's way and when it's done our way. Evaluate one of your own projects in this light.
4. Read Luke 12:13-21. What does this parable say about the boundary between a godly enjoyment of possessions and greed? How does it shed light on your own attitude towards money and possessions?
5. Read James 4:1-3. Note that the Greek word that is translated here as "pleasures" is hedone, from which we get the word hedonism. Do you think that when you quarrel with someone it is really a war about pleasures? When are you pleasure-driven in your prayers?
6. Pastor Dave spoke of the diminishing returns of pleasure. Read Proverbs 25:16 and Proverbs 27:7. How are these Proverbs really about more than just honey? What do they say about being thankful for small blessings? Describe when something bitter tastes sweet for you.
7. Pastor Dave spoke of the problem of self-focus. St. Augustine called it "Incurvatus in se" which is Latin for "curved in on itself." Picture yourself as being bent like that when you sin. Thank God that we can be straightened out! What is the only cure?
8. Often we react with anger, anxiety etc, when we have a threatened idol that we are worshipping. For example when someone is enraged because they have been "ripped off" of time to chill in front of the TV. When are you most likely to be annoyed when deprived of a pleasure?
9. Pastor Dave said "So I think this is what Solomon is saying: Pleasure is not meant to be idolized...it's meant to be enjoyed." Describe an area of pleasure where you have learned to enjoy that pleasure as a gift from God.
10. Read 1 Kings 6:2, 38 and 1 Kings 7:1, 2  
How long did it take Solomon to build the temple? How long did it take to build the palace? How did they compare in size? Which did he build first? Do you see any spiritual implications in any of this? What are they?

**Application:**

11. You can have deep joy during a bad time. Paul had to severely scold the Corinthians. But, later on, he followed up in 2 Corinthians 7:8-11.  
How is sorrow actually good here? How does it differ from worldly sorrow? In what area of your life is the Lord intending to bring joy in difficulty?
12. Read Hebrews 12:2. What is the stunning connection between suffering and joy here? Take time to reflect on this and how it applies to our celebration of communion.