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Moderation

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

Excess is celebrated around the world. A popular U.S. fashion magazine recently had an article about the most fashion-conscious Russian women. One woman explained that the \$300 she spends on one pair of shoes is what a friend earns in a month. Monthly high-fashion expenses total from \$10,000 to \$50,000 for this woman and others. Where the money comes from is never mentioned, but people who do business in Russia tell me that it is most certainly mafia money. It appears that the journalists were more interested in a flashy story than in the business practices of the interviewees.

Magazine articles such as this and TV shows like *MTV Cribs* or *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* feed the cultural myth that such irresponsible lifestyles are desirable and perhaps even attainable. By comparison, our own lifestyles most likely seem very modest, yet we feed into this myth when we follow the media hype.

GROUP DISCUSSION. Give examples of current TV shows, commercials, ad campaigns and so on that promote a lifestyle of excess.

PERSONAL REFLECTION. What excess in your own life do you need to confess to God?

In the end, as the writer of Ecclesiastes shows, these pursuits are meaningless. *Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11.*

1. List the ways in which the speaker has gone about trying to find what is good.

Which of these efforts might be seen as frivolous by popular culture, and which might be seen as valuable endeavors?

2. What clues does the passage give as to why the speaker might have taken on this task?

3. What are some modern-day parallels to the kinds of projects listed in verses 4-6?

4. What ways do people try to do the types of things mentioned in verses 7-9?

5. In verses 3 and 9 the writer mentions that “wisdom stayed” with him.

What do you think this means?

6. In verse 10 he says that he delighted in his work and this was his reward, yet in verse 11 he says that his work was meaningless. What important principles about work do these two observations suggest?

7. What does verse 10 suggest about how we find meaning in life?

8. How does the descriptive language in verse 11 illustrate the author's point?

9. What does this passage say about excess?

10. How are you tempted to find meaning in excess?

11. In what ways might you find a lifestyle of moderation more satisfying than a lifestyle that indulges in excess?

Pray that you will grow in your desire for the things of God.

Now or Later

Monitor your response to media this week in terms of your own desires.