

## Was It Worth It?

**W**e hear many stories about women and men who value things or status over the people in their lives or over genuine fulfillment. Then something happens that throws them back on their heels and they are forced to face the question: Was it worth it? No, say the writers of today's readings. It is not worth losing yourself or the people you love. In fact, it is not worth risking your own integrity.

The Hebrew word for *vanity* can be translated as “worthless” or “foolish.” The characters in the first reading and the Gospel passage were considered foolish because the labors and possessions that wore them down were ultimately worthless.

This idea of vanity or foolishness is a prominent theme in the Wisdom tradition. We all know that actions have consequences. It's these consequences that reveal what is good for us and what is not, what is

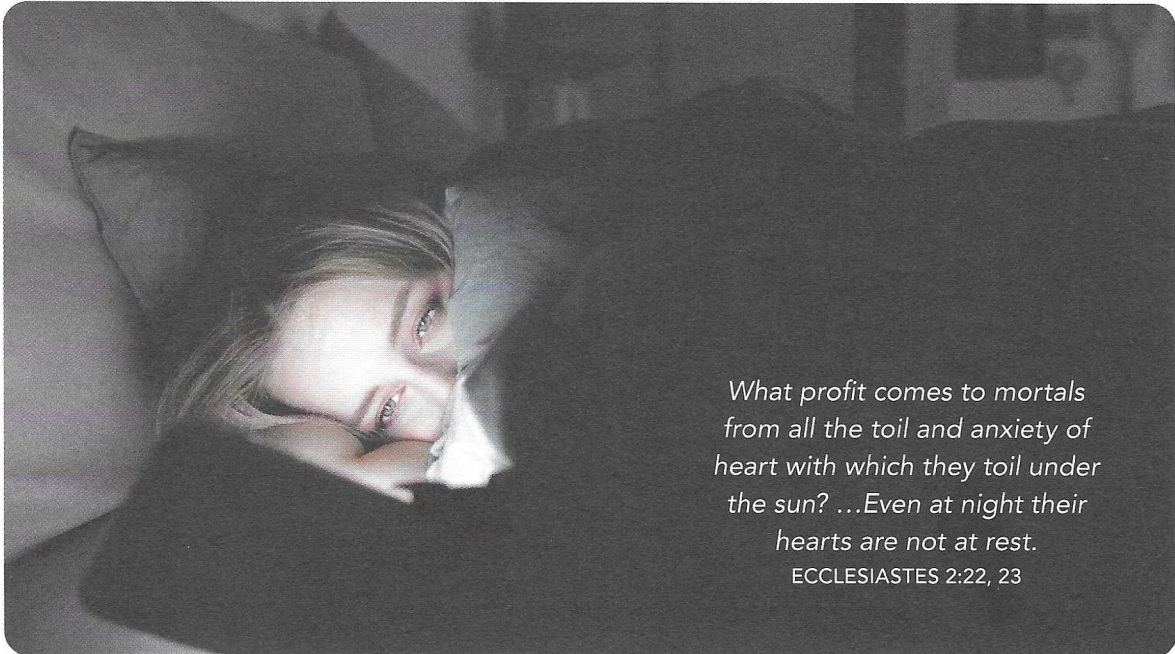
worth pursuing and what we should avoid. Those who learn from life experiences in this way are considered wise; those who don't are deemed foolish. We all know this; we have learned the truth of it from our own experience.

There is one more aspect that must be considered in making wise decisions. Which consequences are worth the effort we put into achieving them? Are we looking for short-term enjoyment or do we seek long-term satisfaction? The profit attained by the people in these readings did not last. They couldn't take it with them, so one might ask: Was it worth it?

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### FOR Reflection

- ★ *Think about the effort you put into achieving something. Was it worth it?*
- ★ *If not, what can you do to change this?*



*What profit comes to mortals  
from all the toil and anxiety of  
heart with which they toil under  
the sun? ...Even at night their  
hearts are not at rest.*

ECCLESIASTES 2:22, 23