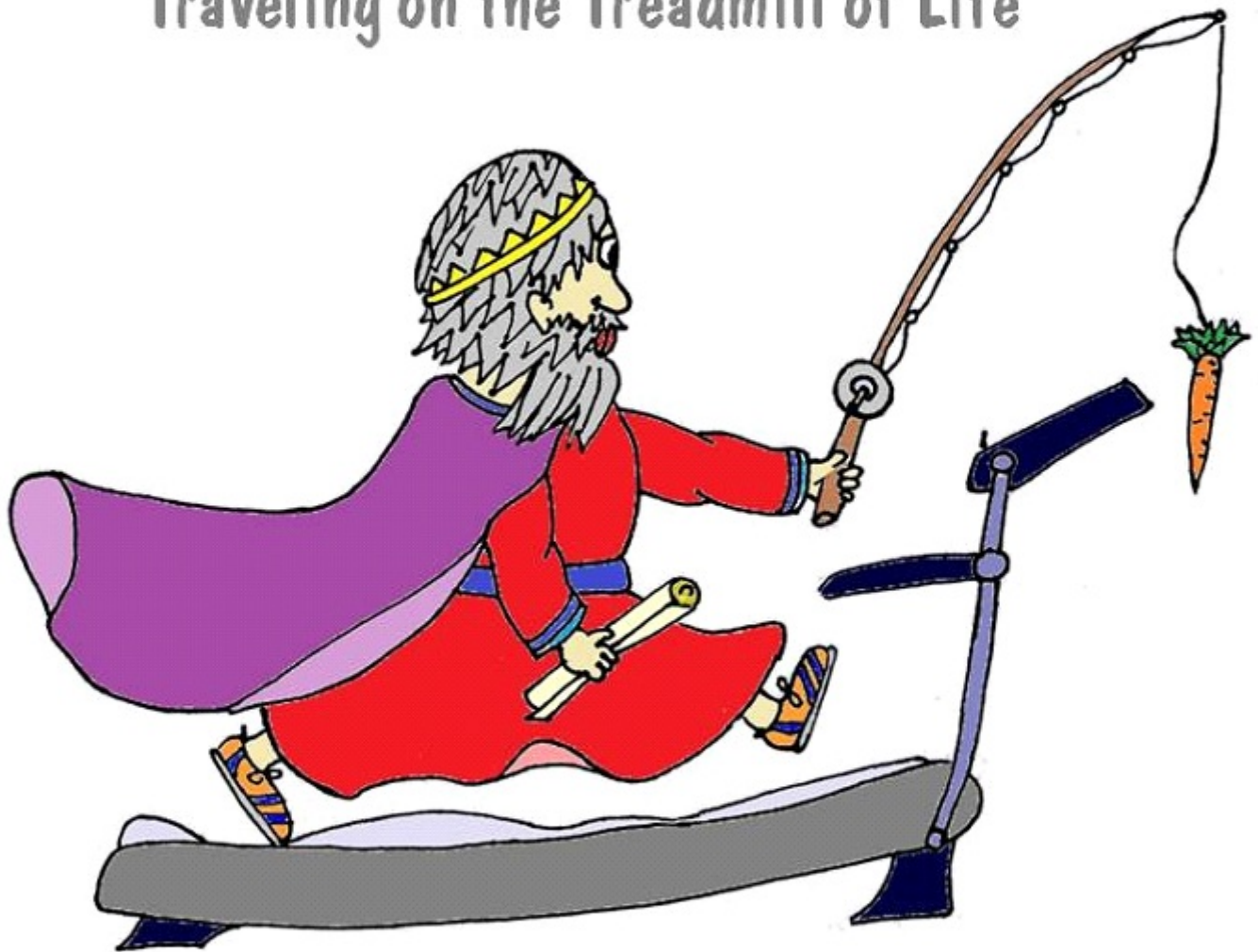


# ECCLESIASTES

Traveling on the Treadmill of Life



**The Forum Terrace Church of Christ**

**Young Adult Wednesday Night Bible Class Fall Quarter 2024**

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# The Treadmill of Existence

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## ***Ecclesiastes 1:1-11***

### **Prelude**

Eccl. 1:1-3 - 1 *The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.* 2. *“vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.* 3. *“What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?”*

### **Introduction**

- A. The Question:** “Does life have meaning?”
- B. Negative Answer**
  - 1. Peter De Vries: “Life is a crowded superhighway with bewildering cloverleaf exits on which a man is liable to find himself speeding back in the direction he came.”
  - 2. H.L. Mencken: “The basic fact about human experience is not that it is a tragedy, but that it is a bore. It is not that it is predominantly painful, but that it is lacking in any sense.”
  - 3. Carl Sandburg compared life to “an onion - you peel it off one layer at a time, and sometimes you weep.”
  - 4. George Bernard Shaw life was “a series of inspired follies.”
  - 5. Life is a let down; our impact, marriage, family, job, identity -- rarely matches our dreams
- C. Solomon’s Quest**
  - 1. The vanity verdict: “*All is vanity*” (1:2,14; 2:11,17; 3:19; 12:8).
  - 2. To understand the book it is important to read the epilogue closely.

### **I. Comprehensive Conclusion**

- A. A Tentative Deduction**
  - 1. It is clear that *hebel* translated “*vanity*” is the key term of Ecclesiastes.
  - 2. The *hebel* declaration is used to create an inclusio around the body of the book (1-2; 12:8).
- B. Definition of “Vanity”**
  - 1. From the Heb. word *hebel*. Vanity - 37 times
  - 2. *Hebel* - found in every chapter except chapter 10. “Mystery”, “enigma” and even “futility”.
  - 3. The word “*vanity*” means emptiness, and comes from the root, “to exhale or to evaporate.”
  - 4. That which vanishes quickly and leaves nothing behind.
- C. Meaning in the Context**
  - 1. “Meaningless” (NIV) Eric S. Christianson
  - 2. Futility - no permanence of lasting.
  - 3. unsubstantial.
  - 4. Man’s desperate search for order in a chaotic world is simply fruitless.
- D. Modified by “*and grasping for the wind*” 2:17; 26; 4:4,16; 6:9.**
- F. Uses in the Bible**
  - 1. The word *hebel* occurs approximately 32 times outside the book of Eccl.
  - 2. Literal uses (Ps. 39:5; Pr. 21:6; Is. 57:13).
  - 3. Metaphor for idols (Dt. 32:21; 1 Ki. 16:13,26; Ps. 31:7; Jer. 8:19; 14:22; Jon. 2:9).
  - 4. Something that quickly passes away, Job 7:16
- G. Solomon’s Point**
  - 1. In the laboratory of life, he experimented with enjoying various physical pursuits.
  - 2. Solomon did it all. 1:12
  - 3. He had it all.
    - a. Reputation for wisdom. 1 Kings 4:29-34
    - b. Enjoyed time of peace and security.

- c. Fabulously wealthy.
  - d. He had everything, yet his life was empty.
5. Nothing filled in all the blanks.

## II. Impelling Inquiry

### A. Definitions

- 1. The key word is *“profit”* or *“advantage”*.
  - a. Yitron, *“profit”* ten times in Eccl.
  - b. Nowhere else in the O.T.
  - c. *“that which is left over when the transaction is complete.”*
  - d. Opposite of *“vanity”*.
- 2. Labor *amal*, 23 times in Eccl.
  - a. *“To toil to the point of exhaustion and yet experience little or no fulfillment in your work.”* 1:3; 2:11,19,20,21; 5:16,18; 8:17.
- 3. No one can show a net profit for a life of hard labor.

### B. Work Has Profit

- 1. Prov. 12:11 - *He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, but he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding.*
- 2. Prov. 14:23 - *In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty.*

### C. Life under the Sun

- 1. *“under the sun”* is used nowhere else in the Bible.
- 2. Under the sun - 29 times
- 3. *“The expression simply means the realm of the living”, (Seow 105).*

### D. All Effort Does Not Equal Profit

- 1. Life is not like mathematics where one and one always equals two.
- 2. The meaninglessness of the world view that does not press beyond the limits of human experience to include God.
- 3. His efforts were as successful as the proverbial blind man trying to catch a black cat in the basement, at night with the lights off. And the cat isn't even there.

## Conclusion

- 1. The writer does not get *“above the sun”*, where true satisfaction alone can be found, until the end of the book is reached - Eccl. 12:13,14
- 2. Life is *“not in vain”*.
  - a. 1 Cor. 15:58 - *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*
  - b. *“Come unto me...and I will give you rest”* Matt. 11:28.
  - c. True profit. Matt. 16:26 - *“For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”*
- 3. Will you live life under the sun or under the Son.

## The Treadmill of Existence

Eccl. 1:4-11 - *4 One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever. 5 The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, And hastens to the place where it arose. 6 The wind goes toward the south, And turns around to the north; The wind whirls about continually, And comes again on its circuit. 7 All the rivers run into the sea, Yet the sea is not full; To the place from which the rivers come, There they return again. 8 All things are full of labor; Man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor the ear filled with hearing. 9. What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. 10 Is there anything of which one can say, “Look! This is something new”? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time. 11 No one remember the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them.*

## Introduction

- A. **Life Is like a Treadmill**
  - 1. The scenery never changes.
  - 2. You never get to where you are going.
  - 3. "Round & round she goes, where she stops nobody knows."
- B. **Solomon Compares this Treadmill To...**
  - 1. Cycles in Nature.
    - a. Solomon was very interested in nature (1 Kings 4:33).
  - 2. Monotony of History.

## I. Unchanging Nature of the World, 1:4-8

- A. **Life Cycle, 4**
  - 1. Homer's "Iliad": "The race of man is as the race of leaves Of leaves, one generation by the wind Is scattered on the earth; another soon In spring's luxuriant verdure bursts to light. So with our race: these flourish, those decay."
  - 2. Death comes to all generations of men.
    - a. The mortality rate is 100% everywhere.
    - a. ILL: Persian King and 1 million men. Xerxes cried that not one of them would be alive in one hundred years.
  - 3. Life begins for another generation.
  - 4. The Earth remains.
    - a. Nature is permanent, but man is transient.
  - 5. The circle of Life.
    - a. ILL: The Lion King - the circle of life.
    - b. Solomon is not promoting New Age spirituality.
  - 6. Transition: The world's own pattern, however long the earth remains, is as repetitive as ours.
- B. **Sun Cycle, 5**
  - 1. ILL: Song sung by Tevia in "Fiddler on the Roof." "Sunrise...sunset,"
  - 2. The sun "hurries" (i.e., "to pant") to make it's endless run.
  - 3. Like the sun rising and setting, we hurry in our endless cycle of night and day or one generation rises and another sets.
- C. **Wind Cycle, 6**
  - 1. Satellite picture. We see the earth and the movement of the wind.
  - 2. Man comes and goes, but the changeless wind goes on forever.
  - 3. Heightens the sense of monotony and purposelessness.
  - 4. Only Christ controlled the wind by calming the wind and the waves for the disciples, Mk. 4:35-41.
- D. **Water Cycle, 7**
  - 1. "Old Man River just keeps on rollin' along"
  - 2. The sun evaporates water clouds form and cool forming rain which pours into rivers which dump into the sea never to change its volume.
  - 3. Jordan River empties into the Dead Sea but it is never filled.
  - 4. Like the ocean our lives appear to be changing but are really staying the same.
  - 5. Transition: *If it's under the sun, it's running in circles.*
- E. **Work Cycle, 8**
  - 1. Solomon is not condemning work and promoting idleness.
  - 2. Man is not able to express or has nothing to say in regard to natures changeless cycles.
  - 3. The eye and ear are never satisfied so man just keeps on working (Ec 6:7; Pr 27:20).
  - 4. Solution: accept life and death and the coming and going of generations Man cannot change the course of any more than nature can.

## II. Unvarying History, 1:9-11

- A. **Illusion of Novelties, 9**
  - 1. Rudyard Kipling wrote,  
The craft that we call modern;  
The crimes what we call new:

John Bunyan had them typed and filed in 1682.

2. Thomas Carlyle called history “a mighty drama, enacted upon the theater of time, with suns and lamps and eternity for a background.”
3. Solomon is not saying there are no new scientific advances. He simply stopped being a scientist and became a historian.
4. What we are shown is men throughout history engaged in the weariness of doing much and getting no where.
5. Application: innovations in the church. Man’s love for novelty.

**B. Limited Perception, 10**

1. 20<sup>th</sup> century where apparent rapid change is the rule: Space travel, nuclear power, computers, etc.
2. Thomas Alva Edison said that his inventions were only “bringing out the secrets of nature and applying them for the happiness of mankind.”
3. The sun rises and sets; the rivers run their courses; and people continue their endless quest for fame, power, and happiness even as they move steadily toward death.
4. Nothing changes the fact is our generation must pass.
5. Transition: Old things seem new to us because we are ignorant of them or have forgotten them.

**C. Faulty Memory, 11**

1. Jim Thorpe, in 1950 named the greatest football player and athlete of the century by some 400 sports writers. Yet this generation has mostly forgotten his great abilities.
2. In 100 or 200 years who will be able to tell you who Taylor Swift, Jude Law or Usher are?
3. Gen. 11- the story of the Tower of Babel - illustrates the futility of fame.
4. Men Make No Permanent Impact on the World
  - a. Yes we will remember and generations to come will feel the impact of men like Edison, Wright brothers, Armstrong, but we will still all die.
5. History still has its surprises, and Jesus’ appearance in human flesh was one of them. He has given us a new covenant, commandments, etc.

**Conclusion**

1. The more things change, the more they stay the same.
2. If there is nothing but nothing under the sun, our only hope must be above it.
3. You run around in circles on this earth hoping to make a difference only to end up, unsatisfied, empty, dead, and forgotten.
4. "The problem with the rat race is that even if you win, you’re still a rat." -- Lily Tomlin

**Questions:**

**Short Answer**

1. What is Solomon’s quest?
2. What is his verdict or answer?
3. How is the writer of this book described?



### Matching

4. Draw a line matching the meaning to the phrase.

Vanity	Coming up empty-handed
Life under the sun	Realm of the living
Profit	Meaninglessness
Grasping after wind	Working to the point of exhaustion
Labor	Advantage

5. Draw a line matching the cycle with the

Life cycle	Weather is always changing
Sun cycle	Circle of life - generation after generation
Wind cycle	Money - Expenses - Make More Money
Water cycle	Day and night continue on
Work cycle	Evaporation - Precipitation - Evaporation

### True/False

6. T F Solomon points out that the only things that change the cycles of history are new inventions by man.
7. T F Mankind has a limited perception of life.
8. T F Few men will be remembered beyond their generation.

### Application and Discussion

9. List from your own experience how life is a vain cycle of endless monotony.

# The Royal Experiment: In Search of Life's Purpose

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## Part 1

### Ecclesiastes 1:12 - 2:11

#### Wisdom & Knowledge

*Eccl. 1:12-18 - 12. I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13. And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this grievous task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised. 14. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind. 15. What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered. 16. I communed with my heart, saying, "Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge." 17. And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. 18. For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.*

#### Introduction

- A. Is life, as Shakespeare had MacBeth describe it, "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing?" (MacBeth, Act V).
- B. **Quest for the Meaning of Life.**
  - 1. The world assesses life in terms of profit and loss.
  - 2. Luke 12:20 - *"But God said to him, 'You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'*
  - 3. Song: What shall it profit a man.
  - 4. We start with wisdom - the most promising of pursuits.
- C. **Solomon's Investigation**
  - 1. Nothing is Changed in Nature
  - 2. Nothing is New in History
  - 3. Nothing is Understood through Intellectual Pursuits

#### I. Job Credentials

- A. **King**
  - 1. "have been and still is".
  - 2. Solomon is speaking.
- B. **Greatness**
- C. **Wisdom**
  - 1. When Solomon was but a young man and had just ascended to the throne of his father, God appeared to him in Gibeon and said, *"Ask what I shall give thee"* (1 Ki. 3:1ff). He asked for wisdom.
  - 2. Ps. 90:12 - *So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.*
  - 3. The point is, if he cannot find meaning in or through wisdom, then who can?
  - 4. "Seeking" in thorough research.

#### II. Job Procedures

- A. **Deliberation**
  - 1. The search it was deliberate as *"set my heart"* suggests.
  - 2. "Talked to myself"

- B. Research**
  - 1. Robert Gordis says that the first verb means “to penetrate to the root of the matter,”
- C. Experimentation**
  - 1. The terms “delve” and “probe” are fitting.
  - 2. This second term means “to examine all sides.”
- D. Method** - “*by wisdom*”.
- E. Subject**
  - 1. The exploration is wide-ranging; “*all that is done under heaven*.” The phrase “under heaven” a synonym for “under the sun”.
  - 2. All activity on earth.
  - 3. Dorothy Sayers, “There is nothing you cannot prove if only your outlook is narrow enough.”
- F. Observation**
  - 1. The Preacher gleaned his knowledge from experience. “I saw” or “i found”
  - 2. “I have seen”. This verb is used more than twenty times in the book to stress the Preacher’s firsthand observations - his scientific investigations.
- G. Thorough**
  - 1. 32 times “fools” and “folly” and 54 times “wisdom”.
  - 2. Be foolish is not just to lack knowledge or to have a low IQ. It is to behave badly, wildly.

### III. Job Description

- A. Grievous**
  - 1. Living life under the sun.
  - 2. “lousy job”
- B. Obligatory**
  - 1. God has implanted in man this unquenchable longing for order and system.
  - 2. Both the workaholic and the alcoholic are running away from reality and living on substitutes, and one day the bubble of illusion will burst.
  - 3. Some specialists claim that 40,000 persons commit suicide in the United States annually, and an estimated 400,000 make the attempt.
- C. Futile**
  - 1. The elusive nature of reality.
  - 2. You never can catch the wind; but if you do catch it, you do not have anything anyway.
  - 3. “Grasping for the wind” a shepherd’s hopeless effort to corral the “wind” as he would herd a flock into the fold.
- D. Frustrating**
  - 1. Eccl. 7:13 -*Consider the work of God; for who can make straight what He has made crooked?*
  - 2. The search leads to frustration rather than resolution.
  - 3. The jig-saw puzzle of life cannot be completed; some of the parts are missing.
  - 4. Some problems cannot be solved, and some information we can never be found.
  - 5. Wisdom may indeed be better than folly, but wisdom does not provide all the answers to life.
  - 6. He used keen wisdom to show us what wisdom could not do.
  - 7. Not everything can be changed.
  - 8. The message is the impotence of wisdom when faced by the fixity of life.
  - 9. Wisdom may finger the problem but it cannot straighten out what is crooked nor count what is simply not there.
- E. Wearisome**
  - 1. “Travail” implies distracting business, engrossing occupation.
  - 2. “It’s wearing me out.”
  - 3. Perhaps exercise machines are symbolic of our time especially the treadmill.
- F. Painful**
  - 1. “Sorrow” from the Hebrew *makab* its root *kaab* describes the excruciating aftereffects of adult circumcision, Gen. 34:25.
  - 2. Is ignorance bliss?
    - a. The answer is not ignorance.
  - 3. Wisdom is better than folly.

- a. Keeps us from sin.
  - b. Extends life, Prov 4:10
  - c. Makes us happy, Prov 3:13
  - d. Is more valuable than rubies, silver, or gold, Prov 3:14.
4. The More Our Eyes Are Opened, the More Emotionally Painful Our Lives Are
- a. Old proverb says, "a wise man is never happy".
  - b. Malcolm Muggeridge wrote about the futility of education. "Education - the great mumbo jumbo and fraud of the ages - purports to equip us to live and is prescribed as a universal remedy for everything from juvenile delinquency to premature senility. For the most part it serves to enlarge stupidity, inflate conceit, enhance credulity, and put the subjected to it at the mercy of brainwashes with printing presses, radio, and television at their disposal."
  - c. The wiser they are in things musical, the more a bad performance will pain them.
  - d. The knowledge of good and evil only added to their sorrows, Gen. 3.
5. Wisdom cannot find the answer only more problems.
- a. The more we seek knowledge and wisdom, the more ignorant we know we are.
  - b. "All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance." T.S. Eliot.

## Conclusion

- A. Nothing has changed.
- B. If you are "living in circles" then turn your life over to Him.
- C. A greater than Solomon is here, Mt. 12:42.
- D. If a man who had everything, investigated everything visible, ...then the one thing needed must be invisible.

## Investigating Pleasure

*Eccl. 2:1-11 - 1. I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure"; but surely, this also was vanity. 2. I said of laughter, "It is madness"; and of mirth, "What does it accomplish?" 3. I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives. 4. I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. 5. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. 6. I made myself waterpools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. 7. I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. 8. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds. 9. So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. 10. Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my reward from all my labor. 11. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. there was no profit under the sun.*

## Introduction

### A. Solomon's Royal Experiment

- 1. Solomon went through "an experiment in living" in which he recorded experiments in Eccl. This experiment was...
- 2. Concentrated on: "Does pleasure provide purpose?"
- 3. Carefully controlled.
  - a. "to see" "to experience, of enjoy.
  - b. With unrestrained determination and mental resolve.
- 4. Complete
  - a. All the money needed.
  - b. All areas explored.
- 5. Conceited

- a. Notice how frequently “for myself” appears to be selfishness.
- b. Solomon says I, Me, Mine, Myself --- at least 59 times in chapter two
- 6. Concluded
  - a. Outcome indicated before details given.
  - b. He saw the experiment through.

## I. Pleasure, 1-11

### A. Laughter & Mirth, 2

- 1. Laughter and mirth are personified. Synonymous terms or with different nuances.
- 2. He found laughter and pleasure nothing short of maddening.
- 3. He does not imply that all laughter is to be hushed as an evil; rather, as a solution for the basic problems of life. (1:26; 8:30, 31; 31:25).
- 4. Partaking of pleasure does not of itself give meaning, Prov. 14:13.

### B. Wine, 3

- 1. Drinking while carefully weighing the significance of the act.
- 2. Wine is folly
  - a. ...for you wake up in a hangover.
  - b. The more that people drink, the less enjoyment they get out of it.
  - c. Often hastens death.

## II. Projects, 4-6; 1 Ki. 7; 9:1; 10:21; 2 Chr. 8:3-6

### A. Architecture, 4a

- 1. He Constructed...
  - a. his own house, 1 (took 13 years to finish).
  - b. the hall of pillars, 6
  - c. the hall of judgment, 7
  - d. Structure for his Egyptian wife, Pharaoh's daughter, 8
  - e. fortifications around Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer, 9:15
  - f. whole cities like Gezer, Lower Beth Horno, Baalath, Tadmor, 9:17-18.
  - g. Storage cities or encampment for chariots and cavalry, 9:19.
  - h. The temple
- 2. If Solomon could find no profit, what hope is there for anyone else?
- 3. ILL: Man whose wishes were instantly granted “in Hell”. E. Stanley Jones.

### B. Agriculture, 4b

- 1. Orchard Lit. “Paradises” i.e. parks or pleasure - Heb. Word *pardesim*.
- 2. An earthly paradise can never make up for the want of the heavenly (Rev. 2:7).

### C. Horticulture, 5,6

- 1. Nebuchadnezzar's hanging gardens illustrates the royal desires.
- 2. His purpose is self-pleasure, not benevolence

## III. Possessions, 7-8

### A. Slaves, 7a

- 1. Israelites were not allowed to be held permanently as slaves (Dt. 15:12-18).
- 2. Today, one is considered successful by the large number of employees.
- 3. The amount of food required for his household (1 Kings 4:22, 23).

### B. Herds & Flocks, 7b

- 1. Hyperbole - “unparalleled” in all of Jerusalem.
- 2. Today, it would be the size of our fleet of cars, the size of our frig or kitchen, big parties with lots of food, barbeque grills, etc.

### C. Silver & Gold & Treasures, 8a

- 1. Wealth is the subject of 1 Ki. 10:14-29.
- 2. To many, unlimited money suggests unlimited satisfaction.
  - a. Applications: lottery tickets, overtime instead of worship, etc.

### D. Music, 8b

- 1. Choir for pleasure, not worship - not constituted with Levitical men only.
- 2. A massive CD collection and many concerts will not stop the treadmill.

### E. Women, 8c

1. A mistranslation.
  - a. "Delights" in Song of Solomon 7:6,7 - "sexual pleasures".
  - b. Euphemistic term for concubines.
  3. Musical instruments - a derivation from Heb. *sad*, "breast". Thus a crude reference to women who are used for sexual pleasure only. The NASB has "the pleasures of men - many concubines"
2. Solomon had 1000 women. 700 wives, 300 concubines - 1 Kings 11:1-3.
3. Our sex crazed society fill up their lives with one sex partner after another only to find empty relationships and loneliness and defilement, Heb. 13:4.

#### IV. Popularity, 9

##### A. Successful

1. Work alone cannot satisfy the human heart, no matter how successful.
2. "Success is full of promise until men get it" Henry Ward Beecher, "and then it is a last-year's nest from which the birds have flown."

##### B. Smart

1. No matter how smart he was he could not change the outcome of the experiment.

#### V. Proliferation of Pleasures, 10

##### A. Did it All...

1. "Anything that my eyes requested".
2. Beautiful women for his harem, purebred horses for his stables, shiny new chariot for the garage.
3. Old Schlitz beer commercial, "You only go around once in life, so you may as well get all the gusto you can."
4. The slogan of today's lifestyle "if it feels good, do it."

##### B. ...Enjoyed Every Minute

1. "I found pleasure in my search for pleasure".

#### VI. Outcome of Experimentation, 11

##### A. Too Much Effort

1. The payoff did not match the effort expended.
2. As a memorable episode of *The Simpsons* reminds us, "The road to the Superbowl is long...and pointless I mean, when you really think about it."

##### B. Too Little Return

1. "Its advertising agency is better than its manufacturing department."
2. Pleasures divert from problems, but cannot free us from them.

##### C. Too Short Lived

1. Lacks staying power.
2. ILL: Chrysler Building vs. Empire State Building.

##### D. Too Much of a Let Down

1. Ever wait eagerly for something special then find that when the time came it was really a let down?
2. Try to catch the wind would be an exertion in frustration. Every time you seize it slides through your fingers.
3. ILL: Child's book: Christmas every day. Futility.
4. Cartoonist Ralph Barton: "I have had few difficulties, many friends, great successes. I have gone from wife to wife, from house to house, and have visited great countries of the world. But I am fed up with devices to fill up 24 hours of the day." He took his own life.

#### Conclusion

1. Solomon explored fully the delights of wine, women and song - when it was all added up it still equaled - ZERO.
2. Poem: Richard Cory  
Whenever Richard Cory went down town,  
We people on the pavement looked at him:

He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
 Glean favored, and imperially slim.  
 And he was always quietly arrayed,  
 And he was always human when he talked;  
 But still he fluttered pulses when he said,  
 "Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.  
 And he was rich—yes, richer than a king,  
 And admirably schooled in every grace:  
 In fine, we thought that he was everything  
 To make us wish that we were in his place.  
 So on we worked, and waited for the light,  
 And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;  
 And Richard Gory, one calm summer night,  
 Went home and put a bullet through his head.

3. Paul's formula for success:  
 GODLINESS + CONTENTMENT = GREAT WEALTH (1 Tim. 6:6)

## Questions:

### Short Answer

1. What is the purpose of Solomon's royal experiment?
  
2. What is his credentials for conducting this experiment?

### Matching

3. Draw a line matching the procedure to the scripture.

Deliberation	"by wisdom"
Research	"all that is done under heaven"
Experimentation	"set my heart"
Method	"all the works"
Subject	"I have seen"
Observation	"seek"
Thorough	"search"

### Multiple Choice

4. The phrase "grasping for the wind" best represents what aspect of the job description.
  - a. Obligatory
  - b. Futile
  - c. Frustrating
  - d. Wearisome
  
5. Wisdom is better than folly because...
  - a. keeps us from sin
  - b. extends life
  - c. makes us happy
  - d. all the above

6. Wine is folly because...
- a. leaves one with hangover
  - b. leaves one discontent
  - c. leads to an early death
  - d. all the above

**Lists**

7. List the architecture achievements of Solomon.
8. List the number of wives and concubines of Solomon.

**True/False**

9. T F Solomon's fame has to do with his success and his wisdom.
10. T F Solomon found no enjoyment in his pursuits of pleasure.
11. T F The outcome of the experiment as too much effort, too little return, too short-lives, and too much a let down.

**Application and Discussion**

12. Why is Jesus greater than Solomon when compared with this quest for the answer to life's meaning?



# The Royal Experiment: In Search of Life's Purpose

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## Part 2

### Ecclesiastes 2:12-23

#### Investigating Wisdom & Folly

Eccl. 2:12-17 - 12. *Then I turned myself to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what can the man do who succeeds the king? Only what he has already done.* 13. *Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.* 14. *The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived that the same event happens to them all.* 15. *So I said in my heart, "As it happens to the fool, it also happens to me, and why was I then more wise?" Then I said in my heart, "This also is vanity."* 16. *For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, since all that now is will be forgotten in the days to come. and how does a wise man die? As the fool!* 17. *Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.*

#### Introduction

- A. In a "Peanuts" comic strip, there was a conversation between Lucy and Charlie Brown. Lucy said that life is like a lounge chair on your deck. Some place it so they can see where they are going; some place it so they can see where they have been; and some place it so they can see where they are at present. Charlie Brown's reply: "I can't even get mine unfolded." Vanity of vanities!
- B. **Solomon's Redirects His Search**
  - 1. "I considered things from another viewpoint".
  - 2. "I decided to turn in another direction..."
  - 3. He has considered wisdom, now wisdom and folly and death.
  - 4. "Folly" the common antithesis to wisdom.

#### I. Experiment Too Thorough for Repetition, 12

- A. **Solomon Could Search**
  - 1. Solomon seeks the answer through experimentation.
  - 2. We don't have his money and we don't have his brains.
  - 3. We surely cannot do the same with our puny resources. Solomon had ...
    - a. Great intellect, 1 Ki. 4:29-31; 10:1-3
    - b. Great fame, 1 Ki. 10:23,24
    - c. Great wealth, 1 Ki. 10:14-22; 2 Chr. 1:15.
- B. **Solomon Could Not Find the Answer**
  - 1. If he of all people has come back empty-handed what hope has anyone else.
  - 2. We don't have enough time or resources to try it all and see what works.
- C. **The Benefit of Solomon's Experience**
  - 1. "Experience is the best teacher."
  - 2. Eccl. gives us the fruits of Solomon's experience, without us paying the dear price at which Solomon bought it.

#### II. Wisdom Is Superior to Folly

- A. **Wisdom Excels Folly, 13**
  - 1. As obvious as the difference between light and darkness.
  - 2. The wise know where they are going.
    - a. Fools, however, are always surprised by events that befall them.

**B. Wisdom Is More Beneficial than Folly, 14a.**

1. Wise people have their eyes opened.
2. Most of us have better sight than insight.
3. The wise man can see death coming and contemplate it. Fools fumble into it.
  - a. "Let me light a match to see if the gas is leaking."
6. The wise man sees that death is coming and lives accordingly, while the fool walks in darkness and is caught unprepared.

**III. Death Renders Wisdom Empty**

**A. Death Is Everywhere, 14b**

1. "Wisdom" is the answer.
2. But in the final analysis - death.
3. The universality of death.
4. Wisdom's profit is that it allows the person to succeed in life right now.

**B. Death Is for Everyone, 15**

1. Euripides, the poet, called death, "the debt we all must pay."
2. If, as we might put it, every card in our hand will be trumped, does it matter how we play? Why treat a king with more respect than a knave?

**C. Death Is an Eraser, 16a**

1. The ultimate reality of death wipes out the memory even of the wise,
2. May not gain us entry into *Ency. Britannica* or *Who' Who*. We will however, be found in that Book of Life, which has different entry qualifications.
3. Tony Campolo said, "If you ever start to feel proud, just remember that soon after your body has been lowered into the grave, your family and friends will be eating potato salad and telling jokes, and you'll be history."

**D. Death Is an Equalizer, 16b**

1. "Two men lived. One a fool, the other wise. Both men died. At death, the undertaker prepared their bodies and laid them out in identical caskets. Look at the two men now. Which one was wise? Which was the fool? Both men appear to be the same."

**IV. Result: Hates Life, 17**

**A. Solomon's Emotional Response**

1. It is the ultimate expression of disgust. "I hated life!"
2. Some great men have wanted to die, such as Job (3:21-7:15), Moses (Num. 11:15); Elijah (1 Ki. 19:4) and Jonah (Jonah 4:3).
3. The words do not point to suicide as the solution of the riddle.

**B. Why?**

1. It takes a person a long time to learn how to live, and then life ends.
2. The term "frustrated" comes from a Latin term frustrate, which means "in vain". One who is "frustrated" feels that all he does is void of purpose.
3. Helplessness evolves into hopelessness.
4. Life is not fair.

**C. Everybody's Life Is Worth Hating.**

**Conclusion**

1. If we try to build timeless successful life through wealth, wisdom, pleasure, or achievement, we are doomed to futility.
2. The Pharaohs built great pyramids. Who today can even name one of these dead kings?
3. By Facing Death, Jesus Conquered the Biggest Fear Facing Solomon.

**Work & Wealth**

*Ecc. 2:18-23 - 18. Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. 19. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity. 20.*

*Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun. 21. For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not labored for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. 22. For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun? 23. For all his days are sorrowful, and his work grievous; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.*

## Introduction

### A. Noble Prize

1. One morning in 1888 Alfred Noble, inventor of dynamite, awoke to read his own obituary. The reporter carelessly reported the death of the wrong brother. Alfred was shocked because the world saw him as the "Dynamite King." Was this the entire purpose of Alfred's life, for that alone would he be remembered? His last will and testament would be the "Noble Peace Prize."

### B. Is Work and Wealth the Answer?

1. When a person is about to die, you never hear them say "Oh, I wish I had spent more time at the office, or more time watching TV." -- Anonymous
2. Solomon begins his argument in his characteristic manner of first presenting his negative conclusion and then providing the reasons for his pessimism.

## I. Death Makes...

### A. Hard Work Detestable, 18

1. The words of Moses in Num. 11:15 and of Job (3:21, 6:9) are hardly less coercive.
2. When workaholics retire, they often feel useless and sometimes die from lack of meaningful activity.

### B. Hard Work Deserted to Another, 19

1. First the wise man loathes the idea of leaving to another person all the fruit of his toil.
2. You cannot take it with you.
3. Ps. 49:10 - *For he sees that wise men die; Likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, And leave their wealth to others.*
  - a. Jewish proverb says, "There are no pockets in shrouds."
  - b. You have never seen a hearse pulling a U-haul?
5. Death demonstrates our lack of control.
6. Death demonstrates lack of value.
  - a. A writer in the Wall Street Journal called money "an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven, and as a universal provider of everything except happiness."
7. Reactions:
  - a. Bumper Sticker: I'm spending my children's inheritance.
  - b. He who dies with the most toys, still dies.

### C. Hard Work Distributed to a Fool, 19

1. Ps. 39:6 - *Surely every man walks about like a shadow; Surely they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up riches, And does not know who will gather them*
2. Perhaps Solomon's mind was on his son, Rehoboam.

### D. Hard Work Despairing, 20

1. Solomon cannot take it with him, and his contributions will soon be forgotten. The total result will be as if he had never lived.
2. The myth that hard work and well-earned wealth validate one's life.

### E. Hard Work Directed by Undeserving, 21

### F. Hard Work a Daily Sorrow, 22

1. "Sorrow", "frustration" "grief" mental pain.
2. Work, work, work. Think. Compete. Strategies. Plan. Sacrifice. Travel. Worry. Skip vacations. Add hours. Increase responsibility. Scratch the right back. Invest. Save. Risk. Work, work, work.

### G. Hard Work Disturbs Our Nights, 23

1. "Their hearts do not lie down in bed."
2. No rest for the weary.

## II. The Royal Experiment: Preliminary Conclusion

- A. God Gives Enjoyment for Our Labor, 24.
- B. God Is Essential to Enjoying Life, 25
- C. God Gives Gifts to the Good, 26a
- D. God Taxes the Labor of Sinners, 26b

### Conclusion

- A. The Teacher here is saying that we should feel good about our work; but recognize that ultimately it doesn't bring satisfaction to life.
- B. You hammered that dream out on the anvil of time.
- C. Death after all comes to everyone.

### Questions:

#### Short Answer

1. To what does Solomon now turn?
2. Why can no one exceed Solomon's research?
3. How is wisdom superior to folly?

#### Matching

4. Draw a line matching the characteristics of death with the scripture.

Death is everywhere	<i>"no more remembrance"</i>
Death is for everyone	<i>"how does a wise man die? As the fool"</i>
Death is an eraser	<i>"same event happens to them all"</i>
Death is an equalizer	<i>"it happens to the fool, it also happens to me"</i>

#### True/False

5. T F Solomon had no reason for hating life.
6. T F Death can cause hard work to be distributed to a fool.
7. T F Death can result in hard work bringing us daily sorrow and disturbed nights.

#### Multiple Choice

8. Which is NOT one of Solomon's preliminary conclusion to his royal experiment?
  - a. God gives enjoyment for our labor
  - b. God is essential to enjoying life
  - c. God gives gifts to the good
  - d. God taxes the labor of sinners

#### Application and Discussion

9. In what ways can a Christian say he hates life?
10. Based on Solomon's observations tell why a workaholic is a fool.

# Man, Not God, is Time Bound

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## *Ecclesiastes 3:1-22*

### God is the Time Keeper

Eccl. 3:1-8 - 1 *To everything there is a season,  
A time for every purpose under heaven:  
2 A time to be born, And a time to die;  
A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted;  
3 A time to kill, And a time to heal;  
A time to break down, And a time to build up;  
4 A time to weep, And a time to laugh;  
A time to mourn, And a time to dance;  
5 A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones;  
A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing;  
6 A time to gain, And a time to lose;  
A time to keep, And a time to throw away;  
7 A time to tear, And a time to sew;  
A time to keep silence, And a time to speak;  
8 A time to love, And a time to hate;  
A time of war, And a time of peace.*

### Introduction

- A. What if someone deposited into your account 86,400 pennies every day? What you did not spend would be lost. How diligent would you be in your expenditures? Well, God gives every man 86,400 seconds every day to spend.
- B. **Great Passage on Time**
  - 1. Changes the literary style from prose to poetry.
  - 2. Qohelet begins this, his most memorable poem.
  - 3. Greatest hit by the "Byrds" in the 1960's.
  - 4. Merismus involves the statement of polar extremes as a way of embracing everything that lies between them (e.g., north and south, heaven and earth).
- C. **Descriptive or Prescriptive?**
  - 1. Some say the list merely describes the events of life. We are powerless to mold events.
  - 2. Others say the list is about appropriate time for actions.

### I. Ecclesiastic Clock, 1

- A. **Season - a Fitting Time**
- B. **Purpose - Event**
  - 1. Life: Measured according to its events
  - 2. There is a place in God's providence for every one of these activities.
- C. **Uncontrollable Schedule**
  - 1. The items in the catalog all involve human participation.
    - a. We cannot choose to be born.
    - b. We wouldn't choose to weep.
    - c. We shouldn't choose to kill.
  - 2. We must accept that we are mortal and governed by time.

### II. Divine Scheduling of Life

- A. *A Time to Be Born, and a Time to Die;***
1. Nov. 22, 1963 The President had planned to cite the words of this poem as part of his address.
  2. We may foolishly hasten our death, but we cannot prevent it when our time comes.
  3. Depressed people have a tendency to ask: Why was I born? Why can't I die?
- B. *A Time to Plant, and a Time to Pluck What Is Planted;***
1. You don't plant when it's harvest time.
  2. "Plucking" may refer either to reaping or to pulling up unproductive plants. If we plant trees, a time comes when we cut them down.
  3. Their religious calendar was based on the agricultural year (Lev. 23).
  4. Gen 8:22 - "...*While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest (seasons) and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*"
- C. *A Time to Kill, and a Time to Heal;***
1. Life seems somewhere strangely fixed between a battlefield and a first-aid station, between murder and medicine.
  2. "Kill" might involve capital punishment as prescribed in Old Testament Law or the slaughter of enemies in the battles.
    - a. The poet is describing what occurs under the sun; he is not making moral pronouncements.
  3. An intentional act to end a life, efforts to preserve a life.
- D. *A Time to Break Down, and a Time to Build Up;***
1. Demolition crews are followed by construction crews; first there is blasting and then comes building.
- E. *A Time to Weep, and a Time to Laugh;***
- A. C.S. Lewis "pain is God's megaphone. He whispers to us in our pleasure [when we laugh], but He shouts to us in our pain [when we weep]."
  - B. The funeral and the wedding,
- F. *A Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance;***
1. Dancing sometimes accompanied religious ceremonies, as when David brought up the ark (2 Sam. 6:14,16).
  2. The same David mourned over his first child with Bathsheba, Amnon and Absalom.
  3. As in David's lament over Saul and Jonathan, 2 Sam. 1:17.
- G. *A Time to Cast Away Stones, and a Time to Gather Stones;***
1. Farmers must clear their fields before they can plow and plant. If you wanted to hurt an enemy, you filled up his field with stones (2 Ki. 3:19,25).
  2. People also gathered stones for building walls and houses.
  3. The gathering of stones is best illustrated in Isaiah's song of the vineyard (5:1-2), which describes the clearing the stony ground and the use of the stones for a watchtower and winepress.
- H. *A Time to Embrace, and a Time to Refrain from Embracing;***
1. "A time to say hello and a time to say good-bye."
  2. It can be used to refer to sexual intercourse, Pr. 5:20.
- I. *A Time to Gain, and a Time to Lose;***
1. "To gain" lit. "to seek" and "to lose" lit. "to destroy".
  2. There's a time to accumulate and a time to liquidate.
- J. *A Time to Keep, and a Time to Throw Away;***
1. The next phrase gives biblical authority for garage sales:
  2. As when sailors throw a cargo overboard in order to save their ship.
  3. Matt. 16:25 - "*For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.*"
- K. *A Time to Tear, and a Time to Sew;***
1. Jewish practice of tearing one's garments during a time of grief or repentance (2 Sam. 13:31; Ezra 9:5).
  2. Sewing clothes for the family and tearing them into rags when they are worn out or outgrown.
- L. *A Time to Keep Silence, and a Time to Speak;***
1. Knowing the proper time to speak and to refrain from speaking.
  2. Silence is often golden.

- M. A Time to Love, and a Time to Hate;**
1. The first time Abraham Lincoln saw a living slave offered in New Orleans on a slave block, he recoiled within. He said, "There was a rising hatred inside of me against slavery, and I swore if someday I could do something about it. I would do something about it."
  2. There are some things that even Christians ought to hate (2 Chr. 19:2; Ps. 97:10; Pr. 6:16-19; Rev. 2:6, 15).
- N. A Time of War, and a Time of Peace.**
1. It is not concerned here with ethical questions of what constitutes a just war or the like.
  2. Romans 12:18 - *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

### III. What Profit?

- A. Back to 1:3**
1. The conclusion 3:9 centers in the futility of all the human activity.
- B. None!**
- C. Why Live?**
1. Make the most of your time.
  2. *"Conduct yourself wisely, toward others, making the most of your time"* (Col. 4:5).
  3. God is the only Time Manager
    - a. Barnes and Nobel and other bookstores have been overrun by books on time management.
    - b. "Time management" is a misnomer. A person cannot do anything to time itself, delay or hasten, save or lose, much less manage it. What we can do is manage ourselves.

### Conclusion

1. We all have the same amount of time.
2. "Life is like a coin. You can spend it any way you want to, but you can spend it only once."

## What Is God Doing With Time

Eccl. 3:9-15 - *9 What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? 10 I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end. 12 I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, 13 and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God.*

*14 I know that whatever God does,  
It shall be forever.  
Nothing can be added to it,  
And nothing taken from it.  
God does it, that men should fear before Him.  
15 That which is has already been,  
And what is to be has already been;  
And God requires an account of what is past.*

### Introduction

- A. As One Ages, He Becomes More and More Conscious of Time.**
1. Time gets away from us.
  2. "Time marches on, like it or not, and we are all caught up in its parade."
- B. What Is Time?**
1. "A stretch of duration in which things happen"
  2. Important.
  3. Relative
  4. Temporary
  5. Fleeting

### I. Does God Provide for Our Profit? 3:9

**A. What a Miserable Cycle.**

1. 14 are positive, 14 are negative. In some ways they seem to cancel out each other, so that the net result is zero.
2. What's the profit?
3. What's the purpose?
4. Solomon surveys life and finds that many things don't add up.

**B. Nothing**

1. Yellow sign "Dead End". Someone had spray-painted two more words on the sign: "What isn't?"

**II. God Gives Us a Task**

**A. Part of the Curse, Gen. 3:17-19**

1. "I have seen all the business God has given to people to afflict them"

**B. Man's Life Is a Gift from God, 10**

1. If we grudgingly accept life as a burden, then we will miss the gifts that come our way.

**III. God Is Making...**

**A. Everything Appropriate**

1. "Beautifully fitting" There is an elegance about how life works.
2. Everything
  - a. Even those things that one dreads have been used to God's glory and to accomplish His purposes.
  - b. "Everything" reaches back to "to everything" in the introduction to the poem (3:1).
  - c. Rom. 8:28 - *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*
3. Balanced
  - a. Life is something like a doctor's prescription: taken alone, the ingredients might kill you; but properly blended, they bring healing.
  - b. What happens when a tire is out of balance on your car? One tire out of balance can shake a whole car.
4. God has made everything appropriate in His time.
  - a. "In its time" The phrase takes us back to 3:1.
  - b. Song: In His time, in His time  
He makes all things beautiful  
In His time.  
Lord, please show me everyday  
As You're teaching me Your way  
That You'll do just what You say  
in your time.

**B. Everyone Curious**

1. God has put eternity in our hearts.
2. "A sense of time past and future" NEB
3. We are made to be curious over our destiny, to wonder about our fate, to concern ourselves with where life is leading.
4. God has not put eternity in the hearts of animals.

**C. Every Result Mysterious**

1. "fit", in harmony with the whole work of God.
2. God controls our times, but he has not told us how and why.
  - a. Walter Kaiser, Jr., "a deep-seated desire, a compulsive drive...to know the character, composition, and meaning of the world...and to discern its purpose and destiny."
  - b. Solomon's compulsive "drive to know" leads to frustration and exasperation, not to rest.

**IV. God Gives...**

**A. Rejoicing, 12**

1. Without revelation, we cannot discern God's purposes; without His blessing, we cannot



- 2. enjoy the good of our labor.
- 2. Man's life can be enjoyable now.
- B. Time for Goodness, 12**
  - 1. "Seize the day" is from the Latin: *carpe diem*.
  - 2. Enjoy themselves is lit. "do good", i.e., "do the best he can"
- C. Enjoy the Fruit of Our Labor, 13**
  - 1. Joyful embrace of daily life as it comes to us as gift from God.
  - 2. Not pagan hedonism, but rather the practice of enjoying God's gifts as the fruit of one's labor,
  - 3. God gives us an appetite to eat and to drink. The ability to enjoy our food.

## V. God Does Everything...

- A. Permanently, 14**
  - 1. God is timeless.
  - 2. Life appears to be transitory, but whatever God does is forever.
  - 3. The eternal perfection of God's work overwhelms all human endeavors and mocks human aspirations to become eternally significant.
- B. Thoroughly, 14**
  - 1. Man purposes, God disposes.
  - 2. A world where His work is the only work that lasts forever being incapable of alteration by human effort.
  - 3. Whatever God does endures, and no one can change God's plan.
- C. To Produce Fear, 14**
  - 1. Why God acts this way...
    - a. "God does it, that men should fear before Him", 14c
    - b. He performs things that cultivate respect for Him.
  - 2. Fear
    - a. "Fear" with "God" as object occurs in 5:7; 8:12-13; 9:13; 12:13.
    - b. Not the cringing of a slave before a cruel master, but the submission of an obedient child to a loving parent.
    - c. We may be willing to leave tomorrow in God's hands, yet we would like to know better the God who programs our tomorrows.
- D. Repetitious, 15**
  - 1. "And God summons each event back in its turn" NEB
  - 2. God seeking out the "lost" moments of past time in the manner of the human seeking lost animals, 15

## Conclusion

- 1. William James: "The great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it."
- 2. C.S. Lewis said, "Our Heavenly Father has provided many delightful inns for us along our journey, but he takes great care to see that we do not mistake any of them for home."
- 3. Puritan pastor Thomas Waston, "eternity to the godly is a day that has no sunset; eternity to the wicked is a night that has no sunrise".

## What About Times of Injustice?

Eccl. 3:16-22 - 16 Moreover I saw under the sun:  
*In the place of judgment,  
Wickedness was there;  
And in the place of righteousness,  
Iniquity was there.*

*17 I said in my heart, "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, For there is a time there for every purpose and for every work." 18 I said in my heart, "Concerning the condition of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are like animals." 19 For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. 20 All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. 21*

*Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth? 22 So I perceived that nothing is better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?*

## Introduction

### A. The Appeal of a Fantasy World

1. Movie-goers line up to watch fantasies that take them to galaxies far, far away.
2. To a monotonous unjust world fantasy became preferable to reality.
3. Fantasy characters don't find God. Robots don't seek God.

### B. Injustice Under the Sun

1. You work so that you can make money. Then somebody or something unjustly takes it away.
2. Suffering makes us sad, but injustice makes us mad.

## I. Problem of Injustice

### A. Injustice in all the Wrong Places, 16

1. The prophets often decried the plundering of the defenseless in the courts of ancient Israel.
2. The courts are messed up.
3. The police department might harbor corruption.
4. It's no longer a question of a good case, but who has the most money to hire the best attorney.

### B. God Will Judge, 17

1. God has a time for everything, including judgment.
2. God not the courts will have the last word.

### C. God tests man with Injustice.

1. "Manifest" in the KJV is "to sift, to winnow." God is sifting man.
2. The injustices of life test men's souls and cause men to see their own limitations and weaknesses.

### D. Man is Like the Animals

1. Injustice reveals our beast like behavior.
2. Man like the Animals is Mortal.
3. Death mocks our pretensions as humans thinking we can control life.
4. Human beings may scheme and plot as they will, but the plans of God are the ones that will be enacted.
5. Man, like animals, returns to the dust at death.
6. Man has no advantage over animals in that they all die.
7. We have the same breath, the same purpose, and same destiny.
8. Fivefold use of the Hebrew *kol*, meaning "all."

### E. Doubts About the Future

1. Solomon is not denying that man has a soul; he affirms as much in 12:14.
2. Solomon indicates men and animals do not have the same experience at death.
3. "Ascend above" is literally what the human spirit is supposed to do, while "descend below" describes the journey of the animal spirit.
4. The lack of evidence.
5. "Who knows" no one had experienced the ascent of the human spirit and lived to tell about it.

## II. Solutions for Living in Times of Injustice

### A. Life is to be Enjoyed

1. Our ignorance should lead us to use the present time to enjoy life if we can and leave the future to God's infinite wisdom.

### B. No One Knows What the Future Holds

1. He cannot be sure that the righteous and wicked get what they actually deserve.
2. What shall become of the results of his work after he is dead.

## Conclusion

- A. We may not know what the future holds but we can know Him who holds the future.
- B. It is high time we learned that time well-spent is time employed in the service of God, 12:13.

## Questions:

### True/False

- |     |   |   |   |
|-----|---|---|---|
| 1.  | T | F | Men may foolishly hasten our death, but they cannot prevent it when our time comes.           |
| 2.  | T | F | Solomon says there is a time to drink wine, and a time to dance.                              |
| 3.  | T | F | The Law forbade Jews from tearing their garments in time of grief.                            |
| 4.  | T | F | There are some things that even Christians ought to hate.                                     |
| 5.  | T | F | Time is a stretch of duration in which things happen.   |
| 6.  | T | F | God has put enmity in our hearts, but not in animals.   |
| 7.  | T | F | Man's life can be enjoyable now.  |
| 8.  | T | F | The prophets often decried the plundering of the defenseless in the courts of ancient Israel. |
| 9.  | T | F | Injustices may be wrong, but at least they reveal man is higher than mere beasts.             |
| 10. | T | F | Solomon indicates men and animals have the same experience at death.                          |

### Application and Discussion:

- 11. Explain how the works of a Christian can live on after they are gone.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 12. How can a Christian make wise use of their time in light of what Solomon has discovered?

# Meaninglessness of an Unsociable Life

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## *Ecclesiastes 4:1-16*

### **Better Never Born Than to Witness Oppression**

Eccl. 4:1-3 - *1 Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed,  
But they have no comforter—  
On the side of their oppressors there is power,  
But they have no comforter.  
2 Therefore I praised the dead who were already dead,  
More than the living who are still alive.  
3 Yet, better than both is he who has never existed,  
Who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.*

#### **Introduction**

- A. Solomon went to the Courts for Observation**
  - 1. “I observed” which signals yet another reflection.
  - 2. King in this passage witnesses three tragedies
  - 3. We may lament the existence of oppression, we cannot do anything about it.
  - 4. For if anything cries out to be reversed it is injustice.
- B. Israel had an adequate judicial system based on the Law of Moses.**

#### **I. Vanity of Oppression in the Courts**

- A. Oppression of the Innocent**
  - 1. Cheerless
  - 2. Comfortless
    - a. This twofold reflection is a stylistic characteristic of Solomon.
  - 3. Powerless
    - a. Power was on the side of the oppressor.
- B. Better Not to See Oppression**
  - 1. Better Off Dead
    - a. Both Jonah and Elijah wished for death (Jonah 4:3 1 Ki. 19:4). God rebukes both for their attitude.
    - b. The living still witness oppression, yet the dead are unaware of it.
    - c. Circumstances can become so uncomfortable that death is preferred to life.
    - d. Christians are to pray for those in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-6).
  - 2. Better Off Never Being Born
    - a. This is the first of four “better” statements in this chapter.
    - b. Those who have never been born are better off even than the dead.
    - c. Job. 3:3-5 - *“May the day perish on which I was born, And the night in which it was said, ‘A male child is conceived.’ 4 May that day be darkness; May God above not seek it, Nor the light shine upon it. 5 May darkness and the shadow of death claim it; May a cloud settle on it; May the blackness of the day terrify it.*
    - d. Jer. 20:18 - *Why did I come forth from the womb to see labor and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?*
    - e. It is better not to have lived at all than to live and witness awful oppression.
    - f. If religion were not taken into account (Ec 3:17, 19), to die as soon as possible would be desirable, so as not to be born at all (Ec 7:1). Job (Job 3:12; 21:7), David (Ps 73:3, &c.), Jeremiah (Jer 12:1), Habakkuk (Hab 1:13), all passed

through the same perplexity,

## Better to Have a Balance of Work and Enjoyment than Hard Work or Laziness

Eccl. 4:4-6 - *4 Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.*

*5 The fool folds his hands*

*And consumes his own flesh.*

*6 Better a handful with quietness*

*Than both hands full, together with toil and grasping for the wind.*

### I. Vanity in the Marketplace

#### A. The Industrious Man is Envious

1. "The purpose of their work was not to produce beautiful or useful produce, or to help people, but to stay ahead of the competition" (Weirsbe 498).
2. Toil and success in work both result from jealousy.
3. Hark Work Based on Competitiveness
  - a. Just to keep ahead of the competition.
  - b. Rivalry
4. It is Sinful
  - a. Jealousy is due to covetousness (Ex. 20:17).
  - b. Divine human relationship and marriage are the only two relationships that allow, indeed require, exclusivity.
  - c. Prov. 14:30 - *A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones.*
5. The Vanity
  - a. This motive can never be satisfied, so it leads to ceaseless work and despair.
6. Philippians 2:4 - *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

#### B. The Lazy Man is a Fool

1. A fool is not industrious enough to work to have anything.
2. Who "folds his hands together" in idleness.
3. While it is foolish to fold one's hands and do nothing, acquiring too much is not worth the effort for it really does not satisfy.
4. Laziness is the fast path to destruction.
  - a. Prov. 18:9 - *He who is slothful in his work is a brother to him who is a great destroyer.*
  - b. Prov. 19:15 - *Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.*
  - c. 2 Th. 3:10 - *For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.*
5. Laziness is self-destructive cannibalism.
  - a. People who refuse to work will "fold their hands" and end up with nothing but their own flesh to eat.
6. Work is Good
  - a. God gave Adam work to do in tending the garden (Gen. 2:15).
  - b. Jesus worked as a carpenter (Mark 6:3).
  - c. Paul labored at times as a tentmaker.

#### C. Better One Handful Than Two

1. Balanced man "one hand of rest and the other of labor."
2. One handful of money is better than two handfuls. Best if the other hand is full of peace and enjoyment.
3. "Why have both hands full of profit if that profits costs you your peace of mind...Better to have gain in one hand and quietness in the other" (Wiersbe 499).
4. Bible Commends a Balanced Approach to Work and Rest

- a. Prov. 15:15 - *All the days of the afflicted are evil, but he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast.*
- b. Prov. 16:8 - *Better is a little with righteousness, than vast revenues without justice.*
- c. Prov. 17:1 - *Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife.*
- d. 1 Tim. 6:6 - *Now godliness with contentment is great gain.*

## Better to Have Companionship Than Be a Lonely, Industrious Miser

Eccl. 4:7-12 - *7 Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun:  
 8 There is one alone, without companion:  
 He has neither son nor brother.  
 Yet there is no end to all his labors,  
 Nor is his eye satisfied with riches.  
 But he never asks,  
 "For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?"  
 This also is vanity and a grave misfortune.  
 9 Two are better than one,  
 Because they have a good reward for their labor.  
 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.  
 But woe to him who is alone when he falls,  
 For he has no one to help him up.  
 11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm;  
 But how can one be warm alone?  
 12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him.  
 And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

### Introduction

#### A. Another Observation Made by Solomon while at the Marketplace

- 1. The lonely hardworking miser.
- 2. He is more like a machine than a human.
- 3. Working hard without companionship results in "something meaningless" (NIV:). He is another example of a vain life.

#### B. Advantage of True Friendship over Isolation.

- 1. Charles Swindoll, "The neighborhood bar is possibly the best counterfeit that there is to the fellowship Christ wants us to give his church. It's an imitation, dispensing liquor instead of grace, escape rather than reality – but it is a permissive, accepting and inclusive fellowship."
- 2. As in the sitcom "Cheers." The theme song says, "Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name, and they're always glad you came; You want to be where you can see, Our troubles are all the same; You want to be where everybody knows your name!"
- 3. Even the animated film "Ice Age" is really about an unlikely friendship between a mammoth, a sloth, and a saber-tooth tiger.

### I. Vanity of the Lonely Miser

#### A. Alone

- 1. The Talmud says, "A man without a companion is like a left hand without the right.

#### B. No Family

- 1. A son or a brother are the two closest of male companionship.
- 2. No one to share it with.

#### C. Always Working

#### D. Never Satisfied

- 1. All his labor was in vain.

#### E. No One to Enjoy Fruits of His Labor

- 1. Never deriving any pleasure from the wealth.

2. He worked hard and had no one to either enjoy it with or leave it to them to enjoy.

## II. Better to Have Companionship

### A. Better Return Financially

1. A business partner.
2. Someone to share the work load.
3. Galatians 6:2 - *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."*
4. The Law of synergy. Where as one horse can pull a 1,000 pounds two horses can pull 3,000. Two can accomplish as much as three or more.
5. The very best investment you will ever make in life will not be a financial one, but rather the investment made in relationships.

### B. Better When Falling

1. Why is it that some congregations shoot their wounded?
2. Jackie Robinson was the first black to play major league baseball. While breaking baseball's "color barrier," he faced jeering crowds in every stadium. While playing one day in his home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error. His own fans began to ridicule him. He stood at second base, humiliated, while the fans jeered. Then shortstop "Pee Wee" Reese came over and stood next to him. He put his arm around Jackie Robinson and faced the crowd. The fans grew quiet. Robinson later said that arm around his shoulder saved his career.
3. A Real Friend Picks You When You're Down.
4. When one encounters any difficulty in life.

### C. Better When Freezing

1. Two are Better when traveling they can keep each other warm.
2. A Real Friend Is Someone Who Provides Emotional Or Physical Warmth In A Cold, Cruel World.
  - a. Psychology Today of June 1982, 40,00 people were surveyed and asked what qualities were most valued in a friendship the third most important quality was warmth and affection.
3. There is comfort in companionship.

### D. Better When Fighting

1. Lone traveler would be an easy prey for thieves.
2. Greek soldiers stood back to back to one another, and they always keep their backs in contact and fought whatever enemy came from any side.
3. When trouble gangs up on a person they find out who their true friends are.
4. 1 Samuel 23:16 - *Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God.*
5. Proverbs 17:17 - *"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."*
6. A Real Friend Is Someone Who Will Fight To Protect You Or Your Reputation.
7. Gossip is when someone says something negative or unkind about someone who is not present, whether it is true or not.
8. Oscar Wilde wrote, "A true friend always stabs you in the front."

### E. Better When Fellowshiping

1. "If one is bad, and two is good how much better is three!" (Longman 143).
2. "A common interpretation in early Christianity was to identify the three cords as faith, hope, and love" (Longman 143).
3. Strength can be gained through human relationships.
4. Proverbs 27:17 - *"As iron sharpens iron, a friend sharpens a friend."* (NLT)
5. There is more strength in numbers.
6. When God is its chief strand makes it a truly unbreakable threefold bond.

## Conclusion

### A. Companionship is better than isolation.

1. They can point out our spiritual blind spots.
2. They can remind us of our priorities.

### B. People need other people.

1. Today we have many acquaintances but few close friends.

2. Cuts against "rugged individualism."
- C. **John 15:13** - "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."

## **Better to Be a Poor, Wise, and Young Than to Have Political Power**

Eccl. 4:13-16 - *13 Better a poor and wise youth  
Than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more.  
14 For he comes out of prison to be king,  
Although he was born poor in his kingdom.  
15 I saw all the living who walk under the sun;  
They were with the second youth who stands in his place.  
16 There was no end of all the people over whom he was made king;  
Yet those who come afterward will not rejoice in him.  
Surely this also is vanity and grasping for the wind.*

### **Introduction**

#### **A. Political Power Cannot Bestow Enduring Joy**

1. The uncertainty of politics
2. Captiousness of popularity

### **I. Vanity in the Palace**

#### **A. Old King**

1. No longer Accepts Advice
  - a. Prov. 11:14 - *Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.*
  - b. Prov. 15:22 - *Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.*
  - c. Prov. 20:18 - *Plans are established by counsel; by wise counsel wage war.*
  - d. Prov. 24:6 - *For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety.*
2. Opposites: poor vs. king; youth vs. old; and wise vs. foolish
3. The "old and foolish king" answers to Solomon himself, who had lost his wisdom, when, in defiance of two warnings of God (1Ki. 3:14; 9:2-9), he forsook God.

#### **B. Young King**

1. Rose From Prison
  - a. Joseph raised from a dungeon to be lord of Egypt.
  - b. Jeroboam, who fled to escape a "prison" and death from Solomon, to Shishak of Egypt (1Ki 11:40).
  - c. David's elevation from poverty and exile, under Saul
2. Rose From Poverty
  - a. Jeroboam, then a poor but valiant youth, once a "servant" of Solomon (1Ki. 11:26-40)
  - b. The humble origins of the youth are relevant to the story.
3. Rose From Wisdom
  - a. Youth and poverty even imprisonment are overcome by wisdom.
  - b. A foolish old king will be replaced by a wise child,
4. In the end, people did not like even him.

#### **C. Second Youthful King**

1. The new crowd deposed the king and appointed somebody else.
2. Second youth replaces the first youth. His rule is short-lived.
3. "In short, wisdom may bring a king temporary success, but it cannot guarantee him his greatest wish- along reign and a hereditary successor" (Longman 147).
4. The populace will reject him for another ruler. It is an endless cycle.
5. Better only as long as the throngs of people will "be happy with him."
6. True companionship and societal support are just two of the things money cannot buy.



## II. Better to Have Wisdom Than Fame

- A. One's position at the top is tenuous at best.
- B. Popularity is such a fleeting thing.
- C. The next generation can demote just as easy as it can promote.

## Conclusion

- A. Political power is meaningless even when accompanied by old age, wisdom, and popularity.
- B. Mark 8:36,37 - *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? 37 Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*

## Questions:

### True/False

- 1. T F Israel had a good judicial system based on the Law of Moses.
- 2. T F Solomon thought it was better not to have lived at all than to live and witness awful oppression.

### Multiple Choice

- 3. Which place did Solomon NOT look at to make his observations?
  - a. Courtroom
  - b. Battlefield
  - c. Palace
  - d. Marketplace
- 4. Which is NOT one of the conditions of the oppressed innocent?
  - a. penniless
  - b. cheerless
  - c. comfortless
  - d. powerless
- 5. Which of the following did NOT express the idea of it being better to die or never to have been born at some point?
  - a. Job
  - b. Jeremiah
  - c. David
  - d. Josiah
  - e. Habakkuk
  - f. Elijah

### List

- 6. List why it is better to have companionship than isolation with riches.
- 7. List the contrasts between the Old king and the Young king.

### Matching

- 8. Draw a line matching the type of man in the marketplace with his character.

Industrious Man

Never Satisfied

Lazy Man

One handful instead of two

Lonely Miser

Envious

Balanced Man

Fool

**Short Answer**

9. What happened to the reign of the young king? Why?

10. What is better than political power and popularity?

**Application and Discussion**

11. How can a Christian maintain a balanced life in the marketplace?

12. What are the best things about having friends and companionship in your life?

# Vanity of Cheating God

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## *Ecclesiastes 5:1-20*

### Vainly Cheating at Worship

Eccl. 5:1-7 - 1 *Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil.*

2 *Do not be rash with your mouth,  
And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.*

*For God is in heaven, and you on earth;  
Therefore let your words be few.*

3 *For a dream comes through much activity,  
And a fool's voice is known by his many words.*

4 *When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it;  
For He has no pleasure in fools.*

*Pay what you have vowed—*

5 *Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.*

6 *Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? 7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God.*

### Introduction

1. He made observations of the Courtroom, Marketplace, and Palace, now he makes observations from the Temple, the greedy in bureaucracy, and the vanity of money.
2. King Solomon Knew Something about the Temple, constructor of the Temple, being King, and being Wealthy.
3. Vanity of Cheating on God
  1. Men vainly attempt to cheat God out of proper worship by not fearing Him.
  2. Men vainly attempt to cheat others out of the blessings of life which God gives to all.
  3. Men vainly attempt to make more money only not to enjoy the gifts from God.

### I. Vain Worship

#### A. Foolish Sacrificing

1. Keep thy foot
  - a. "go with considerate, circumspect, reverent feeling. The allusion is to the taking off the shoes, or sandals, in entering a temple (Ex 3:5; Jos 5:15)" (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown).
  - b. "Watch your step!"
2. So foolish they are ignorant of how foolish their sacrifices appear to God.
3. "Hear" means to pay attention so as to be able to obey.
4. The worshiper listens to part of what is said by God and performs only part of what he has said to God.
5. Obey is a better sacrifice than the offering of fools.
6. A man is a fool by the way he behaves. A worshiper is a fool when he thinks he has pulled one over on God.
7. Not all worship is acceptable
  - a. 1 Sam. 15:22,23 - "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And

*to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."*

8. "As the priests of God, believers today offer up spiritual sacrifices through Him: our bodies (Rom. 12:1,2); people won to the Savior (Rom. 15:16); money (Phil. 4:18); praise and good works (Heb. 13:15,16); a broken heart (Ps. 51:17); and our prayers of faith (Ps. 141:1,2)" (Wiesbe 502).

## **B. Wordy Praying**

1. "Rash" with mouth is opposite of "walk prudently".
  - a. Give thought to what you say in prayer and song.
2. Command: No hasty praying.
  - a. Ps. 141:1,2 - *Lord, I cry out to You; Make haste to me! Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You. 2 Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.*
3. Motive: God is in heaven far above us.
  - a. How would you talk if you went to God's throne directly? Well, you do through prayer.
4. John Bunyan: "In prayer, it is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart."
5. Metaphor
  - a. Excess hard labor brings troubled dreams.
  - b. "dream" = vain thoughts of the fool
  - c. His "dream" is that God hears him for his much speaking.
  - d. It is the dream world the one how prays must live in to think God can be so moved by many words.
  - e. Jesus commands His disciples to avoid vain repetitions. Matt. 6:7 - *And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.*
6. Charles Spurgeon: "It is not the length of our prayers, but the strength of our prayers, that makes the deference."

## **C. Impulsive Vowing**

1. Two sins:
  - a. Making a vow with no intention of fulfilling it.
  - b. Delaying to perform one's vow, thus attempting to get out of it.
2. Reasons for vows:
  - a. Impress others
  - b. Bribe the Lord
  - c. Answer a request
  - d. Gain favor
3. Rash vows would also be excluded.
  - a. Jephthah's foolish vow (Jud. 11:30-35 2) or Herod's foolish promise (Mk. 6:23-26).
  - b. Prov. 20:25 - *It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, And afterward to reconsider his vows.*
  - c. Ben Sira 18:22: "Let nothing prevent you from paying a vow promptly, and so do not wait until death to be released from it" (Crenshaw 117)
4. Command: Do not Delay to Pay
5. Motive: God Does not like Fools
6. Command: Keep Vows
  - a. Law of Moses on Vows (Deut. 23:21- 23).
  - b. When made, it must be kept (Ps 76:11), even as God keeps His word to us (Ex 12:41, 51; Jos 21:45).
7. Better-than proverb
  - a. Vows are optional.
8. Motive: Don't let your mouth cause you to sin .
  - a. The month promises what the flesh will not pay causing one to sin.
  - b. Ps. 66:13,14 - *I will go into Your house with burnt offerings; I will pay You my vows, 14 Which my lips have uttered And my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble.*

9. Command: Do Not give lame excuses
  - a. Priest comes to check up on the vow. They see right through the deception.
  - b. Psalm 15:4 -... *He who swears to his own hurt and does not change;*
  - c. The pharisees manipulated the Law to avoid repaying vows (Matt. 23:16-22).
10. Motive: God's anger will destroy your life joy.
  - a. God will Destroy the hope of joy in this life - man's work or mission.
11. Reason: Vanity of Daydreaming
  - a. His dreams are out of touch with reality. Some make such vows because they live in a fantasy world where God is easily deceived or controlled.
  - b. Their vows are a dream that never become a reality.
12. Solution: Fear God
  - a. The key thought in proper worship is to "fear God",
  - b. Worship Him as He directs, not as you might wish.
  - c. John 4:24 - *God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

## Vainly Cheating the Poor

*Eccl. 5:8-9 - 8 If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent perversion of justice and righteousness in a province, do not marvel at the matter; for high official watches over high official, and higher officials are over them. 9 Moreover the profit of the land is for all; even the king is served from the field.*

## II. Greedy Bureaucracy

### A. Background

1. If God is so exact in even punishing hasty words why does He allow gross injustice?
2. Political oppression vs. injustices in the courts in chapter 4.

### B. No Surprises Here

1. Marvel not at this dispensation of God's will, as if He had abandoned the world.
2. The Living Bible says concerning the poor man's case "the matter is lost in red tape and bureaucracy."

### C. Corruption all the way to the top.

1. Lower officials fleece the public, higher officials either protect or take advantage of the lower officials.
2. Corruption in bureaucracy often goes all the way up to the king.
3. "Every officer can blame the system, while the ultimate authorities hold sway at an infinite distance from the lives they affect" (Kidner 54).
4. Some see this as a positive discussion of checks and balances.

### D. Result: money is more important than justice.

### E. Benefit of Government

1. The profit taken in oppression usually comes back to all - "trickles down" from the King.
2. Everybody benefits from a government even if it has some unjust, greedy officials. Anarchy would be far worse.
3. Anarchy is not a substitute for Tyranny.
4. No call for a revolt nor hopes for a utopian world.
5. Developed Government is a necessity for a growing economy and nation.

## Vainly Cheating through Wealth

*Eccl. 5:10-17 - 10 He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver;  
Nor he who loves abundance, with increase.*

*This also is vanity.*

*11 When goods increase,  
They increase who eat them;  
So what profit have the owners  
Except to see them with their eyes?*

12 *The sleep of a laboring man is sweet,  
Whether he eats little or much;  
But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep.*  
13 *There is a severe evil which I have seen under the sun:  
Riches kept for their owner to his hurt.  
14 But those riches perish through misfortune;  
When he begets a son, there is nothing in his hand.*  
15 *As he came from his mother's womb, naked shall he return,  
To go as he came;  
And he shall take nothing from his labor  
Which he may carry away in his hand.*  
16 *And this also is a severe evil—  
Just exactly as he came, so shall he go.  
And what profit has he who has labored for the wind?*  
17 *All his days he also eats in darkness,  
And he has much sorrow and sickness and anger.*

### III. Money Myths

#### A. More Money Brings Greater Satisfaction, 10

1. The more one loves money, the more money he has, the more money he has the more his life groans for money, etc.
2. If one's goal in life is to get more money, than he will be a slave to the goal and never achieve it.
3. Luke 12:15 - *And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."*
4. 1 Tim. 6:10 - *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*
5. Only a relationship with God can real satisfaction in life be found.

#### B. More Money Brings More Joys, 11

1. Those who eat up the profits are the rich man's dependents
2. More money instead it tends to increase more unforeseen problems.
3. Tax man comes.
4. Relatives show up.
5. More money means more bills and more responsibility and more anxiety.
6. Addiction to material goods brings desolation of spirit not joy.

#### C. More Money Brings More Rest, 12

1. Joe Louis: "I don't like money actually, but it quiets my nerves."
2. The poor employees sleep better than the boss.
3. Kept awake by an upset stomach from eating too much or worrying too much, but most likely both.
4. Gain more wealth and lose more health.
5. "Yes, it's good to have the things that money cannot buy, provided you don't lose the things that money cannot buy" (Wiersbe 505).

#### D. More Money Brings Less Harm, 13

1. "A sickening evil" (Longman, 166).
2. Js. 5:3 - *Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.*
3. Unused money brings no benefits.

#### E. More Money Brings More Security, 14a

1. Wealth can just as quickly be lost.
2. The rich oppressor's wealth provokes enemies, robbers, etc.
3. As a man who loses all his wealth at once and not to his blame.
  - a. Job lost it all in a day.

#### F. More Money Brings Greater Inheritance, 14b

#### G. More Money Brings More Life, 15,16

1. Death files Chapter 13 at the close of every man's life.
2. Job 1:21 - *And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord."*
3. 1 Tim. 6:7 - *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*
4. Money is hard to hang on to in life and impossible to keep in death.
5. Parable of the Rich Fool, Luke 12:13-21

**H. More Money Brings Happy Retirement, 17**

1. Wealth is not always a blessing but a curse.
2. Eating is living and darkness is the opposite of light or joy. Thus all his days are like living life without joy.
3. The pursuit of money brings more woes. More money is needed to "fix" these woes.

## Enjoying the Gifts of God

*Eccl. 5:18-20 - 18 Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage. 19 As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God. 20 For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart.*

### IV. Solution: Enjoy the Life God Has Given You

**A. Blessings Are Given by God For Enjoyment**

1. Labor faithfully, enjoy the good things of life, and accept it all as the gracious gift of God.
2. Carpe diem - seize the day - passage.

**B. Blessings Are God's Gift**

1. All wealth is by "God's gift."
2. There are three ways to get wealth: work, steal, gift.
3. To enjoy life rich or poor is a gift from God.
4. Enjoy whatever God gives and you be thankful for the ability He gives to you so you can enjoy them while you can.
5. The key is not less money or more money, but God. All goods are seen as heaven sent from God.
6. Found in the will of a wealthy man: "To my son-in-law who always insist that health is better than wealth I leave my sun lamp."

**C. Blessings Are Good**

1. The person who rejoices in God's daily blessings will never have regrets
2. Do not fret and worry about how long you will live.
3. Pleasure can be an anesthetic to life's painful experiences.

### Conclusion

- A. The vanity of attempting to cheat God through their Idolatry, Injustice, Ingratitude, Indulgence, robs them of their Enjoyment.
- B. Though man cheats God gives enjoyment.

### Questions:

**True/False**

1. T F Obedience is a better sacrifice than the offering of fools.
2. T F A man is a fool by do to his level of education.

**List**

3. List some offerings given by Christians who serve God as priests today.

4. List the various aspects of a fool's prayer.

### Matching

5. Draw a line matching the command dealing with vows with their motive.

Do not delay to pay it

Don't let your mouth cause you to sin

Pay what you have vowed

God's anger will destroy your life joy

Do not give lame excuses

God does not like fools

### Multiple Choice

6. The key thought in proper worship is
- a. fear God
  - b. many words
  - c. many sacrifices
  - d. all the above
7. Better to have some corrupt in a developed government than to have...
- a. no corruption at all.
  - b. anarchy
  - c. two kings
  - d. all the above.

**Short Answer:** Give Solomon's answer for each money myth.

8. More money brings great satisfaction.

9. More money bring more joys.

10. More money bings more rest.

11. More money brings more life.

### Fill in the Blank

12. "As for every man to whom \_\_\_\_\_ has given \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and given him \_\_\_\_\_ to eat of it"

### Application and Discussion

13. In what way does modern man offer to God the "*sacrifice of fools*" when he comes to worship?

14. What vow has each given to God at baptism?



# Vanity of Being Cheated of Enjoyment

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## *Ecclesiastes 6:1-12*

### The Rich Man Cheated of Pleasure

Eccl. 6:1-6 - *1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: 2 A man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor, so that he lacks nothing for himself of all he desires; yet God does not give him power to eat of it, but a foreigner consumes it. This is vanity, and it is an evil affliction. 3 If a man begets a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with goodness, or indeed he has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better than he— 4 for it comes in vanity and departs in darkness, and its name is covered with darkness. 5 Though it has not seen the sun or known anything, this has more rest than that man, 6 even if he lives a thousand years twice—but has not seen goodness. Do not all go to one place?*

#### Introduction

- A. Life is “as futile as blind men driving cars down crowded dead-end streets” (Weirsbe 506).
- B. The solution Solomon concluded with in the last chapter was the enjoyment of the gifts of God.
  - 1. Now he finds that most wealthy men do not get to enjoy the gifts even if he is blessed with much money, many children or even a very long life.
  - 2. The poor man cannot find satisfaction through hard work.
  - 3. The wise man cannot find enough answers.

#### I. Fortune Without Fun

- A. **An Evil - Great moral injustice.**
- B. **“Common Among Men”**
  - 1. “Frequent” - “weights heavily upon humanity” (Longman 169).
  - 2. Many well-off people cannot experience the enjoyment described in 5:18-20
- C. **Rich Man Has Everything But Enjoyment,**
  - 1. Common: people who have it all but cannot find pleasure in it.
  - 2. Lost Through: Trouble in the home, divorce, Illness, Death, Theft, Sloth, Drinking, War
  - 3. A comfortable life and retirement only to come down with cancer and send the rest of one’s money on medicine and their days in pain.
  - 4. Outward wealth and inward poverty.
- D. **Rich Man Without an Heir.**
  - 1. Leaving it all to a stranger.
- E. **Rich Man with Many Children, Long Life, no burial.**
  - 1. Ps. 127:3-5 - *Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. 4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one’s youth. 5 Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.*
  - 2. 2 Chron. 11:21 - *Now Rehoboam loved Maachah the granddaughter of Absalom more than all his wives and his concubines; for he took eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and begot twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters.*
  - 3. And lie unhonored, without “burial,” at death (2Ki 9:26, 35),
  - 4. A large family that does not love him.
  - 5. No one to mourn him.
  - 6. The rich man is really poor.
  - 7. Making a good living is not the same as making a good life.

**F. Rich Man Has No Advantage Over A Stillborn**

1. Better Than proverb, 4b
2. The advantage goes to the still born because it lacks consciousness.
3. "Among the Jews at the time, a stillborn child was not always given a name. That way, it would not be remembered" (Weirsbe 508).
4. Stillborn never experiences the hardships and misery of the present life.
5. Doubling the Longest life will make no difference.
  - a. An exaggeration or hyperbole
  - b. Methuselah lived almost a thousand years.
  - c. Doubling the reward will not increase the joy.
- a. Death comes to both.
  - a. The two thousand year-old man and the stillborn baby both ended up in the same place the grave.
  - b. Death again spoils the enjoyment of life, however long it may be.
  - c. Multiplying millennium to life does not increase life for a moment.
  - d. A long life, without enjoying is but lengthened misery.

## **The Poor Man Cheated of Satisfaction**

*Eccl. 6:7-9 - 7 All the labor of man is for his mouth,  
And yet the soul is not satisfied.*

*8 For what more has the wise man than the fool?  
What does the poor man have,*

*Who knows how to walk before the living?*

*9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire.  
This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.*

## **II. Employment Without Enjoyment**

**A. Labor Just For Self-Preservation Equals No Satisfaction**

1. Like cow that eats all day and eats all the next day and so on.
2. The human anthill all activity no thought of eternity.
3. Prov. 16:26 - *The person who labors, labors for himself, For his hungry mouth drives him on.*
4. Human life is characterized by continual striving.
5. Death is the ultimate end of self-preservation.

**B. Laborer has No Advantage Over a Fool**

1. Wisdom with hard work should bring satisfaction.
2. The poor are no more satisfied than the rich.
3. He is not better off than and lazy fool.
4. He is not belittling either education or self-improvement.
5. The poor man does not know how to walk the walk of an enjoyable living.

**C. Solution: Focus on what you have not what you desire.**

1. Dreaming of a better life he miss out on the life he has.
2. Plutarch: "He is a fool who lets slip a bird in the hand for a bird in the bush."
3. A dog snatching at the meat in the mirror and thus losing the morsel in its mouth.
4. "It's better to have little and really enjoy it than to dream about much and never attain it."
5. Dreams turn into nightmares.
6. Enjoy the benefits of the rain instead of chasing after rainbows.
7. Don't plan on living, start living.
8. Pleasure in life comes from character and not circumstances.
  - a. Phil. 4:11 - *Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:*

## **The Wise Man Cheated of Answers**

Eccl. 6:10-12 - *Whatever one is, he has been named already,  
For it is known that he is man;  
And he cannot contend with Him who is mightier than he.  
11 Since there are many things that increase vanity,  
How is man the better?*

12 *For who knows what is good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow? Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun?*

### III. Asking Without Answers

#### A. Mortal Man Cannot Debate the Mighty

1. Life with suffering and without purpose causes many to question God.
2. God calls creation into being by the power of His word. Adam's task of naming the animals (Gen. 2:19,20).
3. Naming capture was the essential nature of a person or thing. Giving a name to something is the same as fixing its character and stating what the thing really is.
4. Hebrew, "Adam," equivalent to man "of red dust," "Man" is "Adam" meaning "from the earth" (Gen. 2:7).
5. All came from the dust of the earth and will return to the dust (Gen. 3:19).
6. The Potter and the clay. Is. 45:9- *Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?'*
7. Ignorant man cannot debate an all-knowing God.
8. God is free to do as he wishes.
9. "Dispute" or debate with God is vain for you cannot win.

#### B. More Questions Produce No Answers

1. *"The more the words, the less the meaning, and how does that profit anyone?"* (6:11, NIV).
2. An equation between a multiplication of words and a multiplication of meaninglessness.
3. The more we talk about the issues - the more issues are raised.
4. A doctor explained the x-ray of my neck and shoulder. It may have the answer to many questions, but it raised many more questions which could not be answered.

#### C. Man Does Not Know What is Best

1. Who knows what is good for us?
2. Knowledge does not provide all the answers.

#### D. Man's Life is Short

1. Ps. 144:4 - *Man is like a breath; His days are like a passing shadow. Emphasize the frailty of human beings.*
2. Death is coming is the only certainty.
3. Heb. 9:27 - *And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,*

#### E. Man is Ignorant of the Future

1. Does anybody know what's coming next?
2. Nobody knows the future except God. Some questions about life have no revealed answers.
3. We need more revelation from God.
4. Deut. 29:29 - *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*
5. The future is determined by God and unknown to man.
6. Without knowing the future man cannot judge God.

### Conclusion

- A. Solomon "is very far from holding that man has rights which God ignores; it is rather that man has needs which God exposes" (Kidner 60).
- B. Defeatism or Realism?
- C. Better to accept things the way they are than to debate with God about the way they should be.
- D. No one can really find enjoyment in life's blessings without God's blessing them with the ability and time to do so.

## Questions:

### True/False

1. T F It is common among mankind that a rich person does not enjoy his blessings of wealth.
2. T F Making a good living is not the same as making a good life.

### Short Answer

3. How is it that a stillborn can be better off than a rich man without enjoyment?
4. How is the hard-working laborer not better off than a fool?
5. What is the "*wandering of desire*" of the hard-working laborer? What should he do about it?
6. Why is it vain for man to debate with God?
7. What does many multiplying of questions produce?
8. Who knows what is coming next?
9. What is the one thing man knows about his future?

### Application and Discussion

10. What are some ways the rich, the hard-working laborer, and the wise can be robbed of enjoyment of life? Name some things which would not be their fault. How can they still find enjoyment?

# Wisdom From Undesired Realities

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## *Ecclesiastes 7:1-29*

### Introduction

- A. Chapters 7 and 8 he discussed the importance of wisdom in life.
- B. "Better" is the key word in this chapter.
- C. Solomon points out the wisdom can be obtained from some very undesirable situations: contemplating death, receiving rebuke, waiting on the future, resigning to God's purposes, not striving for perfection, recognizing our sinfulness, and even from the unattainable pursuit of wisdom.

*Eccl. 7:1-4 - A good name is better than precious ointment,  
And the day of death than the day of one's birth;  
2 Better to go to the house of mourning  
Than to go to the house of feasting,  
For that is the end of all men;  
And the living will take it to heart.  
3 Sorrow is better than laughter,  
For by a sad countenance the heart is made better.  
4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,  
But the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.*

### I. Wisdom From Contemplating Death

- A. **Better Fine Name Than Fine Perfume, 1a**
  - 1. A paronomasia: "name" is from sheem and "ointment" is from shemen.
  - 2. Prov. 22:1. - *A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold.*
  - 3. "One's reputation is not complete until one dies" (Crenshaw 133)
  - 4. At birth one is named and in the obits one is named.
  - 5. If a person dies with a good name, his or her reputation is sealed.
  - 6. "Every man has three names one his father and mother gave him, one others call him, and the one he acquires himself." Arabian Proverb
- B. **Better a Death Day Than a Birthday, 1b**
  - 1. Modern man celebrates the day of one's birth not his death.
  - 2. The day of one's birth is the beginning of many sorrows.
  - 3. The day of one's death is the beginning of eternal bliss!
  - 4. Death means escape from life's oppression and meaninglessness.
- C. **Better a Funeral than a Party, 2**
  - 1. Death's lessons are more factual and more vital.
  - 2. One learns more as a pallbearer than as a party person.
  - 3. A funeral reminds us of the brevity of life and the eventuality of death.
  - 4. The house of feasting often shuts out thoughts of God and eternity.
  - 5. The sight of the dead causes "the living" to think of their own "end."
  - 6. Phil. 1:21-23 - *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.*
  - 7. Rev. 14:13 - *Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me,[a] "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from*

*their labors, and their works follow them."*

**D. Better a Good Cry Than a Good Laugh, 3,4**

1. Solomon is not condemning all joy and laughter.
  - a. Prov. 15:13,15 - *A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, But by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. 15 All the days of the afflicted are evil, But he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast.*
  - b. There is "a time to laugh" 3:4
2. Sorrow--such as arises from serious thoughts of eternity.
3. Ps. 90:12 - *So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.*
4. A fool lives a life of enjoyment, as if negating the fact of death.

*Eccl. 7:5-7 - It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise  
Than for a man to hear the song of fools.*

*6 For like the crackling of thorns under a pot,  
So is the laughter of the fool.*

*This also is vanity.*

*7 Surely oppression destroys a wise man's reason,  
And a bribe debases the heart.*

## II. Wisdom From Receiving Rebuke

**A. Better to Be Criticized Than Eulogized, 5**

1. A singular wise vs. plural fools.
2. Most love to hear their names sung "for he's a jolly good fella," but hate to hear: "friend, you better get your act together."

**B. Vanity of Loud, Brief Praise, 6**

1. Another paronomasia in the Hebrew, *sirim* for "thorns" and *sir* for "pot".
2. Fool's merry-making is like a quick burning fire of loud cracking thorns the flare up bright and loud for only a moment.
3. Dried cow-dung was the common fuel in Palestine; it burned hot, slow and silent.

**C. Vanity of Untrustworthy Advice, 7**

1. Even a wise person can be made a fool when money becomes involved.
2. "Wisdom is weakened by extortion, on the one hand, and bribery, on the other. Extortion requires payment from someone in return for silence, and bribery is the receipt of money from someone in return for some desired action. The former makes the wise person a fool by surrendering control of life to another; the latter clouds one's judgment by introducing bias" (Longman 187).
3. Wisdom is not foolproof.

*Eccl. 7:8-10 - 8 The end of a thing is better than its beginning;  
The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.*

*9 Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry,  
For anger rests in the bosom of fools.*

*10 Do not say,*

*"Why were the former days better than these?"*

*For you do not inquire wisely concerning this.*

## III. Wisdom From Waiting For the Future

**A. Better a Strong Finish Than a Quick Start, 8a**

1. Let the "wise" wait for "the end."
2. Good beginnings will usually mean good endings.
3. Projects started strong but weak or no finish.
4. Rom. 8:28 - *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

**B. Better a Cool Head Than a Hot Head, 8b**

1. "Better long patience than soaring pride."

### C. **Vanity of Anger**

1. Quick-Tempered
2. Foolish  
Pride leads to anger, which resides in the heart of the foolish .
3. Blind Memory
  - a. Memory has a way of forgetting bad things in the past.
  - b. "It has been said that 'the good old days' are the combination of a bad memory and a good imagination" (Wiersbe 514).
  - c. In truth, "the good old days" have never existed this side of Eden.
  - d. Shows a complete ignorance of history.
  - e. Viewed through rose colored glasses, they are unable to know the future to judge whether those days will be better than the ones presently being endured.

Eccl. 7:11-14 - *11 Wisdom is good with an inheritance,  
And profitable to those who see the sun.  
12 For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense,  
But the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it.  
13 Consider the work of God;  
For who can make straight what He has made crooked?  
14 In the day of prosperity be joyful,  
But in the day of adversity consider:  
Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other,  
So that man can find out nothing that will come after him.  
11-12) Money can serve as a defense in life -  
Riches do not profit one in a day of wrath*

## IV. **Wisdom From Resignation To God's Purposes**

### A. **Wisdom With Wealth is Well, 11**

1. Solomon points out the need to be resigned that though wisdom is superior to wealth it cannot alter the purposes or plans of God.
2. "Those who see the sun" = living.
3. A reminder that there is a time limit to the help that even wisdom can offer. It pays no dividends in the grave.

### B. **Wisdom Like Wealth is a defense, 12a**

1. Wisdom is like a "shelter" offering greater protection than money.

### C. **Wisdom Gives Life, 12b**

1. Wisdom cannot be lost as money can.

### D. **Wisdom Will not Revise God's Will, 13,14a**

1. "Consider," that is, regard it as "the work of God";
2. God controls both adversity and prosperity
3. Wisdom must respect the fact that God controls the future.
4. Submit to God's providence
5. It does no good to get angry about things we cannot change. This is not fatalism.
6. Serenity Prayer  
O God, give us  
Serenity to accept what cannot be changed.  
Courage to change what should be changed  
And wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

Reinhold Niebuhr in 1934

7. "God balances our lives by giving us enough blessing to keep us happy and enough burdens to keep us humble" (Weirsbe 515).
8. God sends both good and bad times to us. We can't pick and choose, just take life as it comes.

### E. **Wisdom Cannot See the Future, 14b**

1. God purposely set up good and bad days in order to hide the future even from the wise.
2. "that man may not find anything (to blame) after God"

Eccl. 7:15-19 - *15 I have seen everything in my days of vanity:  
 There is a just man who perishes in his righteousness,  
 And there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness.  
 16 Do not be overly righteous,  
 Nor be overly wise:  
 Why should you destroy yourself?  
 17 Do not be overly wicked,  
 Nor be foolish:  
 Why should you die before your time?  
 18 It is good that you grasp this,  
 And also not remove your hand from the other;  
 For he who fears God will escape them all.  
 19 Wisdom strengthens the wise  
 More than ten rulers of the city.*

## V. Wisdom From Not Striving for Perfection

### A. Reminder that Solomon As Explored it All, 15a

### B. Death is not Fair, 15b

1. Righteousness prolongs life, Dt. 4:40
2. Wicked suffer and die early, Ps. 1.
3. The wicked experience good times.
4. Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper?
5. The good die young
6. The wicked only appear to prosper.
7. They have their reward and that is all they will ever get.

### C. Solution is not found in striving to be the wisest and most righteous, 16

1. Solomon is not teaching moderation in all things or that extremes can create problems.
2. Killing yourself being wiser and better will not help. Why? Because as he mentions latter: all men sin.
3. Why ruin your life, shorten your days and get burned-out over the impossible.

### D. Solution is not Striving to be More Wicked and Foolish, 17

1. One might conclude that he might as well live like the wicked man.
2. There can be no moderation in doing wickedness.
  - a. It would seem to imply that we may be wicked a little.
  - b. The possibility of a reasonable level of wickedness. So long as one does not cross some imaginary line.
3. Lawlessness just as bad.
4. All are sinners, but embracing it leads to destruction.
5. The precept is addressed to a sinner.
6. "Be not wicked at all."

### E. Acceptance with Fearing God Results in Escape, 18

1. The "fear of God" is in antithesis to it.
2. God is in charge, so we don't have to be extreme.
3. Prov. 9:10 - *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*
4. We don't need to know everything just the one who knows everything.

### F. Yet Wisdom Is Still a Great Help, 19

1. Ps 127:1 - *Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.*
2. City rulers are invested with power and make important decisions.
3. But the single wise person is stronger, more important and effective.
4. Prov. 24:5-6 - *A wise man is strong, Yes, a man of knowledge increases strength; 6 For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, And in a multitude of counselors there is safety.*



Eccl. 7:20-22 - 20 *For there is not a just man on earth who does good  
And does not sin.*

21 *Also do not take to heart everything people say,  
Lest you hear your servant cursing you.*

22 *For many times, also, your own heart has known  
That even you have cursed others.*

## VI. Wisdom From Recognition of Sinfulness

### A. Everybody Sins, 20

1. The universality of sin.
2. Be not "self-righteous," shows that there is not a just man,"
3. Wisdom's failure to keep a righteous person from sinning.
4. Wise people are of immense value, but no one, not even the wise, is righteous.

### B. Everybody Gossips, 21-22

1. "Curse" may mean "slander, gossip, grumble."
2. Spiritually sensitive people realize they sin (gossip) like everyone else.
3. Have a deaf ear because you too have a deadly tongue.
4. Puts forward a positive value and then relativize it.

Eccl. 7:23-29 - 23 *All this I have proved by wisdom.  
I said, "I will be wise";  
But it was far from me.*

24 *As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep,  
Who can find it out?*

25 *I applied my heart to know,  
To search and seek out wisdom and the reason of things,  
To know the wickedness of folly,  
Even of foolishness and madness.*

26 *And I find more bitter than death  
The woman whose heart is snares and nets,  
Whose hands are fetters.*

*He who pleases God shall escape from her,  
But the sinner shall be trapped by her.*

27 *Here is what I have found," says the Preacher,  
"Adding one thing to the other to find out the reason,*

28 *Which my soul still seeks but I cannot find:  
One man among a thousand I have found,  
But a woman among all these I have not found.*

29 *Truly, this only I have found:*

*That God made man upright,  
But they have sought out many schemes."*

## VII. Wisdom From Unreachable Wisdom

### A. All the Effort And He Was Not Wise, 23

1. I tried to "be wise,"
2. He searches human wisdom and comes up empty.
3. "All this" could refer to what precedes or what follows.
4. Our inability to grasp the meaning of all that God is doing in the world.

### B. All the Searching Without Finding, 24,25

1. Quest for something hard to find.
2. "reason" --rather, "the right estimation" of things."
3. The verbs "to search ... to seek...to know" all convey the eagerness of the investigation.

### C. Three Findings From Searching

1. A seductive woman is more bitter than death, 26
  - a. Some will be captured by women and others will escape.

- b. Joseph (Gen. 39:2, 3, 9) escaped temptations but not trials.
- 2. Only one good man among a thousand but not women, 27,28
  - a. Comparing one thing with another "Considering men and women one by one."
  - b. Was Solomon a misogynist?
    - 1) This is one man's experience, and he does not universalize it.
    - 2) Prov. 12:4 - *An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who causes shame is like rottenness in his bones.*
    - 3) Prov. 14:1 - *The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish pulls it down with her hands.*
    - 4) Prov. 18:22 - *He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the Lord.*
    - 5) Prov. 19:14 - *Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the Lord.*
    - 6) Prov. 31:10 - *Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.*
    - 7) Eccl. 9:9 - *Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.*
  - c. This remark on women is not God's view, but Solomon's.
  - d. Solomon broke one of God's primary marriage law, joining one man to "one" woman (Mt 19:4, 5, 6).
- 3. God Created Man Perfect, Man Created Schemes, 29
  - . The sinfulness of humanity in general
  - b. "Man" is singular, namely, Adam; "they," plural, Adam, Eve, and their posterity.
  - c. Why are only very few virtuous.
  - d. Our fault not our fate.
  - e. The fault did not lie with God. Rather man is to blame.

## Conclusion

- A. In verse 18, Solomon gives us another quick glimpse at his conclusion: "fear God" and do the right thing (12:13,14).
- B. Joey Earl Horstman wrote back in 1994: "Religion, it seems, is no longer a search for meaning or truth nor a way to find salvation or forgiveness. It is a means to be happy, to improve your self-image.....Christ seems less concerned that we are happy than that we are His."

## Questions:

### Multiple Choice

- 1. The key work in this chapter is...
  - a. wealth
  - b. vanity
  - c. better
  - d. hope
- 2. The day of one's death is better than...
  - a. the day of ones funeral
  - b. the day of one's birth
  - c. the day of one's baptism
  - d. all the above
- 3. Sorrow is better than laughter...
  - a. For that is the end of all men
  - b. For by a sad countenance the heart is made better.
  - c. For through suddenness comes laughter.

- d. all the above

**Short Answer**

4. What is a paronomasia?
5. Why might a wise man's advice not be reliable?
6. What is wrong with earning for the "good old days"?

**True/False**

7. T F Wisdom must respect the fact that God controls the future.
8. T F There is a wicked man who perishes in his wickedness.
9. T F Solomon teaches moderation in all things as a key to living.
10. T F The antithesis to striving for perfection is to fear God.

**Fill in the Blanks**

11. For \_\_\_\_\_, also, your own heart has known that even you have \_\_\_\_\_ others.

**List**

12. What three things did Solomon find?

**Application and Discussion**

13. What lessons would you want your children to learn from attending a funeral rather than a birthday party?

# Pursuit of Wisdom is Frustrating but Fruitful

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## *Ecclesiastes 8:1 - 9:1a*

### Introduction

- A. Solomon Continues for Find Answers to the Purpose of Life through the Pursuit of Wisdom.**
1. He has found it somewhat fruitful but mostly frustrating.
  2. Here he finds wisdom in dealing with a King and with injustices.
  3. Yet he find more frustration the more he investigates.

Eccl. 8:1a - *1 Who is like a wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing?...*

### I. Difficulty in Finding Wisdom, 1a

- A. "Who" is to be accounted "equal" to the wise man?**
- B. A sarcastic exclamation of frustration.**
1. He expresses skepticism concerning the power of wisdom.
- C. Answer to the Rhetorical Questions: "No One!"**
1. No one has the power or the knowledge to act correctly in every situation. The world is an unpredictable and dangerous place.
  2. Not even the wise can really understand the work of God.
  3. The answer to his frustration is divine revelation.
    - a. 1 Cor. 1:21 - *For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.*

Eccl. 8:1b-9 - *A man's wisdom makes his face shine,  
And the sternness of his face is changed.*

*2 I say, "Keep the king's commandment for the sake of your oath to God. 3 Do not be hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand for an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him."*

*4 Where the word of a king is, there is power;  
And who may say to him, "What are you doing?"*

*5 He who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful;  
And a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment,*

*6 Because for every matter there is a time and judgment,  
Though the misery of man increases greatly.*

*7 For he does not know what will happen;  
So who can tell him when it will occur?*

*8 No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit,  
And no one has power in the day of death.*

*There is no release from that war,*

*And wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it.*

*9 All this I have seen, and applied my heart to every work that is done under the sun: There is a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt.*

### II. Wisdom in Honoring the King

- A. Wisdom in Controlling One's Emotions, 1b**
1. The wise can turn a stern expression into a smile.
  2. Nehemiah feared for failing to control his countenance before King Artaxerxes.
    - a. Neh. 2:1b-3 - *"Now I had never been sad in his presence before. Therefore the*

*king said to me, 'Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart.' So I became dreadfully afraid, and said to the king, 'May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?'"*

- B. Wisdom in Keeping the Kings Commands, 2a**
1. Reason: One's Oath Before God, 2b
    - a. Submit because of oath before God.
    - b. Rom. 13:1-8
    - c. Taking an oath is serious business.
- C. Wisdom in Controlling One's Actions, 3a**
1. Do not Run Out of the King in Anger at his Orders
- D. Wisdom in Controlling One's Reactions, 3b**
1. It is prudent not to argue with the king, but just leave his presence and carry out his will.
  2. Not in rebellion and insurrection.
  3. Reason: King Does What He Wishes, 3c
- E. Wisdom in Recognizing the King's Authority**
1. His Power is Absolute, 4a
    - a. Eastern rulers in that day hold the power of life and death in their hands and often used that power capriciously.
    - b. The King has the power to enforce what he commands.
  2. His Authority is Unquestionable, 4b
    - a. They were not elected by the people nor were they answerable to them.
    - b. The thoughtful keep their thoughts to themselves.
    - c. The king can do no wrong." There was no law that could find the doing guilty.
    - d. The king's word is supreme; no one can gainsay him. Thus, it is fruitless, even dangerous, to question his actions, and better just to do whatever he wants.
  3. God Has Absolute, Unquestionable Authority
    1. Job 9:12 - *If He takes away, who can hinder Him? Who can say to Him, 'What are You doing?'*
    2. Is. 45:9 - *"Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands?'"*
    3. Dan. 4:32 - *And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses."*
- F. Wisdom In Seeing the Benefits of Obedience, 5a**
1. The king will not harm those who keep his command.
  2. This passage is teaching due respect for government, not morally blind obedience.
  3. There are times when not to obey the King, Acts 5:28,29; Daniel chapters 1,2,3 and 6.
- G. Wisdom of Waiting For the Right Time, 5b**
1. There is a Time for Everything, 6a
    - a. A wise person should know the proper time and the right customs.
    - b. Judge the timing of his actions.
    - c. The godly wise observe the due times of things (Ec 3:1),
    - d. A wise person "knows when and how to act".
  2. Longsuffering is needed, 6b
  3. No one Really Knows the Future, 7
    - a. Though there is a "right time" for everything, it is known only to God
    - b. Rendering man helpless and unable to plan or exercise control over events.
  4. No one Has Control of Coming Events, 8
    - a. Human Ignorance in verse 7 and now human impotence.
    - b. Inability to control the wind
    - c. Inability to prevent death
      - 1) No one can predict, put off, or delay the time of their death.
      - 2) A wicked king must face death.

- d. Inability to get out of a battle
  - 1) “discharge--alluding to the liability to military service of all above twenty years old (Nu 1:3), yet many were exempted (De 20:5-8). But in that war (death) there is no exemption” (Jamison, Fausset, Brown).
- e. Inability to rescue someone who is evil.
  - 1) Wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it.
  - 2) Mt. 10:28 - *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*
- 5. The Time for Justice Upon an Unjust Ruler, 9
  - a. Based on the results of his observations on life.
  - b. Some rulers abuse their power.
  - c. Nevertheless, God will right all wrongs.

Eccl. 8:10-14 - *Then I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of holiness, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. This also is vanity. 11 Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. 12 Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. 13 But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God. 14 There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.*

### III. Wisdom In Dealing with Injustices

#### A. The Unfairness of the Eulogized Wicked, 10

- 1. Solomon reported on a funeral he had attended.
- 2. The deceased was a man who had frequented the temple “*the place of the holy*”.
- 3. Praised for misdeeds which were soon forgotten.

#### B. The Unfairness of Delayed Punishment, 11

- 1. The reason why the wicked persevere in sin: God's delay in judgment .
- 2. When there is no apparent punishment for evil, then it will flourish.
- 3. 2 Tim. 3:13 - *But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.*
- 4. Joab murdered Abner and escaped judgment so he murdered Amasa and Absalom. Finally he was killed in the Temple at the altar.

#### C. The Unfairness of the Wicked Man's Long Life, 12,13

- 1. When men see wickedness prospering and going unpunished, they sometimes conclude that they might as well be wicked too. But he will die.
- 2. No one actually gets away with evil.
- 3. No matter how much evil he does even 100 times over or how long he lives.
- 4. The image of the shadow is longer life for as the day ends the shadows gradually lengthen.
- 5. They will not live long because they do not fear God.
- 6. The long life of the wicked man is but a prelude to eternal darkness.

#### D. The Unfairness of the Reward of the Wicked, 14a

- 1. The wicked do not get punished; they get rewarded.

#### E. The Unfairness of the Reward of the Righteous, 14b

- 1. The righteous do not get rewarded; they get punished.

Eccl. 8:15-9:1a - *So I commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labor all the days of his life which God gives him under the sun. 16 When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, even though one sees no sleep day or night, 17 then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labors to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it. 1. For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God...*

## IV. Solutions:

### A. Enjoy life, 15

1. Another "carpe deim" (seize the day) comment (2:24-26; 3:12-13; 5:18-20).
2. Not to foolish to eat, drink, and be merry. Hope and trust in the goodness of God.
3. 1 Tim. 6:7 - *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*

### B. Complete Knowledge and Justice is Unattainable, 16,17

1. See verse 1a.
2. The person who has to know everything, or who thinks he knows everything, is destined for disappointment in this world.
3. God has purposefully made life unpredictable.
4. One will only lose sleep over the vain pursuit of knowing it all.
5. A confession of ignorance is the first step toward true knowledge.
6. 1 Cor. 8:2 - *And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.*
7. Rom. 11:33 - *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!*
8. Alfred North Whitehead said, "Not ignorance, but ignorance of ignorance, is the death of knowledge."

### C. Only God is in Control, 9:1a

## Conclusion

### A. During this life injustices continue.

1. Justice System often fails.
2. Robert Frost defined a jury as "twelve persons chosen to decide who has the better lawyer."

### B. Wise Response

1. One must still honor the government.
2. One must still remember death is coming.

## Questions:

### Short Answer

1. "Who is like a wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing?"
  
2. Why keep the king's command?

### Multiple Choice

3. Which is NOT true of the King?
  - a. The king's word is absolute
  - b. No one should question him
  - c. Does what he pleases
  - d. Harms those to keep his word
  
4. Which is one of the limitations to one's authority (power)?
  - a. Inability to control the wind
  - b. Inability to prevent death
  - c. Inability to get out of a battle
  - d. all the above

5. Solomon saw unfairness while attending...
  - a. A zoo
  - b. A party
  - c. A funeral
  - d. An execution
  
6. Who continued to sin due to delayed judgment?
  - a. Joab
  - b. Ananais and Siphira
  - c. King Agrippa
  - d. All the above

**True/False**

7. T F The wicked will not prolong his day because he does not fear God.
  
8. T F Solomon suggested the solution of "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die."
  
9. T F The person who has to know everything, or who thinks he knows everything, is destined for disappointment in this world.

**Fill in the Blanks**

10. "the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ and their works are in the \_\_\_\_\_ of God..."

**Application and Discussion**

11. When does one not obey the king (government)?



# Wisdom vs. Death, Chance, and Reward

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## ***Ecclesiastes 9:1b-18***

Eccl. 9:1b-6 - 1. ...People know neither love nor hatred by anything they see before them. 2 All things come alike to all:

*One event happens to the righteous and the wicked;  
To the good, the clean, and the unclean;  
To him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice.  
As is the good, so is the sinner;  
He who takes an oath as he who fears an oath.*

3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. 4 But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

*5 For the living know that they will die;  
But the dead know nothing,  
And they have no more reward,  
For the memory of them is forgotten.*

6 Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished;  
Nevermore will they have a share  
In anything done under the sun.

## **Introduction**

### **A. Wisdom Now Faces its Greatest Challenges**

1. Death to All Men
2. Chance Events In the Lives of All Men
3. Lack of Reward for the Strength of Wisdom

## **I. Greatest Evil: Death Comes to All**

### **A. Death Does Not Show Whether God Loves Us Our Hates Us, 1b**

1. Death is one of the books main subjects (1:4; 2:14-17; 3:18-20; 4:8; 5:15, 16; 6:6; 8:8; 12:1-7).
2. Ernest Becker claimed “the of all thing that move men, one of the principal ones is the terror of death” (The Denial of Death, 11).
3. By all that is seen no one can prove that God loves or hates because death comes to the loveable and the hateable.

### **B. Death is Impartial to All Men, 2**

1. Death is unavoidable.
2. Death is not an accident it is an appointment.
  - a. Heb. 9:27 - *And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,*
3. Rom. 5:12 - *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—*
4. Five pair of opposite.
  - a. Those who live right or wicked.
  - b. Those good - ceremonially clean or those who are unclean.
  - c. To Those morally good and the sinner.
  - d. To the worshiper and the non-worshiper.
  - e. Those who make oaths in devotion to God and those who are unwilling to devote themselves to God.

- f. Everyone regardless of merit, will die.
- C. **Death is the Greatest of Tragedies in Life, 3a**
  - 1. A superlative - evil in the midst of all other evils.
  - 2. This is as wrong as anything that happens in this world.
- D. **Death Comes to All Sinners, 3b**

## II. Advantages of Living over Death

- A. **The Living Have Hope, 4**
  - 1. A proverb: "a living dog is better than a dead lion."
    - a. Dogs were considered unclean, eaters of carcasses, and represented spiritually the most vile of men.
    - b. Lions were a symbol of strength and nobility.
    - c. Life is decidedly worth living at its worst, is better than nothing.
  - 2. Hope does give a bright outlook, but still does not change the outcome: death.
- B. **The Living Have Consciousness, 5a**
  - 1. The living are self-aware of what is going on under the sun.
  - 2. Job 14:21 - *His sons come to honor, and he does not know it; They are brought low, and he does not perceive it.*
  - 3. What are the living aware of: they are going to die.
- C. **The Living are Rewarded and Remembered, 5b**
  - 1. Death ends of all earthly wages or benefits.
  - 2. This is not excluding the possibility of heavenly rewards. Life is contrasted with death, eternity or the afterlife.
  - 3. Wordplay: "reward" skr with "memory" zkr
- D. **The Living Have Emotions, 6**
  - 1. The undertaker makes place a pleasant smile on the corpse in the casket but that does not mean the dead body is really happy.
  - 2. Even strong, negative emotions are better than no emotions at all.

Eccl. 9:7-10 - *7 Go, eat your bread with joy,  
And drink your wine with a merry heart;  
For God has already accepted your works.  
8 Let your garments always be white,  
And let your head lack no oil.*

*9 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun,  
all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.  
10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom  
in the grave where you are going.*

## III. Solution: Enjoy Life

- A. **Enjoy Your Food, 7**
  - 1. Not sarcastic: "Let's eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die."
  - 2. Don't stop living just because you are dying.
  - 3. Prov. 15:17 - *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, Than a fatted calf with hatred.*
  - 4. Prov. 17:1 - *Better is a dry morsel with quietness, Than a house full of feasting with strife.*
- B. **Enjoy Getting dressed up and going out, 8**
  - 1. The hot, dry climate of Palestine is the reason for both the white clothes and oil..
  - 2. Oil protected against dry skin made skin and hair appear healthier.
- C. **Enjoy Your Wife, 9a**
  - 1. Prov. 18:22 - *He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the Lord.*
  - 2. Prov. 19:14 - *Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the Lord.*
- D. **Enjoy Life While You Can Its One of God's Gifts, 9b**
  - 1. Such enjoyment is too momentary.
  - 2. Rom. 9:16 - *So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows*

mercy.

**E. Enjoy Your Work, 10**

1. "Since I am dying might as well stop working."
2. God created man to work in the garden. This was not a curse or trouble but part of what made up paradise.
3. Those who have a chance to work should enjoy it while they can.
4. Jn. 9:4 - *I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.*

Eccl. 9:11-12 - *11 I returned and saw under the sun that—*

*The race is not to the swift,*

*Nor the battle to the strong,*

*Nor bread to the wise,*

*Nor riches to men of understanding,*

*Nor favor to men of skill;*

*But time and chance happen to them all.*

*12 For man also does not know his time:*

*Like fish taken in a cruel net,*

*Like birds caught in a snare,*

*So the sons of men are snared in an evil time,*

*When it falls suddenly upon them.*

**IV. Chance Comes Upon All Men**

**A. The Surprises of Life, 11.**

1. This verse starts a new subject.
2. Only the Lord can control "time and chance".
3. The word "chance" simply means occurrence or event. It has nothing to do with gambling.
4. Things do not always turn out as we might presume.
  - a. The fastest runner does not always win the race.
  - b. The strongest army does not always win the battle.
  - c. The wisest man may go hungry.
  - d. The richest man may be ignorant.
  - e. The most skilled man may not be hired for the job.

**B. The Unpredictability of Life, 12**

1. The suddenness of calamity.
2. This is not just about death, but any unforeseen evil or disastrous event.

Eccl. 9:13-18 - *13 This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it seemed great to me: 14 There was a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great snares around it. 15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that same poor man.*

*16 Then I said:*

*"Wisdom is better than strength.*

*Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised,*

*And his words are not heard.*

*17 Words of the wise, spoken quietly, should be heard*

*Rather than the shout of a ruler of fools.*

*18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war;*

*But one sinner destroys much good."*

**V. The Superiority of Wisdom is Not Rewarded**

**A. Illustration, 15**

1. Introduction to an example of wisdom that made a large impact on him.
2. Little city vs. great king
3. Few men vs. great siege-works.

4. A tremendously lopsided battle. From the perspective of manpower and resources the city does not stand a chance.
  5. Reminds one of verse 11: *"The battle is not the mighty."*
  6. Wisdom without financial resources saves the city.
- B. Wisdom is better but not Remembered, 16**
1. His deed should have merited him a statue in the city square.
- C. Wisdom Is Better But Not Heard, 17**
1. It receives little reward from the world, which admires none save the rich and great.
  2. The quiet words of wisdom over the loud words of fools.
  3. The words of the wise are worth hearing not that they are always heeded.
  4. The teachings of the wise appeal by virtue of their content, not by their volume.
- D. Wisdom is Better but One Sinner Can be More Destructive, 18**
1. It takes only one person to spoil the work of the wise.
  2. Achan sinned and brought defeat on the army of Israel Josh. 7.
  3. David's sin brought trouble (2 Sam. 11,12), even though he had also brought much good.

## Conclusion

- A. Rom. 6:23a - *For the wages of sin is death,*
- B. Rom. 6:23b - *but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- C. While death is inevitable, we should still enjoy life.
- D. 1 Cor. 15:57,58 - *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

## Questions:

### Matching

1. Draw a line matching the opposites.

Righteous	fears and oath
Clean	does not sacrifice
Good	wicked
Takes an oath	sinner
Sacrifice	unclean

### Fill in the Blanks

2. "...for a living \_\_\_\_\_ is better than a dead \_\_\_\_\_."
3. "For the \_\_\_\_\_ know that they will die; but the \_\_\_\_\_ know nothing"

### Short Answer

4. What did Solomon say was the greatest evil?

### List

5. List the advantages of living over death.

6. List the things man is to enjoy in this life.

7. List the surprise that Solomon found in life.

**True/False**

8. T F Wisdom is better than weakness and weapons of war.

9. T F A rich wise man delivered the city.

**Application and Discussion**

10. List the sinner and their sin which caused a great deal of harm. List some single sins which can have far reaching negative results.

11. Explain how time and chance works against your good and great plans.

# Observation of Folly

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## ***Ecclesiastes 10:1-20***

10:1-3 - *Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment,  
And cause it to give off a foul odor;  
So does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor.  
2 A wise man's heart is at his right hand,  
But a fool's heart at his left.  
3 Even when a fool walks along the way,  
He lacks wisdom,  
And he shows everyone that he is a fool.*

### **Introduction**

1. The word “*folly*” is found several times in this chapter.
2. Solomon gives one last look at the value of wisdom over folly.

### **I. Folly Seen in The Ointment**

#### **A. A Little Folly Does Great Damage, 1**

1. It takes only a little of something bad to spoil something good.
2. “A man known for his wisdom can destroy his reputation by one foolish act” (Willis 42).
3. Wise people will stay away from folly.

#### **B. Folly Starts in the Heart, 2**

1. An antithetic proverb
2. One person is wise and another a fool due to their heart condition.
3. “In the ancient world, the right hand was the place of power and honor, while the left hand represented weakness and rejection (Matt. 25:33,41). Many people considered the left side to be “unlucky.” (The English word ‘sinister’ comes from a Latin word that means ‘on the left and’)” (Weirsbach 528).
4. Wisdom and folly go in two different directions.

#### **C. Folly Cannot Be Hidden in a Crowd, 3**

1. Folly is Obvious through observation.
2. Picture of the fool walking on a road when one sees at him once they will know he is a fool.
3. A fool cannot conceal himself.
4. Prov. 12:23 - *A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.*

Eccl. 10:4-7 - *4 If the spirit of the ruler rises against you,  
Do not leave your post;  
For conciliation pacifies great offenses.  
5 There is an evil I have seen under the sun,  
As an error proceeding from the ruler:  
6 Folly is set in great dignity,  
While the rich sit in a lowly place.  
7 I have seen servants on horses,  
While princes walk on the ground like servants.*

### **II. Folly Seen on the Throne**

#### **A. A Foolish Ruler Lacks Self-Control, 4**

1. Solomon asked for wisdom to rule, 1 Ki. 3:3-28.
  2. Prov. 16:32 - *He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*
  3. Prov. 25:28 - *Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.*
  4. Prov. 16:14 - *As messengers of death is the king's wrath, But a wise man will appease it.*
- B. A Foolish Ruler will Error, 5**
1. Evil arises from an error.
  2. Rehoboam listened to his youthful friends.
- C. A Foolish Ruler Will Promote the Wrong Men to the Wrong Positions, 6,7**
1. Like Ahasuerus did with Mordecai and Haman (Es 3:1, 2; 6:6-11).

Eccl. 10:8-11a - *8 He who digs a pit will fall into it,  
 And whoever breaks through a wall will be bitten by a serpent.  
 9 He who quarries stones may be hurt by them,  
 And he who splits wood may be endangered by it.  
 10 If the ax is dull,  
 And one does not sharpen the edge,  
 Then he must use more strength;  
 But wisdom brings success.  
 11 A serpent may bite when it is not charmed;*

### III. Folly Seen in the Workplace

- A. Folly Lacks A Caution**
1. Pit Falls, 8a
    - a. Prov. 26:27 - *Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him.*
    - b. Prov. 28:10 - *Whoever causes the upright to go astray in an evil way, He himself will fall into his own pit;*
  2. Snake Bites, 8b
  3. Rock Falls, 9a
  4. Ax-idents, 9b
  5. Lesson:
    - a. Not "unused skill is wasted."
    - b. Not even experts fail if they do not apply skill.
    - c. Not every job has its occupational hazards.
    - d. Not that hard work is foolish because you might get hurt.
    - e. Where a great amount of caution is needed wisdom goes unheeded.
    - f. The accident prone are those who are prone to cause accidents by their folly.
- B. Folly Works Harder Not Smarter, 10**
1. Don't work harder work smarter.
  2. First lesson as a logger: keep you ax sharp.
- C. Folly Lacks Proper Priorities, 11**
1. Not an accident like Paul's encounter with the viper (Acts 28:4).
  2. "Snakes have no external ears; they pick up sound waves primarily through the bone structure of the head" (Wiersbe 529).
  3. Too late to charm a snake after it bites.
  4. Unused wisdom is folly.

Eccl. 10:11b-15 - *The babblers is no different.  
 12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious,  
 But the lips of a fool shall swallow him up;  
 13 The words of his mouth begin with foolishness,  
 And the end of his talk is raving madness.  
 14 A fool also multiplies words.  
 No man knows what is to be;*

*Who can tell him what will be after him?  
15 The labor of fools wearies them,  
For they do not even know how to go to the city!*

#### **IV. Folly Seen On the Lips**

##### **A. A Fool's Lips are Destructive, 12**

1. Verse 11b moves the thoughts from the workplace to the babblers' lips.
2. Prov. 10:8 - *The wise in heart will receive commands, But a prating fool will fall.*
3. Prov. 10:21 - *The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom.*
4. Prov. 13:3 - *He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.*
5. Prov. 18:7 - *A fool's mouth is his destruction, And his lips are the snare of his soul.*
6. "Speaking wisely brings approval; a fool's words invite destruction" (Longman 247).
7. Swallowed up by his own lips.
8. James 3:5-6 - *5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.*

##### **B. A Fool's Lips are Preposterous, 13**

1. Prov. 15:2 - *The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.*

##### **C. A Fool's Lips are Unbridled 14a**

1. The fool tends to talk a lot.
2. They say whatever comes to mind without minding what they say.
3. James 3:1-2 - *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.*

##### **D. A Fool's Lips Are Omniscient, 14b**

1. Prov. 27:1 - *Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.*
2. See James 4:13-17
3. He thinks he knows it all.
4. No one can tell him anything.

##### **F. A Fool's Lips Are ineffectual 15**

1. "The fool is so busy talking about the future that he loses his way in the present."
2. He gets lost backing out of his own drive way.
3. He knows everything except how to get home.

*Eccl. 10:16-20 - 16 Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child,  
And your princes feast in the morning!  
17 Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles,  
And your princes feast at the proper time—  
For strength and not for drunkenness!  
18 Because of laziness the building decays,  
And through idleness of hands the house leaks.  
19 A feast is made for laughter,  
And wine makes merry;  
But money answers everything.  
20 Do not curse the king, even in your thought;  
Do not curse the rich, even in your bedroom;  
For a bird of the air may carry your voice,  
And a bird in flight may tell the matter.*

#### **V. Folly Seen Among the Rulers**

##### **A. Indulgence, 16,17**



1. Generally youth are given to indulgences.
2. Rulers can be immature.
3. Josiah is an exception. 2 Chr. 34:3 - *For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images.*
4. Wiser rulers are mature enough to know to party at the right time and eat for the right reasons.

**B. Slothfulness, 18**

1. Lazy rulers leave undone the problems which need tending and the kingdom falls apart.
2. Prov. 18:9 - *He who is slothful in his work is a brother to him who is a great destroyer.*
3. Indifference to needs leads to destruction.

**C. Hedonistic, 19**

1. Eat all you can, enjoy all you can, and get all you can.

**D. Indiscretion, 20**

1. Old saying "a little bird told me"
2. If you cannot respect the leader at least respect office (Rom. 13:1-17; 1 Peter 2:13-17).
3. Ex. 22:28 - *"You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people."*
4. Beware! Even the bedroom walls have ears and lips.

## Conclusion

**A. Solomon's Observations are that there are fools everywhere.**

1. Bumper Sticker: "Beam me up Scotty. There is no intelligent life down here."

## Questions:

### Short Answer

1. How many times does the term "folly" appear in this chapter?
  
2. What does it mean that a little fly spoils the ointment?

### Matching

3. Draw a line matching the folly seen on the throne.

Ruler rises against you	on horses
Rich	walking on the ground
Servants	sit in lowly places
Princes	do not leave your post

4. Draw a line matching the disaster which befell the individual.

Digger	Snake bite
One who breaks wall down	dull ax
Quarry worker	hurt by stones
Wood cutter	falls into pit
Snake Charmer	

**True/False**

5.     T     F     Folly works smarter not harder.
6.     T     F     The disaster which came upon these men were the result of random accidents.

**List**

7.     List the characteristics of a fool's lips.

8.     List the folly seen in rulers.

**Application and Discussion**

9.     List some places where you have witnessed folly.

10.    Give examples of folly you have witnessed in the workplace.

# Carpe Diem Advice

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## ***Ecclesiastes 11:1 - 12:1a***

Eccl 11:1-6 - *Cast your bread upon the waters,  
For you will find it after many days.  
2 Give a serving to seven, and also to eight,  
For you do not know what evil will be on the earth.  
3 If the clouds are full of rain,  
They empty themselves upon the earth;  
And if a tree falls to the south or the north,  
In the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie.  
4 He who observes the wind will not sow,  
And he who regards the clouds will not reap.  
5 As you do not know what is the way of the wind,  
Or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child,  
So you do not know the works of God who makes everything.  
6 In the morning sow your seed,  
And in the evening do not withhold your hand;  
For you do not know which will prosper,  
Either this or that,  
Or whether both alike will be good.*

### **Introduction**

#### **A. Carpe Diem**

1. Latin phrase meaning "seize the day."
2. True carpe diem advice encourages one to live for today without concerning for the future; however, Solomon advises one to enjoy life now while contemplating the future.

#### **B. Is life really worth living?**

1. Wisdom, pleasure, success, are all spoiled by death.
2. Time and chance happen to all and terminate the wisest of plans.
3. Enjoying Life is not a "sure thing"
  - a. Sayings about the cloudiness of man's effort.
  - b. "for you do not know" vv. 2, 5,6

### **I. Seize the Day Despite Uncertainties**

#### **A. The Merchant Sending Out Ships, 1-2**

1. Must be figurative language. After all, who wants to old soggy bread?
2. Various views of verse one.
  - a. Bread of charity to others might bring a good return.
    - 1) Arabic proverb: "Do good; throw your bread on the waters; and one day you will be rewarded."
  - b. "image from the custom of sowing seed by casting it from boats into the overflowing waters of the Nile, or in any marshy ground. When the waters receded, the grain in the alluvial soil sprang up (Isa 32:20)" (Jamison, Faussett and Brown).
  - c. Sending out grain ships to trade. Many days later they return with a good return.
    - 1) Solomon was noted for his trade ventures 1 Ki. 9:26; 10:15,22.
    - 2) "Bread" is sometimes equivalent to possessions. (9:11)
3. Living Life Requires Taking Risk, 1

- a. The ships might hit a reef, meet a storm, or be attacked by pirates, and the cargo lost.
  - b. The calculated risks of business and in living day by day.
  - c. Not the same as gambling.
  - d. Living life may bring great rewards.
4. Living Life With Variety, 2
- a. Because of the risks put your grain on more than one ship to send out, if one ship is lost all grain and profit is not lost.
  - b. Seven is the perfect number. Eight is added for being extra careful.
  - c. "Don't put all your eggs into one basket."
  - d. Diversification of one's financial risks.
  - e. Do not be Careless
  - f. Do not be paralyzed into inactivity.
  - g. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.
  - h. None can know what will happen. Diversification doesn't necessarily guarantee safety.

**B. The Farmer Planting His Seed, 3-6**

- 1. Living Life is like farming. It is hard work and a venture filled with uncertainties.
- 2. Trouble is Inevitable in Life, 3a
  - a. "In every life a little rain must fall."
  - b. Clouds rain when they're ready.
- 2. Events in Life are Random, 3b
  - a. Whatever direction a tree falls it stays where it lands.
  - b. Random events can be just as inconvenient. The fallen tree which has consulted no-one's convenience as to when and where it lands.
  - c. "If we worried about the wind topping a tree over on us, or the clouds drenching us with rain, we would never accomplish anything" (Weirsbe 534).
- 3. Perfect Circumstances Cannot Delay Living Life, 4
  - a. Farmers who wait for the perfect weather conditions will never get anywhere.
  - b. Do not waste your life away waiting on the perfect circumstances.
  - c. Absolute certainty never arrives.
  - d. Do not let the prospect of disaster in life immobilize, paralyze you.
- 4. Only God is in Control of Creation, 5
  - a. Know your human limitations.
  - b. Direction of the wind and the formation of an embryo are beyond man's control and discernment.
  - c. Man's incapacity to discern of the plans of God in this life.
- 5. Redouble Your Efforts in Life, 6.
  - a. Plant double in hope that one or perhaps both plantings will come to realization.
  - b. Eph. 5:15-17 - *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

Eccl. 11:7-10 - *7 Truly the light is sweet,  
 And it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun;  
 8 But if a man lives many years  
 And rejoices in them all,  
 Yet let him remember the days of darkness,  
 For they will be many.  
 All that is coming is vanity.  
 9 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth,  
 And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth;  
 Walk in the ways of your heart,  
 And in the sight of your eyes;  
 But know that for all these  
 God will bring you into judgment.*

10 Therefore remove sorrow from your heart,  
And put away evil from your flesh,  
For childhood and youth are vanity.

## II. Seize the Days of One's Youth

### A. Relish Life, 7

1. Life is good. Life is not bitter, life is sweet.
2. He values life over death.

### B. Rejoice Throughout Life, 8a

1. Life is short. Seize each day and make it count.
2. The abundance of our lives is not determined by how long we live, but how well we live it.
3. As long as the young live they should enjoy life.

### C. Remember Dark Days are Coming, 8b

1. Days of sickness, old age and death.
2. Dark days as opposed to the light of life - youth.
3. Do not become obsessed with Death.

### D. Rejoice Your Heart in Youth, 9

1. Life is meant to be enjoyed. Youth is not inherently evil.
2. God is not a kill-joy. God expects young people to act like young people.
3. The "heart" and the "eyes" are the seats of strong desires in youth.
4. Youth need to enjoy life while they have their youth.
5. Not a playboy lifestyle. Solomon does not have sinful pleasures in mind.

### E. Realize Judgment is Coming, 9b

1. They cannot live anyway they desire for God will Judge them.
2. No rejoicing without reckoning.

### F. Remove Anxiety from the Heart, 10a

1. No Rejoicing without responsibility.
2. Phil. 4:6-7 - *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

### G. Remove Evil From the Flesh, 10b

1. Don't sow your wild oats and later pray for a crop failure.
2. Youthful indiscretions contribute to much sorrow.
3. 2 Tim. 2:22 - *"Flee also youthful lusts."*
4. 2 Cor. 7:1 - *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

### H. Recognize the Transitory Nature of Youth, 10c

1. "For youth and vitality are transient" (Longman 262)..
2. Make the most of your youth. You will never see these years again.

## Conclusion

### A. What is the Purpose of Life?

1. Eleanor Roosevelt: "The purpose of life is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience."
2. Although Solomon encourages loving life and seizing the day he has yet to arrive at his conclusion about the purpose of life.

## Questions:

### Multiple Choice

1. What does the Latin phrase *carpe diem* means?
  - a. Seize the day
  - b. Fish of the day
  - c. vanities of vanity
  - d. life is meaningless

2. The command to "*cast your bread*" means
- Show benevolence in hope of reward
  - Send out merchant ships with grain to make a profit
  - Sow your wild oats
  - All the above

**Matching**

3. Draw a line matching the wisdom with farming.

Trouble is Inevitable in Life	a tree falls
Events in Life are Random	sow in morning and in the evening
Perfect Circumstances Cannot Delay Living Life	how baby bones formed in womb
Only God is in Control of Creation	clouds full of rain
Redouble Your Efforts in Life	observe wind and clouds

**True/False**

4. T F Wisdom demands one should wait until circumstances are perfect before acting.
5. T F Youthful indiscretions contribute to much sorrow.

**List**

6. List the advice Solomon gives to youth.

**Application and Discussion**

7. List some practical ways Christians can seize the opportunities of day to day life.
8. If you could go back and advise yourself at age 12 about living life, what would you say?

# More Advice to Youth and Epilogue

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## ***Ecclesiastes 12:1-14***

### **Introduction**

- A. How long do you want to live? Face some facts:**
1. No one is getting any younger.
  2. Growing old does not seem to be much fun.
  3. The alternative to growing old is even worse: death.
  4. Wendell P. Loveless: "I don't go out much now because my parents won't let me - Mother Nature and Father Time!" (Weirsbe 535).
- B. Old Age is Not Always Viewed as an Curse**
1. Prov. 16:31 - *The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, If it is found in the way of righteousness.*
  2. Prov. 20:29 - *The glory of young men is their strength, And the splendor of old men is their gray head.*
  3. To grow old gracefully one must start while they are young in serving God.
- C. Solomon encourages the youth to make a Selection to serve their Creator before the Deterioration of the flesh in old age leads to death. Now they must receive this Instruction from his research and apply his Conclusion.

*Eccl. 12:1a - Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth,*

### **I. Remember your Creator While Young, 1a**

- A. Start Serving God While Young**
1. Sever God while in the zeal and strength of one's youth.
  2. Many youth served Him: Joseph, Samuel, David, Josiah, Daniel, Timothy, Jesus, etc.
  3. The Hebrew is "Creators," plural, implying the plurality of persons, as in Gen. 1:26; so Hebrew, "Makers" (Isa 54:5).
  4. Opposite of sowing wild oats of youth.
  5. Don't burn your candle for the devil and blow the smoke of a wasted life in the face of God!
- B. Motive: the deterioration of old age is coming.**
1. Repetitive "before" speaks to the fleeting time of youth.
  2. James 4:14 - *whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.*
  3. Youth is a time to enjoy life, old age has evil days that bring no joy.
  4. Something horrifying was on the horizon.

*Eccl. 12: 1b-8 - 1b ....Before the difficult days come,  
And the years draw near when you say,  
"I have no pleasure in them":  
2 While the sun and the light,  
The moon and the stars,  
Are not darkened,  
And the clouds do not return after the rain;  
3 In the day when the keepers of the house tremble,  
And the strong men bow down;  
When the grinders cease because they are few,  
And those that look through the windows grow dim;*

4 *When the doors are shut in the streets,  
And the sound of grinding is low;  
When one rises up at the sound of a bird,  
And all the daughters of music are brought low.  
5 Also they are afraid of height,  
And of terrors in the way;  
When the almond tree blossoms,  
The grasshopper is a burden,  
And desire fails.  
For man goes to his eternal home,  
And the mourners go about the streets.*

6 *Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed,  
Or the golden bowl is broken,  
Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain,  
Or the wheel broken at the well.  
7 Then the dust will return to the earth as it was,  
And the spirit will return to God who gave it.  
8 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "All is vanity."*

## II. Reflect On the Coming of Old Age and Death

### A. The Dark Storm of Destructive Aging on the Horizon, 2

1. "Light" in Gen. 1 gives a chronological description of creation.
2. During our youthful years the sky is bright.
3. The storms clouds of aging just keep on coming. "I just got my nose fixed and now my mouth will not work."
4. Storm clouds in the winter of life come and darken the light of the sun and moon in youth.
5. The darkness created by the cloud that make a rainy day so depressing.

### B. Allegory of a Deteriorating House, 3,4a

1. Apparent arbitrariness of associations.
  - a. Both ancient and modern interpreters believe this to be an: anatomical allegory.
2. A picture of a house what is falling apart and return to the dust.
3. In the day when the keepers of the house tremble,
  - a. The arms weaken
  - b. The household threaten by a storm.
4. And the strong men bow down;
  - a. The legs and knees weaken.
5. When the grinders cease because they are few,
  - a. Teeth fall out.
6. And those that look through the windows grow dim;
  - a. No glasses or cataract surgery back then.
7. When the doors are shut in the streets,
  - a. The lips like shut doors the sound of mastication is scarcely heard.
8. And the sound of grinding is low;
  - a. the ears become hard of hearing

### C. More Allegories, Metaphors and Facts of Aging, 4b, 5a

1. When one rises up at the sound of a bird,
  - a. Easily awakened.
  - b. Likely to suffer from insomnia.
2. And all the daughters of music are brought low.
  - a. The body members that produce and that enjoy music; the voice and ear.
  - b. Your voice starts to quaver and weaken.
  - c. The voice no longer able to produce music.
  - d. Hard of hearing.
  - e. Barzillai said to King David: 2 Sam. 19:35 - *I am today eighty years old. Can I discern between the good and bad? Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any longer the voice of singing men and singing women? Why*



*then should your servant be a further burden to my lord the king?*

3. Also they are afraid of height,
  - a. The fear of falling.
4. And of terrors in the way;
  - a. Elderly often speak of fear of crime, illness, loss of independence, high taxes.
5. When the almond tree blossoms,
  - a. He hair turns gray.
6. The grasshopper is a burden,
  - a. Summer is over, coldness coming and grasshopper weak. Movement of the grasshopper which has lost its spring describe the painful and labored movement of old age.
  - b. "grasshoppers--the dry, shrivelled, old man, his backbone sticking out, his knees projecting forwards, his arms backwards, his head down, and the apophyses enlarged, is like that insect. Hence arose the fable, that Tithonus in very old age was changed into a grasshopper" (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown).
7. And desire fails.
  - a. Literally "'the caper-berry fails'. This berry was highly regarded as a stimulus to the appetite and as a aphrodisiac" (Kidner 103).
  - b. Loss of appetite for all things, even life itself.

**D. Description of Death, 5a-7**

1. Goes to eternal home
  - a. Grave in view, not heavenly home.
2. Mourners of one's death
3. A Golden lamp suspended by a silver cord. The cord breaks and the light of life goes out. Light of the lamp has gone out = death.
4. "One day the wheel breaks, the pitcher is shattered. ...The fountain of water was an ancient image for life (Ps. 36:8-9; Rev. 21:6). ...The heart stops pumping, the blood stops circulating, and death has come." (Wiersbe 436).
  - a. Water can no more be drawn, so life ceases when the vital energies are gone.
  - b. The circulation of the blood ceases.
  - c. Water, absolutely essential to sustaining life, symbolizes life. The verse describes death as the cessation of light and water.
5. Body Returns to Dust, 7a
  - a. "Dust" alludes to Gen 2:7 and 3:19.
6. Spirit Returns to God, 7b
  - a. The spirit surviving the body; suggesting its immortality.
  - b. A reversal of creation. God made man from dust and gave him the breath of life. Man returns to the dust and his spirit returns to God.

**E. Process Reflects Futility of Life, 8**

1. With 1:2 form an inclusio for the book.
2. The Prologue repeated right before the Epilogue for added effect.

Eccl. 12:9-12 - 9 *And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs. 10 The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright—words of truth. 11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. 12 And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.*

### III. Receive the Right Kind of Instruction, 9-12

**A. The Preacher's Aim:**

1. "son" is biological or vocational representation of either a physical son or a student,
2. Be wise
3. Give Instruction

**B. Means:**

1. After careful research.
2. Having his material orderly arranged not haphazard.

3. Of Solomon Kidner wrote, "this man should be the patron saint of writers" (Kidner 103).
4. Accepted Words
  - a. Sought delightful words.
  - b. The book is better characterized as difficult and problematic and troublesome not pleasant and delightful.
  - c. He sought to write in a way to appeal to his readers. This was an adventure exploring with Solomon through the landscape of life his elusive prey: the purpose of life.
5. Applying Truth
  - a. He did not compromise the truth in his pursuit.
- C. Motivating the Students**
  1. Using Goads
    - a. Goads like a cattle prod.
    - b. Piercing deeply into the mind.
    - c. Prodding their thoughts along in the right direction
    - d. Words of the wise are of great value.
  2. Using Nails
    - a. "are fastened (in the memory) like nails"
    - b. Nails give them something on which to hand what they have learned. Practical lessons that make sense.
  3. Using a Shepherd
    - a. Some see "shepherd" as a metaphoric reference to God as the source of inspiration for this book.
    - b. A goad is part of the shepherd's trade.
- D. Warning: Beware of Many Books of Men and Weary Reading, 12**
  1. Since one can't study every book, one must be selective as to which ones.
  2. There are too many books, and people exhaust themselves by trying to keep up with them.

Eccl. 12:13,14 - *13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:  
Fear God and keep His commandments,  
For this is man's all.  
14 For God will bring every work into judgment,  
Including every secret thing,  
Whether good or evil.*

## V. Receive the Conclusion, 13,14

- A. Fear God**
  1. Mentioned in 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; and 8:12,13.
  2. "To fear God in this sense means to respect, honor and worship the Lord" (Longman 282).
  3. "The remarkable thing about fearing God is that, when you fear God, you fear nothing else; whereas, if you do not fear God, you fear everything else." (Oswald Chambers).
  4. This summarizes the answer to his own question in 2:3b.
  5. Prov. 1:7 - *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.*
- B. Keep His Commandments**
  1. "this is the whole man," the full ideal of man.
  2. "When all else fails, read the instructions."
- C. Remember Judgment is Inevitable**
  1. Acts 17:31 - *because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."*
- D. Remember Judgment is Inclusive**
  1. 2 Cor. 5:10 - *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

## Conclusion

- A. People have often searched for the meaning of life...**
1. "Why am I here?"
  2. "What is my purpose for life?"
- B. Christ is the answer to the conclusion of vanity under the sun.**
1. 1 John 5:12 - *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

## Questions:

### True/False

1. T F To grow old gracefully one must wait they start getting old to serving God.
2. T F Youth is a time to enjoy life, old age has evil days that bring no joy.
3. T F Darkening clouds represent the arrival of death.

### Matching

4. Draw a line matching the metaphor with the aging process.

keepers of house tremble

poor eye sight

strong men bow down

insomnia

grinders cease

trouble walking

look through windows grow dim

gray hair

sound of grinding low

arms weaken

rises at sound of bird

teeth fall out

daughters of music brought low

hard of hearing

almond tree blossoms

legs and knees give way

grasshopper a burden

voice cannot sing

### Short Answer

5. What is the means of instruction?
6. What is used to motivate the students?
7. What warning does Solomon give? Why?
8. Draw a line matching the descriptions of death.

eternal home

light of life goes out

golden lamp

heart stops

body

grave

spirit

return to dust

pitcher shattered

return to God

**True/False**

9.     T     F     Solomon only in this chapter suggests that his readers fear God.
10.    T     F     Solomon is saying that the only duty man has is to fear God.
11.    T     F     Judgment is both inevitable and inclusive.

**Application and Discussion**

12.    What are some benefits of a Christians living a long time?
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13.    Has the study of Ecclesiastes been pleasant or delightful in some ways? Explain. Has it been of any practical help in your Christian life? Explain.