



HOAW Newsletter

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.

Ecclesiastes 12:13

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HELPING MEN LIVE LIVES OF INTEGRITY AND HONOR

Lessons from Ecclesiastes

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The book of Ecclesiastes are the reflections of a king in the winter of his reign. Solomon reflects on his life and evaluates the results of his activities finding some of value but most meaningless when engaged for the specific purpose of self-actualization. He explored every avenue of desire finding each and every involvement meaningless when life is lived on a horizontal plane devoid of any relationship with the Creator. When God is taken out of the picture, he stresses, whatever we turn our hands to do will eventually prove to be meaningless. At the conclusion of his findings, he states unequivocally that the whole duty of man is to fear God (have the utmost respect for the majesty of God) and keep His commandments;

the structured boundaries of thought and behavior, that will prove to be the road to a focused and fulfilled life.

Summary of Solomon's Initiatives

Great Projects Completed: built houses, planted vineyards, made gardens and parks, planted fruit trees, made reservoirs, had slaves, owned herds and flocks, amassed silver and gold, acquired singers, had a harem.

Great Philosophies on Key Issues: wisdom--wickedness, oppression, labor, achievement, the tongue, justice, materialism, wealth

In his own words...

"I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to

achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun (Eccl 2:10-11)."

Practical Application

Ecclesiastes offers the Christian an opportunity to understand the emptiness and despair that those who do not know God grapple with. Those who do not have a saving faith in Christ are faced with a life that will ultimately end and become irrelevant. If there is no salvation, and no God, then not only is there no point to life, but no purpose or direction to it, either. The world "under the sun," apart from God, is frustrating, cruel, unfair, brief, and "utterly meaningless." But with Christ, life is but a shadow of the glories to come

in a heaven that is only accessible through Him.¹

Interesting Facts

Under the sun...29 times; last is 10:5; found only in Ecclesiastes;
Under heaven...3 times; last is 3:1
 This phrase implies life lived by purely earthly and human values without recourse to a supernatural level of reality is meaningless. Anytime the phrase appears he is commenting from the perspective of someone living their life on the horizontal plane apart from a vertical relationship with God.

Chasing after the wind...9 times; all but 2 are connected with "meaningless;" found only in Ecclesiastes

Meaningless...49 times; last is 12:8; found 3 other times (Job 27:12; Isa 1:13; 1 Tim 1:6) As a quality of life under the sun--this image connotes emptiness, fragility, elusiveness and brevity.²

Wisdom...30 times; last is 10:1

Heart...31 times; last is 11:10

Key Passages

Eccl 1:3-11 Life Goes On - *What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun? Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course.*

All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again. All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing (pictures I take of Ireland), nor the ear its fill of hearing. What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. 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. There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow.

Is Solomon's conclusion true that "there is nothing new under the sun?" In Christ, all things are made new...

- He has given us a new commandment to love one another (Jn 13:34)
- We have new life in the Spirit (Rom 7:6)
- In Him we are a new creation (2 Cor 5:17)
- He gives us a new self (Col 3:10)
- He gives us a new and living way (Heb 10:20)
- He is the mediator of a new covenant (Heb 12:24)
- There will be new heavens and a new earth (2 Pet 3:13)
- He will make all things new (Rev 21:5)

Life apart from God is indeed meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Activity without purpose is meaningless.

Eccl 2:17-23 You Can't Take It with You - *So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. So, my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.*

Naked we came into the world, and naked shall we leave this world. Things acquired will be things lost. Relationships established, however, will continue on. But wisdom has its limits. God gave Solomon the gift of wisdom. Having wisdom and acting on that wisdom is two different things. In many situations, Solomon chose to

¹ GotQuestions.org

² From Dictionary of Biblical Imagery © 1998 by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA. All rights reserved.

disregard wisdom and act contrary to what he knew to be true. You can know what is right but choose what is wrong and harmful. One can be wise but act in unwise ways. Our own evil intentions and proclivities can overwhelm our wisdom. That is one of the many reasons we need a Savior.

Eccl 3:1-8 The Pendulum of Life - *There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:*

- *a time to be born and a time to die,*
- *a time to plant and a time to uproot,*
- *a time to kill and a time to heal,*
- *a time to tear down and a time to build,*
- *a time to weep and a time to laugh,*
- *a time to mourn and a time to dance,*
- *a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,*
- *a time to embrace and a time to refrain,*
- *a time to search and a time to give up,*
- *a time to keep and a time to throw away,*
- *a time to tear and a time to mend,*
- *a time to be silent and a time to speak,*
- *a time to love and a time to hate,*
- *a time for war and a time for peace.*

Life happens between plans. There is a proper time and procedure for every matter (8:6) even though anxiety weighs heavily on our soul. Wisdom applied will help us to know “the proper time and procedure.” There is an ebb and flow to it. We cannot predict or foresee life ahead, but we can prepare for whatever comes our way. Circumstances, events, and encounters may be out of our control. But how we respond to whatever comes our way is in our control through Christ and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Eccl 3:10-11 Eternity in Every Soul - I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also **set eternity in the hearts of men**; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

God’s DNA is given to every living soul and compels us to seek answers to the most important questions of our lives: Why am I here (purpose)? Am I making any advancement (progress)? Am I making any worthwhile contribution that matters (permanence)?

Eccl 4:9-12 Importance of Friends - Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered,

two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Human beings were created to be relational, and friendships are an important part of our lives. We need friends—people we bond with in mutual affection. But not just any friend will do; having the right friends is key, and discernment is required: “The righteous choose their friends carefully” ([Proverbs 12:26](#)). In Scripture, we see what a true friend should be:

- A true friend shows love, no matter what ([Proverbs 17:17](#)).
- A true friend gives heartfelt advice, bringing joy to the heart ([Proverbs 27:9](#)).
- A true friend rebukes when necessary, but the correction is done in love ([Proverbs 27:5–6](#)).
- A true friend influences, enlivens, and sharpens ([Proverbs 27:17](#)).
- A true friend avoid gossip ([Proverbs 16:28](#)).
- A true friend forgives and does not hold grudges ([Proverbs 17:9](#)).
- A true friend is loyal ([Proverbs 18:24](#)).
- A true friend helps in time of need ([Ecclesiastes 4:9–12](#)).³

Chapters 8-12 of Ecclesiastes describe the Preacher’s suggestions and comments on how a life should be lived. He comes to the conclusion that without God, there is no truth or meaning to life. He has seen many evils and realized that even the best of man’s

³ GotQuestions.org

achievements is worth nothing in the long run. So, he advises the reader to acknowledge God from youth (12:1) and to follow His will (12:13-14).

Eccl 8:1-9 Knowing When to Act - *Who is like the wise? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed. I say: Keep the king's command, because of God's oath to him. Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause, for he does whatever he pleases. For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, "What are you doing?" Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing, and the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way. For there is a time and a way for everything, although man's trouble lies heavy on him. For he does not know what is to be, for who can tell him how it will be? No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death. There is no discharge from war, nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it. All this I observed while applying my heart to all that is done under the sun, when man had power over man to his hurt.*

Let's look at this passage more closely.

(1) Who is like the wise man? Who knows the explanation of things? Wisdom brightens a man's face and changes its hard appearance. Godly wisdom can anticipate what's ahead. Little surprises a man of wisdom or catches him unaware.

(2) Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God. (3) Do not be in a hurry to

leave the king's presence. Once you decide to leave you will no longer have the opportunity to change the outcome--you will have to start over somewhere else to establish credibility before you will have an opportunity to bring change.

(4) Since a king's word is supreme, who can say to him, "What are you doing?" (5) Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. (6) For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a man's misery weighs heavily upon him. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases. A good cause becomes a bad cause simply because you bring it up at the wrong time. There is a proper time and procedure for every matter. You have to know what hills you will die on, what hills you will bleed on, and what hills are not worth climbing--die on a few hills, bleed on a few hills; everything else is not worth your engagement.

Eccl 12:1-5 Life is Fleeting (brief, transitory, short-lived) - Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them"- before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their

songs grow faint; when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets.

Life is relatively short. "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— 14 yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes (James 4:13-15)." What legacy will you leave?

Eccl 12:13-14 When All Is Said and Done - Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man. 14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

When we appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give account for what we have done with what God has given us, what evidence will we present that represents a good return on His investment? There are consequences to every action (11:6).

Take Aways

Theological Contribution. The Book of Ecclesiastes has a powerful message for our selfish, materialistic age. It teaches that great accomplishments and earthly possessions alone do not bring lasting happiness. True satisfaction

comes from serving God and following His will for our lives.

But another important truth from Ecclesiastes, which we often overlook, is that life is to be enjoyed. The preacher of this book repeats this truth several times so it does not escape our attention: "There is nothing better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor-it is the gift of God" (3:12-13). God wants us to enjoy life's simple pleasures. Our grateful acceptance of His daily blessings can bring a sense of joy and fulfillment to our lives.⁴

Ecc 2:24-26 There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God; for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? For to the man who pleases him God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of gathering and heaping, only to give to one who pleases God.

Ecc 5:18-20 Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him - for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work - this is a gift of God. He

seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.

Ecc 12:13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.

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If you would like to contact me directly, email me at Greg@HeartofaWarrior.org



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