

# Ecclesiastes 1

## Introduction

- At times we all will ask the question, Why am I here?
- God has put us here on purpose  
**Colossians 1:16** For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:
- God has a purpose for putting us here  
**Revelation 4:11** Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.
- When God is finished with us, He will take us home

### I. The Preacher's Question – Why am I Here?

**Ecclesiastes 1:1-3** The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?

- A. The word Ecclesiastes means the words of the Preacher – the idea of the Preacher is one who speaks to an assembly (ecclesia)
- B. Solomon, the son of David, king in Jerusalem, is the author
- C. The theme is vanity which means uselessness
- D. The perspective taken is an earthly point of view or that which is under the sun
- E. The question asked is, if our labor here on earth is meaningless, then why are we here?
- F. Solomon share his lessons learned from experience, personal observations and God given wisdom

### II. The Preacher's Observations – What's the Use?

- A. There Seems to be No Variety in Life – Nothing seems to Change
  - 1. People are born and people die every day  
**Ecclesiastes 1:4** One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.
  - 2. The sun rises to begin a new day and then sets when day is done

**Ecclesiastes 1:5** The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.

3. The seasons change for a short time and then repeat

**Ecclesiastes 1:6** The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.

4. The river carries water to the sea, but it never seems to overflow – water evaporates soon it rains

**Ecclesiastes 1:7** All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

**B. The Work Never Seems to Come to an End – Nothing Satisfies**

**Ecclesiastes 1:8** All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

1. The work that is done will have to be repeated tomorrow
2. Everything that we do takes work
3. The satisfaction that comes from a job accomplished only lasts a short time
4. Current desires are quickly replaced by new cravings and wants

**C. The Past is Easily Forgotten – Nothing is Really New**

**Ecclesiastes 1:9-11** The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

1. That which brings happiness today will not bring joy tomorrow
2. Something new will catch your eye tomorrow
3. Something new to us might have already been discarded by someone else
4. We easily forget that which brought happiness to us yesterday

### **III. The Preacher's Search – What else is there?**

**A. His search for meaning**

**Ecclesiastes 1:12-15** I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. I have

seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.

1. All is vanity – useless and unsatisfactory
2. There is little that can be done to make any significant changes

**B.** His qualifications – human wisdom

**Ecclesiastes 1:16** I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.

1. Solomon had been given wisdom and discernment by God  
**1 Kings 3:9-12** Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

2. Solomon had knowledge gained by experience

**C.** His conclusion

**Ecclesiastes 1:17-18** And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

1. Even with this human wisdom, finding meaning in life was like trying to catch the wind (vexation of spirit)
2. The more knowledge that I gained, the further from the answer I seemed to get
3. He learned that earthly wisdom apart from God's wisdom was not sufficient to find his purpose in life

## Conclusion

**Luke 12:15-19** And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

- What are the worthwhile things that we do during our life?
- We are not here on this earth to be:
  - Successful – title or position will not satisfy
  - Smart – education will not satisfy
  - Significant – pleasures and wealth will not satisfy
  - Special – relationship with others will not satisfy
- These things mean nothing without Christ – do you have a relationship with Him?

## Ecclesiastes 2

### Do You Enjoy Life?

- The Christian life isn't supposed to be tedious and unpleasant
- A day in the life of a mom

A man came home from work and found his three children outside, still in their pajamas, playing in the mud, with empty food boxes and wrappers strewn all around the front yard. The door of his wife's car was open, as was the front door to the house and there was no sign of the dog.

Proceeding into the entry, he found an even bigger mess. A lamp had been knocked over, and the throw rug was wadded against one wall. In the front room the TV was loudly blaring a cartoon channel, and the family room was strewn with toys and various items of clothing. In the kitchen, dishes filled the sink, breakfast food was spilled on the counter, the fridge door was open wide, dog food was spilled on the floor, a broken glass lay under the table, and a small pile of sand was spread by the back door.

He quickly headed up the stairs, stepping over toys and more piles of clothes, looking for his wife. He was worried she might be ill, or that something serious had happened. He was met with a small trickle of water as it made its way out the bathroom door. As he peered inside he found wet towels, scummy soap and more toys strewn over the floor. Miles of toilet paper lay in a heap and toothpaste had been smeared over the mirror and walls.

As he rushed to the bedroom, he found his wife still curled up in the bed in her pajamas, reading a novel. She looked up at him, smiled, and asked how his day went. He looked at her bewildered and asked, 'What happened here today?' She again smiled and answered, 'You know every day when you come home from work and you ask me what in the world I do all day?' 'Yes,' was his incredulous reply. She answered, 'Well, today I didn't do it.'

- One mother described her horrible day with three small children in the house and began to cry as she rested her head on the high chair – instantly the young toddler who saw him mother crying pulled the pacifier out of his own mouth and popped it in his mother's mouth

## I. The Preacher Tested His Life – He Sought for Pleasure

**Ecclesiastes 2:1** I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.

*Prove – test; mirth – social pleasure*

### A. How he responded to enjoyment

1. He wanted to be entertained, he wanted to laugh

**Ecclesiastes 2:2** I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

- a) Laughter was annoying
- b) Social pleasure was unprofitable
- c) Solomon had learned that laughter did not satisfy

**Proverbs 14:13** Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness.

2. He gave himself wine, he wanted to do experience the pleasures of the flesh to see what was profitable

**Ecclesiastes 2:3** I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

- a) Many have turned to alcohol seeking pleasure or seeking to wash away sorrows
- b) Solomon knew of the dangers of wine

**Proverbs 20:1** Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

**Proverbs 23:29-35** Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

3. Today, people spend huge sums of money seeking pleasure only to not be satisfied. If we live for pleasure alone, the enjoyment will decrease unless the intensity of the pleasure increases

**B.** How he responded to employment

**1.** What he made – great works

**Ecclesiastes 2:4-6** I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

- a) Houses
- b) Vineyards, gardens and orchards
- c) Water supplies and systems

**2.** What he got – workers and wealth

**Ecclesiastes 2:7-8** I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

- a) Servants and maidens
- b) Cattle
- c) Silver, gold and treasures
- d) Singers and musicians

**C.** How he thought these would bring happiness

**Ecclesiastes 2:9-11** So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

- 1.** He was the greatest and had the greatest
- 2.** This greatness did not last nor did it satisfy

## II. The Preacher Hated His Life – He Found that Pleasure Didn't Satisfy

### A. He adjusted his perspective

**Ecclesiastes 2:12** And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.

1. What good is my wisdom after I die?

2. What good is my wealth if I have to leave it behind?

**1 Timothy 6:7** For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

3. What can I do that I haven't done already? – hands and heart were full

4. Death comes to the rich and the poor

**Hebrews 9:27** And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

### B. He considered his wisdom

**Ecclesiastes 2:13-17** Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool. Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. (distressing)

1. At least wisdom is better than foolishness – the wise man prepares for death knowing that it is coming, while the foolish are taken unexpectedly

a) Light is better than darkness

b) The wise can at least see what they are doing

2. Wisdom will be forgotten

a) Both the wise and the foolish will die

b) Both the wise and the foolish will be forgotten

3. He hated life – not that he wanted to commit suicide – but that he wanted to find the purpose for living

### C. He considered his wealth

**Ecclesiastes 2:18-23** Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be

after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil. For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.

*Vexation – distressing*

1. He couldn't keep his wealth – when you die you have to leave it here
  - a) God owns it all
  - b) We are stewards of the wealth that God has given us
2. He couldn't protect his wealth – the one to whom you leave your wealth might be foolish with it or lose it
  - a) He would leave it to someone who had not earned it
  - b) It could be lost or wasted
3. He couldn't enjoy it all
  - a) We worry about losing it
  - b) We worry about not having enough
  - c) We are afraid to spend it

### III. The Preacher Accepted His Life – God Made Life to be Pleasurable

**Ecclesiastes 2:24-26** There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was **from the hand of God**. For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I? **For God giveth to a man that is good** in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

- A. Thank God for what you have been able to accomplish and accumulate with God's help
- B. Thank God that He has allowed you to enjoy these things
- C. The emphasis is not on "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die" – but on enjoying the life that God has given you

## **Ecclesiastes 3**

### **Timing is Everything**

#### **Time Goes On**

#### **Time is Up – there is a limited time here on this earth**

### **Introduction**

- Timing is important in cooking – steak that is rare/medium/well – cookies that are soft and chewy/crispy
- Timing is important in medicine – take medicine every day for it to be profitable – take too much and it can be deadly
- Timing is important in finances – buying something today that goes on sale tomorrow – investing in something today while the cost is low and selling when the price is high
- Timing is important in personal relationships – asking for favor or kindness at the right time gets good results – good timing is important in sharing great news or bad news
- Timing is important in conversation – knowing when to say something or when to keep silent – knowing when to be funny or when to be serious
- Timing is important in our spiritual lives – that which needs to be done today you may not have an opportunity to do tomorrow

#### **I. There is a Time for Everything (3:1-8)**

##### **A. The emphasis of a specific time ordered by God**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1** To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

- 1.** Season means an appointed time – everything happens for a specific purpose
- 2.** Purpose means a delight and a pleasure – timing is key to things bringing pleasure

##### **B. The contrast of birth and death**

**Ecclesiastes 3:2** A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

- 1.** The time of our birth and our death has been set by God – there are no accidental births or deaths
- 2.** The time of our life here on earth is short – we may not understand why some have such a short time here on this earth

- C.** The contrast of destruction and construction  
**Ecclesiastes 3:3** A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;
1. Killing does not refer to premeditated murder rather the punishment of criminals or protection from enemies
  2. At times relationships are broken, but there is a place for healing and building them up again
- D.** The contrast of human emotions  
**Ecclesiastes 3:4** A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
1. Sorrow and joy are both part of life
  2. We must thank God for both the joys and trials of life
- E.** The contrast of helping or hurting a relationship  
**Ecclesiastes 3:5** A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
1. Casting stones into the field of someone who destroy their crops and land
  2. Stones are not good or bad – they can be used for evil or for good in building something
  3. Embracing someone may heal a relationship or hurt your relationship
- F.** The contrast of possessing something or letting something go  
**Ecclesiastes 3:6** A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
1. We accumulate things that had a specific purpose and then many times they are not needed anymore
  2. The less room you have to store stuff, the more you begin to realize what has the most value and is worth saving
- G.** The contrast of talking or being silent  
**Ecclesiastes 3:7** A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
1. The Jews would rend their clothing when they were in mourning
  2. There is time to mourn the loss of a loved one and then there is a time to continue on in life
  3. Just because you think something in your head doesn't mean it needs to come out of your mouth

**H.** The contrast of hate and love

**Ecclesiastes 3:8** A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

1. We are to love the sinner but hate the sin
2. We can hate sin and the effects that it has on people

**II. There is a Purpose for Everything (3:9-11)**

**A.** Why should we even try?

**Ecclesiastes 3:9** What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?

1. Why should we work hard to accumulate things if they will just be used, abused and forgotten
2. Why should we work at relationships with others if we find ourselves constantly saying things that hurt others and asking for forgiveness for our failures and lack of sensitivity

**B.** God has given each of us a unique course in this life

**Ecclesiastes 3:10** I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.

1. There will be good days and bad days
2. We may experience things that others will not
3. If we only focus on the valleys we will never notice the beautiful mountain tops

**C.** God has a beautiful plan for each of us that may not be fully understood here on this earth

**Ecclesiastes 3:11** He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

**III. There is to Be Enjoyment in Everything (3:12-14)**

**A.** Enjoy every day of life and strive to do good

**Ecclesiastes 3:12** I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.

**B.** Enjoy every opportunity to work and labor for the Lord and be thankful for the pleasures of this life

**Ecclesiastes 3:13** And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.

- C. Trust God enough so that you don't ride an emotional roller coaster of highs and lows

**Ecclesiastes 3:14** I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.

#### IV. There Will Be an Ending to Everything Here on this Earth (3:15-22)

- A. God sees what is, what has been and what will be

**Ecclesiastes 3:15** That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

1. We are focused on time
2. God has no time

- B. God will judge the righteous and wicked

**Ecclesiastes 3:16-17** And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.

1. He sees the good and will reward accordingly
2. He sees the evil and will punish accordingly

- C. The Spirit of man will live for eternity even after the body returns to dust

**Ecclesiastes 3:18-21** I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

1. Man and animals are similar in that the body will return to dust
2. Man and animals are unique in that the man has a Spirit that will live forever and animals do not

- D. We are to rejoice and enjoy our life here on this earth

**Ecclesiastes 3:22** Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

## Ecclesiastes 4

### Life isn't Fair and isn't always Pleasant

#### Introduction

- Life isn't always fair from our earthly perspective
- Can we trust God with our lives and know that He will do what is best?
- Is it fair that your family loves you in spite of the dumb things that you do?
- Life is full of ups and downs – joys and sorrows

#### I. Life is Hard

**Ecclesiastes 4:1-3** So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, **better** is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

##### A. What He Saw

1. Oppression – mistreatment and abuse by authority
2. Tears of sorrow of the oppressed

**Revelation 21:4** And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

3. No concern or comfort from others

**John 14:26-27** But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

- ##### B. What He Concluded – the dead were better off than the living and better than those who had not been born

## II. Life is Work

### A. The hard worker is envied by his neighbor

**Ecclesiastes 4:4** Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.

1. Are we working hard just to impress others?
2. Do we covet that which someone else has?
3. Is our motivation for work just to be better than someone else?
4. The hard worker is all production and no leisure

### B. The foolish man is lazy

**Ecclesiastes 4:5** The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.

1. Are we lazy?
2. Foolish decisions now predict a certain future destruction
3. The foolish person is all leisure and no production

### C. The balanced man

**Ecclesiastes 4:6** **Better** is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.

**Proverbs 15:16-17** Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

(Better to have little with the fear of the Lord than much with great stress)

(Better to have a simple dinner with your loved one than to have a feast with those who hate each other)

1. The balanced man has time for production and leisure
  2. He was content with one hand full of profit
- 1 Timothy 6:6** But godliness with contentment is great gain.
3. He could enjoy the labor and the fruit of his labor
  4. We can become so obsessed with work that we worry and stress so much that there is little enjoyment

### D. What he concluded

**Ecclesiastes 4:7** Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun.

## III. Life is Better with Friends

### A. One working alone

**Ecclesiastes 4:8** There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I

labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail.

1. He has no one to enjoy his labors with – no family
2. He never stops to enjoy his labors himself – never satisfied

**B. Two working together**

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-10** Two are **better** than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

1. Two workers can get more done
2. Two workers can help out for each other

**Galatians 6:1-2** Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

**C. Two lying together**

**Ecclesiastes 4:11** Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?

**D. Two can protect each other**

**Ecclesiastes 4:12** And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

**E. Three is best**

**Ecclesiastes 4:12** And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

1. If two is better than one, then three would even be better
2. The threefold cord is woven together to make it stronger

#### **IV. Life is not Certain**

**Ecclesiastes 4:13-16** **Better** is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished. For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor. I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead. There is no end of all the people, even of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

**A. Circumstances change quickly just like people's opinions**

1. A king can lose his popularity after a time
2. A young poor child can grow up to become a king

**B. Nothing is certain**

1. The child who is heir to the throne can be replaced
2. The support or disdain for the king can pass on to the heir

## **Conclusion**

- Life brings tears and sorrow along with joy and excitement
- Life is lonely – you need companions  
**John 15:5** I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.
- Life isn't always fair – God sees all
- Life isn't easy – lots of hills to climb
- Life is complex and hard to explain  
**Isaiah 55:8-9** For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.
- Life is hard – you need encouragement along the way
- Life doesn't stop – keep pressing on

## Ecclesiastes 5

### Watch Your Step

#### Introduction and Review

- **Chapter 1** – Why are we Here?  
God has put us here on purpose  
God has a purpose for putting us here
- **Chapter 2** – Do You Enjoy Life?  
God made life to be enjoyable
- **Chapter 3** – Time here on this earth is limited  
There is a time for everything  
There is a purpose for everything
- **Chapter 4** – Life isn't always fair  
Life is hard  
Life is work  
Life is better with a companion  
Life is not certain

#### I. In Your Worship

**Ecclesiastes 5:1** Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.

**A.** Think about what you are doing – worshiping God can become a thoughtless routine

**1.** Worship is not just an outward action

**2.** True worship is knowing God

**John 4:24-26** God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

**B.** Take note of where you are going – church buildings are not the same as the temple, but we do come to the church to set aside our normal routines and focus on God and His Word (God's presence is manifested by the Holy Spirit's indwelling of believers)

- C. Pay attention to what you are hearing – we gather not to hear a news report or a man’s opinion, but to hear God’s very words to us  
**1 Samuel 3:10** And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

**Acts 17:10-11** And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

- D. Be sure of why you are giving – the foolish man brings outward offerings but maintains a disobedient heart
1. Saul had to learn about sacrifices made to try to cover up disobedience  
**1 Samuel 15:22-23** And Samuel said, Hath 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 hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.
  2. God knows if our hearts are obedient regardless of our gifts and offerings

## II. In Your Prayers

- A. Slow down and think through what you want to say to God  
**Ecclesiastes 5:2** Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.  
**Proverbs 29:20** Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.
- B. Remember who you are talking to  
**Ecclesiastes 5:2** Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.  
**Matthew 6:6** But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

**C.** Be certain to say just what you want to say

**Ecclesiastes 5:2-3** Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

**1.** Many words may reveal foolishness – It is not the length of your prayers but the strength of your prayers

**2.** Avoid vain repetitions

**Matthew 6:7** But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

**3.** The mouth reveals the content of the heart

**Matthew 12:34-37** O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

**D.** Be careful what promises you make

**Ecclesiastes 5:4-7** When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.

**1.** Don't make promises to God if you have no intention of keeping them

**2.** It is better to not make any promises than to not keep the ones that you made

**James 1:19** Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

**3.** Don't try to justify not keeping a promise that you made to God

**4.** Many times words are just dreams and never become actions

### III. In Your Reactions

**Ecclesiastes 5:8-9** If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they. Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field.

- A. Don't be surprised when you see others taking advantage of the less fortunate
- B. Many times there is an abuse of authority all the way up to the top
- C. Although there is dishonesty in government, it is better to have an organized government than to be ruled by one man who is a dictator
- D. God sees the heart of those who are being mistreated and those who are taking advantage of others because of their authority
- E. Many times we seem to expect everyone (even the unsaved) to be honest – we need to be careful not to have too high of an expectation and to guard our reactions and actions as we are to be an example to others of Christ-likeness

### IV. In Your Wealth

- A. Money does not satisfy

**Ecclesiastes 5:10** He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.

- 1. Money cannot buy true and lasting happiness

**Luke 12:15** And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

- 2. The love of money desires to always have just a little more

**1 Timothy 6:10** For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

- B. Money cannot solve all problems

**Ecclesiastes 5:11** When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?

- 1. The more you have, the more you use
- 2. The more you make, the more you owe
- 3. Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can

- C. Money cannot bring peace of mind

**Ecclesiastes 5:12** The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.

1. Those who labor hard sleep with peace at night whether or not they had a full meal or not
2. The rich man is not able to sleep because he worries about making more or losing what he has made

**D.** Money cannot provide security

**Ecclesiastes 5:13-17** There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand. As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.

1. Money can be lost, stolen, misused or spent leaving an empty bank account
2. Wealth acquired here on this earth will be left here when you die

## Conclusion

**Ecclesiastes 5:18-20** Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion. Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God. For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.

- Life has been given to us by God to enjoy
- All that we have been given is a gift from God
- God gives joy no matter what each day brings

## Ecclesiastes 6

### Life Doesn't Make Sense

#### Introduction

- Life brings us too many mysteries that we cannot solve
- Life brings us too many puzzles that we cannot solve
- We want all of life's challenges to make sense
- When life doesn't make sense, we get frustrated
- When we don't see the ultimate purpose, we begin to question God

#### I. Riches without Enjoyment (1-6)

##### A. The Tragedy

1. A man with great wealth who is not able to enjoy the fruits of his labors

**Ecclesiastes 6:1-2** There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.

- a) What a tragedy for a man to work his whole life and save for retirement only to have a serious health issue in later years and not be able to enjoy any of his wealth
- b) What a tragedy to save money for a special event only to have an emergency drain the funds before they can ever be used
- c) The challenge is for us to look for happiness in our relationship with God and not in the abundance of our possessions
- d) We must enjoy our lives now and not plan to enjoy them in the future

**James 4:13-15** Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

**Proverbs 27:1** Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

2. A man who has many children and lives for many years and cannot say that he has lived a good life

**Ecclesiastes 6:3-6** If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he. For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing: this hath more rest than the other. Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?

- a) Here is a hypothetical situation of a man who could live to be 2,000 years old and have hundreds of children
- b) There is not a correlation between the length of your life, number of children or number of possessions that you have to finding happiness in this life
- c) This man had no burial – or he wasn't missed after his death or spoken kindly of at his burial
- d) Solomon compares this man to a child who is born stillborn
- e) The still born child is born into this world with nothing and departs with sadness and darkness
- f) Many have asked why God would allow a child to be conceived and carried in the womb only to die prematurely

#### B. The Conclusion

1. True happiness is not found in working for possessions to accumulate but in knowing Christ Jesus  
**Philippians 4:11** Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.  
**Philippians 4:13** I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.
2. True happiness is not connected to the length of your life but rather in enjoying every day that God gives us  
**Psalms 16:11** Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.
3. All will be frustrated with life without Christ

## II. Labor without Satisfaction (7-9)

**Ecclesiastes 6:7-9** All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled. For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living? Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.

### A. What is the purpose of laboring every day?

1. We buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't like
2. We go to work to buy food only to eat a meal and then be hungry again and have to start all over again
3. Labor can fill the body with food but not fill the soul with satisfaction and happiness

### B. How do we satisfy our appetite to live a happy and fulfilling life?

1. It is better to have little and really enjoy it than to dream about much and never attain it
2. If we only live to satisfy our own desires, then we have truly forgotten God's commands to give and serve others and most of all to bring glory to God by doing His will

**Ephesians 6:6** Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

**John 6:38** For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

## III. Questions without Answers (10-12)

**Ecclesiastes 6:10-12** That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he. Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

### A. There are questions about life that no one other than the Lord can answer

### B. Since God already knows what is going to happen, why bother thinking about the decisions we need to make?

1. God has given us the freedom to make our own choices
2. We are free to make choices in this life, but we cannot change the consequences of those choices

- C. Why argue with God? – we can't win that argument
  - 1. We tend to think that God's plan for our lives is difficult, painful and not to be enjoyed
  - 2. What God desires for us is what is best for us, because He knows just what we need
- D. What's the use of talking about these things?
  - 1. Talking about issues doesn't always provide a deeper understanding
  - 2. Conversation may lead us to draw closer to the Lord
- E. We must accept what God has for us
  - 1. He knows what is best for each of us
  - 2. He knows what we will face in the future – He prepares us now for what we will face in the future

## **Conclusion**

- Life doesn't always make sense to us – but God has a perfect plan
- True happiness is found not in what we have earned or accumulated, but in knowing Christ as Savior
- There will be many things that happen in life to which we don't have good answers
- Trust God that He knows what is best for us and that He is preparing us today for what we will face in the future

## Ecclesiastes 7

### How to Make Life Better

#### Introduction

- Solomon speaks about the value of wisdom  
**1 Kings 3:5, 9-12** In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.  
**Proverbs 4:5-7** Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.
- Wisdom can make our lives better, clearer and stronger

#### I. Wisdom Reveals to Us that which is Better (1-10)

##### A. What can be better than a sweet smelling perfume?

**Ecclesiastes 7:1** A good name is **better** than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

1. A good name is more difficult to acquire than merely making a purchase of expensive perfume
2. A good name will last longer than the fragrance of perfume
3. A good name can influence more than one person wearing a perfume
4. When you are born you are given a name, but when you die you are remembered by others by your actions – did your life leave a sweet smelling aroma or did your life stink?

##### B. How can the day of your death be better than the day of your birth?

**Ecclesiastes 7:1** A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

1. When you are born, you begin a life not knowing how long it will last; when you die, those who know Christ begin a life that will last for eternity
2. When you are born, you begin a life of hardships and difficulties; when you die, you begin a life of comfort and rest with Jesus
3. When you are born, you begin a life of sin; when you die, you are removed from the presence and penalty of sin
4. When you are born, you begin a life here on this sinful earth; when you die, you begin a life in God's perfect heaven

**C.** How can sorrow be better than laughter?

**Ecclesiastes 7:2-4** It is **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 lay it to his heart. Sorrow is **better** than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

1. He is not saying that we should become preoccupied with death, but that we should realize that death is inevitable
2. He is not saying that it is wrong to enjoy feasting and laughter
3. After leaving a birthday party, we have enjoyed the time of joy, laughter and feasting – not much of a lasting impression is left upon our lives
4. After leaving a funeral, we have sorrowed and seriously considered our own lives – a lasting impression is left upon our lives
5. Several times he reminds us how that sorrow affects our hearts in contrast to how feasting usually only affects our flesh
6. This is a warning that all of life is not a party, life brings sorrow on a regular basis and the wise person is able to handle himself in times of happiness and sadness

**D.** How can rebuke be better than praise

**Ecclesiastes 7:5-7** It is **better** to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity. Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.

1. There is more benefit of being corrected from a wise man than to be praised by the foolish
2. The song of fools is flattery – excessive praise and compliments
3. Flattery causes us to have a big head – excessive pride in oneself

- 4. The crackling of thorns burning in the fire makes a lot of noise, but produces nothing but noise
  - 5. Just as flattery can cause a wise man to be filled with pride, so can excessive pressure to perform or even gifts or bribes
- E.** The shortcut is probably not better than the normal way  
**Ecclesiastes 7:8-9 Better** is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.
- 1. Bribery may appear to be a quick way to do business, but turns the wise man into a foolish man
  - 2. The easy way may be the fastest way but is not always the best way – patience is needed over the long haul
  - 3. Many times hastiness can lead to anger and frustration
  - 4. Save time and do it right the first time
  - 5. There are no shortcuts to learning patience
- F.** Today is better than yesterday  
**Ecclesiastes 7:10** Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were **better** than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.
- 1. When is difficult and we are impatient we tend to dream about the “good old days” when things were better
  - 2. The “good old days” are the combination of a bad memory and a good imagination
  - 3. Yesterday is past and cannot be changed and tomorrow may not come so make the most of today
  - 4. Learning from the past and preparing for the future have their place and are important
  - 5. Live in the will of God today and don’t be paralyzed by yesterday or hypnotized by tomorrow
  - 6. While you are dreaming of the future or regretting the past, the present (which is all you have) is slipping away until it is gone

## II. Wisdom Helps Us See Life More Clearly (11-18)

- A.** See the balance between wisdom and wealth  
**Ecclesiastes 7:11-12** Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun. For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.

1. Money can lose its value and be lost
  2. Wisdom keeps its value
  3. The wealthy person without wisdom will waste his fortune
- B.** See the difference between God's way and the way that we had hoped things would happen
- Ecclesiastes 7:13** Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?
1. See the way that God does things and fall into line
  2. Serenity Prayer – God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference
  3. God may have made that crooked on purpose
- C.** See the balance between burdens and blessings
- Ecclesiastes 7:14** In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.
1. God gives us enough blessings to keep us happy and enough burdens to keep us humble
  2. We need to see that we don't know it all and that we do need to rely on God
  3. We realize the power of God when something happens that cannot be explained other than the fact that God did it
- D.** See that God is aware that bad things happen to good people and that the wicked seem to get away with sin without punishment or consequence
- Ecclesiastes 7:15-18** All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness. Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time? It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.
1. Do not consider yourself more wise or more righteous than you really are
  2. We are all sinners – don't allow your own sin to spread and to multiply
  3. Solomon gives us a preview of his conclusion – to fear God

**Proverbs 9:10** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

### III. Wisdom Gives us the Strength to Face Everyday Life (19-29)

**A.** Strength for everyday life comes from wisdom

**Ecclesiastes 7:19** Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city.

**B.** Wisdom can keep us from sin

**Ecclesiastes 7:20** For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

**1.** Our own sin

**a)** We all do things we are not supposed to do

**b)** We all don't do things we are supposed to do

**2.** The sins of others

**C.** Wisdom can keep us from getting our feelings hurt

**Ecclesiastes 7:21-22** Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee: For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.

**1.** Our own words can hurt others

**2.** Others words can hurt us

**a)** People are going to speak badly about you

**b)** People are going to gossip

**D.** Wisdom reminds us that we don't know everything

**Ecclesiastes 7:23-25** All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me. That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out? I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness:

**1.** Earthly wisdom does not have all of the answers to life's questions

**2.** Solomon in all of his wisdom searched for the reasons for things and yet couldn't find one

**3.** The wise man knows what he doesn't know

**E.** Wisdom is needed to deal with sinful people on a daily basis

**Ecclesiastes 7:26-29** And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her. Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account: Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those

have I not found. Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

1. Solomon had a weakness to the sinful, strange woman
2. Solomon reminds us that God made man (Adam) upright and that since then all men and women are sinful
3. There are many snares and temptations in this world, but the person with Godly wisdom will have the power to overcome

## **Conclusion**

- Wisdom can make our lives better, clearer and stronger

## Ecclesiastes 8

### Living Right in an Unrighteous World What do we do with a Broken Government?

#### Introduction

- All throughout history people have been oppressed by bad rulers and governments
- Solomon reminds us that there isn't enough wisdom in this world to understand why everything happens  
**Ecclesiastes 8:1** Who is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed.
- Solomon begins to describe to us someone who is under the authority of a wicked king and explains how this person could respond

#### I. How will you express your disagreement with an authority over you?

**Ecclesiastes 8:9** All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: **there is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt.**

##### A. You may choose to disobey

**Ecclesiastes 8:2** I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God.

1. In ancient times disobedience to a king could mean death
2. Many Christians throughout history have been killed for their religious beliefs
3. You are not going to agree with everything that the authority has commanded you to do
4. Recognize that God has placed government and authority over us  
**Romans 13:1-7** Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the

minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

- a) The principle of submission – the emphasis seems to be upon our response to government and not whether government or its leaders are trustworthy or honest
  - b) God has ordained governmental authority – this does not mean that God approves of all policies or conduct
  - c) The purpose of government is to punish the criminal and to protect the community
  - d) The principle of respect – governmental support
2. Distinguish the difference between a personal preference and something that would be a sin against God – God will honor those who obey authority
- B.** You may choose to resign from the position  
**Ecclesiastes 8:3** Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing; for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him.
1. There may be a time when you have to leave a job if the authority has asked you to do something evil
  2. You may lose an income, but you will retain your character
- C.** You may choose to rebel and overthrow the authority  
**Ecclesiastes 8:3-4** Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing; for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him. Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?
1. It would be rare to choose to be involved in a situation where a group would plot to overthrow the authority
  2. Be reminded of the power of someone who is in authority – they do as they please
  3. Who can actually question the actions of a king?
- D.** You may choose to question the authority  
**Ecclesiastes 8:5-8** Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment. Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him. For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be? There is no man that hath

power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.

1. Consider what needs to be said – this takes discernment
2. Consider when you need to say something – words spoken at the right time
3. Examples from Scripture
  - a) Esther waited till the right time to tell the king that her life was in danger and eventually was able to save her life and the lives of the Jewish people
  - b) Nehemiah used the right words to request leave of his position and assistance from the king and was given time off and supplies to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem
  - c) Daniel and his friends refused to eat the king's meat but protested with wisdom and offered a viable alternative and later were promoted
  - d) The apostles were persecuted for preaching about Jesus and yet were respectful in their responses to the authority  
**Acts 4:18-20** And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.  
**Acts 5:22-29** But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and

intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

## II. How will you respond when the authority chooses to reward the wicked and allow the righteous to suffer?

**Ecclesiastes 8:14** There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be **just men**, unto whom it **happeneth** according to the work of the wicked; again, there be **wicked men**, to whom it **happeneth** according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity.

### A. General observations

1. There will be times that righteous men get what the wicked man deserves – innocent until proven guilty sounds good, but many times is not reality
2. There will be times when the wicked men get what the righteous man deserves – it seems like everyone knew he was guilty except those in the jury pool

### B. Specific examples

1. Those who are given unmerited praise at their funeral  
**Ecclesiastes 8:10** And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity.
  - a) Solomon spoke of a ruler who had frequented the temple and was thought of by some as a righteous man – he was praised
  - b) Much praise is given to someone until you really get to know them
  - c) Are we truly saved or are we just portraying something on the outside that appears to others as godly?
  - d) Many others who were genuine godly people had been ignored and forgotten
2. Those whose punishment never seems to catch up with their guiltiness  
**Ecclesiastes 8:11-13** Because 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. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.

- a) Those who do evil and are not caught by the authority continue in their evil because they think they are getting away with something
- b) God is more longsuffering and patient with sin than we are, but you never get away with anything with God
- c) It may appear that the evil man gets away with sin over and over again, but he will stand before God and be rewarded for his actions
- d) We must not be surprised that life will be full of situations where the righteous are punished and the wicked seem to be rewarded

### III. Can we accept the fact that we will not understand why things happen while living here on this earth?

**Ecclesiastes 8:16-17** When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:) Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.

**A.** God does not reveal to us the why of everything that happens here on earth

**Deuteronomy 29:29** The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

**B.** Solomon reminds us that although there will be uncertainties and questions in life, God has given us this life to enjoy

**Ecclesiastes 8:15** Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.

### Conclusion

- Submit to authority
- Don't be surprised by inequity – unfairness and injustice
- Accept that some circumstances are a mystery

## Ecclesiastes 9

### The Dash between the Dates – Facing Death

#### Introduction

- We have a difficult time facing the reality of death
- We tend to avoid the word death – passed away, left us, lost their life, kicked the bucket, took their last breath, their number came up
- There is no escaping death when your time has come  
**Hebrews 9:27** And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:
- The fear of death brings us to the reality of needing to be prepared for our own death

#### I. Death is Unavoidable (1-10)

##### A. Only God knows the day of our death

**Ecclesiastes 9:1** For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.

1. God knows if our outward works match our inward heart
2. God knows if our life will be either a blessing to others or if it will bring sorrow

##### B. Death comes to the righteous and the wicked

**Ecclesiastes 9:2** All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.

1. All have a common destiny here on this earth – death to our earthly bodies
2. The righteous have a different eternal destiny than the wicked – eternal life

##### C. We cannot escape death

**Ecclesiastes 9:3** This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

1. In facing the death of loved ones we are confronted with our own death
2. Men and women turn to all kinds of evil hoping to escape death
3. Trusting Christ to save you will guarantee that life here on this earth will be followed by eternal life in Heaven

**D.** Do we have a false hope?

**Ecclesiastes 9:4-6** For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.

1. Many have put their hope in the fact that they are alive today and that they plan on still being alive tomorrow
2. Many put their hope into a statistic of how long they will probably live
3. Our hope is in the promise of eternal life to those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus who paid for our sins

**Titus 1:2** In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

**Titus 2:13** Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

**Titus 3:7** That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

**E.** Enjoy life every day until death comes

1. Meal times

**Ecclesiastes 9:7** Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.

a) Meal time brings the family together

b) Love for our family turns an ordinary meal into a banquet

2. Special occasions

**Ecclesiastes 9:8** Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.

a) Typically, the white garments and perfumes were reserved for weddings and reunions

b) Solomon urges us to enjoy every event in life as if it were a special occasion

### 3. Marriage relationship

**Ecclesiastes 9:9** Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

a) Your spouse is a gift from God

**Proverbs 18:22** Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

**Proverbs 19:14** House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD.

b) Marriage is a lifelong commitment to a person not a partnership that can be dissolved when things get tough

c) Solomon could have been saying here – I wish I knew

### 4. Work times

**Ecclesiastes 9:10** Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

a) Do your very best while you still have the strength

b) Tasks that are accomplished give a wonderful sense of accomplishment and fulfillment

## II. Life is Unpredictable – No Guarantees (11-18)

### A. Your abilities are not a guarantee of success

**Ecclesiastes 9:11** I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

#### 1. Do the best always come out on top?

a) Even the best runners don't finish first

b) Even the strongest armies lose battles

c) The wisest are not always the most wealthy

d) The most gifted people can fail

#### 2. Are we supposed to believe that luck has a significant part of life?

a) God has a time for everything

b) Chance means an occurrence and has nothing to do with gambling or good luck

c) Our trust is in our God who sees and controls all – not the fact that we were in the right place at the right time

**3. Trouble comes at unexpected times**

**Ecclesiastes 9:12** For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.

a) Just as fish and birds are caught unexpectedly in the net or trap, so men can be caught when they least expect it

b) The devil is always seeking to snare the righteous

**1 Peter 5:8** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

**Ephesians 6:11** Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

**2 Corinthians 2:11** Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

c) We must not boast about tomorrow

**James 4:13-15** Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

**Proverbs 27:1** Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

**B. Your strengths are not a guarantee of success**

**1. Wisdom is more important than strength**

**Ecclesiastes 9:13** This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me:

**2. The wise man and his wisdom was ignored**

**Ecclesiastes 9:14-18** There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.

## **Conclusion**

- Death is unavoidable – be prepared
- Life is unpredictable – be flexible
- We don't live by expectations, but on God's promises
- We don't depend on luck, but on God's providence
- Our hope is not based upon tomorrow, but upon eternity with Christ – which is the result of salvation by grace

## Ecclesiastes 10

### The Wise Man and the Foolish Man

#### Introduction

**Matthew 7:24-27** Therefore whosoever **heareth** these sayings of mine, and **doeth** them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that **heareth** these sayings of mine, and **doeth them not**, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

#### I. The Danger of Foolishness (1-3)

##### A. Just a little foolishness hurts your reputation

**Ecclesiastes 10:1** Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.

##### B. Whether we are foolish or wise depends upon the desires of our heart

**Ecclesiastes 10:2** A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left.

##### C. The foolish fail to listen to the wise and they create a reputation for themselves

**Ecclesiastes 10:3** Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.

*It is Better to Remain Silent and Be Thought a Fool than to Speak and Remove All Doubt*

#### II. Examples of Foolishness

##### A. Foolish Rulers (4-7)

##### 1. Those who cannot control themselves will have a difficult time controlling others

**Ecclesiastes 10:4** If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences.

a) Controlling your temper – anger

**Proverbs 16:32** He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

**Proverbs 25:28** He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

b) Responding to one who is angry

(1) Soft answer

**Proverbs 15:1** A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

**Proverbs 16:14** The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.

(2) Patience

**Proverbs 25:15** By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.

2. Those who have put fools in positions of authority to either serve or give counsel

**Ecclesiastes 10:5-7** There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as an error which proceedeth from the ruler: Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place. I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.

a) It is foolish to put incompetent people in places of authority

b) It is dangerous to receive counsel from foolish and incompetent people

**1 Kings 12:8** But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him:  
(Rehoboam)

c) It is dangerous to try and to please everyone

**A Man and his Son and their Donkey**

'Let's go to the market and let's sell the donkey,' said the man.

So the man and his son took the donkey to the market. They walked along the road and the donkey walked behind them.

A young man saw the man and his son and their donkey. He laughed, 'You're crazy! Why don't you ride on your donkey?'

'You're right!' said the man and he got on the donkey. The donkey walked in front and the man's son walked behind.

A young woman saw the man riding on the donkey and his young son walking behind. She shouted, 'That's not fair! You are big and strong and that poor little boy is tired. He must ride on the donkey. Not you!' 'You're right,' said the man. So the man got off the donkey and he told his son to

get on the donkey. The donkey walked in front and the father walked behind.

A rich farmer saw the boy riding on the donkey and the father walking behind. 'Huh! You've got a donkey but you are walking. That's ridiculous!' 'You're right. It is ridiculous,' said the man and so he got on the donkey and sat behind his son.

A poor old woman saw the man and his son riding on the donkey. 'That's cruel! That is so cruel! Poor donkey! Get off it at once! It is the donkey's turn. YOU must carry the donkey!'

'Yes, you're right. It's cruel,' said the man. So the man and his son got off the donkey.

Then the man tied the donkey's feet together and then he got a long branch and he put it between the donkey's legs and then the man and his son picked up the donkey and carried him to the market. 'Poor donkey,' everybody shouted. 'Put that donkey down! Don't tie its legs! Let it walk!' 'Oh, no!' said the man. 'We wanted to make everybody happy! Now everybody is angry!' So the man cut the rope. The donkey stood up and then it ran away.

Try to make everybody happy and you make nobody happy!

## B. Foolish Workers (8-11)

1. Those who do not think ahead before they begin – **no forethought**  
**Ecclesiastes 10:8** He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.
  - a) Digging a hole and falling in yourself
  - b) Trimming the hedges and getting bit by a snake or bumblebee
2. Those who are not careful in protecting themselves while doing dangerous work – **overconfidence**  
**Ecclesiastes 10:9** Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby.
  - a) Dropping a stone on your foot
  - b) Dropping a tree on yourself
3. Those who do not use quality tools and materials in performing their work – they are **unprepared**  
**Ecclesiastes 10:10** If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct.
  - a) Stopping to sharpen the ax
  - b) Work smarter, not harder
4. Those who fail to take heed to the obvious – **forgetful**

**Ecclesiastes 10:11** Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babbler is no better.

- a) Snakes will bite – that is their nature
- b) Even if you are the owner, you are vulnerable to getting bit
- c) The charmer would play with snakes and do a public show for a living
- d) If he hurried through the routine – he could be bit himself

**C. Foolish Talkers (12-15)**

- 1.** Hurtful words – that hurt others and the fool himself

**Ecclesiastes 10:12** The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.

- a) Acceptable words that please God  
**Proverbs 10:32** The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.
- b) Appropriate words for the time and occasion  
**Proverbs 25:11** A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.
- c) The right words, said in the right way and at the right time

- 2.** Senseless words

**Ecclesiastes 10:13** The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.

- a) Those who talk about things as though they were experts when in reality they have no idea what they are talking about
- b) Those who talk and their words don't make any sense

- 3.** Endless words

**Ecclesiastes 10:14** A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?

- a) Many words without much content
- b) Self-control needed in our speaking

- 4.** Boastful words

**Ecclesiastes 10:15** The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.

- a) Speaks of those who know the words to use but don't have the common sense to act upon them
- b) The road to the city would have been clearly marked – one whose elevator doesn't stop at all of the floors

**D. Foolish Political Officers (16-20)**

- 1.** Those who care more about the perks of a position than they do in performing their duties – they are immature and like to party

**Ecclesiastes 10:16-17** Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning! Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!

2. Those who are lazy and do nothing

**Ecclesiastes 10:18** By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.

3. Those who spend, spend, spend

**Ecclesiastes 10:19** A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things.

4. Those who have no respect for the office or position of those over them

**Ecclesiastes 10:20** Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

a) A little bird told me that which you thought was a secret

b) Be careful about what you say about others behind their backs  
– would you say the same things to their face?

## Conclusion

- Foolishness in not believing that God exists  
**Psalms 14:1** The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.
- Foolishness in not understanding spiritual things  
**1 Corinthians 2:14** But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

## Ecclesiastes 11-12

### What Life is All About

#### Introduction

- Is life worth living?  
**Ecclesiastes 1:2-3** Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?
- Life from an earthly perspective is frustrating because life is monotonous, earthly wisdom is inadequate, wealth cannot buy happiness and our time here on this earth is short
- Solomon's eternal perspective helps us realize that life is not monotonous but ordered by God – we were created on purpose and God has a purpose for our life; God wants us to enjoy life and our wealth; we should use our God-given wisdom even though everything in life cannot be explained; and there is no way to escape death, but we can live this life with purpose and enjoyment and we can look forward to eternal life if we have received Jesus as our Savior

#### I. Make Life an Adventure – Live by Faith (11:1-6)

##### A. Life left alone – no risk

1. Routine
2. Boring
3. Predictable

##### B. Life of faith

1. You cannot control the circumstances
2. If you wait until the circumstances are ideal – then nothing would ever get done
3. Examples

##### a) Merchants sending out their ships

**Ecclesiastes 11:1-2** Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.

- (1) Send out the grain that you are selling in your ships and wait patiently for them to return with their reward
- (2) Spread out your investments into various endeavors – not every investment will bring great profit – so don't lose

everything on one bad investment (don't put all of your eggs into one basket)

**b)** Farmers sowing their seed

**Ecclesiastes 11:3-6** If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

- (1) You cannot change the past, but you can look forward to every opportunity (the clouds can bring rain again, but the tree that has fallen will not move)
- (2) You cannot wait for the perfect opportunity (winds and rain may come and spoil the planting, but God is in control of the growing and the harvest)

## II. Make Life a Gift – Enjoy It (11:7-12:8)

### A. Rejoice in every day

**Ecclesiastes 11:7-9** Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: But if a man live many years, and **rejoice** in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

1. There will be days of light and the days of darkness – enjoy them all (every day won't be a mountaintop day)
2. There will be things that only a youth can enjoy – don't miss out on them (young people need to be allowed to be young)
3. God will judge how we have lived in our youth whether it be good or bad

### B. Remove sinful activities

**Ecclesiastes 11:10** Therefore **remove** sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.

1. Don't do things in your youth that you will be sorry for later on
2. We cannot sow wild oats today and pray for a crop failure next week
3. The childhood days will quickly be gone

C. Remember who we serve

1. In your youth

**Ecclesiastes 12:1-2 Remember** now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:

- a) Do not neglect the Lord in your youth
- b) This is more than just thinking about Him, it is paying attention to Him with the intention of obeying Him

2. In your later years – an illustration comparing our body to a house that is falling apart

**Ecclesiastes 12:3-8** In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.

- a) Keepers of your house – arms and hands trembling
- b) Strong men – your legs, knees and shoulders weaken
- c) Grinders – lose your teeth
- d) Windows – eyesight begins to dim
- e) Doors – appetite diminishes
- f) Rise up with birds – lack of sleep
- g) Music – voice begins to weaken
- h) Afraid – fearful of falling or getting hurt

- i) Almond tree – hair turns white
- j) Grasshopper – you begin to feel like you are a burden to others
- k) Desires – you begin to lose desire to do new things
- l) Long home – funeral home and gravesite
- m) Silver cord, golden bowl, pitcher, wheel
  - (1) Possibly speaking of our internal systems that normally work well
  - (2) When these things fail to operate, they no longer produce what is needed
  - (3) When our hearts stop and our breathing ceases, the end has come

### III. Make Life an Education – Learn your Lessons (12:9-12)

- A. He taught others the value of wisdom
 

**Ecclesiastes 12:9** And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.
- B. He taught others truths that could be readily understood
 

**Ecclesiastes 12:10** The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.
- C. He taught others so that they would retain their knowledge
 

**Ecclesiastes 12:11** The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

  - 1. Goads – sticks used to motivate animals
  - 2. Nails – that which truths could be displayed and remembered; truths that we fasten firmly to our lives
  - 3. Given – the words were given to Him to be shared with others (God’s very words of Scripture)
- D. He taught others the value of these truths
 

**Ecclesiastes 12:12** And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

  - 1. Don’t allow the wisdom of man to rob you of the wisdom of God
  - 2. There are many books to read, but only one that really counts

#### **IV. Make Life Count – Fear God and Keep His Commandments (12:13-14)**

**Ecclesiastes 12:13-14** Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

##### **A. Fear God**

- 1.** The attitude of reverence and awe that shows that we respect God for who He is
- 2.** A holy God deserves and demands respect

##### **B. Keep His Commandments**

- 1.** Read His Word and obey it
- 2.** Love the Lord and your neighbor as yourself

##### **C. Prepare for Judgment**

- 1.** God will judge every deed – whether it was good or evil
- 2.** God will judge every secret work – whether it was recognized or rewarded

#### **Conclusion**

- Live a Life of Faith
- Enjoy Life Every Day
- Learn the Lessons that Life Brings
- Make Life Count – Life only counts when we view it from God's perspective
- Don't wait to find out the meaning of life until it is almost over