

**“The Book of Ecclesiastes”**  
**Northshore Bible Church**  
**January 2024**

**Lesson 1:**

1. Why I chose this book?
2. Why are you here?
3. Lesson layout:
  - a. Class Structure
    - i. Chapter by chapter
    - ii. Focus on: the topic addressed in each chapter and key words in the chapter, not necessarily every verse.
      1. Solomon’s empty experience of the topic
      2. The godly perspective we should have on the topic
      3. New Testament hope: What does the gospel and the NT give us that Solomon was looking for?
    - iii. Application discussion for today.
  - b. Chapters per week
    - Week 1: Intro and background
    - Week 2: Chapter 1
    - Week 3: Chapter 2
    - Week 4: Chapter 3-4
    - Week 5: Chapter 5
    - Week 6: Chapter 6-7
    - Week 7: Chapter 8
    - Week 8: Chapter 9
    - Week 9: Chapter 10-11
    - Week 10: Chapter 12
  - c. Homework:
    1. Read the whole book 1-2x over our 10 weeks together. Read 1 Kings chapters 1-11 as well if you can.
    2. Watch a couple of YouTube videos by John Lennox (life with and without God)

4. Introduction to the book:

- a. Author and Date: Likely King Solomon, but author never mentioned. He calls himself the Preacher (quester) or Qauleth (a wise man who assembles people to listen). If Solomon, it was written around 950bc. It is both in the Christian and Jewish canon. Solomon was King over Israel and King David was his father.
- b. Style: Poetry – wisdom literature (Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon).
  - i. It's historical, contemplative, philosophical, pessimistic and hopeful, honest and deep, applicable to all people existentially.
  - ii. It is likely a “retrospective” – Solomon in his older years looking back on his life and what he did do, didn't do, what was important, what was not important. Then, passing this wisdom onto other believers similar to his intention in proverbs.
    1. Note: Solomon prayed for wisdom; God was pleased to hear Solomon's prayer and gave it to him (1 Kings 3). But, Solomon did drift away from God later in his life as well (1 Kings 11).
  - iii. In form, it is like a two way discourse. Solomon seeing and questioning various issues in life, then Solomon's knowledge of God responding.
  - iv. Overall, the mood is end-of-life peace when life is seen under God's good hand – even though real life experiences are hard and confusing, sometimes feeling meaningless.
  - v. One of the most misunderstood books of the bible.
- c. Book Purpose or Lessons to Learn:
  - i. God's unseen hand in life and history (providence). Continue to fear God even when the world and life is confusing and frustrating.
  - ii. Asking and seeking: what is the point of life?
  - iii. **Main Lesson: Fear God (Elohim-sovereign, transcendent one) – our relationship with God is the only place to find peace and meaning in life. He is in charge and above us.**
  - iv. Note: some scholars feel it may have been an early evangelistic-like tract to give to other nations leaders who worshiped idol gods.
- d. Simple outline “cycles” (scholars find it difficult to agree on a clear outline):
  - i. Introduction: 1:1-11
  - ii. Cycle 1: 1:12-3:8 (work and wisdom)
  - iii. Cycle 2: 3:9-6:7 (Contrast of human labor with God's labor)
  - iv. Cycle 3: 6:8 – 12:7 (elaborations of prior themes/topics)
  - v. Conclusion: 12:8 – 14 (Positive outcomes of his search in conclusion)

## 5. Introductory Comments:

1. From a post resurrection, post Pentecost, post New Testament canon perspective, it is interesting to reflect on what ways Ecclesiastes has a “Christ-shaped vacuum” to it.
  - a. Solomon talks negatively about a lot of things and only speaks minimally, positively about a few, such as: enjoying work and the fruit of it “under the sun”, once he mentions “do good” as a positive thing and once he mentions “enjoy life with your wife”. Even here, these things have limited value for Solomon.
  - b. Positives that come from these good things are: They are generally seen as blessings from God, they are meaningful and give man a sense of purpose, they are real experiences not just concepts and they are universally truthful/applicable.
  - c. Absent from these good things are: they are temporary and not eternally focused, they are just general wisdom – something or some pieces feel missing (ex. how the community of faith gives hope and joy in life or promise of future reward by God for faithful living), and a lack of instruction about a God centered purpose in hardship and suffering.
  - d. How is Jesus our faithful and righteous King that Solomon was not?
2. Ecclesiastes is a great example that a real, providential, acceptable and purposeful part of our faith walk as Christians is a “wrestling” in our faith walk.
  - a. We see faith in the Old Testament but faith is often shown as a wrestling faith (ex. Ps. 13). In the New Testament, the “mystery” of Christ and redemption is revealed, but this imagery of faith requiring a fight and patience is still there (1 Tim. 6:12).
  - b. In U.S. Christianity, this picture of faith as including wrestling is usually uncomfortable or unacceptable. It is wrongly seen as the result of instability, lack of knowledge, a slippery slope to liberalism or unbelief, a critical spirit or lack of confidence in the Word.

### Correction from Introduction:

In the introduction, I stated that “Overall, the mood is end-of-life peace when life is seen under God’s good hand.” I got this from a commentary. I would like to question this statement. Upon further reflection, I think that at the end of his life, Solomon accepted the reality of God and that the best way to live is to fear him. But, I think Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes, and later died, as a troubled man. I think he was disappointed with life and God. Also, we see no clear biblical evidence that Solomon ever returned to heart felt faith in and love for God before his death.

### Ecclesiastes, Chapter 1:

#### Life with and without God.....

- V. 2-3 = All things are vanity and what gain do we get from it all?
- V. 4-7 = Life is repetitive and mundane. Generations, sun, wind, streams.
- V. 8-11 = Nothing new in life/history. What/who will be remembered?
  - a. National Treasure movie – desire of the bad guy.
- V. 12-18 = Introduction to the Quest

Note: v. 13 – “The evil task or unhappy business God has assigned or given to man” Could be: (a) the experience of trying to figure out life or (b) submitting to living under Gods mysterious hand in a temporary, imperfect world. I like both.

#### Key Words: (bold – terms we will see used multiple times)

**Vanity: lit. Meaninglessness or vapor, a breath.** Vanity – self-absorbed/limited in value. Other translations say fleeting. Word used over 35x in the book.

Solomon uses the word as a term of contrast in light of the brevity of life.

- A. Both that nothing escapes God’s eye and judgement
- B. AND that nothing finds its purpose or fulfillment in life apart from God and his purpose in these things.

**Toil:** lit. labor or work. Also can be understood as aspirations or dreams that result from work.

**Gain:** profit, is sustained for a long period of time, holds value. used 9x in the book.

**Under the sun:** earthly, mortal, finitude, feelings of hot, drudgery of days. Often connected to labor or work. *A view of life that is limited and does not take God’s will and view of life into account.* Used 29x in the book.

New: fresh, better, longer lasting, an answer to what other things have failed in

Remember: long term value sustained, legacy kept alive,

**Heart:** the core part of man – his heart, mind and will.

**Wisdom:** God-centered, revealed understanding that comes from God himself. Application of understanding fit for the time and place. “An increase in godly wisdom heightens ones sensitivity to the unhappy effects of sin, not all of which as immediately visible.”

**Striving after wind:** elusive. A struggle to find answers.

Vexation: tossing about mentally and emotionally. Frustration.

**Knowledge:** not wisdom, but man-centered discovery in the world or opinions of the world. Term often used in contrast to wisdom which has God at the center.

Sorrow: The result of lots of knowledge but no way to piece it all together without a God and the will of God acting in the world.

**Solomon’s Empty Experience:**

- a. Toil gets what gain?
- b. Repetition and mundane in life gets what gain?
- c. Will I and what I accomplish be remembered?
- d. I tried it all and what gain did I get?

**Godly Perspective/Message:**

- a. Be careful of what you put value on or hope in during our short years of living in a limited, earthly place.
- b. God is above and eternal. We are below and temporary. Therefore, our experience of God and life can be difficult.
- c. Meaning in life can only be found in the context of Gods existence.

**New Testament Hope and Contrast:**

- a. 1:2-3 vs. John 10:10 (shalom)
- b. Life and effort is vanity/fleeting vs. 1 Cor. 10:31 and Romans 15:4 (purpose)
- c. What’s the use attitude vs. Romans 8:18-30 (God’s work and victory in history)
- d. Earthly, godless labor vs. 1 Cor. 15:58 (ministry)
- e. Chesterton quote on the value of the mundane and contentment in it

“Because children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, "Do it again"; and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, "Do it again" to the sun; and every evening, "Do it again" to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we.”

### Questions:

1. What is Solomon expecting or hoping for in these pursuits?

2. What does the idea of “meaning” mean and how universal is it?

Worldview: “A worldview can be described as the way a person interprets himself and the world which, in turn, affects how he lives with himself and lives in the world.”

*“Meaning answers the ultimate questions in life: I believe the bible is truly an epic movie/story because it answers the ultimate questions every human seeks – where did I come from? Why am I here? What went wrong in the world? How is the wrong fixed? Where am I and all of history going? Any religion or philosophy that’s worth following has to try to answer these questions and give us reasonable answers.”*

3. How does questioning aid and hinder a life of walking with God?

4. What parts of chapter 1 do you associate with?

5. How has having Christ in your life helped?

### Lagniappe:

Westminster Confession of Faith, written in 1647 states, “What is the chief end of man?

Answer: To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

### Ecclesiastes, Chapter 2:

#### Life with and without God.....

#### Summary:

Vs. 1-11: I will test everything – pleasure, creating great things, wealth, women.

Conclusion of the test.

Vs. 12-17: Does wisdom ultimately gain what I'm looking for? No.  
Vs. 18-23: Does working hard ultimately gain what I'm looking for? No.  
Vs. 24-25: A positive insight. The first of six.

### **Key Words:**

Pleasure: Lit. self-indulgence, no holding back.

Considered: weighing of the scales in his mind. Thoughtful reflection.

Wisdom, madness and folly: A contracting word series. Wisdom good, madness and folly (foolish living) bad, but "earthly advantage of wisdom over folly is cancelled out by death."

Hated life: "concluding that the curse of death erases the profit of a life of attaining wisdom, Solomon comes to hate life in this present age." Remember, labor, building things, tending gardens is part of the core of Adam (creation mandate). For Solomon, whether he knew it or not, the fall has robbed him of finding fulfillment and contentment in the core things God designed men to do.

- Voltaire said, "I hate life and yet I am afraid to die."

Despair: hopelessness, pain in the gut.

Eat, drink and find enjoyment in work: CARPE DIEM – seize the day. To look upon the good of. A reference to the simple things in life. Yet, to Solomon, even these things only have short lived value. *1 Cor. 10:31 – whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.* Sounds Solomon-like.

Hand of God: A father-like and covenant keeping God is the source of all good things. See James 1:17.

### **Solomon's Empty Experience:**

His quest's resume – what did it include and how well did it satisfy? What do people quest-resume include today?

The wise and the foolish both die and who is remembered.

Wealth gained from toil cannot be taken into heaven and gets passed on to others who may or may not use it well.

### Godly Perspective/Message:

- d. Be careful of what you put value on or hope in during our short years of living in a limited, earthly place.
  - e. Work hard, build wealth, use it all wisely, but hold it all loosely too.
  - f. Live life now with eternity in mind. Live from the end point backwards. 99.9%.
  - g. Be thankful that the NT gives us a much fuller understanding of hope of life after death than the OT. Death was more fearful and mysterious to the OT Jew.
  - h. In the meantime, do enjoy the simple and good things that come from God's hand.
- NOTE: Solomon gives of 6 positive reflections/reminders in the whole book.

### New Testament Hope and Contrast:

- a. v. 1 and 1 Tim. 4:4-5
- b. v. 1-10 and Phil. 3:7-8
- c. v. 14-16 and Luke 18:30, John 6:27, John 10:28, and 1 John 5:13, 1 Cor. 15: 19-20,
- d. v. 18 and Col. 3:23-24 and Is. 55:2
- e. Jesus and the gospel restores the image of God in man that was marred by the fall. We can labor and do life with God's original purpose and joy again.

### Lagniappe:

"Maybe the clearest motivation we can say for bringing your Christian faith to your workplace is that *you are serving King Jesus*. We've already mentioned Colossians 3:23-24 several times. You have a great Boss - King Jesus. You get to work for the most successful, innovative, and employee-loyal CEO you could ever meet – King Jesus. His "company's" vision and work is global, supremely important and has eternal profits. He will never fire you and his "company" will never close its doors. Understandably, this is not always easy to remember or to live out in a world of messed up workplaces (Romans 5:12, 8:23). This is a true statement. But, if you keep in mind that you work for King Jesus, we think it will change the way you think about your work. How? Because when glorifying Jesus is our primary motivation, our work – regardless of what that work is in its particulars- becomes an act of *worship*." Stiles, *Bringing Your Faith to the Workplace: A Pocket Guide*.

### Questions:

1. In what ways do we think self-centeredness brings us happiness in life? Does self-centeredness help or hinder true joy? Where does the bible say true joy is found? Talk about this practically – positively and negatively.
2. In what ways do you find work fulfilling and not fulfilling? How can you find it more fulfilling than you already do?



3. What are some of the simple things in life you enjoy? How often do you try to “see Gods hand in them” and do them frequently?

### **Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3:**

#### **Life with and without God.....**

#### **Summary:**

1. V. 1-8: there is a time for everything (God’s providence and order, life happens this way).
2. V. 9-15: Man’s response to what God is doing.
3. V. 16-22: God is just and we are but dust.

“Seasons come and go, but does anything in this life truly satisfy? The answer in [Ecclesiastes](#) is, no, all is vanity ([Ecclesiastes 1:2](#)). However, through all the ups and downs and vicissitudes of life, we have a glimpse of stability—God has “set eternity in the human heart.” Life is but a vapor ([James 4:14](#)), but we know there is something past this life. We have a divinely implanted awareness that the soul lives forever. This world is not our home.” (GotQuestions.org)

#### **Key Words/Phrases:**

Season/time: a proper time and place for everything under God’s sometimes mysterious hand in history. (the doctrine of providence).

Eternity in the hearts of man: *Olem*, meaning is debated. Refers to a deep-seated desire, a compulsive drive to know the character, composition and meaning of the world. To know what God is doing. It may also refer to the desire or curiosity in man for immortality.

“Humans operate in a different way than other created beings (like animals). We have a sense of eternity in our lives; we possess an innate knowledge that there is something more to life than what we can see and experience in the here and now.” (GotQuestions.org)

Joyful and do good: content, having a positive attitude under Gods hand. Do constructive things in life, things that help society in general, obey God.

Fear him: reverence, submit to authority, accept your place under.

Wickedness: unrighteousness, rebellion toward God, selfish living, even evil.

Beasts: created beings, limited in ability, power, knowledge, like other created beings (animals).  
Can only live a life granted to us.

Dust: basic elements, earthly, temporary, created. (See further Romans 9:19-21 as an illustration of this.)

Spirit of man: soul.

Lot: Lit. a place with boundaries (like property). A statement of fact meant to be taken positively. Your place in God's work in the world. Where God has you (sometimes for a reason/purpose you can find out and sometimes not so sure). Not fate!

### **Solomon's Empty Experience:**

1. God's providence is true but it includes bad/sad things as well as good things. Humans desire to be connected with God and His purposes but as lowly, created beings, God has not given us access to knowing everything He is doing and why.
2. Wickedness in the world seems to dominate over righteousness.
3. We are all dust. The good and the bad come from dust and return to dust alike.

### **Godly Perspective/Message:**

1. God's providence: Literally – His ongoing provisions. Theologian Wayne Grudem defines God's providence as "God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that He (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which He created them; (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill His purposes."
2. The second of 6 positives: vs. 12-13 says be joyful, and to do good. Eat, drink and take pleasure in work. This is God's gift to man. Solomon sees this as "profitable".
3. The standard of God's righteousness met with humankind's wickedness should make us have a proper estimation of ourselves individually/collectively, our condition individually/collectively and cause our consciences to have a fear of God.
4. Accept your lot in life.

### **New Testament Hope and Contrast:**

V.11 and Gal. 2:20, Rom. 8:28-30, 2 Cor. 4:17.

V. 20-21 and Jn. 20:31, 2 Cor. 5:17.

V. 22 and Rev. 21 – in new heavens/earth, work will be redeemed completely and last forever.

Eternity in the hearts of man – Jesus connects us to this. Jesus reveals what God is doing and talks a lot about life after death, and gives assurance we can know we can go there. Also, He is our desire to see and know God made visible in the incarnation.

### **Questions:**

1. Does God's providence allow for the existence of pain and suffering as well as health and blessing? How so?
2. How do we see people try to fill the God-shaped hole in their hearts apart from Christ (God has put eternity in the hearts of man)?
3. How is the idea of humans being but "beasts" and "dust" both helpful and depressing?
4. How does having Jesus in your life relate to the things mentioned in this chapter? Ex. Lot in life.

### **Ecclesiastes, Chapter 4-5:**

Schedule wise, we need to do chapters 4-5 today. We will focus almost exclusively on chapter 5.

Read chapter 4. Very Proverbs like chapter. Vs. 4 and 13 popped out to me.

Read chapter 5.

### **Summary:**

5:1-8: Starting to focus in more on the fear of God as the right way to live.

5:9-17: The vanity of wealth and honor.

5:18-20: Solomon's 3<sup>rd</sup> positive insight and instruction. Repetition of the first two.

### **Key Words/Phrases:**

Guard: Lit. watch your step. Awareness, reverence.

House of God: the temple or later, synagogue, today church. There was something different and special about meeting with God “in His house” than privately during the week.

Listen vs. sacrifice of fools: listen to God and learn from Him in obedience more than spouting off your mouth about what you know of God and want from God. A sacrifice offered in form only but without the heart and will. A form of worship where you think you can trick God into thinking your offering is better than it is.

Rash/hasty: Remember your place – God in heaven (creator) and you on earth (created). Irreverent. Quick to speak, slow to listen.

Vow: A solemn promise. Vows were very important to Jewish culture and faith. That importance carried over to the NT. Vows were holy, solemn, relationally committed things that you staked your reputation on before God and the community. See James 5:12.

- a. Making a vow with no intention of keeping it.
- b. Making a vow and being lazy with fulfilling it or excuse making.
- c. Notice vow here is used in the context of a form of worship.

Messenger: sometimes translated angel, other times translated the Priest. Here it is the priest. (note: Jerry’s sermon series on Rev. 1-3)

Cultivating fields: Unsure translation. Contrast with injustice by kings. Kings keeping busy with good, constructive things for the good of the community vs. their own good only.

Eats: (v.17) As food feeds the stomach, vexation feeds his mind here. Supplied his body or mind with.

Good and fitting: Enjoy the benefits of their work as a due reward for their labor.

Lot: Lit. a place with boundaries (like property). Portion. A statement of fact meant to be taken positively. Your place in God’s work in the world. Not fate!

Keeps occupied: Basic joy found in these things as from the hand of God, carries one through life.

### **Solomon’s Empty Experience:**

Governments and groupings of people are often led into violation of justice. Solomon is not surprised by this anymore.

Money does not satisfy!..... though it constantly lures us (greed) to believe it to be so. It often causes vexation.

Bad stewardship will be a shame to you as you have nothing to pass onto your children. This is will cause vexation.

### **Godly Perspective/Message:**

Ingenuine worship is worthless to God and to you. Watch out you don't drift into this out of laziness, irreverence or pride.

Money is meant to be a means to an end – service to God and His kingdom on earth in a variety of ways. God did not design it to be an end to itself.

The ability to enjoy wealth/blessings is a gift from God as well as the wealth/blessings itself. (vs. people who have wealth and can't enjoy it)

Vs. 18-20. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> positive insight and instruction. A repeated focus on enjoying Gods provisions and work and accept/rejoice over your lot.

- Happy Morning donuts.

Your attitude about work and money will affect your sleep – either for good or bad.

### **New Testament Hope and Contrast:**

5:1-3 and Matt. 6:1-18 (spirituality for others to see), but also John 14:15-31 (Spirit now helps guide us in worship and prayer)

5:10-12 vs. Matt. 25:14-30 (the parable of the good steward), 1 Tim. 6:17-19 (where is true life found).

### **Questions:**

1. What lessons has God taught you about money or wealth in your life?
2. What is an example of a time when you prayed to God or worshipped Him at church in an ingenuine way? Did you later feel convicted about that?
3. How is (or should) worshipping God "in His house" (church – with others) be different than your private worship during the week? Are we as Americans possibly guilty of privatizing our worship

too much? Do you remember that when you step into church you are stepping into sacred space even?

4. What are somethings you do that help you succeed in living out verses 18-20 in your life? In what ways do you need help to do this better?

### The word “Lot” in the Bible:

1. ***Literally, a place with boundaries (like property) or also Portion (a certain amount given).*** A statement of fact meant to be taken positively. Your place in God’s work in the world. Not fate!
2. denotes a portion or an inheritance ( [Joshua 15:1](#) ; [Psalms 125:3](#) ; [Isaiah 17:4](#) ), and a destiny, as assigned by God ( [Psalms 16:5](#) ; [Daniel 12:13](#) ). Used 3x in Ecclesiastes - 3:22, 5:18, 5:19. Geneva Bible (1560) says that “a man’s affairs (labors) are his portion” and “the days of his life are his portion.” The term is not used in this form anywhere in the New Testament.
3. Some scholars think it has hints of the concept of “reality” in it. This is your reality. They think of it as an ontological term.
4. Casting of lots is related to this. A decision made based on where the stones fall. The result is to be accepted as from the hand of God. Casting of lots is mentioned many times in the OT and NT.
5. So, is lot in Ecclesiastes meant to be understood as “we should enjoy our work (attitude)” or is it meant to be understood as our “situation or place in life” or possibly both?
  - a. Answer: it seems the most common translation from conservative scholars is the idea of “**accept** what God has given you or **accept** your life”. Of course, knowing that we have a good God and that His will is for our good (even in suffering) we should “accept what God has given us or accept your life” with a good attitude.
  - b. I personally like the Geneva Bible translation as well.

### **Ecclesiastes, Chapter 6-7:**

Schedule wise, we need to do chapters 6-7 today.

**Life with and without God as the center.....**

**Summary:**

6:1-12 – really a continuation of his thoughts in chapter 5. He talks about riches without enjoyment, labor without satisfaction and questions without answers.

7:1-14 – very Proverbs-like section commending a variety of applications of wisdom.

- V.10 is a good one!

7:15-24 – Finding wise balance between extremes.

7:25-29 – Guard against foolish thoughts and temptations that can blind use of wisdom. For Solomon, it seemed to be women.

### **Some Key Words/Phrases:**

Power: enduring ability. Solomon is pointing the finger at God here in context of the observation of the situation. God could flip a switch to change this, but He doesn't. Jewish and Christian scholars have had difficulty mitigating what appears to be Solomon blaming God for this.

Satisfied-Appetite: fulfillment, contentment. These are negative illustrations from normal aspects of how God made us. Our soul is meant to be satisfied. Our appetite for fruits of our labor is meant to be satisfied. They are not satisfied when we turn things of the world or God's good provisions into idols.

Destroy yourself: possibly physiological disturbance (like vexation) or death. Dig yourself into a deep hole over these things.

Heart: 6x in these 2 chapters. the core part of man – his heart, mind and will.

Scheme(s): How God has ordered things or the sum of things. How it all fits together.

### **Solomon's Empty Experience:**

Having wealth and blessing but you can't see it or truly enjoy it. One who does not see blessing coming from the hand of God.

People desire answers for many things. God does not give us all the answers to everything. This is God's right, but it can leave man questioning and vexed.

Earthly, fleshly perspectives, actions and goals can appear to be a good pathway but end up either destructive or empty.

The fact that all people have short lives that end in death make a strong pursuit of anything in this life questionable in terms of value or result.

- Me and bike racing if time.

### **Godly Perspective/Message:**

1. Going back to week one, I posed the pondering question: *what answers was Solomon expecting to get from his quest?* As we are half way through the book now, an issue I see bubbling up as a consequence of the message of the book seems to be: **EXPECTATIONS.** What do we expect from God? What do we expect from life? What do we expect of ourselves? What do we expect of our futures? Maybe even what do we expect out of our churches?
2. Integrate God into all aspects of your life to see reality properly, thank God consistently and get the most of our life until we die.
  - Pizza Illustration.
3. Wisdom is always of great value and much needed from Solomon in his culture (950bc) to us and our culture today (2024ad). It's a resource available to us from God, so seek it and use it and pass it onto the next generations.

### **New Testament Hope and Contrast:**

6:3 and 7 vs. Eph. 6:6, Matt. 10:39

7:15 vs. Matt. 5:45, Rom. 8:18-25

7:26 and Jam. 1:13-15

### **Questions:**

1. What is something about God or life that weighs heavy on you (6:1)?
2. In what ways are you or friends/family you know guilty of 7:10?
3. How would our secular culture respond to 7:19 in general? How do Christians fall into thinking like our secular culture regarding this verse? Examples?

### **Ecclesiastes, Chapter 8:**

#### **Life with and without God as the center.....**

READ chapter 8 from The Message.

#### **Summary:**



8:1-9: Be a person of your word (honor) through all the seasons of life that come at you, including in respect to authorities God has put into place.

8:10-13: Life generally will go well with those who fear God, even when wickedness seems to prosper.

8:14-17: Enjoy life under the sun even though it's impossible to understand all the actions and purposes of God in it. [NOTE: Solomon's 4<sup>th</sup> of 6 positive affirmations. Basically carbon copies of the others.]

### **Some Key Words/Phrases:**

v.2 – 4: Keep the Kings command/Kings word is supreme: God set up (imperfect) authority structures and God works through the voice and will of the king – particularly back in Solomon's day. Citizens vowed to honor the king as such and should honor him in general if they wanted life to go well and to not be put to death.

- The ideal here is a good king – but the history of Israel shows they were still to honor bad king because of what I state above. Solomon was guilty of putting a heavy yolk on the people (1 Kings 4:7-28).

- We see this echoed in Romans 13.

v. 8- Retain the spirit: another word for the wind, control the wind. Interestingly, the NT refers to the Holy Spirit as a wind.

v. 9- Power to hurt man: Injustice and sin in the world allows men to hurt one another.

v. 11- Fully set to do evil: sinful man will take advantage of what they can to get away with selfishness and evil. (good example of the doctrine of original sin – Rom.5:12)

The problem of v. 14 is addressed in v. 16-17. The response to this should be v. 15.

### **Solomon's Empty Experience:**

Both the wise and the fool die. You can spend your life trying to figure out God and you will not be able to fully do so - no matter what power, privilege, education or wisdom you have.

v. 17: Solomon says this 4 other times in the letter.

Man's evils toward other men happen often, and are hard to understand how God lets this happen, and for what purposes.

Sinful man will take advantage of slowness of execution of justice and they will justify it as allowance to continue to do evil.

### **Godly Perspective/Message:**

*Keep doing the next right thing* even when your troubles, and the sinfulness of the world, is heavy on you. God will bless your life for it, it definably honors God and in the end it all has purpose for good in society (Is. 55:8-13, Matt. 5:13).

It's worth it to fear God – both in this life and for the life to come.

It's ok, and even good, that we cannot know everything God knows and why He does everything He does.

- Indiana Jones and the crystal skull
- Mystery.
- Creator/Creation (Romans 9:14-21)

Eat, drink and be joyful in your labor under our short, tough years here on earth. It's a simple gift from God.

- Though these are true, biblical, positive affirmations from Solomon, the attitude in which he says it has some scholars feeling Solomon is just giving up on righteousness and just settling on enjoying life as you can in the base things of life – eat, drink, work then die. Interesting.

### **New Testament Hope and Contrast:**

See above.

v.17 vs. Col. 2:2-3 and 1 Cor. 8:2

2 Pet. 4:12-19: As Christians, we have the blessing of Christ and the hope of eternity and possession of the truth, but we will be persecuted for it. [Maybe even more so than OT saints got persecuted or how much injustice they saw. Wickedness will grow in the earth, right?]

But....

Rev. 20:7-15 and Rev. chapters 21-22: Perfect justice will be executed one day – including on all those in authority like kings! Then, all good and order will be restored forever! Note: Then we will know all that we are meant to know about Gods ways and purposes. This does not mean we will know everything even when we are made perfect.

## Questions:

1. When should we honor/obey government as Christians? When can/should we not?
  - a. Civil disobedience is based on biblical principles and personal conscience
  - b. 1- Government tells us to do something against Gods will.
  - c. 2- Government prevents us from doing god's will.
  - d. Northshore Bible Church YouTube Channel, "October 2020 Thowback Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lNpZreu0TU&list=PLCI8yjWD0OXtGtEXvEblSJcRKvqhQZfBV&index=18>  
  
Northshore Bible Church YouTube Channel, "July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8szTRLGcYzg&list=PLCI8yjWD0OXtGtEXvEblSJcRKvqhQZfBV&index=12>
2. Why do people, including us Christians, keep searching for all the answers?

## Ecclesiastes, Chapter 9:

### Life with and without God as the center.....

READ chapter 9.

### Summary:

9:1-6: again, all suffer the same fate – death. This is consistently vexing to Solomon. Righteous/unrighteous, remembered/forgotten, living can still enjoy life/dead enjoy nothing (of earths provisions/pleasures).

9:7- 10: Solomon's 5<sup>th</sup> positive affirmation. Still the same as the others – yet adds "God approves of what you do" and "enjoy life with your wife".

9:11-17: We can't know the future, only time will show it to us. Wisdom is better than power but is usually not seen/heard as much as power is.

### Some Key Words/Phrases:

Hope – v.4: Not hope in the NT sense of everlasting life. Here it is an earthly hope. The living still has hope that I can enjoy life's pleasures tomorrow, I can know things/be conscious of

them and maybe I will be remembered tomorrow. The dead don't have that possibility anymore.

- 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. Moto – where there's life, there is hope. [hoping for the best outcome tomorrow]

\*<sup>1</sup>God has already approved what you do (go eat and drink wine) - v.7: Two possibilities: (1) God loves to see His creation enjoying life – such as drinking wine He provides. (2) Enjoy your wine and food, for they are reward for your labor under the sun. Both have the underlying idea of “gift from God” in them. I like both. It is not, go do whatever you want, God love you no matter what.

- Read from Weirsbe commentary.
- Acts 2:46 and Jude 3 are NT parallels.

White clothes and oil for the beard – v. 8: metaphors of sun-protecting clothing and a healthy beard/face are signs of blessings from God.

\*Wife who you love- v. 9: Heb, might be translated “women who you love.”

- Solomon may be just taking an earthly perspective here of enjoying the woman you love, even if not married, and lumping that it with enjoy your food and drink.
- Having a woman or a wife was a sign of blessing in life in Solomon's day. A women provided help, public reputation, and joy in general.
- It can be translated “wife” as well.
- Obviously, God's original design is that “having a women you love” is meant to be monogamous and in the context of a marriage.
- The word “Portion” (ESV) is the idea of “lot” in other places in Ecclesiastes.

The race, battle – v.11: all metaphors for life under the sun.

Chance – v.11: The fallen, human perspective of how time works unpredictably and for unknown reasons.

\*Poor, wise man delivered the city – v. 15: Hebrew translation either “delivered” or “could have delivered”. In other words, his wisdom, if listened to, could have saved the city, but it was not listened to, so the city was not delivered. Either way, the point is his wisdom was not remembered or learned from. Then, Solomon says verses 17-18.

### **Solomon's Empty Experience:**

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<sup>1</sup> First of 3 interesting exegetical possibilities in chapter 9.

Death happens to everyone, no matter what you did in your life and what it came to.

Death sends you to a place of unknown where you cannot enjoy the things of earth anymore.

We can't know the future, we have to wait for time to show it to us.

Wisdom is a wonderful thing, but sadly goes unrecognized and unremembered too often.

### **Godly Perspective/Message:**

The sooner you can accept the brevity of life, and that your life is in the hands of God, the better.

Enjoy LIFE with your wife who you love – not just enjoy your wife.

V. 10 and Col. 3:23-24 – wow! (about 1,000 years apart in writing). Was Paul reflecting on this verse/principle from Solomon?

Being remembered is good and a blessing (honor, heritage, etc.), but hold that hope loosely. It's ultimately in God's hands too and you might not be as much as you hope.

### **New Testament Hope and Contrast:**

Death is just the end vs. living hope (1 Pet. 1:3-6).

Death is random vs. appointment (Heb. 9:27).

Death is a looming power vs. death defeated in Christ (Jn. 11:25-26, Rom. 6:23)

Death is a depressing fate vs. empowering motivation to serve Jesus (1 Cor. 15:58).

### **Questions:**

1. How do people deal with the reality of death? How do Christians deal with the reality of death?  
It's a huge deal!
2. Why should we enjoy life with our spouses and how can we enjoy life with our spouses?
3. What is something you remember about a particular godly person who has died?

## **Ecclesiastes, Chapter 10-11:**

**Life with and without God as the center.....**

### **Summary:**

10:1 – 20: A section of purely proverbs before ending his Quest in chapter 12.

11:1-10: A section of purely proverbs before ending his Quest in chapter 12.

### **Some Key Words/Phrases:**

This week we will look at a select number of verses.....sorry for sake of time, we have to do it this way.

1. 10:12-14: Speaks of words that are destruction, unreasonable, uncontrolled and boastful. Consume him – come back to eat him. Beginning and end- they reveal who he is from beginning to end. V.14 – his words can't be trusted and are all over the place.
2. 10:19-20: v. 19 – Bread and wine were signs of blessing and social enjoyment together. "money" - Either money is required to buy these things or simply, money makes the world go around. It is not the actual answer to everything. v. 20 - loose talk, under your breath – you may be found out. Bird- spy or informer.
3. 11:1-2: Here may have been a reference to Solomon's grain trade. Cast – spread your resources to others, it will come back to you (human, material or financial). This is also smart preparation for when trouble.
4. 11:5: Great illustration to show God's powerful hand and purposes that are invisible.
5. 11:7: Sunlight affects our moods. Ex. Seattle.
6. 11:9: Solomon was son of David. Rehoboam was the son of Solomon. May be an object lesson of "the best way to have a happy and contented life when you are old is to get a good start early in life and avoid things that will bring trouble later on"(Wiersbe).
  - "Youthful sins lay a foundation for aged sorrows." –Spurgeon.

### **Solomon's Empty Experience:**

Based on the verses we are looking at today.....I see none.

### **Godly Perspective/Message:**

Words matter! And not just for information purposes, but for how they affect people and the speaker's reputation. They also reveal the heart and have consequences.

Developing a network of people with whom you distribute some of your resources (financial, material and possibly relational and time) is wise and a sign of generosity. It will come back to bless you when needed.

God's invisible work behind the scenes every day in your life and in the world is simply staggering. Example: verse 11:5a.

Enjoy life as a youth, but remember, how you choose to live early in life will likely have an effect on how you live later in life.

### **New Testament Hope and Contrast:**

This week is New Testament complements....

10:12-14 and Matt. 12:34-37, James 3:1-11, Eph. 4:22-24

10:19 and Acts 2:46, 1 Cor. 10:31 (already referred to these in past chapters)

11:5 and Col. 2:15-17

11:9 and 2 Tim. 1:5-6

### **Questions:**

1. How does social media today relate to 10:12-14 and 10:20?
2. What is something that amazes you about God's "behind the scenes work" in your life or in the world?
3. How have you seen the lesson in 11: 9 work in your life or in the life of someone close to you?

## **Ecclesiastes, Chapter 12:**

### **Life with and without God as the center.....**

#### **Summary:**

12:1-7: Be thankful and enjoy God in your youth. The days of old age and the day of death are coming. Some of the most beautiful writing about the aging process ever written.

12:8-14: The conclusion to the quest. Solomon's resume and conclusion (affirms vanity of all things but the fear of God is worth it).

#### **Some Key Words/Phrases:**

v. 1 Evil days: troubled days of getting older.

v. 3-7 all amazing metaphors for the reality and experience of getting old in age and death coming near.

v. 6 Silver cord snapped: Reference to the "cord of life". Some picture an invisible cord that connects the body to the soul (root term for metaphysical studies today but too new agey for the Christian to clearly adopt), some picture the nervous system breaking down (physical- to modernly biological). Probably just a picture of last breath – your body severed from life.

v. 11 Goads and fixed nails: metaphors for "prodding" (a shepherd's prodding stick) and "fixed" as solid truth.

v. 11 one Shepherd: May be a reference to Moses or God. Earthly God given shepherd of Israel OR directly addressing God, the ultimate Shepherd Himself.

v. 12 first time term "my son" appears in the book. May refer to Solomon's son Rahabam or to any disciple of his.

v. 13 whole duty: Lit. "the whole of humanity". Loyal submission to God as King or one's essential act of worship.

v. 14: Judgement: Our accountability to our Maker. (not damnation)

#### **Solomon's Empty Experience:**

Old age is hard and then you die.



You can search for truth and knowledge your whole life and will only acquire as much as God allows. The search is wearisome.

**Godly Perspective/Message:**

As you enjoy the days of your youth, don't forget your Creator – enjoy, thank and reverence Him. Your older years may feel not as blessed - you will encounter various troubles and eventually die some sort of death.

Your life mission should be live in daily reverence/awe and honor of God. From this you should live a life pleasing to Him, rooted in the life-giving instruction of the Bible. In so doing you should find well-being (shalom) in life.

**6 Point Digestion Guide to the Book of Ecclesiastes (a brief summary of the core lessons):**

1. Your days under the sun are like a vapor.
2. Life often doesn't make sense and causes vexation.
3. Enjoy eating, drinking, spouse and work as gifts from God. This is your lot.
4. A worthy life is found in walking in reverence for and honor toward God.
5. \_\_\_\_\_.
6. \_\_\_\_\_.