

## ECCLESIASTES The Purpose of Life

**What is the purpose of life?** *Of your life? This perennial question has troubled humanity since the beginning. What actually endures, matters? For what do we labor, strive to achieve, live? Is what we see and experience in this world all there is? Or does life have a greater meaning and purpose? Solomon the son of King David had been given much - wisdom, wealth, pleasure, the ability and opportunity to build, peace and much more. It is thought that he served the Lord for the first decades of his reign. During this time he built the temple and royal palace. Later he fell away and participated and/or facilitated idolatry. He to whom God had appeared and with Whom he had spoken, went his own way for a time. From what we read in Ecclesiastes he was in the later portion of his reign when he repented. The exact time cannot be known.*

**“Because Solomon acted as if he was greater than the law the law eventually caught up with him.” [jewishhistory.com](http://jewishhistory.com)**

### 1. Prologue: “Meaningless!”

1:1-11

- a. Meaningless! Meaningless! (“empty, nothing, vapor”). Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.” *Solomon declares his distress that everything seems transitory and unsatisfying. (Ps 89:47)*
  - Do not try to figure out life’s meaning. It will get you nowhere. That cannot be measured or known from our vantage point. Leave it to God.
  - But - our purpose can and should be known! Solomon drifted from it and this book shows his return to it. Love God and love your neighbor while you live your life.
  
- b. What do people gain from all their labors (“toil, trouble”) at which they toil under the sun?
  - Generations come and go, but the earth remains forever (*endures*).
  - The sun rises and sets, and hurried back to where it rises.
  - The wind blows to the south and turns to the north;
    - \* round and round it goes
    - \* ever returning on its course.
  - All streams flow into the sea,
    - \* yet the sea is never full.
    - \* To the place the streams come from, there they return again. (Job 36:22-33)
  
- c. All things are wearisome (“full of labor, inadequate”), more than one (“man”) can say.
  - The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.
  - What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.
    - \* Is there anything of which one can say, “Look! This is something new?”
    - \* It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time.
  - No one remembers the former generations (“things”), and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them.

Can you sense his frustration and feeling of hopelessness? “Why am I here?” “What do(es) it/l matter or mean?” If only pain and the abyss awaits us, what is the point? This is where living for the here and now gets us. But there is so much more.

## ECCLESIASTES The Purpose of Life

### 2. Empty pursuits (part 1)

1:12-2:26

#### a. Meaning isn't found in human wisdom alone.

1:12-18

- "I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. (Ecc 1:1)
- I applied my mind to study ("seek") and explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens. (1 King 4:20-28, 23-29; 1 Chr 9:13-28)
- What a heavy ("disagreeable, unpleasant, miserable, painful") burden ("task") God has laid on mankind! (See 3:1-11; Rom 8:28; 1 Thes 5:16-18)
- \* I have seen all the things (or, "works") that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. (*Wisdom can observe, but changing things is another matter. The Heb. says, "grasping" or "striving" for the wind. i.e., for nothing.*)
- \* What is crooked cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted. (Ecc 7:13)  
*In saying it a different way: "The world is broken and I can't fix it."*
- I said to myself, "Look, I have increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced ("understood, seen") much of wisdom and knowledge."
- Then I applied myself ("set my heart") to the understanding of wisdom, and also madness ("irrational thinking") and folly,
- \* but I learned ("perceived, came to know") that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.
- \* For with much wisdom comes much sorrow (or "vexation"); the more knowledge, the more grief ("pain")." See (Job 3:20).

***Do you ever get weary of the "rat race?" It's over - they won. (Mk 8:36)***

#### b. Nor can fulfillment be found in the pursuit of pleasure.

2:1-11

- I said to myself, "Come, now, I will test you with pleasure (or, "gladness, mirth") to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. ("behold, surely, that is empty")
- "Laughter," I said, "is madness ("folly"). And what does pleasure accomplish?"
- I tried cheering myself with wine [my mind still guiding me with wisdom], and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives. (i.e., "What is worth pursuing?")
- I undertook great projects ("works"):
  - \* I built houses for myself and planted vineyards.
  - \* I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.
  - \* I made reservoirs ("pools") to water groves of flourishing trees (lit, "*a nursery for trees*").
  - \* I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house.
  - \* I also owned ("acquired") more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.
  - \* I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. (Deut 17:14-20)
  - \* I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well—the delights of a man's heart (1 King 11:1-6).
- I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me.
- In all this my wisdom stayed with me. (1 King 3:1-15).
  - \* I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure.
  - \* My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. (Col 3:22-24)
  - \* Yet, when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun. (See Lev 25:23)

***We need what can truly satisfy (e.g, Is 55:1-3, Jn 6:27)***

**c. In and of themselves, wisdom and folly mean nothing. 2:12-16**

- Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom, and also madness and folly.
- What more can the king's successor do than what has already been done?
- I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness.
  - \* The wise have eyes in their heads, while the fool walks in darkness;
  - \* but I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both.
- Then I said to myself, "The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?"
- I said to myself, "This too is meaningless."
  - \* For the wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered; the days have already come when both have been forgotten.
  - \* Like the fool, the wise too must die! (Ps 89:47 - apart from a relationship with God, life with all its inequities and brevity *is* futile. I think it is this way to drive us to seek Him.)

***How do we live? What drives us? (Lk 12:20, Jn 12:25)***

**Ecclesiastes**  
**The Purpose of Life**  
**Chapter 2:17-26**  
**“An Exercise in Frustration?”**

**3. Empty Pursuits (Pt 2)**

**2:17-26**

**a. So, (because the pursuit of temporal satisfaction is empty), I hated life because the work that is done under the sun was grievous (“bad, distressing, miserable”) to me. (17-19)**

- All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.
- I hated all the things (“*labor*”) I had toiled for under the sun because I must leave them (“*it*”) to the one who comes after me. (Ps 39:6; 49:10; Lk 12:20)
  - \* And who knows whether that person (“*he*”) will be wise or foolish (or, “*stupid*”)?
  - \* Yet they (“*he*”) will have control (“*rule*”) over all the fruit (“*labor*”) of my toil into which I have poured my effort (“*toiled*”) and skill (“*in which I have shown myself wise*”) under the sun.
- This too is meaningless. (*When we go, all the “stuff” stays here*)  
***We are in this world but not of it—and need to keep it in mind. (1 Jn 2:15-17)***

**b. My heart began to despair (“*I turned,*” that is, he changed course) over all my toilsome labor under the sun. (20-23)**

- For a person may labor with (“*For a man whose labor is with*”) wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then (“*yet*”) [he] must leave all they own to another (“*man*”) who has not toiled for it.
- This too is meaningless and a great misfortune (“*evil*”).
- What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they (“*he*”) labor(ed) under the sun? (Matt 6:19-21, 31-34)
  - \* All their (“*his*”) days their (“*his*”) work is grief (“*vexation*”); even at night their (“*his*”) mind(s) do not rest (“*lay down*”). (Ecc 5:12)
  - \* This too is meaningless.

**For what should we labor under the sun? Matt 6:19-33**

**c. A person (“*man*”) can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. (“*From God is our enjoyment of our labor’s fruit*”) Deut 8:17; 1 Thes 4:9-12; Prv 15:17; 17:1) (24-26)**

- This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without Him, who can eat and find enjoyment? *Our Lord taught His disciples and us, to acknowledge this ( Matt 6:9-13).*
- [For] to the person (“*man*”) who pleases Him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness (“*joy*”).
- But to the sinner, He gives the task of storing (“*gathering*”) up [wealth] to hand over to the one who pleases God (or, “*to [him who is] good*”).
- This too is meaningless, a chasing (“*grasping*”) after the wind.

**Try to live with eternity’s values in mind. 1 Tim 6:17-19**

**Ecclesiastes**  
**The Purpose of Life**

**4. Chapter 3 “Take Life as it Comes”**

**a. Live long enough and you will experience the whole scope of life. 3:1-11**

- Life in its variety will come at you. (a “season,” “appointed time” exists for everything)
- What do workers get from their toil? Unless the time is “right,” will a person succeed? We live with uncertainty. See Ecc 9:11 and Jas 4:13-17.

\* I have seen the burden (“task”) God has laid on men - He has made everything beautiful in its time. (We must do our work, earn our bread under conditions of time and providence). (See Act 17:27, Rom 8:28, 1 Thess 5:16-18). Apart from faith, can anything make sense? Do your best, take life as it comes, accept it as a gift from God. (1 Cor 7:17-24)

\* He has also set eternity (or “everlasting”) in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

**Take life as it comes, and look to God**

**b. I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live (“in their lives”) 3:11-15**

- That each of them (“every man”) may eat and drink and find satisfaction in all their toil - this (“it”) is the gift of God.

- I know that everything God does will endure forever, nothing can be added to it.

\* God does it so that people will fear Him. (“stand in awe of, revere, fear”)

\* Whatever is has already been; and what will be has been before,

\* And God [will call] (“seeks”) the past [to account]. (Ecc 1:9 - *Despite human pretensions we remain mortal, subject to human ills and to the idea that “the more things change, the more they remain the same.” Under God, creation is subject to established laws.*)

**Enjoy His gifts and honor Him**

**c. And I saw something else under the sun: 3:16-17**

- In the place of judgment - wickedness was there, in the place of justice, wickedness was there. (Ps 58:1, and Ps 82 comes to mind along with Mic 3:9)

- I said to myself, “God will bring into judgment both the righteous and the wicked.”

- For there will be a time for every activity, a time to judge every deed. One will never find perfect justice here. But there is a perfect Judge to whom all will have to give an answer.

**Remember your place in this world (Jn 17:16)**

**d. I also said to myself, “As for humans, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals. 3:18-21**

- Surely the fate of human beings is like that of the animals, the same fate awaits them both:

\* As one dies, so does the other.

\* All have the same breath;

\* Humans have no advantage over animals. (Ps 104:27-30)

- Everything is meaningless, all go to the same place;

\* All come from dust, and to dust return.

\* Who knows if the human spirit rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?

**The clock is ticking (Gen 3:19, Heb 9:27)**

**e. So I saw that there is nothing better for a person than to enjoy their work, because that is their lot. For who can bring them to see what will happen after them? 3:22**

**Ecclesiastes**  
**The Purpose of Life**

**5. Chapter 4 This world is Broken**

- a. Again I (“*I turned*”) looked and saw (“*considered*”) all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: Think of oppression as the damage done to people by the selfishness of others, especially by those with power. 4:1**
- I saw (“*and look*”) the tears of the oppressed - and [look] they have no comforter;
  - Power was on the side of their oppressors - and they have no comforter. *They suffer and their frustration and despair is unnoticed and without sympathy. Ever felt alone in your pain? (Prov 14:10)*
- b. And I declared that (“*congratulated*”) the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive. (Job 3) 4:2-3**
- But better than both is the one who has never been born, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun.
  - *What a lot of aggravation!*
- c. Sin promotes striving. 4:4-6**
- And I saw (or “*considered*”) that all toil and achievement (or “*success*”) spring from one person’s envy of another (or, “*of their neighbor*”).
  - *Extremes observed:*
    - \* *FOMO (Fear of missing out)*
    - \* *Fools cause their own ruin through sloth.*
    - \* *Achievement divorced from relationship is empty and unfulfilling (A grasping after wind)*
    - \* *A miserable business!*
- d. Relationship is better than flying solo (“*without a second,*” i.e., being all alone). 4:7-12**
- working together gives a better return. (Eph 4:1-6, Rom 12:3-8)
  - working together brings help (1 Cor 12:24b-26)
  - working together brings comfort (1 Sam 23:16)
  - working together gives protection (*A strong cord!*)
- e. Human advancement is empty in and of itself 4:13-16**
- It is better to be wise but...
  - You cannot please everyone (and trying is an exercise in frustration). And when people pin all their hopes on a mere human, they set themselves up for disillusionment. (Ps146:3, Is 2:22, Hos 10:4)

**ECCLESIASTES**  
**The Purpose of Life**  
**Chapter 5:1-7**  
**“Take the Lord and Your Word Seriously”**

**“Still as of old**

- *Men by themselves are priced*
- *For thirty pieces Judas sold – Himself, not Christ.”*  
“Betrayal” Heather H. Cholmondeley

**6. Take thought for your way.**

**a. Guard your steps (“*keep your foot*”) when you go to the house of God.**

- Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools who do not know that they do wrong. *Where does worship begin? (Rom 12:1-12, 1 Cor 6:20, Eph 5:15-21)*
- Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. *(He is speaking here, about prayer, promises, vows, oaths, etc.). Such should be thoughtful, not just tossed out on the emotion of the moment.*
- \* God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. *Stand in a reverent awe of your Lord.*
- \* A dream comes when there are many cares, and many words mark the speech of a fool. (e.g., see Matt 6:5-15)

***Worship is not just going through the motions. In all things the question is, “Where is my heart?” Jde 11\****

**b. When you make a vow (“*promise*”) to God, do not delay to fulfill it. (Num 30:2)**

- He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill (“*make it good*”) your vow.
- It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it.
- Do not let your mouth (*or mind!*) lead you into sin and don’t protest to the temple messenger, “My vow was a mistake.”
- \* Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands?
- \* Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore fear God.
- How is God’s name taken in vain? (Lev 19:12, Det 23:23, Mal 2:14-16, Mtt 5:33-37). Is our “yes,” yes, and our “no,” no? Do we pay our bills, honor our commitments, keep our word? That is one way that those who bear His name honor Him. And to fail is to dishonor Him. (Mtt 5:33-37, 23:16-22)

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\* **Jude 11 speaks of woe to false teachers who had “taken the way of Cain.” What is that?**

- **Look at Gen 4 - in verses 2b-4 we get a clue. Cain seemingly brought some of what he had own hand to offer God. Abel brought his best.**
- **Look Heb 11:4 - Abel brought a better sacrifice than Cain. Why? His was an act of faith. His brother Cain was simply going through the motions.**
- **Don’t just “worship” God as a matter of convenience or “punching your ticket.” The attitude of your heart and motive matters!**

**ECCLESIASTES**  
**The Purpose of Life**  
**Chapter 5:8-20**  
**“Power and Money”**

- 7. Observations regarding power and money** **8-20**
- a. “If you see the poor oppressed (or “*extorted, injured*”) in a district, and justice and rights denied,”:** (“*unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power*” Webster) **8-9**
- do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. (Ps 82; Prov 15:15-17; Ecc 4:1)
  - The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields. (1 Sam 8:10-18; Rom 13:1-7) - *Solomon’s son forgot this and suffered for it - 1 King 12:1-25*  
**What? You expect perfection here?**  
***Jn 16:33***
- b. “Whoever loves money (“*silver*”) never has enough; whoever loves wealth (“*abundance*”) is never satisfied with their income.”** **10-12**
- This too is meaningless.
  - As goods increase, so do those who consume (or “*eat*”) them.
  - \* And what benefit are they to the owners except to feast their eyes on them? (1 Tim 6:6-10)
  - \* The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much,
  - \* but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep. (Ps 39:6, 127:1-2, Ps 49)
  - “Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown”**  
***Shakespeare, “Henry the IV”.***
- c. An obsession with money and “stuff” will take you down a tough road.** **13-17**  
**“I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded (or, “*kept, preserved*”) to the harm of its owners, or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when they have children there is nothing left for them to inherit.**
- Everyone comes (“*as he came*”) naked from their (“*his*”) mother’s womb, and as everyone comes, so they (“*he*”) depart.
  - \* They take nothing from their toil that they can carry in their hands. (Job 1:21)
  - \* This too is a grievous evil: as everyone comes, so they depart, and what do they gain, since they toil for the wind? (Lk 12:13-21)
  - \* All their days they eat in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger. (1 Tim 6:6)
  - “Money is like manure, of very little use except it be spread”**  
***Francis Bacon***  
***It isn’t how much a person has, it is what actually rules their life***
- d. “This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in (“*enjoy*”) their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them - for this is their lot (“*portion*”).”** **18-20**
- Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions (“*treasures*”), and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot (“*receive their portion*”) and be happy in their toil—
  - this is a gift of God.
  - They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart.
  - Seek to enjoy your life, be thankful and follow Him***



**ECCLESIASTES**  
**The Purpose of Life**  
**Chapter 6:1-12**  
**“Don’t Count Your Chickens”**

**8. Observations on Presumption - Or...”I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily (or possibly, “*is common*”) on mankind: 1-2**

**a. God gives some people wealth, possessions and honor, so that they lack nothing their heart’s desire,**

- but God does not grant them the ability to enjoy them, and strangers (“*foreigner*,” *not from another nation but alien to the person, a “stranger”*) enjoy them instead.
- This is meaningless, a grievous evil (“*sickness, affliction*”).

**What does God promise to provide?**

**Matt 6:25-34; 1 Tim 6:8**

**b. A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child (a “*miscarriage*”) is better off than he. 3-6**

- It comes without meaning, it departs in darkness, and in darkness its name is shrouded.
- Though it never saw the sun or knew anything, it has more rest than does that man —
  - \* even if he lives a thousand years twice over but fails to enjoy his prosperity.
  - \* Do not all go to the same place? *We all die and leave as we arrived — naked.*

**If one only lives for what they can garner here and now it is an “iffy” thing.**

**There is nothing we ourselves can materially guarantee in life.**

**Only in our relationships will there be meaning.**

**Psalms 49**

**c. Everyone’s toil is for their mouth, yet their appetite is never satisfied. 7-9**

*Solomon sees that in and of itself, life is futile. Work yourself hard, deny yourself to get ahead and you still die. Wise or foolish we have the same fate. Better to enjoy what one has than to chase “more.”*

- What advantage have the wise over fools (“or, *stupid, dull*”)?
- What do the poor gain by knowing how to conduct themselves before others? *Rich or poor, wise or foolish, they all end up at the same destination in the end.*
- Better what the eye sees than the roving of the appetite. (Prv 12:11; 28:19; 27:23-27)
- This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

**What should we focus on?**

**Jn 6:27; Is 55:1-3**

**d. Whatever exists has already been named, and what humanity is has been known; 10-12**

- no one can contend with someone who is stronger. (Is 45:9; 1 Cor 10:22)
- The more the words, the less the meaning, and how does that profit anyone?
  - \* For who knows what is good for a person in life, during the few and meaningless days they pass through like a shadow?
  - \* Who can tell them what will happen under the sun after they are gone?

**Adam - child of the ground, only in Christ will you conquer the strong man, death.**

**1 Cor 15:56**  
**ECCLESIASTES**  
**The Purpose of Life**  
**“Musings on Wisdom”**  
**7:1-8:17**

**9. Observations on Wisdom Part 1**

**7:1-29**

- a. It is better to be good than to smell (or look) good.** See Jer 17:9-10 **1-4**
- It is better to consider life’s urgent issues than to “run on our wheel.” We all have a “final exam” coming: our own deaths. What? We won’t live here forever?
  - A good “wake up call” can be beneficial. Think about it — we are amused to death. Social media, movies, music, sports, noise, crowds, politics, etc. The noise of culture is loud and can so occupy our minds that it pushes out almost everything else. Quiet time is good!
  - Wisdom sees the real issues through the “smoke and mirrors” of culture.
- b. It is better to heed godly counsel than to be a-mused.** See Ps 1 **5-9**
- Mockers are going to mock — It means little to nothing (1 Pet 4:1-6).
  - Temptations and pressure to conform are always present — keep your head. Rage at injustice (always being mad) as well as resorting to bribery corrupts the heart (Prv 16:8; Rom 12:2).
  - This too will pass. Everything here has an end — except us. Be patient.
  - Do not be quickly provoked — anger doesn’t usually serve God’s purpose (Jas 1:19-21).
- c. If you keep looking back, you might not deal with the present!** (Php 3:13). **10**
- Besides, the older I get, the better I was! Memory can be flawed and kind to us. It can also key on negatives and make things in our recollection worse than they were. Look to the present! (Prv 27:1-2)
- d. Wisdom enhances our lives and protects us.** **11-14**
- Wisdom is a shelter and preserves those who have it. (Job 28:28)
  - Wisdom recognizes God’s supremacy (Ecc 1:13-15; 3:11).
  - Wisdom helps us know our limits. Sometimes wisdom is best seen in knowing what we do not or cannot know or what we can or cannot do (Prv 27:1; Jas 4:14).
- e. Seek to Avoid Extremes.** **15-18**
- Don’t attempt to earn righteousness — don’t destroy yourself ( Lk 18:14; Rom 10:1-4; Gal 3:10-12)
  - Don’t give up seeking to honor God — why die?
  - Don’t expect justice on your terms either. (Ps 73)
  - Fear God and avoid extremes: The extreme of a works (self) justification, or the opposite extreme of abandoning restraint and wallowing in sinful self indulgence. (Rom 6:1-4)
- f. Be Wise but Understand Your Limits.** **19-29**
- Recognize our frailty. (Ps 143:2; Rom 3:23)
  - Be gracious with the failings of others — you are no jewel yourself! (Eph 4:1-3)
  - Seek wisdom. (Job 28)
  - Do not expect from people what only God can give.
    - \* The autocrat knows not who he can trust.
    - \* The polygamist treated women as possessions, and wondered that he could not find reciprocity or honesty in relationships. But he seemed to have learned. (Ecc 9:9)

**ECCLESIASTES**  
**The Purpose of Life**  
**7:1-8:17**  
**“Musings on Wisdom”**

**9. Observations on Wisdom Part 2**

**8:1-17**

**Who is like the wise? Who knows the explanation (or, “*solution, explanation*”) of things? A man’s wisdom brightens their face and changes its hard appearance. Wisdom can change the sternness of ignorance and pride into a more gentle understanding.**

**a. Obey the king’s command I say, because you took an oath before God. (Ez 17:11-21). Here we see the counsel of patience and tact.**

- Do not be in a hurry to leave the king’s presence. (Prv 12:16, 29:11)
- Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases.
- Since the king’s word is supreme, who can say to him, “What are you doing?”
  - \* Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise in heart will know the proper time and procedure (or “*judgment*”). (See Dan 1:8-14, 1 Tim 5:1)
  - \* For there is a proper time and procedure (or “*judgment*”) for every matter, though a person may be weighed down by misery.

**b. Since no one (“*man*”) knows the future, who can tell someone else what is to come?**

- As no one has power over the wind (or “*spirit*”) to contain it, so no one has power (“*authority*”) over the time (“*day*”) of their death. (Ecc 3:2, Heb 9:27)
- As no one is discharged [in time of] (“*that*”) war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it. (Job 4:8, Prv 1:31, 5:22-23)

**c. All this I saw, as I applied my mind to (or, “*considered*”) everything done under the sun.**

- [There is] a time when a man lords it over (or “*rules, domineers*”) others to his own hurt.
- Then too, I saw the wicked buried - those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless. (Lk 20:46-47)

**d. When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people’s hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong. (Ps 73:17-20)**

- Although a wicked person who commits a hundred crimes may live a long time, I know that it will go better with those who fear God, who are reverent before Him.
- Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow. (Lk 6:46-49)

**e. There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: the righteous get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked get what the righteous deserve. (Job 21, Ps 73)**

- This too, is meaningless.
- So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun.

**f. When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labor that is done on earth - people getting no sleep day or night - then I saw all that God has done.**

- No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. (Rom 11:33-36)
- Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning.

- Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it.  
Some things to take away from this passage:

1. Wisdom helps us see things in context:
  - God is in control.
  - There are things we just cannot know from our perspective.
  - There is peace in resting in His character and work.
2. We cannot control the future so we need to live in the present.
  - Live your life and enjoy it as God's blessing.
  - Seek the Lord. Failure to do so will result in "fruit" in our lives that will take us down. There is cause and effect.
3. Love your neighbor and seek to know God, not just *look* like you do.
4. Seek justice here and trust in ultimate justice. Nothing gets past God (Ex 34:6-7)
5. Never forget that we live in a fallen world. Sin affects everything.
6. Live your life, enjoy its fruit, trust God. A lot of our unrest comes from resentments, unfulfilled wants/desires, memories of past hurts/failures, observation of present injustices etc. Dwelling over much on such things will rob us of present joy.
7. Trust in the Lord.

**ECCLESIASTES**  
**The Purpose of Life**

**10. Observations on Life (Or - “Don’t Count Your Chickens” Redux). Chapter 9:1-12**

a. **So I reflected (“*considered in my heart*”) on all this and concluded (“*to declare all this, to make it clear*”) that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God’s hands, but no one knows whether love or hate awaits them. No one here has a working crystal ball. We cannot base decisions on predicted outcomes. Trust God!**

- All share a common destiny (“*all things come alike to men*”)- be they righteous, wicked, good, [bad], clean or unclean. (*Solomon’s assertion is, that death comes to all*)
- \* As it is with the good, so with the sinful
- \* As it is with those who take oaths, so with those who are afraid to take them.
- This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: the same destiny overtakes them all.

***Death is the “great leveler.”***  
**Heb 9:27**

b. **The hearts of people moreover (or “*truly*”), are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live and afterward they join the dead.** (Ecc 7:20, Rom 3:23, 6:23)

- Anyone among the living has hope - even a live dog is better off than a dead lion!
- For the living know that they will die but the dead know nothing. (*Do we? For we do not often act as if we do. This is the “madness” that Solomon addresses. For a better way of dealing with our mortality see Ecc 7:2, 2 Cor 5:6-10*).
- \* They have no further reward, and even their name is forgotten.
- \* Their love, hate and their jealousy have long since vanished.
- \* Never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun. (Heb 2:14-15)

***Actually, today is the first day of the rest of your life.***

c. **Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do.** (e.g., Ecc 2:24-25, Mic 4:1-5, Zec 3:10)

- Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. (Rev 3:4-5, 18, 4:4, 6:11, 19:8; Matt 22:1-14)
- Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun - all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun.
- Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working, nor planning, nor knowledge nor wisdom. (Eph 6:5-8, Col 3:22-25)

***Seek to fulfill your purpose (Don’t worry about the meaning)***

d. **I have seen something else (“*I returned*”) under the sun:**

- The race is not to the swift, or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant, but time and chance happen to them all. (i.e., *nothing is guaranteed*)
- Moreover, no one knows when their time will come:
- As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so people are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.

***Build your life on what you can count on.***

**ECCLESIASTES**  
**The Purpose of Life**

**11. Wisdom Observed and Applied**

**9:13-11:6**

**a. I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me: (9:13-18)**

- There was once a small city with only a few people in it. A powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built a huge siege works against it.
- Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved that city by his wisdom.
  - \* But nobody remembered that poor man. (Gen 40:16-23)
  - \* So I said, "Wisdom is better than strength."
  - \* But the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.

**b. The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools.**

- Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

***Wisdom is good, but alone cannot fulfill us***

**c. Wise Advice:**

**(10:1-7)**

- As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.
  - \* The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left.
  - \* Even as a fool walks along the road, they lack sense and show everyone how stupid they are. (Prv 13:16, 18:2)
- If a ruler's anger rises against you, do not leave your post; calmness can lay great offenses to rest.
- There is an evil I have seen under the sun, the sort of error that arises from a ruler:
  - \* Fools are put in many high positions, while the rich occupy the low ones.
  - \* I have seen slaves on horseback, while princes go one foot like slaves.

**d. Thoughts regarding risk**

**(10:8-9)**

- Whoever digs a pit may fall into it; whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake. ( see also Prv. 26:27)
- Whoever quarries stones may be injured by them; whoever splits logs may be endangered by them. (Det 19:5)
- If the ax is dull and the edge unsharpened, more strength is needed, but skill will bring success. *With skill you can get a job done, with wisdom and skill it will be much easier.*
- If a snake bites before it is charmed, the charmer receives no fee. *Don't get into a hurry.*

**Seldom will anything be done absent an element of risk. Does that mean that we stay in a padded room and do nothing? There is nothing wrong with taking prayerful, considered risks. If a person only and always does the "safe" things, they will not accomplish much.\***

**f. Words from the mouth of the wise are gracious, but fools (*"stupid, silly, dull"*) are consumed by their own lips (*"their lips shall swallow them up"*).**

**(10:12-15)**

- At the beginning their words are folly; (*Think before and as you speak!*)
- At the end they are wicked madness—and fools multiply words. (Gen 42:8, Jas 4:13-16, 1 Jn 2:16)
- No one knows what is coming—who can tell someone else what will happen after them? (Although it does not prevent people from trying - 1 Sam 28)

- h. The toil (“*travail*”) of fools wearies them; they do not know the way to town.** Compare with Rom 5:1-11, Rom 8: 28-38, Phil 4:6-7, Jas 1:1-5)
- i. Woe to the land whose king is a youth (“*child*” - any age up to manhood) and whose princes feast (*party*) in the morning.** (Is 3:1-9, Jer 38:14-3, 52:1).
- j. Blessed is the (“are you”) land whose king is of noble birth and whose princes eat at a proper time—for strength and not for drunkenness.**
- k. Through laziness, the rafters sag; because of idle hands, the house leaks.** ( e.g., Prv 24:30-31)
- l. A feast is made for laughter, wine makes life merry, and money is the answer for everything.** (Solomon’s observation still holds true today. But ...)
- m. Do not revile the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich in your bedroom.**
- Because a bird in the sky may carry your words,
  - and a bird on the wing may report what you say.
- n. Again, there is nothing without risk:**
- Ship your grain across the sea; after many days you may receive a return. Invest in seven ventures, yes, in eight; you do not know what disaster may come upon the land.
  - If clouds are full of water, they pour rain on the earth.
  - Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there it will lie. i.e., *You have to deal with what is.*
  - Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap. *You can “what if?” yourself to death and paralyze yourself worrying about it. Worry and hesitation can lead to procrastination and you may achieve nothing. You cannot eliminate risk.*
  - As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother’s womb, so you cannot understand the works of God, the Maker of all things.
  - **Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands be not idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.\***  
(Prov 27:23-27)

Regarding risk - consider the words of Theodore Roosevelt:

\* *“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”*

**ECCLESIASTES**  
**The Purpose of Life**

**12. Live your life but... be wise - Remember Him!** **11:7-12:8**

**a. Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun.** **11:7-8**

- However many years anyone may live, let them enjoy them all.
- But let him remember the days of darkness, for there will be many.
- Everything to come is meaningless.

***Embrace Life in all its Richness, Pleasure and Pain***

**b. You who are young, be happy while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth.** **11:9-10**

- Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.
- So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigor are meaningless. (Ps 112:1, Prv 31:30, Phil 4:6-7)

***Seek the Lord and Accept Your Life as His Gift. But Know Your Purpose!***

**Mat 22:34-40**

**c. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before:** **12:1-5**

- The days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them,"
- Before the sun and the light of the moon and the stars grow dark and the clouds return after the rain,
- When the keepers of the house tremble and the strong men stoop,
- When grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim,
- When the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades,
- When people rise at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint,
- When people are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets,
- When the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags itself along and desire is no longer stirred.
- Then people ("*man*") goes to their ("*his*") eternal home and mourners go about the streets.

- **Remember Him before (before you squander your time.):** **12:6-7**

- \* the silver cord is severed
- \* the golden bowl is broken
- \* the pitcher is shattered at the spring
- \* the wheel is broken at the well
- \* the dust returns to the ground it came from
- \* the spirit returns to God who gave it

***Come, Now is the Time to Worship***

**Isa 55:6-8**

**e. "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the teacher. Everything is meaningless. (1 Jn 2:15-17)** **12:8**

***Live Only for the Here, Now and Self and Suffer Incredible Loss***



**13. So- what is the conclusion of the study of life under the sun?**

**12:9-14**

**a. Not only was the teacher wise, but he imparted knowledge to the people;**

- He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs.
- The teacher searched find just the right words and what he wrote as upright and true.
- The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails - given by one Shepherd.
- \* Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them.
- \* Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.

**b. Now all has been heard; and here is the conclusion of the matter:**

- Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of mankind (Lit: "this [is] the [duty] of all mankind ("man")," or, "this is the work, chief end etc. of man.") **Mtt 16:24-27**
- For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. (1 Cor 3:10-15)

**Seek God, and live your life with purpose**

**Mat 25:14-30**

Discouraged? Don't be - Today **is** the first day of the rest of your life. In life as in a lot of things, one can drift or one can move with purpose. We have that choice. We are *not* at the mercy of fate. The call of God through this book is to grab your "rudder" and steer.

- If you don't know where you are going the trip may not be as productive as you hoped. We have directions - the Word, Prayer, Fellowship, Service. They are some of the "bones" on which to build our lives. Aim at nothing, and you *will* hit it.
- God desires that we enjoy our lives but within the context of a relationship with Him.
- Finally, we are not a law unto ourselves. We are accountable. Job 28:28