

Lesson 26 – Ecclesiastes 1-6 Lecture

When Carol told me last year we were going to cover Ecclesiastes, I was pretty excited, as it is a book that is not very often covered in churches. Then she told me we were going to do it in two weeks, so I get the task of summing up the first six chapters this week, and Jeff Swaney will get the second six chapters after the Easter break. Still – to come up with a lecture that covers six chapters in 30 minutes means my preferred way of teaching line-by-line has to be replaced with a different approach. So I read through these chapters several times seeking a way to sum it up and keep it within 30 minutes, and I finally got it. Are you ready? Got your pens? Here it comes “*Life sucks, and then you die.*” I’m done – let’s pray.

Why in the world would God allow a book like this in His Word???

Well....I'm going to make a statement that might surprise you, but I believe this book is one of the more important books in the Bible. The reason I say this is it is a brutally honest portrayal of the results of a life that is lived solely in the flesh. For the non-believer, maybe the new believer, and even the mature believer who has been stuck in a joyless and impersonal faith in God, Solomon's findings in life should ring hauntingly true. Halley's Bible Hand Book offers this, “*God gave Solomon wisdom and unparalleled opportunity to observe and explore every avenue of earthly life. And after much research and experiment, Solomon concluded that on the whole, humanity found little solid happiness in life, and in his own heart he found an unutterable yearning for something beyond himself. Thus the book, in a way, is humanity's cry for a Savior.*

C.S. Lewis came up with one of my favorite quotes, and it responds to Solomon's yearning from Halley's commentary, “*If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.*” Carol gave the title to this lesson as “*Solomon's*

Personal Pursuits”. If you will indulge me, I would like to give an alternate title *It's All About Your Perspective*. Before I get to why I want to give this title to the lecture, I'm going to first spend a few minutes providing some context and foundational words/phrases that run through the book. With that background, the rest of the lecture is going to present a comparison of some of *Solomon*'s key views on components of life, to the *New Testament* views on those same components. Just a heads up, I'm going to be quoting a lot of Scripture in this lecture. For those of you who are using the website, you may want to pull this lecture up and review it if you think you've missed anything.

Okay – let's do some prep work before we get into the heart of the text for these first 6 chapters. First of all, let's start with the title of the book –*Ecclesiastes*. This word is not found anywhere in the book, so how did it become the title? Solomon calls himself the “*Teacher*” in verse 1 of chapter 1. In other versions of the Bible, the translated word used is “*Preacher*”. Either way, the Hebrew word is *koheleth* – this is an official title given to someone who calls an assembly. The Greek word for assembly is *ekklesia* – where we get Ecclesiastes.

Next, by virtually all accounts of Biblical scholars, the author of this book is King Solomon. He is the second born child of David and Bathsheeba – the first one came out of their adultery, but it died. That Hebrew word for Teacher, Koheleth, also carries with it the idea of *debating – mostly with oneself* – considering various ideas about life and then coming to a conclusion. As you read through this book, you can hear Solomon wrestling with what he learned from his father King David's faith and his personal experiences. You'll have to wait until Jeff covers the last 6 chapters to find out where Solomon lands in his debates with himself.

Next, let's cover a few important words and phrases that Solomon uses many times throughout this book. A good place to start is in the second verse of chapter 1 with the second most used word in the book, “*Vanity*”. *Vanity* is used 38

times in Ecclesiastes. The Hebrew word for vanity is “*habel*” (pronounced “hah-bale”), and this means “emptiness, futility, vapor, that which vanishes quickly and leaves nothing behind.”

Another phrase Solomon uses is “Under the sun” - he uses it 29 times. When I get to the heart of this lecture, I’ll speak more to this phrase, but it is an important phrase as it highlights the limitations of Solomon’s perspective. G. Campbell Morgan, in his book “*Unfolding Message of the Bible*” noted Solomon was focused on what was *under* the sun, but he paid no attention to what was *above* the sun.

Solomon used the word “*Profit*” ten times. The Hebrew word is “*yitron*” and, interestingly, is used nowhere else in the OT. Similar to what it means in the accounting world, Profit means, “what is left over”. It is the opposite of vanity. “*Labor*” is used 23 times. The Hebrew word is “*amal*”, which means, according to Warren Wiersbe, to “*to toil to the point of exhaustion and yet experience little or no fulfillment in your work.*” It carries with it the idea of grief, misery, frustration, and weariness.

There other key words including wisdom, joy, and evil that Solomon uses, but they translate to pretty much what we understand them in English. The last word that I’m going to cover, appropriately, is “*God*” - it is used 48 times, but every use of it was Elohim and never Jehovah. Elohim is the Mighty God, the glorious God of creation who exercises sovereign power. He never uses Jehovah, which we see in Scripture as the “*LORD*”. Wiersbe describes Jehovah as “*the God of the covenant, the God of revelation who is eternally self-existent and yet graciously relates Himself to sinful man.*” The name Jehovah also brings the idea of Him being ever present and accessible. So are they the same God? Absolutely. If that is true, then why make the distinction? I’ll be getting to this in a few minutes.

Finally, I want to talk a little about Solomon. Dellenia did a great job last week going over the promise God made to Solomon from 1 Kings 3. The key to God's promises of wisdom and greatness to Solomon hinged on verse 14 "*And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.*" Solomon started strong with God – no doubt still influenced by the deep faith of his father, King David. But as time passed from David's influence coupled with the trappings and temptations that typically come with greatness, Solomon drifted from the Lord. He turned away from Jehovah, accumulated great wealth, and married women out of political gain to seek alliances with nations around him. This was a defiance of the warning in Deuteronomy 17:17, "*He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.*"

Given the melancholy and reflective tone of Ecclesiastes, Solomon is widely believed to be writing this towards the end of his life. He has led a life few men in history lived anymore to the extreme in terms of wisdom, renown, adventure, decadence, and wealth. Now he is looking back and assessing the fruit of his existence. 1 Kings 11:11 offers God's view of Solomon's life pursuits, "*So the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.*" God allowed Solomon to maintain his throne only because the promise He made to David.

Now keeping all of this as a backdrop, I want to spend a little time on some of the key conclusions Solomon made regarding his views on "life under the sun". Let's take a look at a list of the more predominant themes of what Solomon saw as vanity:

- The Futility of Life
- The Futility of Labor
- The Futility of Wisdom
- The Futility of Earthly Treasures
- The Futility of Knowing God

Let's start with his conclusion about the Futility of Life. I'm going to Offer up some of Solomon's thoughts about his opinion of the purpose of life. Ecclesiastes 1:2b, "*Everything is meaningless.*" Ecclesiastes 1:4, "*Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever.*" Ecclesiastes 1:9, "*What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.*" Ecclesiastes 1:17, "*Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.*" Ecclesiastes 4:3, "*But better than both is the one who has never been born, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun.*" Ecclesiastes 6:3c, "*if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.*" Finally, Ecclesiastes 6:12, "*For who knows what is good for a person in life, during the few and meaningless days they pass through like a shadow?* Wow – does this guy need a hug or what???

So what are Solomon's conclusions? One of them is life is cyclical – it just keeps going round and round, and the earth remains forever. He pursued wisdom, madness, and folly, and he concluded that pursuing life under the sun is chasing after the wind. In other words, there is no payoff to these pursuits – there is no reward that he can grasp. He then goes to a dark place thinking we're better off never being born or being a stillborn child! He wraps up his thoughts about life wondering what is good for a person because our days are meaningless and pass through like a shadow.

Let's add some color to the perspective to his conclusions and think about who Solomon was and what he possessed. He was a king. He had greater wisdom than anyone in history. He had a ton of money. He lived in comparative peace. Yet, he finds life to be futile and meaningless. Seriously, think about that framework and then look at the seemingly endless tragic stories of entertainers who seem to be on top of the world, but they end up being miserable, on drugs, and even sometimes end their lives. They came to the same sad conclusion that Solomon did – that life under the sun isn't worth living. What a waste.

Another one of Solomon's conclusions was the Futility of Labor. Let's take a look at a few of his quotes on the issue of labor and toil. Ecclesiastes 1:3: *What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun?* Ecclesiastes 1:14: *"I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind."* Ecclesiastes 2:11a: *"Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless".* Ecclesiastes 4:4a: *And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another.*" Finally, Ecclesiastes 5:15b: *"They take nothing from their toil that they can carry in their hands."*

Solomon is placing the purpose of one's labors on "gain" – there should be fruit of one's labor. Without defining what "gain" is, he is correct. Why would we waste our efforts on doing things if we felt it wasn't going to gain anything? The shortfall in his assessment is he is defining "gain" as something monetary or tangible. He validates this definition when he says that the motivation of one's labors is out of envy for what someone else has that the person laboring *doesn't have and wants*.

A true test of the purity of our labor is to ask this question, '*What is my motivation for doing what I'm doing?*' If the priorities of what we are doing are rooted in self-centeredness, then we are going to end up with the same conclusions

Solomon does. Why is that? Our appetites for building our self-esteem are insatiable if that is our motivation. Solomon got it right in 2:8b, “*The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.*” When we are living in the flesh, our flesh knows only one thing – to get **more**. Solomon also notes an inevitability of the workaholic – he ends up alone. Working for the sole sake of monetary or tangible gain will leave us exhausted, unfulfilled and alone. My father was a workaholic, and he and my mother had these dreams that in their older years they would do a lot of traveling. They put off enjoying life in the present in hopes that with more money, they could better enjoy life later on. A lot of people do that, but in this case, my mother died at 52 years old, and they never were able to enjoy the fruits of my father’s labor.

Before I go any farther, though, let me be clear about the issue of labor – we are to provide for ourselves. One of the more tragic developments of American society in the last 30-40 years is the burgeoning dependence on the U.S. and state governments to fund people who are perfectly capable of working. Programs such as welfare, food stamps, and unemployment insurance are called “entitlement” programs. The long-term problem with these entitlement programs is the beneficiaries of them develop an attitude of exactly what they are called - *entitlement* – that they deserve these handouts just because they are living in America. Before some of you start yelling at me, I firmly believe that we should show compassion for and help people who are down on their luck or have been victimized by terrible circumstances. However, where these programs fail is how to get these people weaned off the government money and getting them back to work. There are a couple of good sayings that seem fitting here - “*Lots of people who once looked to God to save them now expect the government to do it.*” *They say God helps those who help themselves, and the government helps those who don’t.*” Laboring for the sole purpose of developing wealth and building one’s

tangible possessions is not the way to go, but laboring for the purpose of providing for one's self and their family is healthy and honorable.

Next on Solomon's hit list was the Futility of Heritage/Legacy. Here are some of his juicier blasts: Ecclesiastes 1:11: "*No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them.*" Ecclesiastes 2:18-19: "*I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless.*" Finally, he says in Ecclesiastes 3:22, "*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?*"

So Solomon first acknowledges no one remembers the former generations, but then he focuses in on what his real issue is – seeing the efforts of all his labors being passed on to potentially questionable descendants. Let's look a little more closely at how sad Solomon's viewpoint is. First, he is dismissing the legacy of his father, David. Had he only known how important of a man he has been in human history, he might have sung a different tune. What was his real struggle? What value assessment was he placing on his offspring? It wasn't about whether or not they would be productive humans in their faith and works, whether or not they treated people kindly, or whether or not they took care of their families. His value assessment of what he was leaving behind was based solely on their handling the fruit of his labor – namely his money and worldly possessions. Solomon himself uses the key word that is his underlying theme on this topic in 2:19 *Control*. He realizes he cannot control what his heirs will do with all of his possessions. His love for these possessions actually turns out to be a hate for them because he cannot control what's going to happen to them.

Having been in the finance field for more than 35 years, I have seen countless people anguish over leaving their inheritance to their children and grandchildren. They set up trusts and put stipulations on the uses of the money – in effect controlling the money they made during their lives from the grave. While there is some wisdom in being careful with the money we leave to our heirs, the reality is there is nothing we can do with how they’re going to spend or invest the money we’ve accumulated – we’re dead! What is the basis of the value we are going to assess our heirs? If it is just about how they’re going to spend or invest our money, then all I can say is that is pretty tragic.

The next thing Solomon takes a shot at is pretty startling given it was what he asked for when God asked him if he could have anything in the world, what would he want – what was his reply? *Wisdom*. Solomon is widely known as one of the wisest men in Biblical, if not all of human history. No doubt his incredible accumulation of wealth, possessions, and position were the fruit of his wisdom. However, after all that “gain” from his wisdom, what was his conclusion to its value? Ecclesiastes 1:11c: *Wisdom Is Meaningless. It's meaningless.* Now Solomon didn’t just sit on the wisdom God gave him – he ran with it. Ecclesiastes 1:13 Solomon tells us, *“I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens. What a heavy burden God has laid on mankind!”* He goes on with his conclusions about wisdom in 1:18, *“For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.”* Solomon goes on with his whine, I mean lament, by concluding what is the point of having wisdom if the fool ends up with the same fate as the wise man. This is a message from hell when you think about it – what is behind this particular claim? The wise should be smart enough to figure out how to keep from dying – or, in other words, wisdom should give you the powers of God over life and death.

In all of Solomon's complaints about wisdom, he qualified the scope of wisdom back in verse 13 "*explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens.*" Solomon was viewing his wisdom as the mechanism for him to achieve material and earthly gain. If wisdom didn't produce his idea of gain, he saw wisdom as being a source of sorrow and knowledge bringing more grief. Now to be fair, it is possible Solomon had some good intentions in the use of his wisdom, but he was realizing earthly wisdom does not solve the ailments of humanity. Moreover, this is the same guy who was responsible for the following verses: Proverbs 2:10, "*For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.*" Proverbs 3:13, "*Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding.*" Proverbs 8:11, "*For wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.*"

So what happened to Solomon and wisdom? You know happened to him? It's the same thing that happens to us. Life happened. The heavy weight of a sin-filled world eroded the freshness and innocence of Solomon's beliefs and focus, and he bowed under the pressure that comes with sin so his eyes could only look as high as under the sun. For those of you who have had the blessings of having your faith at an early age, some of you can probably relate that some of the innocence of what you learned about God as a child took a few heavy blows from painful circumstances in life. That rock you thought you were standing on seemingly slowly started getting less sturdy. Our flesh in pain starts telling us our faith is in vain. The thing is – the rock we as followers of Jesus stand on – Jesus Himself – never changes – He is always the same rock. The issue is whether or not we believe it. Clearly, Solomon's father David's faith that likely fueled his quotes in Proverbs has over the years of his existence has been burned off, and now he's gassed with *his* faith and that has left him looking at what was his greatest gift from God, wisdom, as meaningless. How incredibly sad.

Solomon also saw the futility of earthly treasures. Some of his key findings on this topic included Ecclesiastes 4:8, “*There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth.*” Ecclesiastes 5:10-11, “*Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.*”¹¹ *As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owners except to feast their eyes on them?*” Ecclesiastes 5:12b-13: “*but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep. I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners,*”

What are some of the key words and phrases in these verses that speak to the truth of a life lived solely for the purpose of making and growing money? “*His eyes were not content with his wealth.*” “*Whoever loves money never has enough.*” “*Wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners.*” Let’s put this in perspective – Solomon was about as wealthy a man as their was – comparing to today, he was probably Bill Gates or Warren Buffet – like wealthy. Yet listen to his words – he’s miserable. My friends, money does not buy happiness. Now for those of us who are living paycheck to paycheck, we probably would at least like the opportunity to test that saying, right? I will confess to you all right now, I have told God I thought I would be a magnificent lottery winner as I would spend the rest of my life finding ways to give it all away for Kingdom purposes. Isn’t that noble of me? Well, since I have yet to win the lottery, it appears God isn’t quite so sure. The reality is the vast majority of lottery winners end up penniless and their relationships with their families and friends are forever altered – and usually not for the better. Solomon is spot-on with his assessment of the futility of earthly treasures.

While there are other things he talks about being vanity or meaningless, I’m only going to talk about one more – and it’s a biggie. The Futility of Knowing God. The truth is as I read through these Scriptures several times, Solomon got a

lot of things *right* about his ***knowledge of*** God. However, it is clear, though, he does not ***know*** God – certainly nothing like his Father David did. Let's take a look at some of his poor conclusions about God. Ecclesiastes 1:13b: *[Speaking of wisdom]* “*What a heavy burden God has laid on mankind!*” Ecclesiastes 3:11b, “*yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*” Ecclesiastes 3:13, “*That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God.*” Ecclesiastes 3:18, “*As for humans, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals.*”

Let's pick out a few key points from these verses: The gift of wisdom is a heavy burden from God; no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end; God gives the gift of satisfaction to our labor through eating and drinking; and, God tests humans because they are like animals. These are sad conclusions about God, but they are the perfect segue into the final portion of this lecture. Solomon has amassed a long list of conclusions about life, and he pretty much sums up life as being what? *Meaningless*. I said earlier that Solomon's conclusions are pretty much the same inevitable conclusions for the non-believer. What do *we* have that the non-believing world doesn't have *Jesus*. We have the *Gospel*. We have the *Christmas story*. We have *Good Friday*. We have *Resurrection Day*. And we have the *Holy Spirit*.

Let's take a look at a couple of key Scriptures. John 3:3, “Jesus replied, “*Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.*” Now 2 Corinthians 5:17, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!*” Sadly, too many believers come to the same conclusions about life that Solomon did because they don't know what they have. What are these verses telling us? Upon faith in Who Jesus is, what He did on the cross on our behalf, and His resurrection, we are given a ***new*** life –

we are born again into a new life. This is the Spirit-led and filled life. It is a totally new existence, and it is contrary to life in the flesh.

Let's take a look at a couple of more Scriptures. Romans 8:13, "*For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*" Galatians 2:20, "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*" God has really laid on my heart the truth of this new life, and I'm saddened how few believers live in this truth these days. To be completely transparent – I'm not living like this anywhere near as much as I know I can. It's so frustrating because God has given me many opportunities to see what a new life led in the Spirit looks like, and it is awesome. One thing is for sure about the believer who is living in the Spirit, it is impossible to draw the same conclusions about life in the Spirit as Solomon did about life in the flesh. To prove that, I'm going to use his conclusions as a backdrop to show you how the New Testament responds to them.

Let's begin with Solomon's claims that life is meaningless. There are virtually countless verses in the New Testament that speak to the blessings of living life in the Spirit, so in the interest of getting you out of here by Easter, I've chosen just a couple: Galatians 5:22-23: "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*" And John 10:10: "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*" Solomon's conclusions about the futility of life were because he was focusing his purposes for living life to make *him* happy. For the person living in the Spirit, they are complete in their happiness and joy because they are in Christ – Who is the author and finisher of our faith. Therefore, with this security of a relationship with God, life led in the Spirit allows us to focus on living for Christ

and loving others by exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit – being joyful, peaceful, forbearing, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. There is nothing meaningless about a life that is centered in Christ and living as He lived to a world that is in desperate need for these beautiful character traits. As Jesus said in John 10:10 – the life He offers is full.

Regarding labor, let's see what that great tentmaker, the Apostle Paul, had to say about laboring in the Spirit. Colossians 3:23: “*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters*” Ephesians 4:28: “*Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.*” 1 Corinthians 10:31: “*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*”

What are the underlying themes of Paul's perspective on laboring in the Spirit? We are to work *for the Lord* and to bring *Him* glory in what we do. We are also to take what we earn from our labor and share it with others. What's the main difference between Solomon's perspective on labor and the Spirit's perspective? The focus of laboring in the Spirit life is on God and others. Solomon's perspective was about personal gain from his labor. The end pursuit of laboring in the flesh for gain is a vicious circle of more work for more gain. Laboring for the Lord and others brings a satisfaction of true goodness that cannot be achieved in the flesh.

Moving on to wisdom, let's look at these Scriptures: Luke 21:15: “*For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.*” Romans 11:33a: “*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*” 1 Corinthians 1:30: “*It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*” 1 Corinthians 2:13: “*This is what we speak, not in words*

taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.”

What do we learn about wisdom in these verses? First, the wisdom we have is God Himself dwelling in us via the Holy Spirit. Yes, God gave Solomon wisdom, and I believe it was His wisdom. What is different is Solomon chose to use the wisdom he was given by God to focus on life under the sun – in the flesh. The purity of his purpose in his Godly wisdom deteriorated as he drifted further and further from the Lord. For the believer, we are given the Holy Spirit upon our confession of faith, and He’s not going to leave us – even when we drift from our faith. Holy Spirit-fueled wisdom is greater than any earthly wisdom and has no end in its wonder because the source of it is infinite because God is infinite.

Regarding money, we find the following: Matthew 6:21: “*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” Hebrews 13:5a: “*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.*” Matthew 6:24: “*No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*” 1 Timothy 6:10: “*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*”

Just as we’ve talked about life, labor, and wisdom, Solomon’s focus on the purposes of these things was on “gain”. We’ve also talked about the importance of defining what “gain” is. Now that we have defined a Christ-given new birth and life alternative, we have an alternative way to define gain. Perhaps there is no more clear need to do that than in the area of treasures, or money. From an earthly or fleshly perspective, there is no greater objective measure of gain than in the area of money and possessions. I’m sure you’ve seen the signs or heard the sayings, “He who dies with the most toys wins.” Think about the stupidity of that statement –

your life is over, but you “win” because you left the most behind? Think about Solomon’s comments about leaving money to his heirs – what if they are fools? Even Solomon could see the folly in this statement.

In the Kingdom of God – treasures and money take on a different purpose. In other words, there’s a new way to define “gain”. According to these Scriptures we’ve offered, our hearts are a reflection of what we are doing with our money. Are we hoarding the money for ourselves, or are we using it to bless others by investing it in others or giving it away to those in need? We cannot love money and love God. God is a jealous God, and He wants to be first in your heart. He knows what you need, and one of His names is Jehovah Jireh, which means the Lord WILL provide. By choosing to love money, we are, in effect, rejecting God’s willingness and ability to provide what we need. Given the kinds of wealth and possessions Solomon accumulated, it’s not much of a reach to conclude that the love of his money and things took priority over his relationship with God. And look where it left him in his assessment of all he had – it was meaningless.

Finally, and most importantly, let’s look at what we have now that Solomon didn’t have when it comes to knowing God. God has always been knowable, but He became even more knowable and relatable when Jesus came on the scene 2,000 years ago. Let’s look at some great promises of knowing our amazing God. John 17:3: “*Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*” Ephesians 1:17: “*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*” Colossians 1:10: “*so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,*”

That last verse is a great one, but it bears some explanation, as I don’t want to lay some legalistic trip on you. What does it mean to “live a life worthy of the

Lord and please Him in every way”? First of all, as a believer, you are His child, so He is madly in love with you AND He is pleased with you. The “life” that Solomon found so meaningless was void of a relationship with God, and it left him focusing on the things under the sun. A life that is full of meaning is centered on loving the Father and those around us with the Son. To lead a life that is worthy of the Lord and pleasing Him is merely one that is devoted to loving God and loving others. We do that because He first loved us, and He proved that by sending His Son to die on a Cross for the payment for our sins. Jesus’ life was never meaningless – therefore, neither is the life that has Jesus as its primary focus.

Solomon chose to only see life through his eyes. If you’re looking at life through your eyes, then that is all you will ever see – your finite eyes will only go so far, and that is what makes things look very big and daunting. When you look at life through God’s eyes, you are seeing things from His perspective where compared to Him things don’t seem quite so daunting, and with Him there is *always hope* – and there is *always meaning*.

Let me finish with a scenario for you to consider. What if you found out that there was a man who had found a loophole in the tax code and he had a legitimate and legal way to save you \$10,000 on your taxes? Let me ask you a question. Which is worse? - The man not sharing his findings or those who learn of his findings but don’t do anything with it? My friends, this book has shared some serious good news about a new life in Christ for those that believe in Him. You’ve been given the information. My question to you is “*Are you going to do anything with it?*” I can assure you this new life is anything but meaningless. Let’s pray.