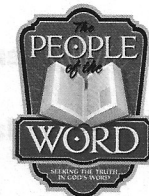


Lessons Learned From Life

Ecclesiastes 7-12

Eccl. 7:14, *When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider:
God has made the one as well as the other.*



Eccl. 1:2 "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the teacher. Utterly meaningless. Everything is meaningless." The author uses this word 38 times in the book. The word has a dual meaning:

- 1) Emptiness, futility, vapor, that which vanishes quickly and leaves nothing behind. We enjoy moments in life, but at the moment of contentment, tragedy strikes, and it's gone.
- 2) Enigma, mysterious, or paradox. Life is unpredictable. Proverbs 21:6, "A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare."

Mark records Jesus' words in 8:36, *What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?* It's a question of priorities, of emphasis. Do we prioritize life UNDER the sun, or ABOVE it?

The author's basic goal is to present the teacher arguments as he deconstructs all the ways we attempt to find meaning and purpose APART from God.

Pursuing And Exploring (1:12-6:9).

- **Wisdom** and **knowledge** ends in "much grief" and "much sorrow" (1:12-18).
- He found that the **paths of pleasure** and **possessions** are futile and unprofitable (2:1-11).
- The certainty of death for both **the wise man and the fool** drove Solomon to the conclusion that a wise lifestyle is just as purposeless as a foolish one (vv. 12-17).
- **Labor** and its fruits were also explored and found to be grievous and empty (2:18-3:22). However, there is an interlude in chapter 3 verses 11-15, as the teacher expounds upon a life with God "above the sun" if you will:
 - What God makes: Verse 11, *He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men...*
 - What God gives: verses 12-13, *I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God.*
 - What God does: verses 14-15, *I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him. Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account.*
- **The injustice of oppression** and **the accumulation of wealth** were seen to bring largely frustration and dissatisfaction (4:1-16, 5:10-6:9).

Reflecting And Summarizing (6:10-11:6). By the time we reach this section of the journal, we find Solomon drawing a series of conclusions and lessons from his attempt to live "under the sun." The central thrust of his assessment is this: *Lasting purpose and fulfillment can be found only in a trusting relationship with God.* Nothing less will do.

Solomon's Additional (Enigmas) Mysteries - Chapter 8

The Mystery Of UNJUST Triumph – 8:10-13

The Mystery Of UNFAIR Consequences – 8:14

Ways to Handle Life's Mysteries

Three “musts” that serve to round out Solomon's counsel on dealing with these troubling enigmas of life:

1. We must admit that although our hearts cry for justice, we are dependent upon MERCY.
2. We must admit that we don't understand why, and we may never learn why while on this side of eternity.
3. We must admit that we are not sovereign and that the Lord has purposes BEYOND our capacity to understand.

Drawing Some Final Conclusions (12:9-14)

At the close of his journal, the wise Preacher gives two bottom-line exhortations to his readers: “(1) Fear God and (2) keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

Martin Luther wrote, “My concern is for two days: Today and THAT Day.” So, how do we “fear God and keep his commandments” today in preparation for THAT Day?”

Focus On What Will Endure

The Journal's Relationship To Our Journey Through Life

1. **The lure of something better tomorrow robs us of the JOYS offered today.** The temptation to seek greener pastures may be unavoidable, but we can refuse to become its prey. And once we choose to live for today, rather than for tomorrow, we will find it easier to be content. “This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” – Ps. 118:24.
2. **The final destination, if God is ABSENT from the scene, will not satisfy.** Emptiness and a fleeting sense of contentment pervade a life acted out apart from God's perspective and approval. The only cure for futility and dissatisfaction in our lives is a consistent walk of faith with the living God. So, let's remember:
 - A. Life is an ADVENTURE – Let's live it by faith! (Eccl 4:1-5:9)
 - B. Life is a GIFT – Let's enjoy it! (Eccl 11:1-6)
 - C. Life is a SCHOOL – Let's learn our lessons! (11:7-12:8)
 - D. Life is a STEWARDSHIP – Let's manage it well! (Eccl 12:9-12)