

## Ecclesiastes “Summary: gathering the nuggets”

Solomon the author of Ecclesiastes wrote with **clarity artistry and integrity**. Thus his book instructs our minds, touches our hearts, and guides us in the wisdom of God.

The famous American writer Tom Wolfe described Ecclesiastes as “*the highest flower of poetry, eloquence, and truth*” – “the greatest single piece of writing I have known.” This is the book that gave us phrases like “the sun also rises” (Ecclesiastes 1:5), “to everything there is a season” (Ecclesiastes 3:1), “eternity in the hearts of men” (Ecclesiastes 3:11), “cast your bread upon the waters” (Ecclesiastes 11:1), “the almond tree blossoms” (Ecclesiastes 12:5), and “man does not know his time” (Ecclesiastes 9:12).

## IT HAS BEEN QUITE THE JOURNEY... Pray

**Solomon writes... Proverbs 24:30-34** I went by the field of the lazy man, And by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; 31 And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; Its surface was covered with nettles; Its stone wall was broken down. 32 When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction: 33 A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest; 34 So shall your poverty come *like* a prowler, And your need like an armed man.

Solomon didn't know it at the time but he was writing a **prophesy** about himself. The characteristics of the sluggard's farm became the characteristics of Solomon's heart.

**Weeds...** Compromised morality... His marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh. Marrying a pagan was forbidden. She led him away from God.

**Weeds...** The pursuit of wealth. The love of money filled the garden of his heart with weeds

**Weeds...** An Israelite king was not to “multiply wives for himself, lest his **“heart turn away”** (Deut. 17:17). Solomon had 700 wives, and 300 concubines.

**Weeds... Deut. 17** A King must stay humble and rule with humility... 1 Kings 10:18 Then the king made a **huge** throne, decorated with ivory and overlaid with fine gold.


**Like the sluggard in his own proverb, Solomon let down his guard. He became spiritually careless and lazy.**

*It doesn't take much to ruin a garden.*

By the time he had reached his middle years, many of Solomon's **cherished values** were broken down. The fine speeches and prayers of early years were like so much **chaff, strewn on a sluggard's field.**


**Weeds...** Worthless thistles and stinging nettles grew thick in the very center of his life.

**“VANITY OF VANITIES,”** lamented Solomon, “all is vanity!”

 Solomon used his **position**, **POWER**, and **purse** to experiment with everything imaginable in pursuit of deep down fulfillment. He traveled down the path of **science** and **philosophy**, he turned to **pleasure**, then to **achievement**, he moved on to **religion, materialism, fame**, and **power**. He contemplated the value of hard work, long life, a large family, a good name.

**The Hebrew word is hevel “vanity”;** No word is more key in Ecclesiastes. Solomon liked that word, **“vanity”;** he will use it **38 times** in Ecclesiastes.

**emptiness, FUTILITY;** The word **“vanity”** could be translated *“whatever is left after you break a soap bubble”*. Life without God is like chasing after soap bubbles.

 **FACT:** human life and human goals, as ends in themselves and apart

from God, are futile and meaningless...

Another key phrase in Ecclesiastes appears in verse 3, "**under the sun**". The phrase occurs **29** times in Ecclesiastes. In his quest for meaning Solomon limited his search to things under the sun - **not heavenly things but earthly things**. His *boundaries* were here *below*: **material and physical pursuits. It IS LIFE CONSIDERED WITHOUT AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE.**

**The preacher wants us to feel the full weight of a miserable life under the sun...**

Hughes... "The reason the Preacher shows us the weariness of our existence, making us more and more disillusioned with life under the sun, is so we will not expect to find meaning and satisfaction in earthly things, but only in God himself." **Charles Bridges** "We are permitted to taste the bitter wormwood of earthly streams, in order that, standing by the heavenly fountain, we may point our fellow sinners to the world of vanity **we have left** and to the surpassing glory and delights of the world we have newly found."

**ECC. 1 VERSE 9 "AND THERE IS NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN."**

**REALLY SOLOMON... "NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN."**

**Jesus declared in Revelation 21:5** "*Behold, I am making all things new*" Only Jesus can do a truly new work. He puts a **new song on our lips, a new desire in our hearts. He gives us a new start, a new hope, a new life. Can I get a GLORY!**

## Chapter 2

Our **Hebrew** became a **HEDONIST**. Solomon tries to find meaning in pleasure. He becomes a "**PARTY ANIMAL**". He "**Grabs for all the gusto**" - "*If it feels good, do it.*" Solomon puts on his Reebok's and lives their mad motto: "**Life is short- play hard**" and wow, did Solomon play hard... Solomon's palace in Jerusalem was a **perpetual party**. Once again, vanity... *grasping at the wind.*

**"IS THAT ALL THERE IS?"**

**WINE, WOMEN AND SONG!** Solomon *partied hearty*, but he found **NO PEACE IN HIS PLEASURE**, *no satisfaction in his sensuality*, **no contentment in his Carnal Cravings**. **IS THAT ALL THERE IS?"**

Life without God Solomon would say **"WE ARE BORN NAKED, WET AND HUNGRY. THEN THINGS GET WORSE."**

Wise or foolish you still will die... His repeated failures in quest for life's meaning is now in danger of embittering his heart: **SO HE SAYS IN CHAPTER 2 VERSE 17 "THEREFORE I HATED LIFE"**

★ **2 A TIME TO BE BORN, AND A TIME TO DIE; The womb and the tomb... birth and death —A TIME TO PLANT, AND A TIME TO PLUCK WHAT IS PLANTED;**

God is in charge of time and His timing is perfect!

**KAIROS: THE SUPREME MOMENT... GOD'S SOVERIGNTY**

**chronos: sequential time...**

★ When Solomon says that, **"GOD HAS MADE EVERYTHING Beautiful IN ITS TIME"**. He is not just talking about the way that God made the world in the first place, but about the way that **HE HAS RULED IT EVER SINCE.**

**CHAPTER 3 VERSE 11... ALSO HE HAS PUT ETERNITY IN THEIR HEARTS**

Inside every person there's a tugging, a longing, a frustration that can only be satisfied by a touch of eternity. **This is the hunger of the human heart!** There's a "hole in our hearts"... And neither **enjoyment** or **employment** can fill that hole.

St. Augustine prayed: "You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in You." We can say that eternity is in our hearts because we are made in the image of an **ETERNAL GOD**

Chapter 4...

## **FAME IS BOTH FICKLE AND FLEETING.**

The Preacher reflects on the value of *contentment*. It is better to have less and be content (with quietness) than to have more and constantly be grasping for more on top.

It's good to have the things that money can buy, provided you don't lose the things that money can't buy. **BALANCE!**



**TWO REALLY ARE BETTER THAN ONE** – better for work and for warmth, better in times of woe and in warfare.

**Finishing verse 10 of chapter 4... BUT WOE TO HIM WHO IS ALONE WHEN HE FALLS, FOR HE HAS NO ONE TO HELP HIM UP.** Aloneness was the worst state of being in the Hebrew mind!

**\*\*\*AND A THREEFOLD CORD IS NOT QUICKLY BROKEN. BRING JESUS INTO EVERY RELATIONSHIP YOU HAVE AND HE WILL ONLY STRENGTHEN IT!** Jesus + one is always a majority...

What a friend we have in Jesus!!!

→ Maclaren, "Fruitful and acceptable worship *begins* before it *begins*."

Ecclesiastes 5 was written to help us take God *more seriously* when we worship.

When we fear God we will come to worship with **expectancy and awe**. We will be ready to listen to what He says. We will be careful what we say, limiting our speech to words that are pleasing to him. We will give God what He deserves, including whatever **time** or **talent** or **treasure** we have promised to give.

2,350 verses deal with the proper use and perspective towards \$\$\$\$. Solomon preaches... verse 10 chapter 5 says, "**HE WHO LOVES SILVER WILL**

**NOT BE SATISFIED WITH SILVER; NOR HE WHO LOVES ABUNDANCE, WITH INCREASE. THIS ALSO IS VANITY."**

The **THINGS** that matter in life are not things at all... Do you have **Things** or do **Things** have you.

The contemporary author Jessie O'Neill has diagnosed this spiritual problem. She calls it "affluenza"<sup>99</sup> which is "an unhealthy relationship with money" or the pursuit of wealth.

Remember to say NO! to Cirrhosis of the Giver

**SOLOMON GIVES SOME GREAT REASONS TO KEEP RICHES IN PERSPECTIVE...**

- \* Freeloaders, relatives and friends will soak you.
- \* Oppressive government and taxes

**But no matter who they are, the more we have, the more other people try to get it.**

**Another problem with having more money is that it will keep us up at night. How will I maintain all I have, how can I keep from losing it?**

**Another negative about riches You can't take it with you!**

Many people live "The Golden Mean" as taught by ancient Greek and Roman philosophers. Moderation, don't let this Jesus stuff go to your head. Jesus says because you are neither hot nor cold I will vomit you out of my mouth... Jesus in moderation is not a Biblical teaching. **JESUS IS EITHER LORD OF ALL OR NOT LORD AT ALL.**

**Ecclesiastes 7:13 CONSIDER THE WORK OF GOD; FOR WHO CAN MAKE STRAIGHT WHAT HE HAS MADE CROOKED?**

**WHY DOES GOD ALLOW THINGS TO REMAIN CROOKED WHEN WE PRAY SO FERVENTLY THAT HE WOULD MAKE THEM STRAIGHT?**





God knows the crooked things test our faith... this produces patience and then we become complete, lacking nothing.

**Suffering is part of our preparation for eternity.**



Crooked things remind us this earth is not our home. We will suffer tribulation on this earth.

*Crooked things can convict us of our sin... correct us in our sins... can keep us from spiritual complacency.*

It is not our job to try and figure out why things have been made crooked. **God knows why!** When something in life seems crooked, we are usually very quick to tell Him how to straighten it out. **Maybe God sent the crooked things to straighten us out!**

**SOLOMON SAID. "CONSIDER THE WORK OF GOD" IN THE END HE WILL MAKE ALL THAT IS CROOKED STRAIGHT!**

In verse 20 of chapter 7 Solomon reminds us of the doctrine of sin. Specifically that we all are sinners. 20.. **FOR THERE IS NOT A JUST MAN ON EARTH WHO DOES GOOD AND DOES NOT SIN.**

Solomon's observation is correct. Paul picks up this same theme in Romans when he says there is none righteous, no not one (Romans 3:10).

**WE all were born in the same sinking boat... All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory... the wages of sin are death! "GREAT SINNERS" IN NEED OF "GREAT FORGIVENESS" WHICH WAS PROVIDED FOR BY OUR "GREAT SAVIOR".**

He also reminds us of how ugly our **Unruly mucus membrane** known as the tongue can be. **Solomon says, "Just as you have talked about others, you can be sure others are talking about you"**—not a comforting thought, but true.

**THINK TWICE BEFORE YOU SPEAK ONCE...**

Solomon's bad track record with woman comes out in verse 26 of chapter 7 **AND I FIND MORE BITTER THAN DEATH THE WOMAN WHOSE HEART IS *SNARES* AND *NETS*, WHOSE HANDS ARE *FETTERS*. HE WHO PLEASES GOD SHALL ESCAPE FROM HER, BUT THE *SINNER* SHALL BE TRAPPED BY HER.**

Solomon was a sinner trapped by her... will you be or will you be like Joseph and Daniel and purpose in your heart not to defile yourself.

**CHARACTER IS FORGED IN THE SMALL MOMENTS OF LIFE AND REVEALED IN THE BIG ONES.**

**Joseph was careful to never be alone with his temptation.**

"HE NEVER LET HIS HAND GET NEAR THE COOKIE JAR" **Men, LISTEN CAREFULLY!** Mrs. Potiphar is calling for you to **lie with her** <sup>bb</sup> <sup>qq</sup> The Deliah's are screaming tell me of your strength and let me then cut your hair... SHE CALLS TO YOU FROM THE COMPUTER SCREEN, she screams to you from the T.V. She calls from the beaches, **THE SPORTS EVENTS... SHE HAS DESTRUCTION IN HER EYES. She will never give up until she has ruined you.**

**DANIEL HAD A RESOLVE!** He **predetermined**, He **purposed** in his heart. An unshakeable purpose... literally he **set upon his heart/** not to defile himself. **It was a firebrand on his soul . . .**

**VERSE 1 OF CHAPTER 8 SAYS, A MAN'S WISDOM MAKES HIS FACE SHINE, AND THE STERNNESS OF HIS FACE IS CHANGED. AND WHO KNOWS THE INTERPRETATION OF A THING?**



**We know the wisdom of the gospel turns the frown of sin into the smile of grace.**

**Proverbs 15:13...** A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, But by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.





Who is more merry than the one who's sins are forgiven and eternal salvation secure?

**Onto verse 2 I SAY, "KEEP THE KING'S COMMANDMENT FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR OATH TO GOD.**

**Our submission to authority on earth is one important part of our submission to Christ in Heaven.**



When it comes to a conflict between God and man, we must obey the higher authority."

**Great wisdom is required to know when authority has called us to do something contrary to what God has called us to do**

We **do not** control our own destiny or determine the days of our lives. We certainly don't know how to interpret everything that happens in our lives. **What, then, is the wise way for us to live?**

In full surrender and obedience to the One who knows the end from the beginning and has our very best in view.

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Solomon was clearly troubled by the prosperity of the wicked and the difficulties of the righteous.

**VERSE 12 OF CHAPTER 8 "YET I SURELY KNOW THAT IT WILL BE WELL WITH THOSE WHO FEAR GOD, WHO FEAR BEFORE HIM. Verse 13 BUT IT WILL NOT BE WELL WITH THE WICKED;**

Judgment is coming – maybe sooner than we think but God is giving man more time to repent.



Even if he does not explain exactly what happens after death, **Solomon knows that justice will be done.** Although he knows that the world is full of

injustice, he also believes in the final justice of God.

THE GREATEST JOY OF HEAVEN WILL BE GOD'S PRESENCE

The greatest agony of hell will be God's absence

**Hell is a furnace of unquenchable fire**, a place of everlasting punishment, where its victims are tormented in both their bodies and their minds. Hell is a place from which God's mercy and goodness have been withdrawn, where God's wrath is revealed as a terrifying, consuming fire, and men live with unfulfilled lusts and desires in torment forever and ever.

**No parties going on in hell.. utter aloneness!**

✦ So do not envy the wicked, **even when they seem to prosper**. It will not go well for them on the Day of Judgment.

**Verse 15 of Chapter 8 SO I COMMENDED ENJOYMENT, BECAUSE A MAN HAS NOTHING BETTER UNDER THE SUN THAN TO EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY**

“Yes, there is vanity under the sun. Yes, we see injustice that is hard to accept and understand. Yes, we have a lot of hard work to do. Nevertheless, there is joy for us in the ordinary things of life – **eating, drinking, and sharing fellowship with the people of God.**”

**HAND OF GOD** The Bible uses the image of “the hand of God” to express God’s **power, love, supervision, and control**. God really does have **“the whole world in his hands.”** We know that the hand of God is a hand of love.

In Chapter 4 verse 5 Solomon preaches **“FOR THE LIVING KNOW THAT THEY WILL DIE;”** The positive side of Solomon’s **statement is** knowing that we will die gives us time to prepare for death, and also for eternity.

We all prepare for the future with life insurance, medical insurance, car insurance... Have you prepared for death?

## HAVE YOU TRUSTED IN JESUS ALONE FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF YOUR SINS?

Not only for salvation but I also think it is good to prepare for death in very practical ways.

**You should have a will or a trust.** Something with specific directions to determine what your wishes are in all areas before and after you are gone.

Discipleship is a journey, and not merely a destination.

**VERSE 8 OF CHAPTER 9 SOLOMON EXHORTS US TO “GO, EAT YOUR BREAD WITH JOY, AND DRINK YOUR WINE WITH A MERRY HEART; FOR GOD HAS ALREADY ACCEPTED YOUR WORKS.”** His admonition “Go!” means: “Don’t sit around and brood! Get up and live!” Yes, death is coming, but God gives us good gifts to enjoy so enjoy them! The word “go” conveys a sense of urgency. This statement is not **descriptive** but **imperative**.

Solomon tells us to put on tuxedos and evening gowns because it’s time to enjoy.

- **AND LET YOUR HEAD LACK NO OIL!!!** put on the best perfume and cologne... This is an important part of getting ready for a celebration – not just looking good but **smelling good**, especially in hot climates.

SO... **9 LIVE JOYFULLY WITH THE WIFE WHOM YOU LOVE ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR VAIN LIFE**

**he is not saying that life is meaningless but rather that life is short.**

**IN THE BOOK OF NUMBERS GOD REMINDS US OF “MY SERVANT CALEB WHO HAS A different spirit AND FOLLOWS ME wholeheartedly, I WILL BRING HIM INTO THE LAND HE WENT TO, AND HIS DESCENDANTS WILL INHERIT IT.**

**What is a different spirit?** Gill in his commentary... A spirit of

faith, fear of God, courage and might, truth and faithfulness, believing in the promise of God

*What does it mean to serve wholeheartedly?*

**WHOLEHEARTEDLY IS NOT HALF/HEARTED... EVER DO SOMETHING HALF HEARTED? GIVE GOD 100%, 100% OF THE TIME. HE IS WORTHY OF IT!**

***THE WISE WAY AND THE FOOLISH WAY . .***

*Ecclesiastes 10:1 reminds us that even small things have big consequences.*

**The conclusion is logical: Wise people will stay away from folly! “One ‘whoops’ can erase 50 ‘atta-boys’!”**

*Solomon has told us many things about the fool already.*

The Fool is lazy (Eccl. 4:5), ill-tempered (7:9), morally **blind** (2:14).

*He refuses to take advice (9:17). His life is not pleasing to God (5:4).*

**A FOOL** ... A “fool” in the Biblical sense is not necessarily someone with below-average intelligence. Folly does not always show up on the low end of the IQ scale. Rather, the term refers to someone who lacks the **PROPER FEAR OF GOD** and therefore is prone to go the wrong direction in life. It is the fool who “says in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psalm 14:1).

**A FOOL** is characterized by *impulsive disobedience*, **SELF CENTERED ARROGANCE**, and *rash disregard for the holiness of God*.

**A FOOL** seems to be the only person who does not know that he is a fool!

One author explains Solomon’s words, “For every folly, there is an equal and opposite self-destruction. The addict seeks the calm of the drink or the thrill of the hit but ends up wasting away. The lusty sinner wants

sexual pleasure but by gratifying desire outside the holy bonds of matrimony ends up spiritually and physically unsatisfied. The selfish husband or wife wants to have things his or her own way but in trying to get it ruins the relationship and loses everything. The angry father or mother wants more control, but angry emotions set everyone on edge, which only leads to more chaos, more anger, and ultimately less control. These are some of the pitfalls of folly. Dig the pit, and you will fall in. Break down the wall, and the snake of sin will come back to bite you.”

**Closing out the difference between a fool and a wise man Solomon described a fool as one who is not gracious with his words.**

**IN CHAPTER 10 VERSE 13 “THE FOOL SPEAKS FOOLISHNESS, HIS TALK IS RAVING MADNESS.”**

**The fool is one with too many words, Plato said,** “Wise men speak because they have something to say; fools because they have to say something.”

**The fool has too little sense, PARTIES ALL DAY, late getting to work. And as Mr T. famously said, “I pity the Fool!”**

Solomon teaches us that the better part of spiritual wisdom is **not caution** but **COURAGE**. He really challenges us to **Do Something!**

**Chapter 11 verse 4 “HE WHO OBSERVES THE WIND WILL NOT SOW, AND HE WHO REGARDS THE CLOUDS WILL NOT REAP.”** The wind is never right for the sower and the clouds are never right for the reaper. If you are looking for an excuse for doing nothing, you can always find one.

**Hey, “nothing ventured, nothing gained.”** <sup>99</sup> “To win you’ve got to risk losing.”



When and what we invest in the kingdom of God – our time, our talent, our treasure – it is never wasted.

So cast your bread upon the waters. Give a portion to seven, or even to eight. In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand. What God will do, you never know; but you will never reap if you never sow! **A turtle doesn't get anywhere until he sticks his neck out!**

## **DO SOMETHING!**

Ecclesiastes Chapter 12 verse 1 says, **“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth”** again in VERSE 6, **“Remember your Creator”**.

"Remember" is listed close to 300x's in the Bible why? Because we forget. As I was traveling through the Old Testament I was taken back by how many verses God spoke this truth. I wrote this, *"God desperately desires for us to never forget Him. He, seemingly, in tears pleads for us to not forget Him. He says write my laws on your heart, write them on your foreheads, doorposts, everywhere so you don't forget me."*

Life “under the sun” life without God is vanity! **Solomon has taught us...**

**Work is vanity,** Ecclesiastes 1:13-14; 2:18-23).

**Human wisdom is vanity.** (Ecclesiastes 1:18).

**Wise or foolish,** Ecclesiastes 2:15-16).

**Pleasure is vanity. Wine, women, and song; parks houses and vineyards; gold, silver and treasure** – there is “nothing to be gained under the SUN” (Ecclesiastes 2:11). **Power is vanity.** (Ecc. 4:1).

**Even Death has no meaning apart from God and eternity!** (Ecclesiastes 3:20).

✘ “Nothing in our search has led us home,” says Derek Kidner, “nothing that we are offered under the sun is ours to keep.” Vanity of vanities! It is all vanity.”

OH HAPPY DAY! As Hughes says, “vanity” does not get the last word, either in



the Bible or in the Christian life.

The final message of Ecclesiastes is not that **nothing matters** but that “everything matters”. **What we did, HOW WE DID IT, and why we did it** will all have eternal significance.

*So Fear God... Keep His Commandments...*

*Found among his papers in Zimbabwe after he was martyred for his Christian faith*

I'm a part of the fellowship of the unashamed. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I'm a disciple of His and I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still.

My past is redeemed. My present makes sense. My future is secure. I'm done and finished with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, or first, or tops, or recognized, or praised, or rewarded. I live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by [Holy Spirit](#) power.

My face is set. My gait is fast. My goal is heaven. My road may be narrow, my way rough, my companions few, but my guide is reliable and my mission is clear.

I will not be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed.

I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice or hesitate in the presence of the adversary. I will not negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, or let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, and preached up for the cause of Christ.

I am a disciple of [Jesus](#). I must give until I drop, preach until all know, and work until He comes. And when He does come for His own, He'll have no problems recognizing me. My colors will be clear!