

“Living Wisely” (Part 3)

A Series on the Wisdom Literature of Scripture: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes & Job

About Wisdom Literature:

There are three books of the Bible that would later come to be called the "wisdom literature." These three books are the books of *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes* and *Job*. Each of these books explores the same basic theme and tackles the same basic question—**What does it look like to live the good life?**

Proverbs: (The brilliant young teacher)

Ecclesiastes: (The sharp middle-aged critic)

Job: (The weathered older person who's seen a lot in their day)

ECCLESIASTES

Ecclesiastes 1:1-18 (NLT)

"These are the words of the Teacher, King David's son, who ruled in Jerusalem. "Everything is meaningless," says the Teacher, "completely meaningless!" What do people get for all their hard work under the sun? Generations come and generations go, but the earth never changes. The sun rises and the sun sets, then hurries around to rise again. The wind blows south, and then turns north. Around and around it goes, blowing in circles. Rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows out again to the sea. Everything is wearisome beyond description. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content. History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new. Sometimes people say, "Here is something new!" But actually it is old; nothing is ever truly new. We don't remember what happened in the past, and in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now. I, the Teacher, was king of Israel, and I lived in Jerusalem. I devoted myself to search for understanding and to explore by wisdom everything being done under heaven. I soon discovered that God has dealt a tragic existence to the human race. I observed everything going on under the sun, and really, it is all meaningless—like chasing the wind. What is wrong cannot be made right. What is missing cannot be recovered. I said to myself, "Look, I am wiser than any of the kings who ruled in Jerusalem before me. I have greater wisdom and knowledge than any of them." So I set out to learn everything from wisdom to madness and folly. But I learned firsthand that pursuing all this is like chasing the wind. The greater my wisdom, the greater my grief. To increase knowledge only increases sorrow."

"Meaningless, meaningless, everything is utterly meaningless." (Hebrew: HEVEL- "vapor or smoke" used 38 times in Ecclesiastes)

HEVEL (Hebrew): 1. Temporary, fleeting (like smoke that appears solid but if we try to grasp it we find out we cannot, so our lives can be this way when we pursue things like beauty, goodness and even justice.) 2. Enigma, paradox (the author equates this to chasing the wind- 1:14)

3 subjects the author speaks to:

- March of Time
- We All Die
- Life's Random Nature

What we often find fulfillment in: wealth, career, status, pleasure, etc.

Ecclesiastes 9:13-18 (NLT)

"Here is another bit of wisdom that has impressed me as I have watched the way our world works. There was a small town with only a few people, and a great king came with his army and besieged it. A poor, wise man knew how to save the town, and so it was rescued. But afterward no one thought to thank him. So even though wisdom is better than strength, those who are wise will be despised if they are poor. What they say will not be appreciated for long. Better to hear the quiet words of a wise person than the shouts of a foolish king. Better to have wisdom than weapons of war, but one sinner can destroy much that is good."

What we should find our fulfillment in: Wisdom & Fear of the Lord

Conclusion & Evaluation of the Teacher

Ecclesiastes 12:9-14 (NLT)

“Keep this in mind: The Teacher was considered wise, and he taught the people everything he knew. He listened carefully to many proverbs, studying and classifying them. The Teacher sought to find just the right words to express truths clearly. The words of the wise are like cattle prods—painful but helpful. Their collected sayings are like a nail-studded stick with which a shepherd drives the sheep. But, my child, let me give you some further advice: Be careful, for writing books is endless, and much study wears you out. That’s the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone’s duty. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.”

What does it look like to live the good life?

Fear God and Obey His Commands