



Life without God

“The Search for the Meaning and Purpose to life”

Ecclesiastes 1:1-18

Wayne J. Edwards, Pastor

King Solomon, the son of King David, wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes before his death in 931 BC.

- As king, Solomon had the opportunity and resources to pursue the rewards of wisdom, pleasure, and work in and of themselves – some believe he was not only the richest man in the world at that time, but the richest man who will ever live.
- The content of Ecclesiastes reflects a person looking back on a life that was long on experience but short on lasting rewards.
- Yet the world-weary tone of the writing suggests that, late in life, Solomon looked back on his folly with regret and pointed his readers to a better, simpler life lived in obedience to God.

Ecclesiastes is the fourth book in the Bible's series of five books of poetry and wisdom in the Bible.

- **The Book of Job** explains the crisis of physical suffering; it challenges the secularist view that if a person suffers, they must have committed a sin.
- **The Book of Psalms** explains the crisis of emotional suffering. According to a Christian psychologist, the Book of Psalms covers every emotion mankind will ever experience, and how our emotions reflect the depth of our relationship with God.
- **The Book of Proverbs** explains how God designed the world to work. It's not a book of promises, i.e., if we follow the rules, everything will turn out good, but rather a book of principles; general rules, that, if followed, normally produce good results.
- **The Book of Ecclesiastes** says the desire to accumulate wealth and worldly wisdom does not guarantee a happy, healthy, life. In fact, he describes life without God as futile, meaningless, empty, vanity.
- **The Song of Solomon** explains the one meaningful experience God wants us to have during our few brief years of life, and that is in romantic love; to experience what it means to have a covenant relationship with another human being for life,

Here's how they all fit together!

- **Job** tells us how to trust God through pain and suffering.
- **Psalms** tell us how to express our emotions, from sadness to gladness; from sorrow to serenity; from the depths of depression to the portals of praise and adoration.
- **Proverbs** offer practical wisdom for life's journey; the issues of life seem to work better if we follow these rules, and that's especially true in the areas of morality and getting along with others.
- **Ecclesiastes** reminds us that there are limits to the enjoyment of this life, no matter how hard we work or how hard we try to follow the rules, for we live in a fallen world, a broken world, a world infected and infested with sin, and life can become very frustrating.
- **The Song of Solomon** tells us that, seeing the emptiness of this life and how soon it will pass, if we want to experience any lasting joy, especially in our old age, we need to pursue and develop that romantic relationship with our life partner, and reproduce our seed through our children.

In Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, Solomon came to the same conclusion as he did in Proverbs 1:7: God's ultimate purpose for our lives is to ***“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.”***

- To fear God means to respect Him, to honor Him, to revere Him; to recognize His holiness as well as His greatness, and we do that by obeying His Word.
- Question # 1 of the Westminster Catechism asks: **What is the chief end of man?** The answer: “***The chief end of man is to glorify God and to praise Him forever.***”

In Ecclesiastes 1:1, Solomon identified himself by the Hebrew word “*goheleth*,” which is translated as “Preacher.”

- The Hebrew word for “vanity” is “Hevel.”
 - In English, “hevel” means “meaningless.”
 - In Hebrew, “hevel” refers to “vapor” or “smoke.”
 - Solomon used this word 38 times as a metaphor to describe the meaninglessness of life without God.
- While Ecclesiastes presents a naturalistic view of life, Solomon’s goal is to recognize the rule and reign of God in the world.
- Solomon articulated his naturalistic view in the 2nd verse of the 1st chapter: “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!”
- Life was meaningless to him; nothing made sense to him: he had tried pleasure, work, and intellect, and while they may have been temporarily enjoyable, and even beneficial, there was that hunger in his soul for the fuller meaning and purpose of life.
- In the prologue, verses 1-11, Solomon expressed his weariness that nothing ever changes, and nothing ever satisfies.
- Solomon looked for the meaning and purpose of life in wisdom, pleasure, right living, work, wealth, and honor, the same things that people are looking into today.
- But just as Solomon did not find the meaning and purpose of his life in those six things in his day, neither did our forefathers, and neither will we, nor will our children.
- Verse 13 – Solomon said, apart from God’s revelation, it was impossible for mortal man to understand the vanity of life.
- Verse 14 – Solomon said, even with all his wisdom, he could not find the point of life.
- Verses 15-18 – Solomon said, even though he was very smart, in the end his intellect only led to aggravation, for he still could not discern the true meaning and purpose of life.

We all desire to know and experience the real meaning and purpose of life, and often that search takes us along many winding, up-and-down paths filled with bursts of satisfaction that shine bright for a time, but they eventually fade.

- Ecclesiastes tells us, when we attempt to find the meaning of life in the pursuit of pleasure, the commitment to a job or career, or through the pursuit of intellectual excellence, eventually we will find them to be dead in trails.
- Ecclesiastes shows us a man who lived through this process – Solomon had every opportunity to live a successful, rewarding life, but he came to the end of his days with a wiser, more seasoned perspective – life is meaningless without God.
- When we are surrounded by the world's pleasures, and we are tempted to proclaim the pursuit of them as the end-all goal of life, God has given us the Book of Ecclesiastes to remind us that life is destined to remain unsatisfying apart from our recognition of God's intervention.
- Hear the words of Solomon that they might encourage you to place your trust solely in the Lord.

**“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:
Fear God and keep His commandments,
because this applies to every person.
For God will bring every act to judgment,
everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.”
Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 NASB**