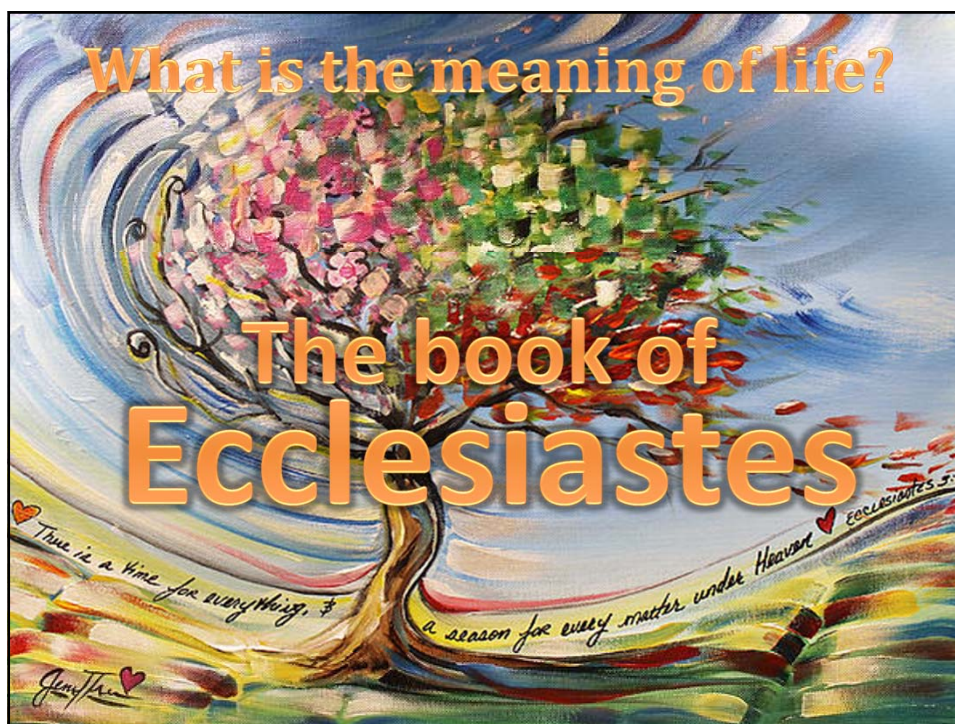


WHAT THE
BIBLE
Is ABOUT

WHAT THE
BIBLE
Is ABOUT

5 SESSION FIVE



The book of Ecclesiastes

- The most **outrageous** book in the Bible.
- It **sounds like** a Chinese fortune cookie...
- ... but has a very **contemporary message**:
 - **Fatalism**
 - **Existentialism**
 - **Chauvinism**
 - **Hedonism**
 - **Cynicism**
 - **Pessimism**
- A man reached the end of his life **disappointed, disillusioned, depressed**.
- **"I saw"** – these are his observations. (But God doesn't see life as Solomon sees it.)

Terminology

קֹהֵלֶת	<i>qoheleth</i>	H6953	preacher, speaker in an assembly, debater
קֶהֶל	<i>hebel</i>	H1892	vapour, breath, vanity (emptiness)
יִתְרוֹן	<i>yithrown</i>	H3504	profit, gain, advantage, surplus
עָמַל	<i>amal</i>	H5999	toil, trouble, labour, mischief, worry
רָע	<i>ra</i>	H4751	evil, wickedness, mischief
ἐκκλησία	<i>ekklesia</i>	G2258	assembly (as in citizens assembled together)

The main character: קֹהֵלֶת

- Koheleth
 - Teacher, philosopher
 - the speaker to an assembly- (presides over a debate about the question "Is life worth living?")
 - Somebody who thinks he has something to say.
- Vanity today means "pride", but in older English it means emptiness, in vain. Pointless. Vapour.
- He had power, wealth, fame, to do anything he wanted.
- Queen of Sheba came to see him and said, "The half has not been told." 1 Kings.

Solomon's term for God

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."
 (Deuteronomy 6:5)

יהוה
 Yĕhovah

אלהים
 'elohiym

Elohim ("God" in the English Bible) is the Mighty God, the glorious God of **creation** who exercises sovereign power.

YHWH ("LORD" in the English Bible) is the God of the **covenant**, the God of revelation who is eternally self-existent and yet graciously **relates Himself to sinful man**.

Since Solomon is dealing exclusively with what he sees "under the sun" (i.e., the Creation"), he consistently uses *Elohim*.

Perspective



Under the sun

Hevel
 All is vapour
 (meaningless)

Problem



With God

Gladness in my heart to be working with God.

What you see is all in how you look at it!

Conclusion

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.

For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

What did Solomon see when he looked?

Among other things, Solomon saw:

- **injustice** to the poor (Ecclesiastes 4:1-3)
- **crooked politics** (Ecclesiastes 5:8)
- **incompetent** leaders (Ecclesiastes 10:6-7)
- **guilty people free** to commit more Crime (Ecclesiastes 8:11)
- **materialism** (Ecclesiastes 5:10)
- a **desire** for **"the good old days"** (Ecclesiastes 7:10)

Makes one wonder if Solomon has been around on his Harley this week to spot those things.



Ecclesiastes 1-2

- Life
 - Enjoyment (2:1-3)
 - Employment (2:4-11)
- Death
 - Wisdom (2:12-27)
 - Wealth (2:18-23)
- INITIAL CONCLUSION: Accept life (2:24-26)

Solomon tried and tested everything under the sun!

- The arts
- Music
- Architecture
- Collecting pictures, galleries
- Entertainment – laughter, comedy
- Business – fortune in commerce world
- Pleasure: food, wine and women
- Philosophy (bought a great library, studied... of making books there is no end).

They stimulated but didn't satisfy.

Is life worth living?

NO! Life under the sun is **not** worth living:

- the **monotony** of life (1:4-11)
- the **vanity** of wisdom (1:12-18)
- the **futility** of wealth (2:1-11)
- the **certainty** of death (2:12-23)

Why didn't they satisfy?

- You just get old
- You get tired of them (bored)
- When they become Number 1, vexation of spirit (frustrated).
- How can we explain his failure? He has tunnel vision (Ecclesiastes 1) everything he saw was under the sun (you need a higher perspective) (2) he only looked at this life – limited by time and space; he needed perspective of God.
- Tunnel thinking led to negativity.

Thinking it through!

- Science only observes this world and this life. Science. The scientific age has the same tunnel vision that Solomon had.
- God is outside life and can see it properly.
 - Whenever Solomon brought God into Ecclesiastes, he became positive and optimistic.
 - Whenever limited to his human observations and left God outside, he became negative and more and more depressed.

To overcome monotony in life (3:1:5-9)

1. Look up (3:1–8). God orders time.
 2. Look within (3:9–14). Eternity is within your heart.
 3. Look ahead (3:15–22). Death comes to all.
 4. Look around (4:1–5:9)
 - In the courtroom (4:1-3)
 - In the Marketplace (4:4-8)
 - On the highway (4:9-12)
 - In the palace (4:13-16)
- Enjoy life* (3:12–15, 22)

Chapter 4. Life just isn't fair

In the courtroom (4:1-3)

In the Marketplace (4:4-8)

On the highway (4:9-12)

In the palace (4:13-16)

Enjoy life (3:12–15, 22)

3 warnings about the value of life

1. Don't Rob the Lord (5:1–7)
2. Don't Rob Others (5:8–9)
3. Don't Rob Yourself (5:10–20)

3 of life's mysteries

1. Riches Without Enjoyment (6:1–6)
2. Labor Without Satisfaction (6:7–9)
3. Questions Without Answers (6:10–12)

Ecclesiastes 6:1-6. Riches without enjoyment

¹There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it *is* common among men: ²A man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor, so that he lacks nothing for himself of all he desires; yet God does not give him power to eat of it, but a foreigner consumes it. This *is* vanity, and it *is* an evil affliction.

³If a man begets a hundred *children* and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with goodness, or indeed he has no burial, I say *that* a stillborn child *is* better than he— ⁴for it comes in vanity and departs in darkness, and its name is covered with darkness. ⁵Though it has not seen the sun or known *anything*, this has more rest than that man, ⁶even if he lives a thousand years twice—but has not seen goodness. Do not all go to one place?

Ecclesiastes 6:7-9: Labour Without Satisfaction

⁷ All the labour of man *is* for his mouth,
And yet the soul is not satisfied.

⁸ For what more has the wise *man* than the fool?
What does the poor man have,
Who knows *how* to walk before the living?

⁹ Better *is* the sight of the eyes
than the wandering of desire.
This also *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.

Ecclesiastes 6:10-12: Questions without answers

¹⁰ Whatever one is, he has been named already,
For it is known that he *is* man;
And he cannot contend
with Him who is mightier than he.

¹¹ Since there are many things that increase vanity,
How *is* man the better?

¹² For who knows what *is* good for man in life, all the
days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow?
Who can tell a man what will happen after him under
the sun?

3 of life's mysteries

1. **Wisdom Can Make Life Better** (7:1–10)
2. **Wisdom Helps Us See Life Clearly** (7:11–18)
 - Maturity requires balance.
 - Adversity and Prosperity (7:14)
 - Righteousness and Sin (7:15–18)
3. **Wisdom Helps Us Face Life Stronger** (7:19–29)

Ecclesiastes 7 - The Value of Practical Wisdom Wisdom can make life better

- 1 A good name *is* better than precious ointment,
And the day of death than the day of one's birth;
- 2 Better to go to the house of mourning
Than to go to the house of feasting,
For that *is* the end of all men;
And the living will take *it* to heart.
- 3 Sorrow *is* better than laughter,
For by a sad countenance the heart is made better.
- 4 The heart of the wise *is* in the house of mourning,
But the heart of fools *is* in the house of mirth.

Ecclesiastes 7 - The Value of Practical Wisdom

Wisdom can make life better

- 5 *It is* better to hear the rebuke of the wise
Than for a man to hear the song of fools.
- 6 For like the crackling of thorns under a pot,
So *is* the laughter of the fool.
This also is vanity.
- 7 Surely oppression destroys a wise *man's* reason,
And a bribe debases the heart.
- 8 The end of a thing *is* better than its beginning;
The patient in spirit *is* better than the proud in spirit.
- 9 Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry,
For anger rests in the bosom of fools.
- 10 Do not say, "Why were the former days better than these?"
For you do not inquire wisely concerning this.

Ecclesiastes 7 - The Value of Practical Wisdom

Wisdom Helps Us See Life Clearly

- 11 Wisdom *is* good with an inheritance,
And profitable to those who see the sun.
- 12 For wisdom *is* a defense *as* money *is* a defense,
But the excellence of knowledge *is that* wisdom gives life to
those who have it.
- 13 Consider the work of God;
For who can make straight what He has made crooked?
- 14 In the day of prosperity be joyful,
But in the day of adversity consider:
Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other,
So that man can find out nothing *that will come* after him.

Ecclesiastes 7 - The Value of Practical Wisdom Wisdom Helps Us See Life Clearly

- 15 I have seen everything in my days of vanity:
 There is a just *man* who perishes in his righteousness,
 And there is a wicked *man* who prolongs *life* in his
 wickedness.
- 16 Do not be overly righteous,
 Nor be overly wise:
 Why should you destroy yourself?
- 17 Do not be overly wicked,
 Nor be foolish:
 Why should you die before your time?
- 18 *It is* good that you grasp this,
 And also not remove your hand from the other;
 For he who fears God will escape them all.

Ecclesiastes 7 - The Value of Practical Wisdom Wisdom Helps Us Face Life Stronger

- 19 Wisdom strengthens the wise
 More than ten rulers of the city.
- 20 For *there is* not a just man on earth who does good
 And does not sin.
- 21 Also do not take to heart everything people say,
 Lest you hear your servant cursing you.
- 22 For many times, also, your own heart has known
 That even you have cursed others.
- 23 All this I have proved by wisdom.
 I said, "I will be wise";
 But it *was* far from me.
- 24 As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep,
 Who can find it out?

Ecclesiastes 7 - The Value of Practical Wisdom

- ²⁵ To search and seek out wisdom and the reason *of things*,
To know the wickedness of folly,
Even of foolishness *and* madness.
- ²⁶ 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.
- ²⁷ Here is what I have found," says the Preacher,
"*Adding* one thing to the other to find out the reason,
²⁸ Which my soul still seeks but I cannot find:
One man among a thousand I have found,
But a woman among all these I have not found.
- ²⁹ Truly, this only I have found:
That God made man upright,
But they have sought out many schemes."

Wickedness

The Problem of Evil

1. Authority (8:1-9)
 - a. Disobedience
 - b. Discernment
 - c. Desertion
 - d. Defiance
2. Inequity (8:10-14)
3. Mystery (8:15-17)

Ecclesiastes 8

- ¹ Who *is* like a wise *man*?
 And who knows the interpretation of a thing?
 A man's wisdom makes his face shine,
 And the sternness of his face is changed.

Obey Authorities for God's Sake

- ² I say, "Keep the king's commandment for the sake of your oath to God. ³ Do not be hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand for an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him."

Ecclesiastes 8

- ⁴ Where the word of a king *is*, *there is* power;
 And who may say to him, "What are you doing?"
⁵ He who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful;
 And a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment,
⁶ Because for every matter there is a time and judgment,
 Though the misery of man increases greatly.
⁷ For he does not know what will happen;
 So who can tell him when it will occur?
⁸ No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit,
 And no one has power in the day of death.
There is no release from that war,
 And wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it.
⁹ All this I have seen, and applied my heart to every work that is done under the sun: *There is* a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt.

The last enemy - death

Meet Your Last Enemy



Ecclesiastes 8 - Death Comes to All

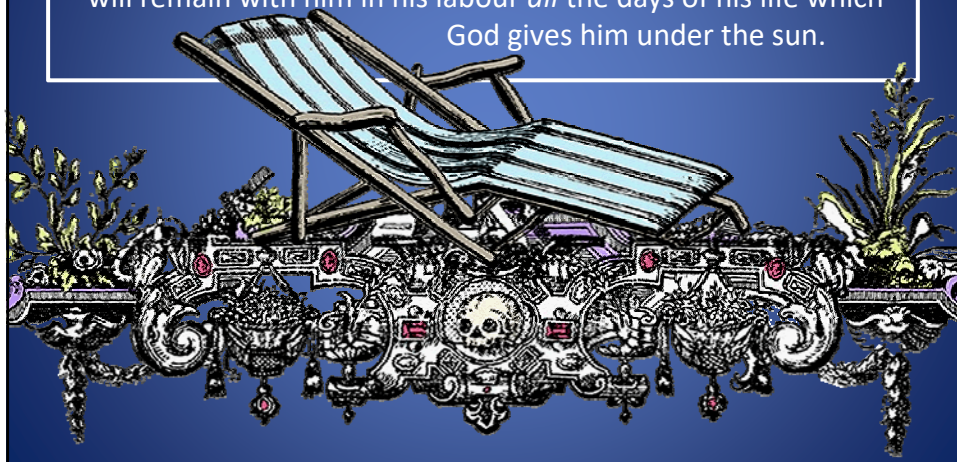
¹⁰ Then I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of holiness, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. This also *is* vanity. ¹¹ Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

¹² Though a sinner does evil a hundred *times*, and his *days* are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. ¹³ But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong *his* days, *which are* as a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

¹⁴ There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just *men* to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked *men* to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also *is* vanity.

Ecclesiastes 8 - Death Comes to All

¹⁵ So I commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labour *all* the days of his life which God gives him under the sun.



Ecclesiastes 8 - Death Comes to All

¹⁶ When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, even though one sees no sleep day or night, ¹⁷ then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labours to discover *it*, yet he will not find *it*; moreover, though a wise *man* attempts to know *it*, he will not be able to find *it*.

Ecclesiastes 9

¹For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and the wise and their works *are* in the hand of God. People know neither love nor hatred *by* anything *they see* before them. ²All things *come* alike to all:

One event *happens* to the righteous and the wicked;
To the good, the clean, and the unclean;
To him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice.
As is the good, so *is* the sinner;
He who takes an oath as *he* who fears an oath.

³This *is* an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing *happens* to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness *is* in their hearts while they live, and after that *they go* to the dead. ⁴But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

Ecclesiastes 9

- ⁵ For the living know that they will die;
But the dead know nothing,
And they have no more reward,
For the memory of them is forgotten.
- ⁶ Also their love, their hatred,
and their envy have now perished;
Nevermore will they have a share
In anything done under the sun.
- ⁷ Go, eat your bread with joy,
And drink your wine with a merry heart;
For God has already accepted your works.
- ⁸ Let your garments always be white,
And let your head lack no oil.

Ecclesiastes 9

⁹ Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that *is* your portion in life, and in the labour which you perform under the sun.

¹⁰ Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with your might; for *there is* no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

Ecclesiastes 9

¹¹ I returned and saw under the sun that—

The race *is* not to the swift,
Nor the battle to the strong,
Nor bread to the wise,
Nor riches to men of understanding,
Nor favor to men of skill;
But time and chance happen to them all.

¹² For man also does not know his time:
Like fish taken in a cruel net,
Like birds caught in a snare,
So the sons of men *are* snared in an evil time,
When it falls suddenly upon them.

Ecclesiastes 9 – Wisdom Superior to Folly

¹³ This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it *seemed* great to me: ¹⁴ *There was* a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great snares around it. ¹⁵ Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that same poor man.

¹⁶ Then I said:

“Wisdom *is* better than strength.
Nevertheless the poor man’s wisdom *is* despised,
And his words are not heard.

¹⁷ Words of the wise, *spoken* quietly, *should be* heard
Rather than the shout of a ruler of fools.

¹⁸ Wisdom *is* better than weapons of war;
But one sinner destroys much good.”

The danger of folly

1. **The Foolish Ruler (10:4–7)**
2. **Foolish Workers (10:8–11)**
3. **Foolish Talkers (10:12–15)**
 - Destructive Words
 - Unreasonable words (v. 13)
 - Uncontrolled Words (v. 14)
 - Boastful Words (14b-15).
4. **Foolish Officers (10:16–20)**
 - Indulgence (vv. 16–17)
 - Incompetence (v. 18).
 - Indifference (v. 19).
 - Indiscretion (v. 20).

Napoleonic Officer Recruitment Tool

	Brilliant	Stupid
Industrious	Those that are brilliant and industrious are fitted for the highest staff positions.	Those who are stupid and industrious are dangerous and must be removed at all costs
Lazy	Those who are brilliant and lazy have the requisite nerve for the highest command positions.	Work can be found for the stupid and lazy.

Ecclesiastes 10 – Wisdom and Folly

- ¹ Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment,
And cause it to give off a foul odor;
So does a little folly to one respected for wisdom *and* honor.
- ² A wise man's heart *is* at his right hand,
But a fool's heart at his left.
- ³ Even when a fool walks along the way,
He lacks wisdom,
And he shows everyone *that* he *is* a fool.
- ⁴ If the spirit of the ruler rises against you,
Do not leave your post;
For healing pacifies great offenses.

Ecclesiastes 10 – Wisdom and Folly

- ⁵ There is an evil I have seen under the sun,
As an error proceeding from the ruler:
- ⁶ Folly is set in great dignity,
While the rich sit in a lowly place.
- ⁷ I have seen servants on horses,
While princes walk on the ground like servants.
- ⁸ He who digs a pit will fall into it,
And whoever breaks through a wall will be bitten by a serpent.
- ⁹ He who quarries stones may be hurt by them,
And he who splits wood may be endangered by it.
- ¹⁰ If the ax is dull,
And one does not sharpen the edge,
Then he must use more strength;
But wisdom brings success.

Ecclesiastes 10 – Wisdom and Folly

- ¹¹ A serpent may bite when *it is* not charmed;
The babbler is no different.
- ¹² The words of a wise man's mouth *are* gracious,
But the lips of a fool shall swallow him up;
- ¹³ The words of his mouth begin with foolishness,
And the end of his talk *is* raving madness.
- ¹⁴ A fool also multiplies words.
No man knows what is to be;
Who can tell him what will be after him?
- ¹⁵ The labor of fools wearies them,
For they do not even know how to go to the city!

Ecclesiastes 10 – Wisdom and Folly

- ¹⁶ Woe to you, O land, when your king *is* a child,
And your princes feast in the morning!
- ¹⁷ Blessed *are* you, O land, when your king *is* the son of nobles,
And your princes feast at the proper time—
For strength and not for drunkenness!
- ¹⁸ Because of laziness the building decays,
And through idleness of hands the house leaks.
- ¹⁹ A feast is made for laughter,
And wine makes merry;
But money answers everything.
- ²⁰ Do not curse the king, even in your thought;
Do not curse the rich, even in your bedroom;
For a bird of the air may carry your voice,
And a bird in flight may tell the matter.

Solomon has wrestled with the question:

Is life worth living?

NO! Life **under the sun** is **not** worth living:

- the **monotony** of life (1:4-11)
- the **vanity** of wisdom (1:12-18)
- the **futility** of wealth (2:1-11)
- the **certainty** of death (2:12-23)

Ecclesiastes 11

The Value of Diligence

1. Cast your bread upon the waters,
For you will find it after many days.
2. Give a serving to seven, and also to eight,
For you do not know what evil will be on the earth.
3. If the clouds are full of rain,
They empty themselves upon the earth;
And if a tree falls to the south or the north,
In the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie.
4. He who observes the wind will not sow,
And he who regards the clouds will not reap.
5. As you do not know what is the way of the wind, Or how the
bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, So you do
not know the works of God who makes everything.

Ecclesiastes 11

6. In the morning sow your seed,
And in the evening do not withhold your hand;
For you do not know which will prosper,
Either this or that,
Or whether both alike will be good.
7. Truly the light is sweet,
And it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun;
8. But if a man lives many years
And rejoices in them all,
Yet let him remember the days of darkness,
For they will be many.
All that is coming is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 11

Seek God in Early Life

8. Rejoice, O young man, in your youth,
And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth;
Walk in the ways of your heart,
And in the sight of your eyes;
But know that for all these
God will bring you into judgment.
9. Therefore remove sorrow from your heart,
And put away evil from your flesh,
For childhood and youth are vanity.

Ecclesiastes 12

1. Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before
the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you
say, "I have no pleasure in them":
2. While the sun and the light, The moon and the stars, Are not
darkened, And the clouds do not return after the rain;
3. In the day when the keepers of the house tremble, And the
strong men bow down; When the grinders cease because they
are few, And those that look through the windows grow dim;
4. When the doors are shut in the streets, And the sound of
grinding is low; When one rises up at the sound of a bird, And
all the daughters of music are brought low.
5. Also they are afraid of height, And of terrors in the way; When
the almond tree blossoms, The grasshopper is a burden, And
desire fails. For man goes to his eternal home, And the
mourners go about the streets.

A Vivid description of Old Age

Keepers of house	Your arms and hands tremble.
Strong men	Your legs, knees, and shoulders weaken and you walk bent over.
Grinders	You start to lose your teeth.
Windows	Your vision begins to deteriorate.
Doors	Either your hearing starts to fail, or you close your mouth because you've lost your teeth.
Grinding	You can't chew your food, or your ears can't pick up the sounds outdoors.
Rise up	You wake up with the birds early each morning, and wish you could sleep longer.
Music	Your voice starts to quaver and weaken.
Afraid	You are terrified of heights and afraid of falling while you walk down the street.
Almond tree	If you have any hair left, it turns white, like almond blossoms.
Grasshopper	You just drag yourself along, like a grasshopper at the close of the summer season.
Desire	You lose your appetite, or perhaps your sexual desire.
Home	You go to your eternal home and people mourn your death.

Ecclesiastes Chapter 12

6. Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, Or the golden bowl is broken, Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, Or the wheel broken at the well.
7. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it.
8. "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "All is vanity."
9. And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs.
10. The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright--words of truth.
11. The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.

Ecclesiastes Chapter 12

12. And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.

13. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.

14. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

Ecclesiastes Chapter 12

12. And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.
*Don't go beyond what God has written in His Word.
Don't let men's truths rob you of God's wisdom.*

13. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.
*The answer to whether live if worth living is above all a perspective... a worldview. Through God, yes; man, no.
"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:12)*

14. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

Is life worth living?

YES! Life **under God** is worth living:

- Life is an **adventure**—
live by faith (Ecclesiastes 11:1-6)
- Life is a **gift**—
enjoy it (Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:8)
- Life is a **school**—
learn your lessons (Ecclesiastes 12:9-12)
- Life is a **stewardship**—
fear God (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)

Fear God

“The remarkable thing about **fearing God** is that, when you fear God, **you fear nothing else**; whereas, if you do not fear God, **you fear everything else.**”

Oswald Chambers

Important Observations



Six times Solomon tells us to enjoy life while we can!



At no time does he advise us to enjoy sin!



Present joys depend on the security of our future.

Ecclesiastes is in our Bible because it **tells** where **we'll end** up **if we don't** discover **His way** to live!

Love **not** the world,
neither the things that
are in the world.

1 John 2:15

The blessing of the Lord
makes one **rich**, and He
adds **no sorrow** with it.

Proverb 10:22, NKJV

