

What Ecclesiastes tells us about a meaningful life.

A Public Faith Part #2 Noah Largent 6/26/16



The author of Ecclesiastes takes a hard look at the human enterprise—an enterprise in which he himself has fully participated. Ecclesiastes performs two very valuable functions. First, it should stimulate compassion for those who are trapped in despair and live in a meaningless world, alone without God. The author brilliantly captures the futility and meaninglessness of the world, expressing a philosophy of life widespread in the 20th century. But the book includes more than despair. It also blends in proverbs about how life should be lived, powerful observations that can be easily overlooked. Look for these easy to overlook bits of wisdom, especially toward the end of the book.

Solomon's 3 experiments in search of a meaningful life.

#1 Living for Pleasure. *Ecclesiastes 2:1 "I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good."*

When you live for pleasure, you find that indeed often it feels great! Yet it fades even as you're grasping hold of it. This is why Solomon calls chasing after pleasure, "a chasing after the wind".

#2 Living to Leave a Legacy. *Ecclesiastes 2:18 "I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me."*

As noble as our efforts may be to live for causes beyond ourselves, Solomon realized that whatever people do would likely be undone, misused or left unappreciated by future generations!

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#3 Gaining Wisdom. *Ecclesiastes 2:16 "For the wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered; in days to come both will be forgotten. Like the fool, the wise man too must die!"*

Although wisdom is highly valued and extolled in this book, it has its limits! No matter how smart you may be, we all face a common end and regardless of how well educated you may be, everyone lives with common experiences of pain, loss, disappointment and tragedy.

The underlining diagnosis of these experiments and Solomon's search for meaning is that it cannot be the creation of your own design!

Solomon's solution for experiencing a meaningful life.

Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 There is nothing better for people than to eat and drink and to find enjoyment in their work. I also perceived that this ability to find enjoyment comes from God. ²⁵ For no one can eat and drink or experience joy apart from him. ²⁶ For to the one who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy.

God demonstrates the kind of loving commitment that leads to a meaningful life.

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. -1John 3:16

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