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## Everything Is Meaningless - Ecclesiastes 1:1-18

*Topics:* Accomplishments, Confusion, Culture, Despair, Discouragement, Experience, Hopelessness, Insecurity, Knowledge, Learning, Life, Purpose, Reading, Satisfaction, Understanding, Wisdom

### Open It

- \* 1. What would you say is the purpose of life?
- 2. What is one thing that makes life worth living?
- 3. What sort of mindless activities do you enjoy? Why?

### Explore It

- 4. Who wrote this chapter? (1:1)
- 5. What are some of the themes in these verses? (1:1-18)
- \* 6. What sweeping statement did Solomon make about life? (1:2)
- 7. What question did Solomon ask? (1:3)
- 8. How did Solomon illustrate his statement that the earth remains the same? (1:4-7)
- 9. What's new? (1:8-10)
- 10. Who will be forgotten? (1:11)
- 11. To what did Solomon devote himself? (1:12-13)
- \* 12. What conclusion did Solomon reach about everything he had seen and done? (1:13-14)
- 13. To what had Solomon committed himself? (1:16-17)
- \* 14. What conclusion did Solomon reach concerning wisdom and folly? (1:17-18)

### Get It

- 15. Why was Solomon so dissatisfied with life?
- 16. When have you found the pursuit of knowledge to be burdensome?
- 17. When have you felt as if you were just chasing after the wind?
- \* 18. To what sort of meaningless activities do people commit their life?
- \* 19. What about life do you find meaningless?
- 20. In what way does increased wisdom and knowledge bring increased sorrow and grief?
- 21. If we cannot find meaning in the pursuit of knowledge, in what can we find meaning and satisfaction in life?

### Apply It

- \* 22. When can you take time this week to rethink your purpose and direction in life?
- 23. What is one meaningless activity you need either to totally eliminate from your life or reduce the amount of time you spend doing?

## Pleasure, Wisdom, Folly, Toil - Ecclesiastes 2:1-26

*Topics:* Abundance, Accomplishments, Achievements, Death, Desires, Discouragement, Foolishness, Frustration, God, Greatness, Life, Pleasure, Purpose, Relationships, Wealth, Wisdom, Work

### Open It

1. Why do you think the entertainment industry (movies, television, etc.) is such a booming business?
- \* 2. What priority do you think a person should give to leisure and fun?
3. What is something about work that you find satisfying?

### Explore It

- \* 4. What did Solomon say about his pursuit of pleasure? (2:1-2)
5. What sort of activities did Solomon find meaningless? (2:1-26)
- \* 6. How did Solomon try to cheer himself? (2:3)
7. What projects did Solomon undertake? (2:4-8)
- \* 8. In what way did Solomon indulge himself? (2:10)
9. What conclusion did Solomon reach when he considered all he had achieved? (2:11)
10. To what did Solomon turn his thoughts? (2:12)
11. What conclusion did Solomon reach about wisdom and folly? (2:12-14)
12. What did Solomon say would be the fate of the fool and the wise person? (2:15-16)
13. Why did Solomon hate life and all the things for which he had worked? (2:17-21)
14. According to Solomon, what does a person get for all his or her strivings? (2:22-23)
15. In what did Solomon say a person should find satisfaction? Why? (2:24)
16. What do we require to find enjoyment? (2:24-25)
17. What does God give? (2:26)

### Get It

- \* 18. When does pleasure become meaningless or even harmful?
19. With what sort of activities do people try to fill their life?
- \* 20. What sorts of distractions do you pursue to give your life meaning or significance?
21. To what extent are the fates of the fool and the wise the same?
22. Why did Solomon conclude that a person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his or her work?
23. Why is it so hard to find satisfaction in our relationship with God?
24. How should we please God with our life?

### Apply It

25. In what way can you seek to please God with your life today?
26. What is one thing you can do to find satisfaction in your work this week?
- \* 27. How do you need to reprioritize your commitment to pleasure in light of its unimportance?

## A Time for Everything - Ecclesiastes 3:1-22

*Topics:* Culture, Death, Desires, Eternal Life, God, Judgment, Life, Life-Style, Purpose, Satisfaction, Timing, Work

### Open It

- \* 1. Why do you believe or disbelieve the idea that, deep down inside, most people believe in God?
- 2. For what other reasons than to make a living do people work?
- 3. What sort of things make you happy?

### Explore It

- 4. For what sort of activities is there a time? (3:1-8)
- 5. What topics did Solomon explore in these verses? (3:1-22)
- 6. What has God set in the hearts of people? (3:11)
- 7. What can we not understand? (3:11)
- 8. What's the best way we can spend our days while alive? (3:12)
- 9. What is described as a gift from God? (3:13)
- 10. What did Solomon say about everything God does? (3:14)
- \* 11. What will God call into account? (3:15)
- \* 12. What did Solomon see in the place of judgment and the place of justice? (3:16)
- \* 13. Whom will God bring to judgment? (3:17)
- 14. Why does God test us? (3:18)
- 15. What fate awaits both people and animals? (3:19-21)
- 16. What should we enjoy? Why? (3:22)

### Get It

- 17. What did Solomon mean by his statement that "there is a time for everything"?
- 18. When is it hard to be sensitive to the appropriateness of the timing of our activities?
- 19. Why is it important to be sensitive to the timing of our activities?
- 20. How is the fact that God has placed eternity in our heart manifested in our society?
- 21. How do people in our society wrongly seek to fill their longing for God?
- 22. In what way is finding satisfaction in eating, drinking, and working a gift from God?
- \* 23. How should the fact that God will bring judgment to both the righteous and the wicked affect the way we live?
- \* 24. In what way are the fate of animals and people similar and dissimilar?

### Apply It

- 25. In what one way can you seek to be more sensitive to the timing of the things you do this week?
- 26. What is one way you can enjoy your work or what God has given you?
- \* 27. Who can help you remember your accountability to God? How?

## Oppression, Toil, Friendlessness, Advancement - Ecclesiastes 4:1-16

*Topics:* Achievements, Death, Despair, Envy, Evil, Friendship, Life, Motives, Oppressed, Purpose, Satisfaction, Society, Work

### Open It

1. What do you think motivates most successful people to achieve?
2. What sort of qualities do you look for in a friend?
- \* 3. What type of person do you think is most content with his or her job?

### Explore It

4. What did Solomon see taking place under the sun? (4:1)
5. What did Solomon say about oppression? (4:1-3)
6. What is the theme of this chapter? (4:1-16)
- \* 7. How would you describe Solomon's mood? (4:1-16)
8. Whom did Solomon declare to be happiest of all? (4:2-3)
- \* 9. Why do people work to achieve? (4:4)
10. From what do all achievements spring? (4:4)
- \* 11. What did Solomon say about toil? (4:4-6)
12. What did Solomon think of tranquillity? (4:6)
13. What meaningless thing did Solomon see "under the sun"? (4:7-8)
14. What did Solomon say about friendlessness? (4:7-12)
15. Why are two better than one? (4:9-12)
16. What did Solomon say about young people? (4:13)
17. What did Solomon say about advancement? (4:13-16)
18. What did Solomon conclude was meaningless? (4:13-16)

### Get It

19. How is the oppression taking place in our society like or unlike the oppression that took place during Solomon's day?
20. In what sense might it be better to be dead than alive?
21. How does evil make life seem meaningless?
- \* 22. In what way do achievements spring from envy?
- \* 23. What can we do to be content and not envious?
24. What makes work meaningful or meaningless?
25. Why are friends and friendship important?
26. If advancement is meaningless, why do so many people strive hard to achieve it?

### Apply It

27. What is one specific thing you can do to improve the quality of your friendships?
28. What is something you can do this week to make your work more meaningful?
- \* 29. What do you want to remember the next time you feel envious of someone else?

## Awe of God; Riches - Ecclesiastes 5:1-20

**Topics:** Awe, Contentment, Death, God, Happiness, Life-style, Money, Oppressed, Possessions, Purpose, Vows, Wealth, Words, Work, Worship

### Open It

1. What does it mean to be happy?
2. What best helps you worship God?
- \* 3. What is your most treasured possession?
4. Why do most people want more money than they already have?

### Explore It

5. How should a person go to the house of God? (5:1)
6. How did Solomon encourage us to conduct ourselves in the house of God? (5:2-3)
7. What did Solomon say about vows made to God? (5:4-6)
8. Why should we stand in awe of God? (5:7)
9. What should not surprise us? (5:8-9)
- \* 10. What unflattering truths hold for the person who loves money? (5:10-12)
- \* 11. What grievous evil did Solomon notice? (5:13-17)
  12. What is good and proper for a person to do? (5:18)
- \* 13. What sort of experience did Solomon describe as a gift from God? (5:19)
  14. What happens to the person who has wealth and possessions? (5:20)

### Get It

15. Why is it important to approach God with the right attitude?
16. Why do people make rash vows to God?
17. Why is it hard to keep the promises we make to God?
18. What does it mean to stand in awe of God?
19. Why is money unable to bring happiness or contentment?
- \* 20. If we cannot take anything with us when we die, why do we work so hard to acquire things?
  21. How should we go about finding satisfaction in our work?
  22. What does it mean to accept one's lot in life?
- \* 23. What is the connection between accepting one's lot in life and finding happiness?
  24. Why is it so hard for us to accept our lot in life?

### Apply It

25. What vow that you have made to God do you need to fulfill?
- \* 26. What is one thing you will change about your life-style to reflect the unimportance of money and things?
  27. What can you do this week to accept and better appreciate the things that God has given to you?

## Solomon's Counsel - Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

**Topics:** Children, Death, Desires, Despair, Evil, Folly, God, Honor, Life, Life-style, Money, Possessions, Purpose, Satisfaction, Wealth, Wisdom, Words

### Open It

1. What is something that gives you a real sense of satisfaction in life?
- \* 2. Why do you think most people are satisfied or dissatisfied with their life?

### Explore It

- \* 3. What evil did Solomon notice? (6:1-2)
4. What is the main topic of these verses? (6:1-12)
5. From this chapter how would you describe Solomon's outlook on life? (6:1-12)
- \* 6. What shocking statement did Solomon make about children? (6:3)
- \* 7. In what context did Solomon consider a stillborn child better off than a living person? (6:5-6)
8. What is true about the fate of all people, including the stillborn? (6:6)
9. What is never satisfied? (6:7)
10. What question did Solomon ponder concerning the wise person and the fool? (6:8)
11. What did Solomon consider to be better than the roving of the appetite? (6:9)
12. What conclusions did Solomon reach about people? (6:10)
13. What did Solomon conclude about words? (6:11)
14. With what question does this chapter conclude? (6:12)

### Get It

15. Why is it meaningless to have wealth but be unable to enjoy it?
- \* 16. Why might the person who earned the wealth be unable to enjoy it, while someone who did not earn is able to enjoy it?
- \* 17. How should a person enjoy his or her possessions?
18. When might someone feel as if death was preferable to life?
19. Why is it impossible to satisfy human appetites?
20. How might the abundance of words result in less meaning?
21. What impact does the brevity of life have on you?

### Apply It

22. What is something you want to change about your life-style in light of the brevity of life?
- \* 23. How can you better enjoy the things that God has given you?

## Wisdom - Ecclesiastes 7:1-8:1

**Topics:** Death, Evil, Folly, God, Happiness, Knowledge, Life, Life-style, Mourning, Plans, Righteousness, Sorrow, Sovereignty, Wisdom

### Open It

- \* 1. When do you find yourself wishing for the “good old days”?
- 2. What do you find difficult about being at a funeral? a party?
- 3. How do you usually feel after a party? a funeral?
- 4. Concerning what issues do your coworkers tend to take extreme rather than moderate positions?

### Explore It

- 5. Why is it better to go to a house of mourning than to a feast? (7:2)
- 6. Why is sorrow better than laughter? (7:3)
- 7. Why should we be patient and not easily provoked? (7:9)
- \* 8. Why did Solomon counsel against comparing today with some wonderful past? (7:10)
- 9. To what did Solomon compare wisdom? (7:11-12)
- 10. What is the advantage of knowledge? (7:12)
- \* 11. What should we do when times are bad? (7:13-14)
- 12. What two things had Solomon seen during his meaningless life? (7:15)
- 13. What counsel about living did Solomon give? (7:16-18)
- 14. How much consideration should we give to the words of others? (7:21-22)
- 15. What did Solomon discover when he sought out wisdom? (7:23-26)
- 16. What did Solomon find while he was still searching? (7:27-29)
- \* 17. What effect does wisdom have on a person? (8:1)

### Get It

- 18. How is a sad face good for the heart?
- 19. In what way is wisdom a shelter?
- \* 20. In what way is today very much like yesterday?
- \* 21. How should the fact that God has made both the good times and the bad times affect the way we view and live our life?
- 22. How do you feel when you see good people suffering and bad people prospering? Why?
- 23. Why do people tend toward extremes rather than balance?
- 24. Why do people choose to go in search of their own schemes rather than follow God’s plan?
- 25. What sort of schemes are people in our society pursuing?

### Apply It

- 26. In what area of your life will you strive to achieve more balance this week?
- \* 27. What do you want to remember the next time you start to idealize the past?
- 28. What is one specific step you can take to pursue wisdom?



## Obey the King - Ecclesiastes 8:2-17

*Topics:* Death, Evil, Fear, Future, God, Government, Justice, Law, Life, Punishment, Reverence, Timing

### Open It

1. When do you find it difficult to obey the law?
- \* 2. Why do you find it easy or difficult to take time out for fun or leisure?
3. What do you think is unfair?
4. What is one way you think the government could more effectively deter crime?

### Explore It

5. Why did Solomon say to obey the king's command? (8:2)
6. What would happen to the person who obeyed the king's command? (8:5)
7. For what did Solomon say there is a proper time and procedure? (8:6)
8. What does no one know? (8:7)
9. Over what does no one have power? (8:8)
10. What happens when a criminal sentence is not quickly executed? (8:11)
- \* 11. What did Solomon conclude about people who are God-fearing? (8:12)
12. What did Solomon conclude about people who do not fear God? (8:13)
- \* 13. What did Solomon conclude was meaningless? (8:14)
- \* 14. What did Solomon commend? Why? (8:15)
15. In what way are we limited? (8:16-17)

### Get It

16. What lesson about the punishment of crime does Solomon impart?
17. Why should we obey our elected leaders and the laws they make?
18. How can we encourage our elected leaders to pass and enforce just laws?
19. What is the proper procedure for challenging an unjust law?
20. What does it mean to fear God?
21. Why are people who fear God better off than people who do not?
22. Why do the righteous sometimes get what the wicked deserve and vice versa?
23. In what respect is it impossible to fully understand life and God?
- \* 24. Why did Solomon commend the enjoyment of life?
- \* 25. How can we enjoy life as a gift from God?

### Apply It

- \* 26. What is one specific thing you will do this week to help you enjoy life more?
27. What can you do to cultivate a healthy reverence for God?
28. What is one thing you can do to uphold good and just laws?

## A Common Destiny for All - Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

*Topics:* Death, Evil, God, Husbands, Life, Purpose, Sovereignty, Wives, Work

### Open It

1. What is something that makes life worth living to you?
2. Why would you or wouldn't you want to know the day you are going to die?
- \* 3. What do you like doing with your spouse?

### Explore It

4. What did Solomon conclude about the righteous and the wise and all that they do? (9:1)
5. Who shares a common destiny? (9:2)
6. What is the evil in everything that takes place? (9:3)
7. How did Solomon describe human nature? (9:3)
8. Who has hope? (9:4)
9. Why do the living have hope? (9:5-6)
- \* 10. What did Solomon tell his readers to do? (9:7-8)
- \* 11. What did Solomon say about marriage? (9:9)
  12. What is our lot in life? (9:9)
  13. How should we work? (9:10)
  14. Why should we do all we do with all our might? (9:10)
  15. What did Solomon observe about people? (9:11)
- \* 16. Why should we use our time well? (9:12)

### Get It

17. In what way do all people share a common destiny?
18. What sort of hope do we have concerning life after death?
- \* 19. How should we enjoy our life in light of the seeming meaninglessness of life?
20. To what extent does chance affect what happens in life?
21. What impact should the fact that we do not know when we will die have on the way we live our life?
- \* 22. In enjoying life as a gift from God, why should we place a priority on our families?

### Apply It

23. What is something you can do this week to enjoy life?
- \* 24. When can you take time this week to plan a special activity, event, or treat with your spouse?
25. What is something you can change about your job or the way you approach it to make it more enjoyable?

## Wisdom Better than Folly - Ecclesiastes 9:13-10:20

*Topics:* Criticism, Evil, Foolishness, Government, Laziness, Money, Quiet, Strength, Wisdom

### Open It

1. Where have you seen incompetent people end up in positions of responsibility?
2. When have you wished for more money?
3. In what ways has someone else's laziness affected you?
- \* 4. In what way has the advice of an obscure but wise person ever helped you?

### Explore It

- \* 5. What did Solomon see that impressed him? (9:13-16)
- \* 6. What was ironic about the man who saved the city? (9:13-18)
- \* 7. What was ironic about the way the city was saved? (9:13-18)
8. What themes are explored in these verses? (9:13-10:20)
9. To what did Solomon compare the quiet words of the wise? (9:17)
10. What is the value of wisdom? (9:18)
11. What does a little folly outweigh? (10:1)
12. What evil arising from the error of a ruler did Solomon see? (10:5-7)
13. Against what sort of injuries did Solomon warn? (10:8-9)
14. How did Solomon compare and contrast the words of the wise with the words of the fool? (10:12-14)
15. What consequences of laziness did Solomon describe? (10:18)
16. What did Solomon say about a feast, wine, and money? (10:19)
17. Why did Solomon counsel against reviling the king and cursing the rich, even in private? (10:20)

### Get It

18. How is wisdom better than folly?
- \* 19. In what way is wisdom more powerful than strength?
- \* 20. How can just a little folly be so dangerous?
21. How do incompetent people end up in important positions?
22. In what self-destructive behaviors do people in our society engage?
23. What are the negative consequences of laziness?
24. In what way is money the answer for everything?
25. What are some problems or situations for which money is not the answer?
26. Why is it important to guard our tongue even when it doesn't appear to be necessary?

### Apply It

- \* 27. What is one step you can take this week to cultivate wisdom over brute strength in your life?
28. Concerning what self-destructive or foolish behavior will you seek someone's advice?

# How to Live While Young - Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:8

*Topics:* Age, Death, Future, God, Life, Opportunities, Risk, Youth

## Open It

1. Why do people want to know the future?
2. Of what opportunities have you failed to take advantage? Why?
3. What sort of risks are you afraid of taking?
- \* 4. What is the worst thing to you about getting old?

## Explore It

5. What central theme did Solomon develop in these verses? (11:1-12:8)
6. What conclusions did Solomon draw about life? (11:1-12:8)
7. What did Solomon tell his readers to do? (11:1)
8. What sort of person did Solomon criticize? (11:4)
9. What is beyond our understanding? (11:5)
10. Why did Solomon tell his readers to keep busy? (11:6)
11. What do we need to keep in mind? Why? (11:8)
- \* 12. What advice did Solomon have for the young? (11:9)
- \* 13. When should we take pains to remember our Creator? (12:1)
- \* 14. How did Solomon describe old age? (12:2-5)
15. How did Solomon symbolize death? (12:6-7)
16. What did Solomon conclude is meaningless? (12:8)

## Get It

17. How do the uncertainties of the future make you feel?
18. How should we live in light of the uncertainties of the future?
19. What prevents you from taking calculated risks in life?
20. Why is it important to establish a relationship with God when we are young?
- \* 21. In what way is it easy to forget our Creator?
- \* 22. What can we do to keep our accountability to God in mind?
23. Why is it easier to enjoy life when we are young than when we become old?
24. How does the reality of aging affect you?
25. How should we live our life in light of the reality of death?
26. In what sense is life meaningless?
27. How should we respond to the seemingly meaningless aspects of life?

## Apply It

28. What first step can you take to pursue an opportunity that you have put off?
- \* 29. What is something you can do this week to remind yourself of God's place in your life?
30. Whether young or old what is something you will do today to enjoy the life God has given you?

## The Conclusion of the Matter - Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

*Topics:* Evil, Fear, God, Judgment, Knowledge, Learning, Obedience, Purpose, Wisdom

### Open It

1. About what do you like to keep learning more and more?
- \* 2. Who has helped you become wiser or more mature?
3. What motivates you to keep God's commands?

### Explore It

4. How did Solomon conclude this book? (12:9-14)
5. How did Solomon describe the Teacher? (12:9)
- \* 6. What did the Teacher do with his knowledge? (12:9)
7. For what did the Teacher search? (12:10)
8. How did Solomon describe what the Teacher wrote? (12:10)
- \* 9. How did Solomon describe the words of the wise? (12:11)
10. About what did Solomon warn his reader? (12:12)
11. What did Solomon say about books and study? (12:12)
12. What is a person's whole duty? (12:13)
- \* 13. Why did Solomon tell his reader to fear God and keep His commandments? (12:14)

### Get It

14. With what mood would you say Solomon concluded this book?
15. How are wise sayings like goads?
16. When have you been weary from studying?
17. How important is learning and studying in comparison to other pursuits?
18. What is the relationship between fearing God and keeping his commandments?
19. How does the fact that God is going to judge every deed motivate you?
20. What opportunities do you have to teach others?
- \* 21. How can we learn from each other?
- \* 22. What opportunities do you have to learn from others?
23. In what ways can you be a teacher or advisor to at least one other Christian?
24. In what ways can you gain from others' wisdom and insight?

### Apply It

25. What can you do always to be conscious of God's commands?
26. What is one piece of advice you would give to a younger or less mature Christian?
- \* 27. What can you do this week to learn from another Christian who is older or wiser?