



1. Prologue: Without God, All is Vanity
2. Only God Gives Meaning in Life
3. Divine Wisdom Enables You to Live Wisely
4. Conclusion: Fear God and Obey His Commandments.

PROLOGUE: WITHOUT GOD, ALL IS VANITY

ECCLESIASTES 1:1–11

Solomon opens this chapter by pointing out the injustice and disappointment of life, mourning the quick passing of youth, and reminding us of the inevitability of death.

Read 1:1–11.

Q 1: What is vain, empty, or meaningless about life apart from God, as Solomon describes it?

Q 2: How is Jesus Christ the remedy for the vanity of life?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

ONLY GOD GIVES MEANING IN LIFE

ECCLESIASTES 1:12—6:12

Next, Solomon turns to his own personal search to find fulfillment and satisfaction in life apart from faith and serving God.

THE VANITY OF WISDOM

Solomon began his search with the very gift he asked of God—the gift of discernment and wisdom.

Read 1:12–18.

Q 3: Why does Solomon conclude that much wisdom brings much vexation and an increase in sorrow?

Q 4: How can we find joy and satisfaction in wisdom?

Read Matthew 11:25–27.

INTRODUCTION:

Imagine having the world at your fingertips. God gave it all to young King Solomon when He gave him a wise and discerning heart. Like the prodigal son in Jesus' parable, Solomon squandered God's generous gift in wild living. Here in his Book of Ecclesiastes, he reports on his discoveries about a life of self-indulgence lived apart from God.

AUTHORSHIP:

King Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes, most likely in the latter years of his life and reign as Israel's king. After spending decades investigating the sinful pleasures this broken world offers, Solomon wrote this book to report his bleak findings and to teach us where to find true joy and contentment in life.

PURPOSE:

Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes to share the disillusionment he found when he pursued his own selfish goals, which opposed the purposes God had created him for. Solomon teaches us to find our enjoyment in our Creator's good and gracious gifts, and to be confident He will faithfully provide our future needs. That frees us to look forward to the bliss of eternal life in God's presence for Jesus' sake.

A SIMPLE OUTLINE:

For the purposes of this study, Ecclesiastes will be divided into the following sections:

THE VANITY OF PLEASURE

King Solomon next turned his attention to investigating the pleasant diversions this world offers.

Read 2:1–11.

Q 5: Many people dream of winning the lottery, quitting work forever, and doing whatever their heart desires. What might Solomon say to such a person?

Read Psalm 16:8–11.

BOTH THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH DIE

Solomon perceives that, apart from God, there is no great advantage in being wise.

Read 2:12–17.

Q 7: Why does aging and the approach of death fill Solomon with so much bitterness and weariness?

Q 8: Where can we find hope as we consider our approaching death?

HUMAN LABOR IS IN VAIN

King Solomon considers all he has accomplished and accumulated—and grieves that he must leave it for his successor, who didn't work for it.

Read 2:18–23.

Q 9: How can Solomon's observations about the things God has given us help us estimate their value more accurately?

GOD ALONE GIVES MEANING TO LIFE

Solomon's conclusion about working.

Read 2:24–26.

Q 10: Is Solomon contradicting himself in verse 24, advising us to seek our pleasure today because we are all going to die eventually?

GOD GIVES A PROPER TIME AND PURPOSE FOR EVERY ACTIVITY

Solomon shares a poem about God's timing in our lives.

Read 3:1–8.

Q 11: What is the point Solomon is making with this poem?

WHAT GOD DOES ENDURES FOREVER

Our works and accomplishments are all temporary—only God's are eternal.

Read 3:9–15.

Q 12: How can this passage reframe the way we think about our labors?

GOD WILL JUDGE

Solomon reminds us that God is our ultimate Judge.

Read 3:16–22.

Q 13: Why does Solomon compare our lives with those of the beasts?

PEOPLE SUFFER INJUSTICE, BUT BELIEVERS HAVE HOPE

Solomon looks at the things that motivate people to work hard and strive for success.

Read chapter 4.

Q 14: What right and wrong motivations does Solomon uncover?