

# Never Enough

*Ecclesiastes 1*

## **BIBLE PASSAGE**

**(Ecc 1:1 NKJV)**The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

**(Ecc 1:2 NKJV)**"Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

**(Ecc 1:3 NKJV)**What profit has a man from all his labor In which he toils under the sun?

**(Ecc 1:4 NKJV)**One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever.

**(Ecc 1:5 NKJV)**The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, And hastens to the place where it arose.

**(Ecc 1:6 NKJV)**The wind goes toward the south, And turns around to the north; The wind whirls about continually, And comes again on its circuit.

**(Ecc 1:7 NKJV)**All the rivers run into the sea, Yet the sea is not full; To the place from which the rivers come, There they return again.

**(Ecc 1:8 NKJV)**All things are full of labor; Man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor the ear filled with hearing.

**(Ecc 1:9 NKJV)**That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun.

**(Ecc 1:10 NKJV)**Is there anything of which it may be said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in ancient times before us.

**(Ecc 1:11 NKJV)**There is no remembrance of former things, Nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come By those who will come after.

**(Ecc 1:12 NKJV)**I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

**(Ecc 1:13 NKJV)**And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised.

**(Ecc 1:14 NKJV)**I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is

**vanity and grasping for the wind.**

**(Ecc 1:15 NKJV)What is crooked cannot be made straight, And what is lacking cannot be numbered.**

**(Ecc 1:16 NKJV)I communed with my heart, saying, "Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge."**

**(Ecc 1:17 NKJV)And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind.**

**(Ecc 1:18 NKJV)For in much wisdom is much grief, And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.**

## INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION: A young boy outside with a plastic bag, grabbing the air and putting it in his bag. "I just want to be able to take the air with me everywhere I go."

Those who are perceptive have probably, at some point in their life, had the thought, "What am I doing here?" We go through life trying to ignore that nagging feeling, somewhere deep in our soul, that everything we experience in life seems off from what we want it to be or believe that it could be.

- I'm going to get my favorite toy for Christmas (grasp the wind)
- I'm finally getting my first car now that I have my license! (grasp the wind)
- Finally going to college to make something significant with my life (grasp the wind)
- I graduated top of my class, and can't find a job. (grasp the wind)
- I'll work hard and climb up the ladder! (grasp the wind)
- I've accomplished saving some money, and I'm getting married! (grasp the wind)
- He cheated on me, but maybe I'll find someone else (grasp the wind)
- Finally having a baby! Had a miscarriage (grasp the wind)
- The Chiefs are going to the Superbowl!
- It's our 40-year anniversary trip to Europe! (grasp the wind)
- My wife got into a horrible car accident (grasp the wind)
- I'm alone in hospice care (grasp the wind)

Emily Phillips was a teacher who died years back. Upon her diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, she wrote her own obituary. She started by saying:

**QUOTE**

“*It pains me to admit it, but apparently I have passed away. Everyone told me it would happen one day but that’s simply not something I wanted to hear, much less experience. Once again I didn’t get my way! That’s been the story of my life.*”

She goes on to talk about the unfortunate and seemingly unfair path of her life. She ended her statement with some blunt but haunting words...

***"I was born; I blinked; and it was over."***

Emily Phillips, The Independent

**APPLICATION**

There are certain moments and seasons in human life that, simply from a temporal perspective, we almost want to open our mouths and say, "What's the point?" Or, as the opening words of Ecclesiastes put it, "**Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!**"

**CONTEXT**

He calls himself the preacher, and while unnamed, this is undoubtedly written by David’s son, King Solomon. There is only one person who can meet these two qualifications:

- **Qualification 1:** Son of David
- **Qualification 2:** King over Israel in Jerusalem - Rehoboam (David’s grandson) – split the kingdom. Solomon is the only one who reigned over all of Jerusalem.

His title: The Preacher (The one who preaches in the assembly) -

- **Ecclesiastes – to assemble.** The preacher is calling out the whole world to listen to his final sermon on life.

- Many believe that most of the Proverbs were written by Solomon in his younger and middle-aged years, and the book of Ecclesiastes was written at the end of his life. In this book, he describes old age and its effects in great detail; he speaks as an older person to those who are young and gives us his conclusions about the totality of life.

The title of His sermon can be found in the last three words of verse 3): **"...under the sun"**

- Solomon writes about trying to find fulfillment in life "Under the sun" - Life here on this earth, in physical creation.
- When you look up in the sky every morning, what do you see? **The sun!**
- There is an aspect of every one of our lives that is lived "under the sun."
- Every day, the sun watches (so to speak) as humans all over the world go about their lives and business. They work, they toil. They laugh, they cry. They labor they rest. They're good, they're bad. They are born, and they die. All as the sun rises and sets over their existence.

## APPLICATION

With this in mind, it's important to note that Solomon's search for fulfillment and meaning throughout this book is mostly limited to earthly things, not heavenly things. As we go through this book, we must remember that just because Solomon says it doesn't make it a principle to live by. Solomon's human observations, while divinely inspired, are not necessarily designed to be prescriptive rules to govern life. We should rather see Ecclesiastes as a pessimistic commentary on the life of a man who tried to find pleasure and purpose apart from God.

I love what Ray Steadman calls Ecclesiastics:

***"The inspired book of error"***

Ecclesiastes is unique in that it is the one book in the Bible that is written from the human perspective rather than the divine.

## SOLOMON CONTEXT

Solomon was unquestionably a favored man. God loved him! In fact, when Solomon was born, God gave him a special name, Jedediah, which means “Beloved of God.” (2 Samuel 12:25)

- Before his father King David died, he left his son Solomon some good fatherly advise:

**(1Ki 2:2 NKJV)"I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man.**

**(1Ki 2:3 NKJV)"And keep the charge of the LORD your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn;**

Consider Solomon:

- He was loved and favored by God
- Though his father was far from perfect, he taught Him to follow the Lord
- The Lord himself gave Solomon wisdom, riches, and splendor beyond any other person that has ever lived.

And yet... Ecclesiastes shows us that never has a man so wise lived a life so foolish. And why? According to Solomon, he lived foolishly on purpose for the sole reason of discovering if there was any purpose or meaning in living life under the sun.

Solomon was in a unique place to be able to pursue this goal as well. The Bible tells us that during Solomon’s reign, silver counted for nothing because he had so much of it. A pile of silver was like a pile of rocks.

- Solomon is arguably one of the, if not the wealthiest, man that ever lived.
- Not only was his wealth extensive, but he ruled over the largest kingdom that Israel has ever seen **[map\_image]**.
- **The temple he built was a wonder of the ancient world, and the wisdom that he spoke made him renowned in foreign nations.**

There was nothing that everyone would want that Solomon didn't have. There was no limit to the worldly pleasures and accomplishments that he could pursue. If any man could find fulfillment in life “Under the sun,” Solomon was the perfect candidate!

## APPLICATION

We all want something... Most people think that there's something in this world that will not only make our lives better, but give us some sense of why we are living life. Well, Solomon had all the "**some things**" that most people want! Because Solomon asked God for wisdom, God gave him wisdom unparalleled in history, riches, power, and long life. He had 1000 women (literally 700 wives and 300 concubines) at his beckoned call. He was good-looking, rich, powerful, and a genius!

Many would say, *"If I could have Solomon's life, everything would be right in the world."*

And what is this man's conclusion on life under the sun?

## BIBLE PASSAGE

**(Ecc 1:2 NKJV) "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."**

**(Ecc 1:3 NKJV) What profit has a man from all his labor In which he toils under the sun?**

## QUOTE

“ His conclusions can be summed up by a proverb from a poet named Carl Sandburg:

*“Life is an onion. Once it’s peeled there’s nothing left, and one cries the entire time they are peeling it.”*

Carl Sandburg

## QUOTE

“ *Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re gonna get.*”

## VANITY

### Vanity – emptiness and frustration – used 37 times

- From the Hebrew root which means “vapor”
- In other words, life at the end lacks substance.
- On a recent date, Ashley and I went to a more upscale restaurant, which is rare for us. One of my dishes was served with foam. an edible foam that has the essence of same flavor.
  - I found a famous chef, **Ferran Adria [image]**. He is famous for his culinary foam **[image]**. You pay hundreds of dollars to get a plate of small foam. How empty and frustrating would that be? And that’s how Solomon sees life.
- Yet this word is the appropriate word to define life without God. Empty and frustrating. That’s what life will be like under the son.
- Have you found this true? *When was the last time you spent time, effort, money, and energy to make something right, only to be frustrated that there is still something wrong?*

Vanity in Ecclesiastes describes the process of living life for everything this world has to offer, only to realize that in the end, you were like a **mouse aimlessly running on a wheel [image\_2]**. You continue running day after day, never getting anywhere.

- This book is full of cynicism, sarcastic and bitter language, and leaves one with a sense of hopelessness. In fact, if we were to read this entire book in one sitting, most people would go away thinking, "I have nothing to live for!"
- For 11 1/2 chapters, the Preacher gives his sermon of despair, doom, and gloom. But it's not an atheistic end. Solomon certainly believed in God, though his understanding of God was certainly skewed by the world. At the very end of the book, he will quickly conclude that nothing really matters under the sun, but because there is a God, everything matters, for one day, He will bring every word, thought, and action into judgment.
- And maybe that's what God's point was in this book. Perhaps in discovering the vanity of life under the sun, we might discover the beauty and substance of living life "Above the Sun."

# 1 The Teacher of Nature

## BIBLE PASSAGE

**Ecc 1:4 NKJV - One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever.**

**Ecc 1:5 NKJV - The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, And hastens to the place where it arose.**

**Ecc 1:6 NKJV - The wind goes toward the south, And turns around to the north; The wind whirls about continually, And comes again on its circuit.**

**Ecc 1:7 NKJV - All the rivers run into the sea, Yet the sea is not full; To the place from which the rivers come, There they return again.**

## APPLICATION

The Creation:

- **The sun**
- **The wind**
- **The rivers**

When he looks at nature, he sees a monotonous cycle of labor that never ends. It just keeps going and going.

- You can't truly appreciate nature apart from the Lord. Apart from the Lord, even nature becomes this big tiresome treadmill.
- All of creation goes on in an inevitable cyclical motion, not dependent on us. Here is what Solomon is saying: **"There is motion but no meaning."**
- That's how life is under the sun, apart from God... there is motion, but no meaning in any of it.



The earth spins, and the sun goes up and down like it did yesterday. The water goes from the river to the ocean to the clouds and comes back down into the river. The wind goes on its course around the earth and repeats. So is life without God it's the same old thing repeating itself.

## BIBLE PASSAGE

**(Ecc 1:8 NKJV) All things are full of labor; Man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor the ear filled with hearing.**

## APPLICATION

Just like the river that constantly flows into the sea, but the sea is never full, so is human life that is constantly seeking to be satisfied in this life. This is why humanity is always searching for what's new thing. Life under the sun becomes an endless search for the "New and the better."

- The newest movie
- The newest gadget
- The newest fashions
- Let my eyes see more, let my ears hear more, and at some point, I'll be satisfied... it never happens. Under the sun it never CAN happen!

Man cannot express it:

- Talk to someone who is wrapped up in this cycle, and they can't even see it taking place. The vanity of their pursuits and their life apart from Christ.

Just as there is a cyclical, repeating nature in creation without any obvious purpose, there is also a cyclical pattern in history.

## 2 The Teacher of History

### BIBLE PASSAGE

**(Ecc 1:9 NKJV) That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun.**

**(Ecc 1:10 NKJV) Is there anything of which it may be said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in ancient times before us.**

### APPLICATION

Is there anything new? You might say, "Sure new technology, new ideas..." but the truth is, the human heart hasn't changed in about 6000 years!

- Everything we see mankind doing now is simply the same old things taking on new forms.
- **You can put a pig in a dress, in a sports car, in a mansion, you can give him an iPad, a big screen LED TV, and his own TV show... but in the end, he is still a pig who loves to roll around in the mud.**

There is nothing new. We have the same deceptions wrapped in a different package; the same pursuits, lusts, and desires drive people today in the same way they did thousands of years ago.

- **EXAMPLE:** Well I read this book on this new revolutionary diet! NOT. Hey, Nebuchadnezzar was roaming the fields like a wild animal eating the grass thousands of years ago. He owns the copyright of being a naturalist who ate raw foods.

***The pursuit of new stuff is simply an attempt to fill an old need... the need to be reconciled to God.***

APPLICATION: In this life apart from Christ, our life becomes an empty pursuit of the same old things. But in CHRIST: The old things have passed away, behold all things have become

NEW! It's only when we embrace Jesus that the purposes and plans of life make sense, and every day can become new!

But at least you're going to make an impact in the world, right?!

#### BIBLE PASSAGE

**(Ecc 1:11 NKJV) There is no remembrance of former things, Nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come By those who will come after.**

#### APPLICATION

You think you do something memorable and make a big splash in human history, but eventually, within a few generations, no one will remember you.

How many Einsteins do you think existed in human history in every culture from the beginning of time? How many can you name now?

Eventually history forgets even the greatest names and achievements.

**EXAMPLE 2:** How many of you know **who this is?** Neither does anyone else, but I'm sure he

4:50



## 3 The Teacher of Knowledge

#### BIBLE PASSAGE

**(Ecc 1:12 NKJV) I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.**

**(Ecc 1:13 NKJV) And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised.**

**(Ecc 1:14 NKJV) I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.**

**(Ecc 1:15 NKJV) What is crooked cannot be made straight, And what is lacking cannot be numbered.**

**(Ecc 1:16 NKJV) I communed with my heart, saying, "Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge."**

**(Ecc 1:17 NKJV) And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind.**

**(Ecc 1:18 NKJV) For in much wisdom is much grief, And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.**

## APPLICATION

Solomon, in these last verses of chapter 1, refers twice to grasping the wind.

- It's the idea of wanting to lay hold of something that doesn't have a substance that can be grasped or contained.
- Everyone, reach up in the sky. Grab some air. Now check your hand. Who got some?

Here are the two categories he places within "grasping the wind."

### 1. EVERYTHING PEOPLE BURDEN THEMSELVES WITH IN LIFE

**(Ecc 1:12 NKJV) I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.**

**(Ecc 1:13 NKJV) And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised.**

**(Ecc 1:14 NKJV) I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.**

When we see the word "Wisdom," we should understand it in the context of knowledge and understanding. Solomon is not necessarily talking about heavenly wisdom or knowledge of God but merely practical understanding, logic, and worldly knowledge.

**What he determined to do** - discover and determine the meaning behind the way life works and all the world of life.

**What He determined** - the things that keep us busy in life bring burdens that amount to pointlessness and futility. I like how the ESV renders verse 13:

**(Ecc 1:13 ESV) And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.**

**(Ecc 1:15 NKJV) What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered.**

This is how he describes what it's like trying to make sense of life. Finding the meaning of life is like trying to straighten something that has a natural bend and trying to solve an equation that doesn't have all of the variables. Around every corner, you find something else out of whack. You try and figure it out, and right when you think you've made some progress, something happens that puts you right back at square one.

**EXAMPLE: If I gave you a jar full of marbles and told you to make it your life's mission to count the jelly beans, you'd probably say something like, "What is lacking cannot be numbered!" Exactly, that's like trying to figure out the purpose of life simply by observing what's "under the sun."**

## 2. INCREASING KNOWLEDGE IS GRASPING FOR THE WIND

**(Ecc 1:16 NKJV) I communed with my heart, saying, "Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge."**

**(Ecc 1:17 NKJV) And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind.**

***This is probably why philosophers tend to be some of the most depressed people!***

## *The Socratic fallacy - "I know that I know nothing." -Socrates (Greek Philosopher) - conversations with Plato*

- No amount of knowledge about the world, culture, philosophy, pursuits, or anything else "under the sun" actually gets you any closer to identifying the actual meaning of life.
- In fact, the more you learn, the more frustrated you become because you find no closure and only more questions around behind every door of discovery.

David probably understood this. I could see him up all night contemplating the meaning and purpose of everything he was observing in life, and the next morning he wrote Psalm 131:

### **BIBLE PASSAGE**

**(Psa 131:1 NKJV) LORD, my heart is not haughty, Nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, Nor with things too profound for me.**

It's probably what Agur was experiencing when he wrote Proverbs 30: **"Surely I am more stupid than any man, and do not have the understanding of a man."**

Guys, if your wife ever tells you, "God gave me a verse for you, Proverbs 30:1," best give it some thought.

### **APPLICATION**

Solomon looks at himself and says, "I have more wealth, wisdom, and knowledge than anyone. I purposefully drove myself to mental madness and purposefully swung the other way to mental soundness. I purposefully partook in the wildest folly and purposefully avoided foolishness. I took myself on a journey from one end of the spectrum to the other, so that I could figure it out and... It was a big waste of an existence! the more I learned, the more futile it became."

He ends this thought by saying something that many students will probably try and use next time they go to school:

**(Ecc 1:18 NKJV) For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.**

See mom, Solomon said! you don't want me to be more depressed, do you? Just let me be ignorant and happy!

- The tragic thing is this was partially Solomon's conclusion "under the sun."

## CONCLUSION

We have 10 more chapters of this to endure, but we can't close without bringing out "above the sun" applications.

If I was created for a relationship with God, I will never be satisfied until I'm living in what I was created for.

**EXAMPLE:** Adam and Eve thought that they could find value and purpose apart from God, only to realize that on the other end, being apart from God brought pain, sorrow, labor, and ultimately, death. Today, God leaves a glimpse and notion of eternity within the human heart so that when someone has lived life to the fullest and still feels empty, they would look to God to discover the reason they were created.

- Solomon ultimately comes to this conclusion at the end of the book. But you have to understand that up until the last couple verses, Solomon has been dealing with life from a purely humanistic standpoint.

Even as Christians, life becomes most frustrating when we start pursuing our purpose and identity outside of Christ.

## QUOTE

**“When we seek our identity and purpose in things, pursuits, or positions, we are, in essence, trading the glory of Jesus that never fades for the temporary glory of things that won't last. We trade our**

*relationship with the creator for a relationship with the created only to end life with a hand full of wind.*

Pastor Josh

## APPLICATION

Jesus knew what He was talking about when He said:

**(Mat 16:25 NKJV)"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.**

Once you look beyond all of the alluring clothing that the world covers itself with, you realize that there is no substance. Look past all the branding, clothes, money, buildings, commercials, prestige, and advertising; you understand that it is nothing but a **vicious cycle of futility** that has been going on since sin entered the world.

As Solomon will put it, "There is nothing new under the sun." This is true. Don't get sucked into the trap of wasting your life in a cycle that has absolutely no purpose. That is vanity.

- Colossians – **(Col 3:1 NKJV) If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.**
- Ephesians - **(Eph 2:10 NKJV) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**
- You see it's only in Jesus that we can experience life "above the sun." When we look to Jesus at the life He can offer us. Look under the sun, and you'll find disappointment; look to the SON, and you will find purpose and peace.

## APPLICATION

It's not what we do, it's about changing our perspective on what we do:

EXAMPLE - buying a new building for the company. Why?



