

Ecclesiastes

- Author: Solomon
- Subject: the meaning of life
- Much dispute over authorship since 16th century.
- Before that, everyone agreed on Solomon.
- Many statements can be made to contradict each other if they are stretched beyond their contexts.
- Generalizations should not be taken too far.
- Read it as a book, not a collection of one-liners.

Chapter 1

- Vanity is vainness, not exaggerated self-worth
- What advantage does man have? (3 – 11)
 - People come and go
 - Nature goes on and on
 - People cannot take in all in or tell it all
 - There is nothing new under the sun
 - No one will remember what we do
- Proposed Goal 1: Seeking wisdom (12 – 18)
 - Seeking wisdom is an affliction
 - Wisdom cannot fix things
- Wisdom and knowledge just bring pain

Chapter 2

- Proposed Goal 2: Pleasure (1 – 11)
 - Laughter is madness
 - Pleasure accomplishes nothing
 - Accumulating possessions and indulging the senses was only temporarily rewarding.
- Proposed Goal 3: Wisdom versus folly (12 – 23)
 - Wisdom is better, but all die.
 - Neither is remembered.
 - The inheritor may be a fool
- Proposed Goal 3: Enjoy your work (24 – 26)
- God gives, so labor is not the goal

Chapter 3

- Conclusion 1: No joy without God (2:25)
- Conclusion 2: Everything has its time (3:1 – 11)
- Conclusion 3: God set eternity in our hearts (3:11)
- Conclusion 4: But we cannot know all (3:11)
- Conclusion 5: Just be happy (3:12 – 22)

- Rejoice and do good, they are gifts from God
- God made everything exactly right, so fear Him
- Justice will prevail in the end
- Everyone dies, no one knows the future
- So just be happy in what you do.

Chapter 4

Observations:

- Oppression ruins life (1 – 3)
- Rivalry accomplishes nothing (4)
- The fool wastes his life (5)
- Rest is better than laboring in vain (6)
- Labor without an heir is vain (8)
- Teamwork is better than independence (9 – 12)
- Wisdom is better than foolishness (13 – 16)

Chapter 5

- Relating to God (1 – 7)
 - Seek to understand, not just perform (1)
 - Be humble when talking to God (2)
 - Time and words do not measure quality (3)
 - Do what you say; God is not fooled (4 – 5, 7)
 - Don't argue with prophets (6)
- Having good sense (8 – 17)
 - Do not be surprised by oppression (8)
 - Agriculture, not war, makes riches (9)
 - Love of abundance does not satisfy (10 -17)
- Conclusion 6: Enjoy work (18 – 20)

Chapter 6

- Achieving a goal may still be vain (1 – 9)
 - Gaining wealth but not keeping it
 - Long life and many children, but not happy
 - Enjoy what you have, not what you dream
- Don't contend with God (10 – 12)

Chapter 7

Keys to understanding life:

- A good name is of the most value (1)
- Understanding is better than entertainment (2–6)
- Oppression & bribery ruin understanding (7)

- The end is better than the beginning (8)
- Anger is foolish (9)
- The ‘good old days’ weren’t (10)
- Wisdom preserves life (11 – 12)
- God is in control (13 – 14)
- Life isn’t fair (15)
- Don’t go overboard (16)
- Don’t be stupid (17)
- Hold onto God (18)
- In wisdom is strength (19)
- Nobody’s perfect (20 – 22)
- Summary of wisdom
- I only scratched the surface (23 – 28)
- God made man upright but... (29)

Chapter 8

- Wisdom (1 – 9)
 - Wisdom improves the moment (1)
 - Obey government
 - For God’s sake (2 – 3)
 - For your own sake (4)
 - Because you understand the truth (5 – 7)
 - Because its power is limited (8 – 9)
- Justice will prevail in the end (10 – 14)
- Enjoy the life God has given (15)
- You cannot know it all (16 – 17)

Chapter 9

God gives:

- Knowledge of love and hate (1)
- The same to all: death (2 – 3)
- Life is better than death (4 – 6)
- Happiness; God has accepted the good (7 – 8)
- Joy (9 – 10)
- Not by our skills (11 – 18)

Chapter 10

- Be consistent
 - A little folly spoils great wisdom (1)
 - Foolishness will be revealed (2 – 3)
 - Stay the course (4)

- Wisdom and folly contrasted
 - Position does not indicate wisdom (5 – 7)
 - Folly has its own downfall (8 – 15)
 - Know the marks of good leadership (16 – 19)
 - Don't complain (20)

Chapter 11

- Be prepared for good
- Be generous (1 – 2)
- It is what it is; move on (3 – 6)
- Don't ignore adversity; look at all of life (7 – 10)

Chapter 12

Summation:

- Remember God all of your life
 - In youth, before the downhill slide (1 – 5)
 - Before death (6 – 8)
- Wisdom is worth telling (9 – 12)
 - Even though we don't know everything
 - Wise words prod people
 - Knowledge holds us together
 - Even though it is sometimes hard
- Bottom line: fear God and keep His commandments. Justice will prevail.