Ecclesiastes

1 The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:
2 "Meaningless! Meaningless! says the Teacher.
3 "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.
4 What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?
5 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever.
6 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.
7 The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, and it’s never ending.
8 All streams flow into the sea yet the sea is never full.
9 To the place the streams come from, there they return again.
10 All things are meaningless.

11 There is no remembrance of men of old; and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow.

Wisdom is Meaningless

12 I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. I devoted myself to studing and exploring by wisdom all that is done under the sun.
13 I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards,
14 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them, I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing plants.
15 I brought male and female slaves, and other slaves who were born in my house, I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.
16 I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces.
17 I acquired men and women singers, and a harpist as well, the delights of the heart of man.

18 What is twisted cannot be straightened,
19 what is lacking cannot be counted.
20 I thought to myself, "Look, I have grown in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me.
21 I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge."

22 I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom and knowledge.

23 "Look! This is something new?"
24 It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time.

Ecclesiastes 1:18

Wisdom and Folly Are Meaningless

Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom and folly, and also madness and folly.

What is it that the king’s successor does? He has done it all. He has already been there. I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness.

The wise man has eyes in his head, when the fool walks in the dark.

But I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both. Both going to die.

The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise? This too is meaningless.

For the wise man, like the fool, will be forgotten, in days to come both will be torn down.

The wise man too must die.

Ecclesiastes 1:18

Meaningless, Meaningless

18 For with much wisdom comes much sorrow.
19 and also madness and folly.

Pleasures Are Meaningless

Psalm 62:11

20 I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good, but that also proved to be meaningless."
21 I tried cheering myself with wine and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile, for men to do under heaven during the days of their lives.
22 I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards,
23 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them, I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing plants.
24 I bought male and female slaves, and other slaves who were born in my house, I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.
25 I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces.
26 I acquired men and women singers, and a harpist as well, the delights of the heart of man.
27 I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me.
28 I denied myself nothing of my eyes.
29 My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor.
30 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done, and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind, nothing was gained under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:18
ECCLESIASTES 3:21

What does the worker gain from his toil? He has seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men, so that they cannot find out what God is doing in the world. He has also seen that whatever a man is, it is all vanity. And whatever happens, it happens for a time; there is nothing better than a man's having joy in his work, because that is his reward with him. For who knows whether he will come after him who comes after him to share his labor and to partake of his toil? Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward, or the spirit of the animal, which goes down into the earth?

Thoughts + Questions At N.I.S.

"And I saw something else under the sun."

In the place of judgment—wickedness was there, in the place of justice—wickedness was there.

"I thought in my heart."

God will bring judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed.

"As for men, God tests them, so that they may see that they are like the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and all return to dust."

Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward, or if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?

ECCLESIASTES 3:22

"So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?"

Oppression, Toil, Friendlessness

4 Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun.

I saw the tears of the oppressed—and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors—and they have no comforter.

And I declared that the dead, who had already died, were happier than the living, who are still alive.

But better than both is he who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun.

And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

The fool folds his hands and covers himself, saying, "Better is the hand of a poor man than the hand of a poor man with wisdom.

Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.

Again I saw something meaningless under the sun.

There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother.

There was no end to his toil; yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. "For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why depriving myself of enjoyments?"

This too is meaningless, a miserable business.

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:

"If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!"

Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?

Thoughts: Easier to be rich than poor, etc. God is unfair: one who is wise is better off than an old king.

Stand in Awe of God.

5 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.

Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God.

Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, "My vow was a mistake. Why should God be angry at what you have done?"

ECCLESIASTES 6:10

Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun, during the few days of life God has given him—this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God. He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.

Riches Are Meaningless

If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is exalted by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. The increase from the land is taken by all: the king himself profits from the fields.

Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

The sleep of a laborer is better than fine perfumes, and the day of death better than the day of birth.

It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting for death is the destiny of every man; the living should make this their heart.

Sorrow is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart.

The heart of the wise is in the house of pleasure, but the heart of fools is in the house of pain.

It is better to heed a wise man’s rebuke than to listen to the song of fools.

Like the crackling of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of fools. This too is meaningless.

Extortion turns a wise man into a fool, and a bribe corrupts the heart.

The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride.

Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.

Do not say, “Why were the old days better than these?”

For it is not wise to ask such questions.
ECCLESIASTES 8:14

cause you took an oath before God. Do not be in a hurry to leave the king's presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases. "Since a king's word is supreme, who can say to him, "What are you doing?"

Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a man's misery weighs heavily upon him.

Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come? No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death. As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it.

All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything done under the sun. There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own hurt. Then too, I saw the wicked buried—those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless.

When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong. Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better for the man who is reverent before God. Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.

There is something else, meaningless that occurs on earth: righteous men who get what the wicked deserve, and wicked

ECCLESIASTES 8:15

men who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless. So I commended the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life. God has given him under the sun.

When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe man's labor on earth—his eyes not seeing sleep day or night—then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it.

A Common Destiny for All

So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no man knows whether love or hate awaits him. All share a common destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not.

As it is with the good man, so with the sinner; as it is with those who take paths so with those who are afraid to take them.

This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun. The same destiny overtake all. The hearts of men, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead. Anyone who is among the living has hope—even a live dog is better off than a dead lion.

For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing: they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten.

Their love, their hate, and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.

Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart for it is now that God favors what you do.

Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil.

Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life, and in your toilsome labor under the sun. Whatever your heart finds to do, it will do all with my might in the grave, where you are going, that is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

I have seen something else under the sun:

The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant, or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.

Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come:

As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.

Wisdom Better Than Folly

13 Also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me:

There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful k
ECCLESIASTES 11:1

The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools.

Wise men are better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

10 As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left.

Even as he walks along the road, the fool lacks sense and shows how stupid he is.

If a ruler's anger rises against you, do not leave your post; calmness can save you from ruin.

There is an evil I have seen under the sun:

The sort of error that arises from a ruler:

Fools are put in many high positions while the rich occupy the low ones.

I have seen slaves on horseback while princes go on foot like slaves.

Whoever digs a pit may fall into it.

Whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake.

Whoever quarrels stones may be injured by them.

Whomever splints legs may be endangered by them.

If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed.

Bread Upon the Waters

11 Cast your bread upon the waters.

ECCLESIASTES 11:2

for after many days you will find it again.

Give portions to seven, yes, to eight, for you do not know what wealth may come upon the land.

If clouds are full of water, they pour rain upon the earth.

Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there will it lie.

Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.

As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, you cannot understand the work of the Maker of all things, but know that for all these things God will bring to you judgment.

So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body.

For youth and vigor are meaningless.

At any time of your youth before the days of trouble come, the years approach when you will say, I find no pleasure in them—before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dim, and the clouds return after the rain; when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds; but all their songs grow faint; when men are afraid of heights, and of dancers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along; and desire no longer is stirred. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets.

Remember him before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.
"Meaningless! Meaningless" says the Teacher.
"Everything is meaningless!"

The Conclusion of the Matter

"Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by one Shepherd. Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them.

Of making many books there is no end, and much study weakens the body.

13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: FEAR GOD and keep his commandments.

14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

ECCLESIASTES 12:14

What Are the Traumas of Mid-Life?

1 Old Age and wanting to avoid it.
2 20-25 years of marriage.
3 Kids are grown.
4 Job security—Replaced by machine or younger man.
5 Success.
6 Need for new challenges & experiences.
7 Facing failure & unrealized goals.
8 Physical health.
9 Finding meaning & purpose.
10 Weary of responsibility.
11 Tired of all the hassles.
12 Desire to be free of knowing problems.
13 Desire to start over again in all areas of life.
14 Futility of present activity.
15 Frustration of getting older and not having made A Million.

8 Or the leader of the assembly; also in verses 9 and 10.
Is That All There Is?
Foundation for Mid-Life

The Success Syndrome:
Work - Wine - Women

Whatever will be, will be!!

Caught in the Corporate Squeeze - A Man looks up

Snared by Materialism:
The More And More Money Madness

Wisdom From the pits; digging out of depression; Thinking through Trauma

Eat, drink And be Merry:
For tomorrow we die.

Go For it because the grave is coming: I'm growing older!!
1. Everything is Meaningless 1:1-2:26
2. Whatever will be, will be 3:1-22
3. Caught in the Corporate Squeeze 4:1-16
4. How does God Fit into the Picture? 5:1-7
5. Wealth without Enjoyment 6:1-12
6. Wisdom 7:1-29
7. Eat, drink and be Merry 8:15
8. A Time for All 9:1-12

Mark Twain: "Life is just one damn thing after another."

Life is like Mowing the Lawn!! You do it over and over and over again.

Is that all there is?

The sheer futility in trying to find significance!!

18 - ① 1:1-18 - Is that all there is? Founda
26 - ② 7:1-26 - The Success Syndrome: Work
22 - ③ 2:1-22 - Whatever will be, will be!! - It's a fact of life.
23 - ④ 4:1-5:7 - Caught in the Corporate Squeeze.
25 - ⑤ 5:8-6:12 - Snared by Materialism. The more...
46 - ⑥ 7:1-8:17 - Wisdom from the pits: digging out
38 - ⑦ 9:1-10:20 - Eat, drink and be Merry for ton
24 - ⑧ 11:2-12:14 - Go for it because the grave is
Is that All there is? 

To find Significance!!

The Sheer Futility in trying

"Work, Wine - Woman - Foundation to mid-life - what's the use?"

Caught in the Corporate Sycophant Syndrome.

Life is like Mowing the Lawn. If you do it over and over again, B. Virden, "Managing"

Can't pay for Salvation with A.

Mark Twain: "Life is just one damn thing after another."
Can't pay for Salvation with American Express or Master Charge.

mid-life — what's the use?

men —

Frustration of wanting things different.

up,

say Madness.

Thinking through Trauma

growing Older!!