
Ecclesiastes

The Emptiness of Life without God

Introduction: Life is absolutely meaningless according to the teacher (1:1-2).

I. Our most passionate pursuits in life leave us with a sense of emptiness (1:12—2:26).

A. The cyclical nature of life and creation is meaningless with God (1:3-11).

1. Generations come and go on this seemingly endless earth (1:3-4).
2. Natural phenomena continue in seemingly endless cycles (1:5-7).
3. Life itself is repetitive and unfulfilling (1:8-10).
4. Generations past and future are eventually forgotten (1:11).

B. The pursuit of pleasure and success is meaningless without God (1:12 – 2:26).

1. Relying on mere human wisdom leaves us empty (1:12-18).
2. Pursuing a life of personal pleasure leaves us empty (2:1-3).
3. Undertaking impressive projects leaves us empty (2:4-6).
4. Amassing personal possessions leaves us empty (2:7-8).
5. Achieving supreme prestige leaves us empty (2:9-11).
6. Reflecting on our future fate leaves us empty (2:12-16).
7. Bequeathing wealth and work to others leaves us empty (2:17-23).
8. Enjoying life as a gift from God never leaves us empty (2:24-26).

I I. Our most successful achievements in life leave us with a sense of emptiness (3:1—5:20).

A. Personal observations—time and toil are meaningless without God (3:1 – 4:16).

1. Every event and activity has its proper time (3:1-8).
2. Both time and toil find meaning only when they are viewed as gifts from God (3:9-15).
3. Both the time for judgment and the enjoyment of toil rest in God's hands (3:16-22).
4. Oppressive and envious toil leaves us empty (4:1-6).
5. The emptiness of toil runs counter to the benefits of companionship (4:7-12).
6. Passing leadership on to youth leaves us empty (4:13-16).

B. Personal Advice—words and wealth are meaningless without God (5:1-20).

1. Many words and unfulfilled vows leave us empty (5:1-7).
2. The unfair distribution of wealth and its forfeiture at death leave us empty (5:8-17).
3. Enjoying time and toil as gifts from God never leaves us empty (5:18-20).

I I I. The glaring inconsistencies of life leave us with a sense of emptiness (6:1—8:15).

A. The inconsistency of prosperity without joy is meaningless without God (6:1-12).

1. Prosperity and longevity without joy leave us empty (6:1-9).
2. The uncertainties of life and death leave us empty (6:10-12).

B. The inconsistency of righteousness without reward is meaningless without God (7:1—8:1).

1. Death and mourning are preferable to life and laughter (7:1-6).
2. Integrity, patience, and wisdom are preferable to bribery, pride, and folly (7:7-12).
3. Because life's circumstances are in God's hands, no one can anticipate the future (7:13-14).
4. Righteousness often goes unrewarded and is actually unattainable (7:15-22).

5. Wisdom is unattainable and humankind's schemes run contrary to God (7:23-8:1).
- C. The inconsistency of rulership without justice is meaningless without God (8:2-15).
1. It's prudent to obey the king and refrain from questioning his decisions (8:2-8).
 2. Oppressive leadership and delayed justice leave us empty (8:9-14).
 3. Enjoying life as God designed it never leaves us empty (8:14-15).

I V. Our very existence in life leaves us with a sense of emptiness (8:16—12:7).

- A. The values of life and wisdom are meaningless without God (8:16—10:20).
1. Life is preferable to death because it's impossible to comprehend the outcome of good and evil (8:16 – 9:6).
 2. God allows us to enjoy life, including food, marriage, and work, in spite of life's emptiness (9:7-10).
 3. Life's ironies include chance, disaster, and unrewarded wisdom (9:11-18).
 4. Wisdom outweighs folly in every walk of life (10:1-20).
- B. The values of youth and vigor are meaningless without God (11:1—12:7).
1. Because God's ways are inscrutable, people must work hard and take risks (11:1-6).
 2. Because God's judgment is certain, young people should enjoy life in the moment (11:7-10).
 3. Because God created us, we should remember Him before old age sets in (12:1-7).

Conclusion: Life finds fulfillment only in relationship to God (12:8-14).