



# *Ecclesiastes*

# *Journal*

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## *Introduction*

Not everyone agrees that this book was written by King Solomon, but I am going to assume it was as there are good reasons to believe this. The first verse tells us it was written by a son of David, and a king in Jerusalem. Later on, it mentions that that he had more wisdom than all who had been before him in Jerusalem. Since Solomon was known famously for his wisdom, this seems to be fairly conclusive that the writer was indeed him.

Reading through a book while knowing a bit about the author can be very helpful in understanding what has prompted his thoughts and conclusions. Ecclesiastes is not an easy book to understand. Its message can seem quite a contrast to the rest of the Bible, and maybe a little depressing when read quickly. Hopefully this will help you to read it as written by Solomon, the son of a man after God's own heart who knew all the ups and downs of his father's life; a man who was 'beloved of God' at his birth and was to build the house of God; a man to whom God gave a wise and understanding heart, and yet still experienced failure to be wise.

*"Now the scope of this book is to show that this is a great mistake, that our happiness consists not in being gods to ourselves, to have what we will and do what we will, but in having him that made us be a God unto us."* -- Matthew Henry

This is written using the KJV Bible. I usually use a Bible app or online program that gives access to study aids such as lexicons and expository dictionaries such as Vine's for word definitions, the Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge for cross-references, and topical reference works such as Nave's.

# *Chapter 1:1–11 – All is vanity*

NOTICE:

- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.
- Find the question that is being asked in this section and make it stand out by drawing a box around it in red.
- In verse 4, the Preacher makes a comparison between the vanity of life, and the permanence of the earth. However, even the permanent "labour" of creation has vanity attached to it. Make verses 5–11 into a list of reasons why from a human perspective it is vanity.

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MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- Look up the definition of the Hebrew word for “vanity” in a Lexicon.

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EXPAND:

From man's perspective, all these things may seem to speak of endless monotonous repetition, but if we try to look at these things from God's perspective, how does that change what they are? (i.e. Psalm 119:89-91).

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USE:

If life is like a single breath when compared to the inanimate parts of creation, what can that teach us to do? (Psalm 90:12)

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## *Chapter 1:12–18 – Wisdom*

NOTICE:

- Look for the word vanity and colour it in pink and underline what it is referring to. Add to this the term "vexation of spirit" - or striving after wind.
- Look for the word wisdom and colour it in purple.
- Find any occurrences of the word "God" and colour them in blue and then underline the part of the sentence that is referring to something God is or is doing.
- What does the Preacher state to be his project in these verses? Draw a box around it in red.

## MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- What is wisdom? Look it up in a concordance for a definition and glance through the references where this word is used for some help in defining it.

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- Read through 1 Kings 3:4-14; 4:29-34. Why did Solomon request wisdom? What did he use his wisdom for?

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- Labour: There are a few different words used for man's work in Ecclesiastes that seem to cover all the possibilities. Look up the word "labour" from verse 3, "sore travail" from verse 13, and "works" in verse 14 in a concordance and write down their meaning. How are they the same/different? What "labour" did God assign to people at the beginning?

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## EXPAND:

- Have a look at your underlining connected with God (verse 13). Look up the Hebrew word for "exercised" - in what way is this word used by other Bible writers? What does this tell us about God's perspective on man's work? Does it have a purpose from God's point of view?

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- We are told in Proverbs 3:13 "*Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.*" But here Solomon tells us that gaining wisdom and understanding also brings about grief and sorrow. Why would this be?

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- James tells us there are two kinds of wisdom. Read through James 3:13-18 and take notes on how to tell the difference.

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USE:

Make a list of your work (what you do every day). Leave some space near it as we will revisit this later.

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# *Chapter 2:1-11 Is making ourselves happy the point of our labour?*

## NOTICE:

- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.
  - Make a list of all the things the preacher laboured at to make himself happy. Can you think of a modern day equivalent for all of the Preacher's attempts at happiness?
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## MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- Read through 1 Kings 10:14-29. Take notes on the kind of life that Solomon led.
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- Look up the Hebrew word for "mirth" in a lexicon. This is not a word for silliness. In what other contexts is this word used?
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- Look up the Hebrew word for "pleasure" in a lexicon. This is a fairly common word - used 559 times in the Old Testament. What is interesting about it, is that it is the word used numerous times in Genesis 1 to describe the work of God. This word is a significant one in Ecclesiastes, so find the two places it occurs in this section, and colour it in a nice, bright orange.
  - Look up the Hebrew word for "folly" (verse 3) in a lexicon. What does it mean?
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EXPAND:

Do you agree with the Preacher's conclusion in verse 11? \_\_\_\_\_

USE:

This reminds me of the "do what makes you happy" saying. The problem is that not everything we must do will make us happy and although we often do find pleasure in doing what makes us happy, that pleasure can be short-lived. Go back to your list of your work - draw a heart besides the work that makes you happy.

## *Chapter 2:12–17 How do wisdom and folly compare?*

*The Preacher has now examined wisdom (which he found to cause grief and sorrow), and folly which he found to be vanity and vexation of spirit and having no profit.*

NOTICE:

- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.
- Draw a red box around verse 13, where the Preacher finds profit in wisdom in comparison with folly.

MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- Look up the Hebrew words for "light" and "darkness". Have a look through the verses that use these words in the Psalms. Write down any that stand out to you. What do you think it means that a wise man has eyes in his head?

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- Read through 1 Kings 3:16-28. How does this story show the profit in wisdom?

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- Even though the Preacher has acknowledged that there is some profit in wisdom, wisdom itself does not change fact that life is fleeting. The wise die just like the fool. Have a look through the cross-references for verse 17 for a few other people who felt similarly to what the Preacher is feeling here. Why did these people hate life?

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EXPAND:

Read Matthew 25:1-12. What is the difference between being wise and foolish?

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USE:

How can we differentiate between wise and foolish uses of our time or labour?  
Check your list.

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## *Chapter 2:18-26 – Is labouring to provide an inheritance an answer to the question?*

### NOTICE:

- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.
  - Find any occurrences of the word "God" and colour them in blue and then underline the part of the sentence that is referring to something God is or is doing.
  - There are four occurrences of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find them and colour them in orange.
  - Underline the question the Preacher asks in verse 22 in red. This question is pretty much the same one he asked in chapter 1. How is it different?
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### MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- The kings of Judah are a good example of what the Preacher is speaking of here: Saul, David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Ahaziah, Athaliah, Jehoash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah. Circle all the kings who showed wisdom in blue. What was the result of all Solomon's wisdom down through the line that inherited all his labour?
  - Have you ever felt the way the Preacher does in verse 23? Would you say this is a good summary of ALL your days? Why or why not? How about when you read Matthew 11:28-30?
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EXPAND:

- What are the three things verse 24 tells us are from the hand of God? My KJV margin says "delight his senses" - maybe this makes you look at the labour of your days a little differently?
  - What are the different perspectives in labour being to a "good" man wisdom, knowledge and joy, while to a sinner it is gathering and heaping up and losing it in the end? But even then, man's labour is still vanity and vexation of spirit.
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USE:

When you are given something you have not laboured for, how is it different than if you had laboured for it yourself? Go back to your list of work... put a star beside anything that you will leave to someone else when you die.



## *Chapter 3:1–15 – Time*

*A humans, we understand beginnings and endings very well - this is how we experience time. But time doesn't actually begin and end - it is the material world - us and all that we interact with - that has beginnings and endings - time itself doesn't change.*

*"Space [everything around us] is exposed to our will; we may shape and change the things in space as we please. Time, however, is beyond our reach, beyond our power. It is both near and far, intrinsic to all experience and transcending all experience. It belongs exclusively to God." (Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*)*

### NOTICE:

- Make a little chart and list the 14 "A time to's". How does this help us to understand our lives in the framework of time?

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- Underline the question the Preacher asks in verse 9 in red. Is there anything different about it this time?

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- There are three occurrences of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find them and colour them in orange.
- Find any occurrences of the word "God" and colour them in blue and then underline the part of the sentence that is referring to something God is or is doing.
- What are the two things that the Preacher says "I know" about?

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## MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- The Preacher tells us that God has made everything beautiful in his time. This reminds me of Romans 8:28 - look at cross-references for other incidents. What is different about the way humans and God see things?

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- In Genesis 1, God saw the good in all of His work, in Isaiah 53:11 there is a prophecy of Jesus seeing his work and being satisfied. In verse 13, in order to enjoy the good of his labour, a man has to be able to see it. Look up the word "enjoy" and find out how else it is used. How does this help you to understand how to "enjoy the good" in labour?

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- Imagine you are Solomon looking back on all that has happened in the Scriptures. How many events can you think of that looked daunting and terrible at the time but resulted in something beautiful?

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## EXPAND:

- There are various ideas about what it means that God "hath set the world in their heart". Some think it refers to worldly thinking, some think it refers to a longing for eternity, but whatever it means, it needs to correspond to the following part of the sentence - that because of what God has set in our hearts, we are not able to see what God is doing from beginning to end the way God can. Look up the word for "world" and find out what it means and how else it is used in Ecclesiastes. What do you think it means?

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- How does knowing that God's works are eternal, that they cannot be added to or taken from make men fear Him? Check out cross-references.

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- There are different explanations of verse 15, but since we are speaking of God and time, it seems to be speaking of God's constancy - that He is the same now as He was before, and will be the same in the future, and He "seeks again that which is passed away". Read this in several translations and try to write it in your own words.

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USE:

How does it make you feel knowing that eating and drinking, and seeing the good in your labour is a gift from God? Go back to your list and consider what the "good" may be in the labour that you may not enjoy so much. Does it make you look at your life a little differently?

## *Chapter 3:16-22 – Like the beasts*

NOTICE:

- Find any occurrences of the word "God" and colour them in blue and then underline the part of the sentence that is referring to something God is or is doing.
- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.

## MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- The Preacher finds that in places of justice and righteousness there were things that were wrong. This just seems to be the sad reality of any human government. The best that he could say and that we can say is that ultimately there will be justice. The story of the nation of Israel up to the time of Solomon, and afterwards as well, show how God does choose the time and place for judgment. Read through 1 Kings 8 (Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple). What incidents can you think of in Israel's history where God did judge the righteous and the wicked? Do you think God is actively judging the righteous and wicked today?
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- The Bible speaks of a final day of judgment as well. Check out the cross-references for verse 17.
  - In what ways are humans and animals the same? In what way are they different? Read Psalm 49. What does it add to the Preacher's words?
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## EXPAND:

- Thinking of the many wives that Solomon had: the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and their various gods that Solomon built high places for, he would have been very familiar with the various ideas of the afterlife. The nations around Israel at the time believed in an afterlife. When they buried their dead, they buried food and drink and other possessions with them as well for their journeys to wherever they thought they were going. In Egypt, a Pharaoh would be buried with all sorts of treasures to take along with him into the afterlife. However, there is no difference between an animal dying or a human dying - you cannot see a spirit ascending or descending. No one can tell anyone what happens after death by experience. Why would the Preacher think it better for people to recognize that death is the end of life, just like with animals (verse 18)?

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- What is the Preacher's conclusion now about how a man should look at his labour?

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USE:

How does this change your perspective on daily life? How can you rejoice in your labour?

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## *Chapter 4:1-3 – Oppressive labour*

### NOTICE:

- It seems to be a fact of life on earth, that where there is labour, there will be oppression. Work is work, it is generally not all that pleasurable, and if you can pay someone to do it for you, or if you can get it done by someone else for free... well, why not? Underline the reason for the oppression in verse 1.
- There is one occurrence of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find it and colour it in orange.

### MAKE CONNECTIONS:

It is kind of ironic that there is evidence that Solomon was himself an oppressor. The people complained of the grievous service and heavy yoke that he had put upon them in 1 Kings 12:4. Take a look at 1 Samuel 8:11-18 and note what it says about kings.

### EXPAND:

Why do you suppose there was no comforter? Read through Psalm 72 - a Psalm for Solomon. What does it have to say about the oppressed?

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### USE:

Perhaps sometimes we feel as the Preacher does here when we look at the messy parts of the world we live in and consider what the world might be like for our children. Who should be our comforter?

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## *Chapter 4:4-6 – Envyng the work of others*

NOTICE:

- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.
- There is one occurrence of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find it and colour it in orange.

MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- Do you wonder if the Preacher was thinking of the life of David here, especially his early life where his success made king Saul so jealous that for the last 8 years of his life, he hunted David to kill him. Or maybe of Abel, who was killed by his brother out of envy. Can you think of other cases in the Bible or elsewhere where success only created envy? Check out the cross-references.
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- Verse 5 actually sounds like a good description of envy - doing nothing oneself but being eaten up by envy of the success of others. Do a search for the word "envy" in the book of Proverbs. What does it have to say?
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- What is better about one handful with quietness? Have a look through the cross-references and write any down are helpful to remember.
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USE:

Are you ever like the envious man - accomplishing nothing yourself because you can't do what someone else does? Figure out how to be inspired by others, instead of made envious.

## *Chapter 4:7-12 – Self-inflicted oppression*

### NOTICE:

- There are three occurrences of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find them and colour them in orange.
- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.

### MAKE CONNECTIONS:

The Preacher speaks about a different kind of oppression here - one that is self-inflicted. Here is a man, all alone, working himself to death, never satisfied with riches, and depriving of himself of good for what purpose? This is not what God had in mind when He created people. What did He have in mind?

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### EXPAND:

- The next few verses speak about the benefits of sharing our labour with others. Make a list of the benefits of not labouring alone.
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- This last bit seems to provide a clue about how to stop oppression. If one is overpowered by another, two can likely stand against him, but even better is a threefold cord which is not easily broken. (A three-strand rope is probably the most common kind of rope there is. It is made from fibers twisted together into yarn, and then three strands of yarn are twisted and made into rope.) How does this relate to the concept of one body in Romans 12:4,5?

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USE:

Look at your list of your labour. Would any of your work benefit from someone to work with? If you are trying to do everything on your own, then stop, and find a partner or community to work with.

## *Chapter 4:13–16 – Work for change*

NOTICE:

- There is one occurrence of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find it and colour it in orange.
- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.

MAKE CONNECTIONS:

Although those with power can oppress people in their control, those who are oppressed have power to change things when they work together. Leaders must be good leaders to keep the loyalty of their followers. There are a variety of interpretations of these verses, but try to see if this fits anything in Solomon's experience. Read through 1 Kings 11 - take note of any correspondence.

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USE:

Is there anything you can do to help stop the oppression of others?

## *Chapter 5:1-7 – Labour for God*

NOTICE:

- Find any occurrences of the word "God" and colour them in blue and then underline the part of the sentence that is referring to something God is or is doing.
- There is one occurrence of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find it and colour it in orange.
- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.

MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- Part of the "labour" in our lives is to serve our God, but serving God is not just about external actions. Make a list of the warnings the Preacher gives.

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- A fool's voice and a dream are the result of a multitude of business, and a multitude of words. Too much work or too many words have this in common: they result in nothing helpful or substantial, but a lot of distraction. A vow to God is one that must be given priority. Read 1 Kings 9:1-9 - do you think that Solomon may have been considering mistakes he had made in his life where God was concerned?

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EXPAND:

How can your mouth cause your flesh to sin? Do a search for the word "mouth" in the book of Proverbs. Have a look through Psalm 12.

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USE:

The conclusion of this matter is to not just labour for God, but to fear Him. Have a look at the word "fear" in a lexicon. What does it mean? How should a proper fear of God affect your attitude when you come to worship Him and do the work He has given you? Did you include labour for God in your list of work?

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## *Chapter 5:8–17 – Hoarding riches, oppressing others*

NOTICE:

- There are three occurrences of the Hebrew word "raah" translated "evil" in this section. Find it and circle it in black.
  - Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in a colour that seems appropriate (pink or gray?) Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.
  - Make a list of all the problems with riches.
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## MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- It is not uncommon today to hear this very same thought in verse 8 - to be shocked that oppression of the poor, violent perverting of judgment can be allowed by a good God. But the very next verse reminds us that God provides abundantly for everyone. Read through Psalm 104 and take notes about God's care for His creation.
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- Do a search of the word "oppress". Take notes on God's view on oppression.
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- Oppression and deliverance is a theme in the book of Judges. Solomon mostly likely would have known the history of his people well, and the cycle that ensued. Make a chart with these headings: state of Israel - oppressor - years - state of Israel - deliverer - years. Note what you find in these verses: Judges 3:5-11; 3:12-15,30; 4:1-3,9,5:31; 6:1, 6,8:28; 10:6-16, 32,33; Judges 13:1, 1 Samuel 7:3,8,13.

## EXPAND:

- The truth about the causes of oppression are found in man. Recently I read that it is estimated that by 2030, the richest 1% will own 2/3 of global wealth. Many think the profit of their labour is riches, and find that they are never satisfied, and that the more riches they have, the more mouths there are to feed, and in the end it seems that all they get to do is behold them, not enjoy them. Have a look at Deuteronomy 8:12-14 and 15:7-11 - how is wealth to be regarded?
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- How is the Preacher's question different this time?
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USE:

How can we be certain that we are not complicit in the oppression of others?

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## *Chapter 5:18–20 – Make use of what you have!*

NOTICE:

- Find any occurrences of the word "God" and colour them in blue and then underline the part of the sentence that is referring to something God is or is doing.
- There are two occurrences of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find them and colour them in orange.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

- So if the profit of labour is not about hoarding up riches for oneself, what is the Preacher's conclusion now about how a man should look at his labour in verse 18?
  

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- What is the gift of God? How does looking at this as a gift change how we may use it?
  

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USE:

The last verse is a little hard to figure out, but the Moffat translation says, "Then he will never brood over the fewness of his days, for God is giving him his heart's delight." This seems to tie in very well Paul's words in 1 Timothy 6:6-11.

## *Chapter 6:1-10 – Something common to man*

### NOTICE:

- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.
- Find any occurrences of the word "God" and colour them in blue and then underline the part of the sentence that is referring to something God is or is doing.
- There are four occurrences of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find them and colour them in orange.

### MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- What similarities does this section have with Solomon's life? (2 Chronicles 1:12-17)  

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- I think we can assume that Solomon was familiar with the books of the Law, so it is kind of interesting to compare this thought (that one could want nothing but then be left without the power to enjoy all that he had) with Deuteronomy 28.  

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- Although the Bible only mentions three children of Solomon, it is possible that with 700 wives and 300 concubines the number was much greater. Compare the man with the untimely birth - you will find that there are six comparisons in verses 3-6. Why was the untimely birth better?  

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EXPAND:

- Read through the promise God had made to David regarding Solomon (1 Chronicles 17:11-14). Then read what happened in 1 Kings 11:28-40. What do you think it means to have a soul filled with good?
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- Read verse 10 in a few different translations. Have a look at the cross references for this verse. Human nature hasn't changed down through the thousands of years that have passed - the wandering of the desire is always present - and even though Solomon was given a wise and understanding heart, he was not immune to it.
  - Review all the different things the Preacher has found to be vanity. What has the preacher added to his question about man (verse 12). Who can tell him? (Psalm 1, James 4:14,15).
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USE:

Verse 9 seems to me to be a very appropriate verse for Solomon (and any of us too). Read it in a few different translations and then write it out and put it somewhere where you can be reminded of it often :)



## *Chapter 7:1–6 a good name?*

*What is good for a man and what comes after him?*

NOTICE:

- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.
- There are four occurrences of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find them and colour them in orange. Underline what is being referred to as good.

MAKING CONNECTIONS:

- In the chronicles of the king of Judah, there is often a summary of their lives comparing them to David. Read through Psalm 89. How does this show the importance of a good name?  
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- Typically we rejoice at a birth and do not look forward to death. Have a look through the cross-references to this verse. Why would the day of death be better?  
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EXPAND:

- List the two reasons the Preacher gives for the house of mourning and sorrow to be better than the house of feasting and laughter. Look through the cross-references for these verses and see how many more reasons you can come up with.  
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- It is probable that Solomon often experienced the "songs of fools" telling him how great he was (1 Kings 10:1-9). Yet he would probably also have been familiar with the rebuke of a wise man and his father's response to it (2 Samuel 12). How is wise rebuke better than flattery?
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USE:

Part of dealing with vanity in our lives means we need to be concerned about building a good name, so that something similar to this can be said of us: "he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did". Does any of your labour work against this?

## *Chapter 7:7-10 – Don't be a fool*

NOTICE:

- There are four occurrences of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find them and colour them in orange. Underline what is being referred to as good.
- In order to be known as a wise man, one cannot act like a fool. Make a list of all the ways to act like a fool in these verses, and then their positive counterparts.

USE:

It's not unusual for people to look back on days gone by and think that they were somehow better than the present. This sounds a bit like Numbers 11:4-6. Why is this not wise?

# *Chapter 7:11-22 – Life will have its share of both prosperity and adversity*

## NOTICE:

- Find all the occurrences of wisdom and colour it in purple - underline what the verse is saying about wisdom.
- Find the word "profit" what does the verse say about profit?
- Find occurrences of God, colour in blue and underline what it is saying about God.
- There are five occurrences of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find them and colour them in orange. Underline what is being referred to as good.

## MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- Read through Psalm 31. Many of David's Psalms are like this - times of challenging adversity and times of deliverance and prosperity - the result for David was greater dependence on God. Solomon's reign was one of peace - how did this affect his dependence on God?
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- Before David died, he charged Solomon with taking care of a few problem people. One was Joab. Read through 1 Kings 2:5-6; 28-33. Perhaps this is who Solomon is thinking of in verse 15.

## EXPAND:

Verses 20-22 help in understanding what is being said in verses 16-19: Having a proper view of ourselves, that we are sinners trying to do the right thing, but we will fail sometimes and we will never be perfectly righteous in this life. What are

the problems with being overmuch righteous or over wise? Recognizing that we are all foolish sometimes, what are the problems with not curbing it? What are the two things that will help us to stay balanced?

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USE:

Be reminded of Hebrews 4:14-16.

## *Chapter 7:23-29 – The trouble with man*

NOTICE:

- Find all the occurrences of wisdom and colour it in purple - underline what the verse is saying about wisdom.
- Find occurrences of God, colour in blue and underline what it is saying about God.
- What was the question the Preacher was seeking an answer to in this section. Underline it. What was hard about finding it? Read through Job 28.

MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- Why was it that when he said "I will be wise" it didn't work out?
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- Where else is a woman used as imagery for sin - look through the cross-references.
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- In contrast, a woman is also used to personify wisdom. Read through Proverbs 8.

EXPAND:

- There are a few different explanations of what the Preacher meant in verses 27,28. It doesn't seem likely that he was making a general statement about men and women, so it is probably best understood from the perspective of Solomon's experience. The word for "man" is the Hebrew word "adam" which can be understood in a general sense of person. Was there a person in Solomon's experience who had found and exhibited wisdom in his life? (Psalm 89) Is there a reason why Solomon did not find a wife (or woman) with this kind of wisdom? Perhaps for the kings of Israel and Judah, there was to be only one person who they looked to for an example of this kind of wisdom, just as today we look to the son of David as our example.
  

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- The word "inventions" comes from a Hebrew word that is associated with warlike machines. How is this a good analogy as a contrast to how God created man?
  

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USE:

It is a bit of a paradox that Solomon, having wisdom given to him from God, could still find it difficult to actually be wise. This is perhaps the difference between knowing what is right and carrying it out or the difference between hearing and doing. Is there anything that you know you should do, but don't?



## *Chapter 8:1-11 – Keeping the king's commandment*

### NOTICE:

- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.

### MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- What are the characteristics of a wise person? Search for the word "wise" in Proverbs and then write down what makes a person wise.

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- Where else in the Bible did a man's face shine? Why?

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- What was the king's commandment given to Solomon? Read 1 Chronicles 22:6-17, Proverbs 4:1-10.

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- What other experience did Solomon have with the king's commandments and oaths of the LORD? 1 Kings 2:1-9, 22-46. What do these experiences have to do with "time" and "judgment"?

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### EXPAND:

Verses 9-11 sound an awful lot like Joab (1 Kings 2:28-31). What kind of a man

was Joab? Why was it right for Solomon to take his life?

USE:

Why is it vanity that the wicked are so quickly forgotten once they are dead? How would this world be different if the wicked were instantly put to death? How is this a lesson about dealing with sin in our own lives?

*Chapter 8:12–17 – cannot find out the work*

NOTICE:

- Find occurrences of God, colour in blue and underline what it is saying about God.
- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.
- There are three occurrences of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find them and colour them in orange. Underline what is being referred to as good.

MAKE CONNECTIONS:

Read through Psalm 37. What similarities does it have to the Preacher's word here?

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EXPAND:

Being joyful is important. Read through Deuteronomy 12 and notice all the joy.

USE:

There are clearly limits to what we can know. If a man who was given wisdom by God, and applied his heart to know everything could not fully understand what the work of God is, we certainly will come up against the same limitations. Some things will always be puzzles. Don't expect to always find a clear answer.



## *Chapter 9:1-12 – Appreciate life*

NOTICE:

- Find occurrences of God, colour in blue and underline what it is saying about God.
- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.
- There are four occurrences of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find them and colour them in orange. Underline what is being referred to as good.

MAKING CONNECTIONS:

- Although the Preacher has concluded that man cannot find out all the work of God and think to know it, he has still made some discoveries. He has found that there is little difference between good and bad men in terms of what happens to them in this life. This is a conundrum that many people have difficulty with today.
- Read through 2 Samuel 15, and Psalm 55 which was probably written during this time in David's life. God's love or hatred can not always be judged by external circumstances.
- Even though one event happens to all - there is a difference between the righteous and the wicked - list the characteristics of each from verse 2 - how might they affect one's life?

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- Even though there is a difference between the righteous and wicked, what is true about man's heart? Look through the cross-references for verse 3.

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EXPAND:

- Make a list of what it means to be dead in verse 5,6.

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- Make a list of what you should do while you are still living from verses 7-10.

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- Can you think of biblical examples where the Preacher's observations in verse 11 are borne out?

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USE:

Since we cannot know all it is that God is doing in people's lives, be careful how you judge their outward circumstances.

*Chapter 9:13–18 – wisdom not always appreciated*

NOTICE:

- Find all the occurrences of wisdom and colour it in purple - underline what the verse is saying about wisdom.

MAKING CONNECTIONS:

Although this story in 2 Samuel 20:14-22 is about a woman, how is it similar?

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EXPAND:

Why is wisdom better than strength? How would the application of this benefit our world today?

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USE:

Learn to value wisdom more than strength. Where do you go for help?



# *Chapter 10:1-15 – The problem with folly*

## NOTICE:

- Find all the occurrences of wisdom or wise and colour it in purple.
- Find all the occurrences of foolish or fool and colour it in brown.

## MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- A little folly can destroy the reputation of the wise, but does the reverse work? Does a little wisdom ruin the reputation of a fool? Why or why not?
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- What is the difference between the right and left hand in the Bible? If you can find Torrey's New Topical Textbook (on Blue Letter Bible), have a look through the entries for Heart, Character of the Renewed, and Heart, Character of the Unrenewed.
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- See if you can find a connection between 1 Samuel 25:24-44 and verse 4. What was the lesson learned here?
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## EXPAND:

- Make a list of the errors or folly that proceeds from a foolish person in a governing position and how it may affect those under him (v. 6-10). These all seem to be problems that come from wisdom not being recognized and given its proper place. Solomon had many people working for him in his building projects and would have experienced firsthand the problems with folly.
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- List all that it says about a fool in verses 12-15. How is a wise man like a snake with enchantment?

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- List what the symptoms are of a foolish government in verses 16-19. How can this relate to the government of our own selves?

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- However foolish a government may be, a wise man does not curse it. Compare this with 1 Samuel 26:7-12, Exodus 22:28. When you allow those thoughts, what might the result be? (2 Samuel 16:5-12; 1 Kings 2:36-46). What does it mean to curse someone?

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OSE:

Recognize the general benefits of wisdom in life. Value wisdom.



## *Chapter 11:1–10 – the value of time*

### NOTICE:

- Find occurrences of God, colour in blue and underline what it is saying about God.
- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.
- There are four occurrences of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find them and colour them in orange. Underline what is being referred to as good.

### MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- Instead of bread being made for laughter (self indulgence), it is to be cast upon the waters. Read through this sermon by C.H. Spurgeon (not a Christadelphian and therefore some doctrinal differences but good message) - Sowing in the Wind, Reaping Under Clouds (available on Blue Letter Bible under Text Commentaries for this chapter). Take notes.
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- Read through Psalm 139. We will not understand completely all the works of God, but we can know that He knows us, and since that is true, we only need to live each day at a time and trust in Him for the future.

### EXPAND:

- Certainly we all enjoy the days of light and sunshine - why would it be good to remember the days of darkness?
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- Make a list of the Preacher's instructions to young people.

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USE:

I think that these thoughts make it more obvious that the Preacher is using "vanity" in the sense of time and not meaning. There is not time to waste being foolish.



## *Chapter 12:1-8 – Death will come*

### NOTICE:

- Find occurrences of God, colour in blue and underline what it is saying about God.
- Find the word "vanity" in this section and colour it in pink. Underline what the Preacher is saying is vanity in the same colour.
- There is one occurrence of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find it and colour it in orange. Underline what is being referred to as good.

### MAKE CONNECTIONS:

- Look up the word "remember" in verse 1. Look through other verses where this word is used. What is to be remembered? How does one remember the Creator? How many young men of the Bible can you think of that did remember their Creator in their youth?

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- The analogies in verses 2-6 are speaking of what happens in old age that make it difficult to do all the things we can do in our youth. Make a list of them and what they refer to. For example, light being darkened probably refers to the dimming of sight.

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### USE:

Are there things you could be doing in God's service that you are putting off until you have more time or are older?

## *Chapter 12:8-14 – conclusion*

### NOTICE:

- Find occurrences of God, colour in blue and underline what it is saying about God.
- There is one occurrence of the Hebrew word "towb" usually translated "good" in this section. Find it and colour it in orange. Underline what is being referred to as good.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS:

- Go back through the places where you marked wisdom and note what the Preacher has concluded about wisdom.
  - Who is the shepherd being referred to in verse 11? Find out what a goad might be (there isn't much information but try a Bible dictionary). Look up the Hebrew word for "fastened". How do the words of the wise benefit a person?
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### EXPAND:

- Even in Solomon's time, he thought there was no end to the making of books... today is no different. We can waste so much time trying to figure out what we should be doing, or how we should be doing it, but it is also important to be actually doing it! Compare this to the parable Jesus told about the two builders (Matthew 7:24-27).
  - How is the Preacher's conclusion in verse 13 the fulfilling of the two greatest commandments?
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- The conclusion is to "Fear God and keep His commandments." What is the fear of the LORD the beginning of? (Proverbs 1:7).
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- Go back through Ecclesiastes and summarize what was said about vanity, what God is said to be and do, and what is good.

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USE:

Solomon did not find a complete answer to his question of what exactly we gain by our labour or how God works. However, he does conclude that our labour does matter, but that it must be motivated by a fear of God and keeping His commandments. There will be secret things about our lives and our labour that we cannot understand, but we can believe in the justice of God, and with everything that happens in our lives we can trust our God to make it right. Psalm 36.

