

The Meaning In Life

Franklin Church of Christ
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AM Worship

Introduction:

Do you ever get the feeling that life is a pointless circular trip? Isn't it nice to take a break from the rat race of life and gather to worship God? Would you like to do more than just take a break from the meaningless repetition that simply ends when you die? You can do that. Nearly 3000 years ago, Solomon chronicled his experiment of the ages in **Ecclesiastes**. He tried everything to break free from life's meaninglessness. Examine **Ecclesiastes** and learn how to break free.

Discussion:

- I. Life is one endless, unbroken, pitiful cycle.
 - A. The start of Solomon's book is one of the most depressing beginnings to anything ever written. He starts with the theme of his whole book—life stinks, then you die (**Ecclesiastes 1:1-2; 2:16**).
 - B. In **Ecclesiastes 1:5-11**, Solomon explains three points about life. First, our individual lives are filled with constant repetition. Like the sun we go up, just to come down, just to go up again tomorrow. Second, every generation likes to think they have the answer to break free from this noose of life. But we are all just like the wind, blowing around and always coming back to the same old things. Third, nothing we do will ever provide us with the satisfaction to stop this meaningless repetition. We are like a sea that constantly takes in the rivers, but never gets full.
 - C. Do you see what Solomon is saying? How do we live? We make our beds just to sleep in them again. We wash dishes just to dirty them again later. We clean houses only to clutter them up again. We go to work in order to make money in order to buy things, which depletes our money so we just have to keep going to work. We put some of it back in savings only to lose it in the stock market. Or maybe we do keep hold of it and get to retire early and then what happens? Our kids live irresponsibly and expect us to pay for it. Or we die and it gets left behind. Seems kind of useless doesn't it. Despite the thousands of generations that have lived on this earth, no one has come up with a way on earth to break free from this meaninglessness.
- II. Man's attempts to break free and have meaning in life.
 - A. Solomon was one of the wealthiest men alive. He had everything his heart desired. So, he decided to examine the various aspects of life. What could he do that would be really meaningful. Notice the various avenues he followed to break free and provide meaning.
 1. In **Ecclesiastes 1:16-17**, he searched for meaning through wisdom and understanding.
 2. In **Ecclesiastes 2:1-2**, he tested mirth and laughter. He just wanted to have a good time.
 3. In **Ecclesiastes 2:3**, he searched for meaning by gratifying his flesh with wine.
 4. In **Ecclesiastes 2:4-6**, he searched for meaning through personal accomplishments.
 5. In **Ecclesiastes 2:7-9**, he searched for meaning in life through possessions.
 6. In **Ecclesiastes 2:10**, he searched for meaning by examining pleasure.
 - B. In **Ecclesiastes 2:11**, Solomon tells us that every bit of this was useless. Why? Because he was going to die and nothing he did would stop it (**vss. 14-20**). Then everything he had made would go to someone else and who knew what they would do with it.
 - C. Surely we live in a time that clearly demonstrates the vanity of everything. We know in our society that we can search for meaning by eating, drinking and being merry. But tomorrow we will have a heart attack because of it. We can have all the fun in the world today. But tomorrow the bank will take our house away because we did not work and make the payments. We can seek all manner of pleasures. But tomorrow we will have a sexually transmitted disease. We can own all manner of possessions and a house fire, a flood or a tornado will destroy them all. We can build tall buildings, but tomorrow some religious fanatic can fly a plane into it and it will crumble to the ground in a heap of ashes and garbage. We can be young and strong with a seemingly great future and some nut can sniper us down in a gas station parking lot. We can make all kinds of plans for tomorrow and then contract some awful illness that confines us to our homes. We can be the founding father of a great nation and tomorrow historians will be ripping our reputations to shreds. What is the point? Yet, people today are still trying to find meaning in all of these things.

III. A seemingly fulfilling life.

- A. Solomon discovered that wisdom does give some benefit (**Ecclesiastes 7:11-12**). It can help your labor have a greater return. It can provide protection. It can even prolong your life in some instances. So, perhaps it is better to be wise than to be a fool.
- B. However, when considered further, Solomon essentially came to the conclusion that wisdom really is not all that beneficial. Notice some really important things wisdom will not do.
 - 1. According to **Ecclesiastes 7:20**, wisdom will not keep us from sinning.
 - 2. According to **Ecclesiastes 12:1-5**, wisdom will not stop us from getting old, weak and frail.
 - 3. According to **Ecclesiastes 2:15-16**, wisdom will not stop us from dying.
 - 4. According to **Ecclesiastes 9:11-12**, wisdom will not tell us when we will die.
 - 5. According to **Ecclesiastes 9:14-15**, wisdom will not preserve our reputation after we die.
 - 6. According to **Ecclesiastes 2:18-19**, wisdom will not protect our legacies.
 - 7. According to **Ecclesiastes 11:9**, wisdom will not keep us from being judged by God.

IV. If all this is true, what is the point of life? Why is God doing this to us?

- A. Having come to this point, and being completely depressed, we ask what is the point of it all? If God is out there, why is He doing this to us? Solomon answered this in **Ecclesiastes 3:18-20**. God is testing us. He wants us to see that we are going to die.
- B. In **Ecclesiastes 7:1-4**, Solomon says it is good for man to know that he is going to die, because he will take it to heart. But, we may ask, what is the point of taking that to heart? Understanding that we are going to die is what is depressing us. Note the answer in **Ecclesiastes 8:11-14**. Just before saying that he has seen a topsy-turvy world in which it happens to the righteous as we would expect it to happen to the wicked and vice versa, he said it would be well for those who fear the Lord but not well for those who do not. That sounds like a contradiction. How can Solomon say that fearing God makes a difference and then immediately say that it does not? Because in **vs. 14**, he is talking about in this life. In **vs. 11-13**, he is talking about after this life.
- C. Why does God want us to know we will die? Because there is something that occurs when this life is over that can change our perspective on everything. After we die, a time is coming when how we lived will matter. There is time when based on how we lived and what we did down here will determine whether or not we will be truly happy or eternally tormented.
- D. In **Ecclesiastes 11:9-10; 12:13-14**, we learn that after this life is over we are going to face God in judgment. Those who have not feared Him will face awful consequences. But those who have feared Him and have kept His commandments will have a joyous eternity with God. It will be well for those who fear God. Suddenly there is meaning in life. I can find contentment and happiness in what I am doing now because I know it has eternal consequences. But it only has those consequences because God exists and has something waiting for us when this life ends.
- E. I can now enjoy life. **Ecclesiastes 9:7-10** points out I can work with all my might and really enjoy my labor because I understand how life works. There is no point in striving after the wind of legacies and reputations. I can do what is right and enjoy my work, my wife, my life and then I can die in peace because I served God and I know that it will be well with me because I lived in accord with His will. When my perspective is changed by knowing that death comes and then judgment, suddenly the most important thing I want to accomplish is to go to heaven. My highest priority is to serve God, seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness. God will govern my life. And I will be happy.

Conclusion:

We can learn all of this from a man who lived nearly 3000 years ago. Why not learn the lessons? The experiment has been conducted. We will be no different. Only serving the Lord will provide any lasting benefit. But let me say, that this is only the case because nearly 2000 years ago another man lived. But not just a man, God who became man lived. **John 1:1-4** talks about Jesus, the Son of God, who, being divine, became human and brought life and light to us. Jesus came so your life could have meaning and purpose. The death of Jesus, did not occur so we could have a weekly observance of it. It occurred so your life could have meaning every day. Why not abandon the pointless rat race of normal living and be God's servant. Do not strive after wind, strive after God and His eternal blessings.