

Nothing else matters

Ecclesiastes

The world would have you think that you can have fulfillment by either acquiring a certain amount of things or by experiencing a certain number of worldly pleasures. However, we see in Ecclesiastes that the teacher had experienced everything the world had to offer but wasn't satisfied and realized all of it was a waste of time. We can only receive fulfillment from our relationship with God. He then separates his findings based on particular areas before coming with his conclusion.

Hevel (הֶבֶל) - vapor; The teacher in the book mentions how worldly pursuits or trying to find fulfillment in the world is a waste of time\ futile or by the term, seemingly physical but can't be grasped. They are temporary pleasures that eventually will pass after the initial joy of acquiring them fades. The Teacher goes on to state that Time and Death essentially make man's pursuits\status\achievements moot.

Time [1:3-11](#) - Nature will remain the same yet produce more compared to man who tries to make the best of his time with achievements that won't be as memorable (8 "All this monotony is tiresome; no one can bear to describe it. The eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear ever content with hearing"). The next generation may not even remember the achievements (11 "No one remembers the former events, nor will anyone remember the events that are yet to happen; they will not be remembered by the future generations.") yet future generations will see what nature produced.

Pleasure ([2:1-3](#)) - Chasing pleasure will make you physically\mentally feel good for a moment, but chasing that high (with whatever indulgence), you just end up feeling unfulfilled.

Wealth\Materialism ([2:4-11](#), [5:10-20](#)) - You can acquire riches and yet (because we're human) it won't ever be enough. This part shows that the teacher acquired vineyards, slaves, livestock, treasures, concubines and yet at the end of it all he realized it was ultimately profitless.

Career ([2:18-21](#), ch [4](#)) - Being responsible and caring about your job is fine, but you can't make it your identity or you will get depressed if you ever get fired. You'll just be chasing the next title or level hoping that it will give fulfillment. The teacher felt despair once he realized his gain would eventually have to be given as an inheritance who may not even be wise in using it.

He then suggests living with wisdom and in the fear of the Lord. However, he acknowledges even living life that way doesn't guarantee us from facing hardships. He gives examples like some good people die and some evil people prosper and yet there's no reason as to why([3:16-22](#), [7:15-18](#)). He also goes into how even though one may have wisdom, that doesn't stop them from being affected by tribulations or unwise rulers over them([5:8-9](#), chpts. [8](#) and [10](#)).

So what's the answer?

Everything external in our lives is out of our control, yet we can still enjoy the “Gift of God”(5:19) he mentions, which is being grateful for simple pleasures like friendship, family, a good meal or a sunny day. When we let go of trying to control life and have trust in God, we can enjoy our lives as we experience them instead of what we **think** they should be.

Death (9, 11:7-12:7) - Eventually we will all pass away. He encourages the reader to follow the impulses of the heart but still remember that God will judge all of our actions when we die. Continue to have the fear of the Lord in youth before old age and death come. This isn't to make us fearful or God's anger (this is still in the OT covenant), but rather live life and seek pleasures in alignment with God's standards.

It's fine to enjoy the product of your labor and have hobbies, but we shouldn't expect them to give us true fulfillment or identity. Some say the teacher in this story was Solomon (“son of or a son of David”) or someone who had his status, so seeing that he has everything he wanted and still wasn't satisfied shows us that we shouldn't chase after the things of this world. After the teacher was finished, the author of the book gave his outlook for the last verses.

12:13-14

Having heard everything, I have reached this conclusion: Fear God and keep his commandments, because this is the whole duty of man. For God will evaluate every deed, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Reference:

Bible Project - <https://bibleproject.com/videos/ecclesiastes/>