

# What is Life All About

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 04 September 2022

Preacher: Bill Story

[ 0 : 00 ] Take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to Ecclesiastes one last time, chapter 12. We're looking at the final paragraph as an introduction to our review. Today we're doing something a little different.

I won't be preaching. We will be facilitating a review through the last six chapters of Ecclesiastes. This is a time for us to kind of evaluate together what we've learned, to discuss a little bit, difficult passages, to share with one another what God has taught us, what we've learned, what's the value of this book.

Do you see value to this book? So I'm not going to read the last six chapters. I'm going to read just the last six verses of chapter 12, which is an evaluation itself of the book.

So if you're able, please stand as a read from Ecclesiastes 12, beginning at verse 8. Vanity of vanity, says the preacher.

[ 1 : 22 ] All is vanity. Besides being wise, the preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care.

The preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings.

They are given by one shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these, of making many books. There is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

The end of the matter, all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments. For this is the whole of man.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

[ 2 : 28 ] So it reads. Let us pray. Father, guide us today as we evaluate this book, as we review its concepts, review its message, grant us the wisdom and the eyes, Lord, from you to see it as you see it, to see it as a Christian sees it.

And help us to recognize the value of this book. Help us to recognize how it will help us in dealing with this world.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. This book's theme is about questions, wrestling with the hard questions of life.

Speaking of questions, I came across this story this week. A couple, a man and wife, who worked in the circus, went to an adoption agency.

You see it coming yet? Well, the social workers obviously had a lot of questions and doubts about the suitability of adopting out a child, the circus workers.

[ 3 : 42 ] Where will they live? What is the environment of the circus? Is that suitable? What about education? Those kind of things. Well, the couple showed them a 50-foot motor home that was pristine, well-kept, well-maintained, had a separate bedroom for the child.

So, okay, living arrangements seemed to be good. What about education? Well, there's a nanny and a tutor who take care of the children, teach all the subjects, all the regular subjects, as well as Latin and Chinese and other languages.

So, they get very good education. Well, what about the environment of a circus, right? It just kind of doesn't seem like that would be healthy for a child. Well, again, there's a full-time nanny while we're working that takes care of the child.

And she's an expert in pediatric care as well as the welfare and diet of children. And there are 17 other children in the community that will have social things for the children.

So, the social workers were quite satisfied with the answers to these questions. And so, they're just curious, what age were you hoping to adopt? And the husband says, well, it doesn't really matter as long as he fits in the canon.

[ 5 : 10 ] So, asking the questions and asking the right questions and forgetting which questions should have been asked is important. Ecclesiastes, as I said, has been asking the hard questions.

It asks the questions about where is the meaning of life? What is fulfilling? What brings lasting satisfaction? And especially, how do we navigate through this world with all the evils of the world? With foolish government? With evil things that are up backwards and forwards? When the wicked prosper and the righteous are punished?

When things are upside down? How do we manage with a world that doesn't make a lot of sense? So, it's asking really the right questions. So, let's take a quick evaluation in the last few verses of our text in chapter 12, 8 to 14.

This is now, notice that the change in voice. Okay, now it's speaking third person. Now there's somebody else. Right?

[ 6 : 27 ] At the opening and the close of this book, there is somebody who's framing this book. Who talks about the preacher. Talks about, so he says, the preacher says all his men.

And then he's going to talk about, so the preacher, what did he do? He taught people and he weighed things and studied and arranged. The preacher sought to fight. So, he's talking in the third person about the preacher.

Everything in between the end and the beginning of Ecclesiastes is the preacher himself. Okay? There he was speaking in the first person. I did this. I saw this.

I investigated this. I gathered this. Et cetera, et cetera. It was his experience. Now we have this editor. We have this other person who framed the whole book.

Now saying, okay, now let's take a step back from the preacher. Here's what he did. What's our evaluation? Okay?

[ 7 : 28 ] So, he talks about what the preacher did. Talks about verse 10. What was his goal? His goal, he sought to find words of delight. As you think about this book of Ecclesiastes, do you think he found words of delight?

Would that be your evaluation of this book? Was it delightful? No, it's kind of skewed, isn't it? And okay, he sought that, but did he succeed?

Right? Uprightly wrote words of truth. Were they words of truth? Well, on some level, yes, they're words of truth. Were they the full truth? Nothing but the truth? No.

Then he talks about wisdom. Verse 11, the words of the wise are like goads. The words of wise should be goads. A goat is a pole with a nail on the end or a sharp object on the end to get the cattle going.

It's like a spur, but a long spur. Right? To move the cattle along. It's prodding. So the words of the wise should prod us, should move us, motivate us, right? Incentivize us to go after the wise things.

[ 8 : 40 ] And they're like nails firmly fixed. Now, the nail would be what's on the end of the pole.

Right? So you got the pole goading and then you have the little stinger.

A little extra incentive. Right? So that's what wise teachings do. And then he says they are given by one shepherd in verse 11.

Now, that's curious. So is the shepherd he's talking about every wise man? Is the shepherd he's talking about God himself? The Lord is my shepherd. Right?

Is he talking about, and of course, we're going to fulfill it with New Testament understanding. Since Jesus said it was all speaking about him. Jesus is the shepherd. Those things that truly are the wise things is what Jesus has taught us.

So we understand that. Now, then verse 12. So he talks about those things. Now he's going to give us a warning. Interesting. Why a warning at the end of this book? Beware.

[ 9 : 37 ] Why? Because there are things in this book that Solomon himself would disagree with. Unless this is Solomon after he left the Lord.

Which is possible. But the Solomon who followed the Lord would not agree with this book in total. Okay? So beware of these things.

What? Well, statements like verse 8. Beware of, what does he say? What's the summation of the whole book? All is vanity. Vanity of vanities. Everything is vanity.

Is it? Is everything meaningless? Is everything unfulfilling? What do you think?

Without what? Without the spirit. Without the spirit. Absolutely. Is everything. So he talked about under the sun. Remember? Everything he's talking about is under the sun. On an earthly perspective.

[10:40] Not above the sun. But below the sun. Everything is meaningless and empty. Would you agree with that? Yes? Yes? Everything?

Are you sure? Now, if you're an unbeliever. If you have no hope. If you have no relationship with God. Is everything meaningless and unsatisfying under the earth?

Yes. Absolutely. Because it wasn't meant to satisfy you. These are temporary things. This is creation for our good. But not for our satisfaction.

Not for our fulfillment. So pleasure, work, right? Projects. He talks about all the things he did. At the end of the day. He said, not fulfilling. Satisfying to an extent.

But not lasting satisfaction. But what about for a believer? What about for a David? For a Moses? For a Daniel?

[11:40] For a Naomi? For a Ruth? What about for you? For a believer? For a believer. Even under the earth. Under the sun. Is everything.

Everything we go through. Everything we have. Everything we do. Is it all without meaning? What about our trials? Are trials meaningful?

Yes. Are they satisfying? Are you sure? I'm not talking about how you feel about it. But it's meaningful. Eventually. Yes. Does the scripture say that your trials have meaning and fulfillment?

Yes. Yeah. We, in fact, we rejoice in our trials, don't we? Because we know God has a purpose to them.

So from a Christian point of view, his statement, all is vanity, is not true. From a worldly perspective, yes. From an unrelationship to God and the spirit, yes.

[12:46] So what about, we already asked the question, he sought to find words of delight. Did he succeed? That's a subjective question. We're not, but the impression is, delight, I wouldn't know if I'd use that word.

Then he talks about beware of these things. Verse 12, the making of many books and much study is weariness.

So here's a man, he's evaluating the preacher here. And the preacher has done, has written his own book. And he's done a lot of study.

In fact, he claims to have studied everything. And he does say it was weariness. And ultimately for him, vanity.

Unfulfilling, unsatisfying. So this other editor, this third person, is now saying, beware.

[13:48] Why? Why is he saying beware? Yes. Well, I have a good question. So could we relate this to today's age by saying like self-help books or like reading anything and everything you can on parenting or marriage?

Yes. All those things. Endless books on those things, aren't there? Right. Yeah. And I found even good, even basic good commentaries.

I've learned over the years not to get so many commentaries. I look for a lot of advice first on who's good, who's worth it. And I thank God for people like D.A. Carson who says, don't bother with that one.

He's just blatant. It's a waste of paper. And is that because you can read? Some commentaries are so simple that you can figure, if you just read carefully, you can figure out everything they're going to tell you.

Yeah, I just read that. I know that. What am I, dumb? Well, there's so many, so many. So, but, but, like you, like the example you said, Rodney, maybe, yeah, parenting. What's a good one?

[15:00] Right? We talk to people. We talk to people. We talk to wise people. What's a good book on parenting, you know? Because there's a ton of them. Right? Or whatever. So there's endless books, much weariness in it.

So where do, how do we find the good ones? How do we? So beware. Right. So he says, be careful about it. Don't just take anything. So don't just read anything. Right? And especially today, we need help.

Can you imagine if back then, before the printing press, when they had to make their own paper, and there was many books? Imagine the comparison today. Right?

So. So I'm thinking, because if we put it into the context of when this was written, there weren't many books.

Right. Right. But he's saying there's, in some sense, there is. Right. So is the context really the conclusion that he makes here, which I find fascinating?

[16:01] Right. The conclusion of the matter is, for God, and this is my translation, which might be a little different from anyone else's, and keep his command.

Mm-hmm. Because this is for all humanity. For God will bring every act of judgment, including everything, whether good or evil. Oh. And so I'm thinking, put that before the beware when you are gathering information from different sources.

Oh, yeah. He's leading up to it, though, it looks like. Right. So he's evaluating the preacher, and the first thing he says, beware. And then, after everything's been heard.

Right. Here's the bottom line. Here's the ultimate. It's just like all the information we get. Yeah. Should be filtered. Oh, yeah. Through God. Right. Seek him.

Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. I want to say, to answer the question about why, I think in a nutshell, it's because there are the consequences of good choices and bad choices, and we are going to be judged.

[17:22] Yes. For the answer. I think that's the why. Of the fear God? Yes. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Or. So, let me back up, yeah, because I want to get to that.

Let me back up and ask, what's the value of this book? Because we've wrestled with it. This book is wrestling with hard questions.

Right? And we've, week to week, we've got to add, okay, let's add what Jesus says, because we need a little more, you know, what his answer was isn't fully satisfying, or isn't, he doesn't seem to believe in afterlife.

Right? Right? So, I think when he's talking about judgment, he's talking about God will give you a hard end of your life. That's why, do it while you're young, because once you get old, you know, that's going to be hard, because God's going to judge you for your young choices.

That's, I think, his view. I don't think he believes in an afterlife. It doesn't seem, he doesn't say anything about that. He says, the grave is the end. The grave is your eternity.

[18:29] What about the consequences? Right. So, he is talking about, he does talk about a sovereign God. He does talk about a God who holds you accountable. Right? So, now we're reading, at the end of this book, we're reading another person saying, fear God.

All right? And he's, and I would think he's more of a biblical orthodox, like a Solomon, like a David, like a Daniel, giving his view of the preacher.

Let me stop back. Is there any value to this book? Insight. Insight. Okay. Is it worth our time?

Careful now, huh? Right? If it was written, put in the Bible. Right. But every generation has said, why is this here?

Every generation. No, from, from. Ancient times. But every generation asks the same questions that are in this book, too. Correct. And every generation of orthodox people have said, no, it stays.

[19:38] It's the tension between our flesh. Yes. And this. Yes. The world, you know, the world is full of lots of good things God's provided for us. Right.

Right. But our perspective, if we look at it with God as part of it, recognizing it's from him, obeying his boundaries and limits.

Right. Right. Understanding his reason for our pleasure and our struggles. It all has to be filtered.

Right. Through him. But it's the tension that we have.

Our flesh wants to just throw up our hands and enjoy, you know. If we've all thought deeply in life, which I imagine most of us have here, or if not all, we've wrestled with these questions.

What's the meaning? What's it all about? What's really satisfying? Because we've been disappointed with the things of the world that don't satisfy us. They are satisfying temporarily.

[20:35] They are, you know, the things that God has created are for our good and to be enjoyed. But not to be our whole of life. Right. So that's where idols.

We make creation our idol. We make job, things, possessions, whatever our idol. Right. We're looking for that meaning in something else, which is only God can fulfill.

So here's the value I saw. And I think I would do this whole thing a little different, just slant it a little differently. I think it's so valuable for us as believers to think and become compassionate with the understanding of the typical world person.

These are the questions they're asking. These are the questions they're wrestling with or avoiding. Right. They're either dealing with it or they're avoiding it.

But when we talk to unbelievers, these are the kind of questions we need to answer. Not with trite Christian, just love God and, you know.

[ 21 : 48 ] But really having ourselves wrestled with these questions. Yeah, that is an important question. What about when the world's upside down?

Yeah, Betty. So, Pastor, why can't this just be Solomon explaining different periods in his life? Could be. He's beginning and then he's going, this is how I felt.

This is what I lived through. These were my questions. But this is my conclusion. So, he is the sole author. He's the preacher and the evaluator.

He's lived through it all. And this was what he saw. And this is now what he's concluding. It very well could be. I'm open to that.

There are a lot of people. It's kind of two camps. There's a lot of people that believe it is Solomon. A lot of people convinced it's not Solomon. What the church has recognized and rabbis, etc.

[ 22 : 51 ] have recognized through the centuries is it's a value. It's a value. And if it's a Solomon or a Solomon-like person, that makes it valuable to hear.

Because if indeed it is Solomon, we really need to hear it. Right? Because that carries so much weight. He wrote, what did he write?

He wrote 3,000 Proverbs. I have a question about that, Pastor. If it's actually Solomon, that's not the word of God.

Well, Solomon wrote Proverbs. Yeah. Right? So, he was a writer of, a recognized writer of Scripture. Does that make sense?

The question could be, but if this is in his later days, and he's writing more from a, I've rejected God perspective, that's going to be tainted. That makes sense to me.

[ 23 : 55 ] But it's also possible he's playing devil's advocate, and just doing this whole thing, as a wise man might do, to get you to think.

It could be that, too. That's legitimate. Yeah, Rick. Going back to your original question about, is this valuable in the wrestling that each generation has for whether or not to include this in Scripture?

The fact that they've accepted this is an indication to us that it's okay to question our faith. It's okay to deal with difficult subjects.

It's okay to be angry with God because of what we're in, into that. I think that's a really, really important precept. And I think this book supports that probably more than any of the books.

This deals with subjects we get nowhere else. At least not in this depth. Like how many other passages talk about when you're governed by fools?

[ 24 : 58 ] How many other passages are that blatant? So, by the way, we had a lot of views that week. Some reason, imagine that, right?

Okay. Fearing God. Bottom line. It says, The end of the matter. All has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man.

Literally, it reads, For this is the whole of man. Not just duty, but I think it's broader than that. It's the whole of man. It's everything man is about.

It's why man was created. Not just his duty, but his life, his thinking, thinking his everything. Fear God, keep His commandments. That's everything for man.

That's it. Not just what he does. How he thinks. What he believes. How he lives. Where he finds his joy. Right? So, he talked about fear several times.

[ 26 : 04 ] I think five different times throughout the book of Ecclesiastes. He's talked about fear. Those who fear God are the ones who find joy. Those who fear God are those who are the ones pleasing Him. So, he's talked about it from different perspectives.

What's fearing God, by the way? If that's the bottom, bottom line. If that's the ultimate of why we live. What does it mean?

What does it look like? Typically, people say, well, they look at the word and they translate it. They say, okay, it means fear, phobia, Greek. In Hebrew, it means awe and truly fear, dread to some extent.

Depending. Right? The disciples feared Jesus after He calmed the storm. What did that mean?

Oh, I really respect you now, Jesus. No, they were on their faces. Who is this? Okay, it's a little bit more than just respect.

[ 27 : 07 ] And even I think of beyond an awe. There's a sense of, whoa. Whoa. I'm in danger here. But there's more to that.

If that's the bottom line, it's got to relate to everything else. What is fear? So how does Solomon describe it in Proverbs 3? He associates it with several other things.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. And what? I can't hear you. And lean not on your own understanding.

In all your ways, acknowledge Him. In all your ways, acknowledge Him. Walk with Him. Then what? Trust the Lord with all your heart.

Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him. He will make your paths straight. Fear the Lord. Turn away from evil. Right?

[ 28 : 16 ] So it means trusting God. Because He's associating all those things together. Not leaning on my... Okay, so that means I'm trusting on God's understanding, not my understanding.

Right? Fear relates to those things. I gave you other verses there to look up that talks about what the fear of the Lord is.

At the top of the outline, I've quoted Psalm 145, 19. He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him. Read that again.

He fulfills the desire of those who fear Him. Is that how you would describe the fear of God? The fear of God fulfills my desire.

Would you think of connecting those two things? Yeah. If we're thinking fully about what the fear of God is. Not just, ooh, I'm scared.

[ 29 : 20 ] But here's the benefit of it. He fulfills my desire. In other words, it's fulfilling life. It's satisfying. The very thing that this author is trying to find and says, I can't find it under the sun.

The psalmist says, I found it. I found it. Not just later. I found it now. Under the sun, I found it now. I got fulfillment.

When I fear God, when I walk with my Creator, when I'm acknowledging Him in everything I do, when I don't first lean on my own understanding but look to Him and lean on His understanding, even when it doesn't make sense to my understanding, I find joy.

Peace that passes under standing. Joy inexpressible and full of hope. Where do you get that stuff? Does that make sense?

See, fear God's bigger than just this. That's how Scripture describes it. Okay, I'm done preaching. All right, so, I said I wasn't going to preach.

[ 30 : 34 ] Preaching leaks out of teaching. That's how I understand. Anyway, so, let's hear from you. Looking at all the conclusions. Where do you want to go?

What have you learned? What's your response to the book? What would you like to discuss? The last, on your outline there, I have, if you've colored it properly, it should look like this.

Have the right colors on it? No. So, there's six questions, right? The theme of this book is wrestling with the hard questions. So, these are just the second half of the book.

These are his conclusions, but he's still asking questions of application. So, chapter six and seven, the question was, how is adversity better than avoidance?

Sorrow better than laughter? Funeral parlor is better than the feasting banquet.

[ 31 : 39 ] He gives all of these better thans. The harder thing is better than the easy escapism thing. So, that's one question he asked.

And then, second half of chapter seven, how do we live with senseless paradox? When life, life just don't make no sense. You know, so when, when the righteous should profit, when the righteous should be rewarded, they're punished.

That's senseless paradox. When things are upside down, when the wicked are rewarded and the righteous are punished, that's senseless paradox. That doesn't make, that's not the way it should be.

Right? So, when life, but we see that in life. So, how do we live with that? That's the second question he deals with. Chapter seven. Chapter eight, he deals with, how do we manage powerlessness or hopelessness when we face uncontrollable things?

When the government is evil and the government is leading us a bad direction, how do we deal with that? I can't control that. They're in, I'm not in power. Right? Okay, when we face those kind of things, how do we deal with it?

[ 32 : 52 ] Fourth question, chapter nine. If we're all gonna die, what difference does it make? And he talks about the righteous die as well as the wicked. He, he has a hard time with that.

Now the wicked deserve to die, but what about the, why are the righteous dying? They've sacrificed their life, they've made wise choices, they're doing the right things, and they still die. And he gives no sense of, well, for their afterlife.

No, they're dead, they're in the grave. So that's the question. This is a question the world asks. If we're all gonna die, what difference does it make? Eat, drink, and be merry, right? Second part of chapter nine and the rest of chapter 10, how do you answer a foolish ruler, right? So when you're, when you're governed by fools.

And then the final question, chapters 11 and 12, in the end, what will matter most? Right? So he's talking about the aspect of dying and the aspect of while you're young, do things while you're young, before it's too late kind of thing.

[ 33 : 55 ] Okay, so that's, those are the questions. We're not gonna go one through Israel. Where do you wanna go? What, what do you wanna talk about? What? Bill, I'd like to, I'd like to talk about the conclusion.

That's fine. Yeah, anyway. My point is this. I think we, I think it's useful to study all this in depth. But I'd like to start with what the beginning is, to me, is the conclusion.

And I've read Ecclesiastes a number of times, and it always comes out the same to me in the end. It fortifies in me a decision toward a life of repentance.

Turning away from this world and turning to God. And I would like to offer this for people to look at at some point.

I think it's all summarized in what we turn to when God is in Job 42 when he makes his confession.

[ 35 : 04 ] Okay? Because I love this finality of his confession in verse 5. I had heard he's speaking to God saying, I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.

Therefore, I despise myself and repent. And to me, that's what Ecclesiastes is all about for me personally.

Thank you. Thank you. Come to Jesus meeting, right? We love the end of Job. It's kind of like, I'm sorry, who are you?

Yeah? Right? Now, just to follow up on one of the comments you made about the question in verse 9, chapter 9, about we're all going to die, so we might as well just live for today.

That's the difference in Christianity and all other world religions. It's not that we're all going to die, it's we're all going to live. Where are we going to live?

[ 36 : 13 ] Are we going to live in relationship with God? Or are we going to live in eternal separation from God? Or as Jesus described in Luke, torment.

Yes. Eternal torment. There's a gulf that I can see across the gulf, right? I can see the people who are being taken care of.

What's interesting in Jesus' description there is the rich man asks Abraham to go warn his relatives. He doesn't ask to come across, which is interesting.

So, yeah? Pastor, what I think this is telling me is it's reminding me that in the world Christ has put actually Satan in charge.

So we have to be careful of the things we do and talk, say, and hear, and such because of the consequence about judgment.

[ 37 : 23 ] and we need to stay strong in our trust and faith in him again because we want to live a rightful life.

Okay. Yeah. Yeah, Ecclesiastes doesn't mention the enemy, does it? Yes, it does.

Does it? Oh, our own, yeah, our perspective, yeah, yeah, but the enemy who, yes, we know that enemy when we sing about who has no power with our Jesus, yeah, trembles at the thought of Jesus but not at the thought of Bill.

But we should turn the letter on the phone. Yeah. Nature, and our desires, and I think we've all covered it. Yeah. A couple input of how this is a tool.

Yes. Any other thoughts, questions, answers, suggestions? Yeah, Pat. Well, it stuck with me in chapter six about what God has chosen for us and it's not about our pursuit of what we give in life but what God has chosen.

[ 39 : 04 ] So those who God enables to enjoy and those God does not enable. Yeah, that's powerful, isn't it?

And the author's frustrated with that because I get the impression he's not enabled to enjoy it. But he sees other people who enjoy the life and the advantages that they have.

I don't understand that it's up to God to enable them to enjoy or not?

What does he actually enable? Well, it says he enables them to enjoy what they have. Mainly based upon the gifts he has given us.

Right, so let's see, chapter six, where are we? Okay, one and two, six, one, there is an evil, so he calls it a bad thing, that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind, a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him the power to enjoy them.

[ 40 : 23 ] So it's a gift of God to be able to enjoy what you have. A lot of people have lots and lots of stuff that don't enjoy, I mean, really find fulfillment and joy in them.

Peace and contentment. Peace and contentment with what we're given, whether it's a lot or a little, is a gift from God. Because he's assuming lots means more joy.

Yes, right. right. So he, but, and then he talked about, I think, the previous chapter, you know, the previous chapter, verse 519, everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil.

This is the gift of God. So it's a gift of God not only to enjoy, but to, what did he say? To accept his lot, right? Why didn't you give me more?

Why didn't you make me different? Why didn't you, you know, to accept his lot and to rejoice in his toil as a gift of God? So, please. Please. This is the part that kind of challenged me.

[ 41 : 36 ] If he has given the man the wealth and all of possessions and honor, he actually gave those to him, why does he not allow him to enjoy them?

That's the question he's asking. Why does God give to some and not to others? Yeah. Oh. You don't have to go right up.

Because he's God and I'm not. I'm thinking too much about it. Okay. Well, that's the question he said. That's exactly what he's at. Why? They both have all the same gifts except the ability, the power to really enjoy them.

Why? Yeah, no, that's the question. That's the wrestling. It reminds me of when Paul says, I've learned to be content whether in plenty or in want.

It's all about the joy, the pleasure, the contentment, the peace comes from God. it's not about how much or how little.

[ 42 : 47 ] That's my thought. I agree. I think you're right on. But he calls it a secret. I've learned the secret. What's the secret?

How can you find contentment in whatever your lot is, whatever God has, whether it's little or much, whether it's hard or easy?

Crystal? I think my conviction over and over through Ecclesiastes was that I relate to the writer in the way that I feel like I often find my joy in the gifts rather than the giver of the gifts.

And I get skewed on focusing on all the gifts and how they... That's the natural thing to do, right? ...and forgetting the Lord and that it's really all from him.

Right. It's almost like it is the idol. They become these wonderful and precious gifts that he has given to me now become what I'm living for rather than living for him.

[ 43 : 57 ] Right. So I think that was my conviction this entire chapter. Because it's not that just the world wrestles with these questions. As believers, we still wrestle with these things. And so we have to renew our mind.

We have to go, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait, wait. Like you're saying, what's it about? Where's my focus? What does Jesus say? How do I get, you know? These are natural frustrations.

So had it not have been for this book during the season, I don't know that I would have even really realized that I was wrestling with this. That it was something, maybe that's one of the reasons they leave it in is to show the...

The other thing about this book is it asks some questions we don't want to ask. It deals with some subjects I'd rather not. I don't want to think about aging.

Right? When the windows are shut, what? The grasshopper drags along, what is it? The almond tree blossoms and the cord is broken.

[ 45 : 03 ] All those nice metaphors of... Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I like the grasshopper dragging along.

He lost his hop. So... Yeah. Good. Any other thoughts, questions, comments?

Yes? Dawn? Yes? I don't think this is in your outline. Maybe kind of random. But in 17, you said, do not say why would the old days be better than these or do not watch that question.

And I think that's a challenge that I have, you know, and I don't know other people and... We used to have good in the old days?

Yeah. Oh. Let's make America great again, right? That's the whole thing. Yeah. What do we mean by that? Well, we know what we mean by that, but yeah, why do we want the past?

[ 46 : 10 ] We idealized the past and I think sometimes we have felt like that was a righteous attitude or a righteous mindset.

Because we're kind of assuming things have declined. We need to get back to, you know, and, you know, what's your name? Bella, what's it?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. The old for him song is not that old, but it's old to some of y'all. We need to get back to the basics of life.

Yeah. Well, and there's truth in that. There's truth in that. Yeah. He's saying what we naturally tend to say is, oh, it was better.

It was better. Back in old. But what's the use of that? How does that help? Yeah. Other than I bemoan the time I live in, and something then is against what God has done.

[ 47 : 18 ] Right? Why has God let us decline? I'm not saying that it's a bad, you know, he's just saying it's unwise. You can camp out there too much. Yeah. Why you need to take up space?

Doesn't mean we try to make it better again. It does not mean that. But it brings to my Jesus from our perspective, since we know, from the New Testament perspective, it brings more depth to his words for me.

Do not worry about the past. Yeah. Be concerned with the present, and the future will take care of itself. and that these are the words that fuel those words, it is a tendency of ours to think back.

Yeah, I was surprised to see many of the proverbs or ideas of the proverbs in this book are stated by Jesus. Not the same words, but same concept.

Sorrow is better than laughter. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Right? Blessed are the persecuted. What? Blessed are the hungry, blessed are the poor.

[ 48 : 31 ] What? So, that reminds me of God's presence, right? So, the fact that your mourning isn't the blessing, but the comfort that you receive is the blessing.

The process is the only happening in the present. This is the only place we can be with God, right? We don't have that like he's timeless, but we're like right now.

So, if we're going to depend on him and be in awe of him, fear him, I mean, all of it, it's just like this is our time, right?

Now, what we have. And that's to relate with him, which is what it's all about, right? All the blessings, Crystal, that you talked about, if we think about them as they're reminders and teachers of God's character, right?

It's the loving father or the provider or the good shepherd who's giving all those gifts. That was kind of a You're good.

[ 49 : 46 ] But it's true. I just feel like it's like the present. We just, we can only give God the present and yes, we can remember the past and we can be thankful, but it's like in the present.

Yeah, we remember the past, that's value for the present. We remember our creator, we remember our stones of remembrance where God has been faithful, right?

helps us now. We live for the future, but not in the future. Right? Jesus says today's got enough trouble of its own, don't worry about tomorrow.

Today's got enough trouble. I've given you enough for today. Focus on what I gave you for today. Thank you, Lord. Can I focus on tomorrow? So, all right.

good, are we ready for 1 John? Yes. Sure? All right, all right. Looking forward to it. The theme of 1 John is, by this you know that you have eternal life.

[ 51 : 00 ] He wrote the book so that you know with assurance that you have, possess, eternal life. In other words, this is the assurance that I am truly saved.

How do I know I'm truly a child of God? How do I know I've truly been born again? John is going to give the tests, the marks.

By this you know. What you think, how you act, how you walk. Are you a walker or just a talker? All talk? Or do you walk? I think it's really encouraging. It gets into some basic stuff.

He's going to cycle through the same things but he's going to come at it from a different angle.

When you read through the book the first time, you're going, wait a minute. You read it through about the tenth time, you're going, oh, I see what he's doing.

[ 52 : 03 ] It's quite brilliant. Okay. That's what we'll do, Lord willing. I'm going to do that next week. Let me close this, then we'll go to prepare for communion.

Father, thank you for our time. Thank you for this book that has been valuable for us to wrestle ourselves with these important questions, these real questions, real life questions, and struggle with the real life answers.

not only for believers, but for those who need to come to know you. So help us to use this knowledge both for ourselves, as we examine ourselves and our walk with you, and Father, as we witness for you, as you bring people into our lives that are wrestling with these questions, that we might be better equipped to answer with real answers.

this we pray in Christ's name, amen.