

Life Group Study Guide

Ecclesiastes 1:1–2:26

Introduction

“Meaningless! Meaningless! says the Teacher. Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless!” Wow, what a way to begin! Right away you get the idea that Ecclesiastes is not going to be a typical book.

Ecclesiastes does not have a stated author, but scholars have traditionally attributed it to King Solomon, son of King David, based on statements and descriptions within the book.

Ecclesiastes is located in the section of Scripture commonly referred to as “Wisdom Literature,” or “Books of Poetry.” The other books in this section are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and the Song of Solomon. They are written in a poetic style in contrast to the narrative manner of the historical books.

Solomon begins the book by declaring that everything is meaningless, futile, worthless, or in vain (1:2). He ends the book with a command to “Remember your Creator” (12:1) and an intense plea to “Fear God and keep his commandments” (12:13). Between these bookends are Solomon’s observations about life and the human experience written in a stream-of-consciousness flow of both poetry and prose styles.

Read 1 Kings 3:5-14; 4:29-34

1. How did Solomon get his wisdom?
2. Why did he ask for wisdom?
3. How did Solomon’s wisdom compare to other wise people?
4. What were some of the practical applications of his wisdom?

Read Ecclesiastes 1:10-2:26

1. What are some of the experiences and accomplishments Solomon pursued in his attempt to find meaning and purpose?
2. What were the results of his efforts?
3. Why do you think he reached the conclusions that he did?
4. When you compare these two sections of scripture how can you reconcile the fact that Solomon, with his God-given wisdom, could reach these conclusions?

Conclusion

Solomon's pursuit of experiences and accomplishments in the first 11 verses of chapter two can be described as a quest to recreate paradise on earth—a heartsick and futile attempt to get back to the Garden of Eden. Most people, sometime in their life, experience a sense of longing, a nagging suspicion at some deep level, that what we can experience here “under the sun” is not all that our lives are meant to be. There is a common human feeling that there must be something else to life beyond what we can experience and understand. Solomon experimented with trying to fill this longing in his soul with experiences, substances, wisdom, folly, and accomplishments. He found them all empty and meaningless.

What are some of the modern experiences, substances, wisdom, folly, and accomplishments people use to try to fill the God-shaped hole in their soul? What are the results? Which are you most susceptible to? What is the one true solution for filling the God-shaped hole in your soul?