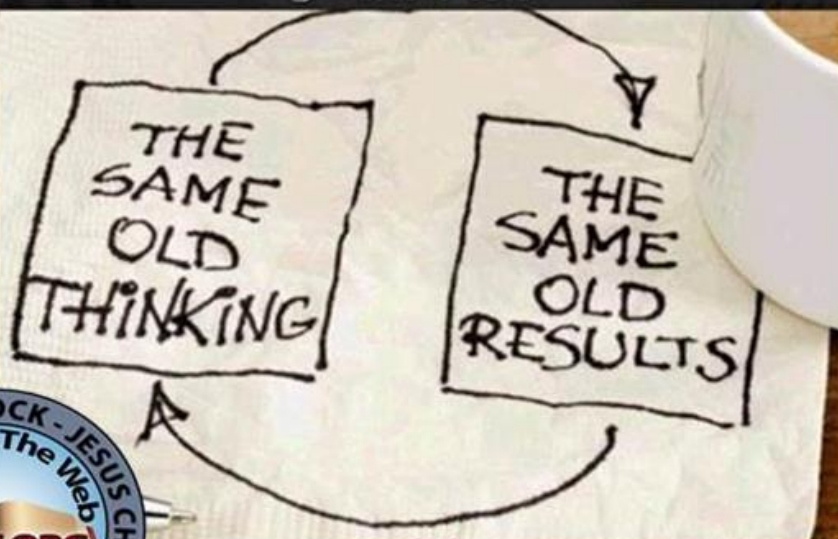


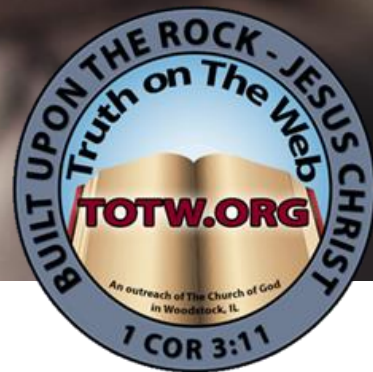
Think BIBLICALLY



RENEW
your mind
ROMANS 12:2



Understanding the Bible: **Ecclesiastes**



Ecclesiastes

ca 935 BC

What Is Life About?

LAW

PROPHETS

WRITINGS

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

*Former
Prophets*

Joshua
Judges
1-2 Samuel
1-2 Kings

*Latter
Prophets*

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Ezekiel
The Twelve

*Pre-
Exilic
Writings*

Psalms

Job
Proverbs
Ruth
Song of Songs
Ecclesiastes

*Post-
Exilic
Writings*

Lamentations
Esther
Daniel
Ezra-Nehemiah
1-2 Chronicles

KEY VERSES

Ecclesiastes 1:2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity.

Ecclesiastes 1:3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?

Ecclesiastes 9:11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race *is* not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man.

Ecclesiastes

1:1-2:26 Life Is Pointless

3:1-22 The Way God Made It

4:1-6:6 Poverty, Riches, And God

6:7-7:29 Making The Best Of It

8:1-17 Answering To Man And To God

9:1-12:14 Life And How To Live It

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1:1-11 Everything Is Futile

1:12-18 Knowledge Does Not Help

2:1-11 Pleasure Leads Nowhere

2:12-17 Everybody Has To Die

2:18-23 Achievement Means Nothing

2:24-26 Only God Gives Contentment

3:1-22 The Way God Made It

3:1-8 Everything In Its Time

3:9-15 Man In His Place

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4:1-8 Man's Lot Is Miserable

4:9-12 Consolation In Fellowship

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8:9-15 Good Living Is Best

8:16-17 But There's Too Much To Know

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9:1-10 Life Is Short

9:11-18 Life Seems Unjust

10:1-11:8 More Wise Advice

11:9-12:8 Serve God While You May

12:9-14 Summing Up

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12:9-14 Summing Up

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? *One* generation passeth away, and *another* generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things *are* full of labour; man cannot utter *it*: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is* that which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun. Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. *There is* no remembrance of former *things*; neither shall there be *any* remembrance of *things* that are to come with *those* that shall come after.

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Ecclesiastes 1:12-18 I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all *things* that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit. *That which is* crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all *they* that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

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Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also *is* vanity. I said of laughter, *It is* mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what *was* that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all *kind of* fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got *me* servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, *as* musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all *was* vanity and vexation of spirit, and *there was* no profit under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 NLT I said to myself, “Come on, let’s try pleasure. Let’s look for the ‘good things’ in life.” But I found that this, too, was meaningless. So I said, “Laughter is silly. What good does it do to seek pleasure?” After much thought, I decided to cheer myself with wine. And while still seeking wisdom, I clutched at foolishness. In this way, I tried to experience the only happiness most people find during their brief life in this world. I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards. I made gardens and parks, filling them with all kinds of fruit trees. I built reservoirs to collect the water to irrigate my many flourishing groves. I bought slaves, both men and women, and others were born into my household. I also owned large herds and flocks, more than any of the kings who had lived in Jerusalem before me. I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both men and women, and had many beautiful concubines. I had everything a man could desire! So I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom never failed me. Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure. I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors. But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.

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Ecclesiastes 2:12-17 NLT So I decided to compare wisdom with foolishness and madness (for who can do this better than I, the king?). I thought, “Wisdom is better than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness. For the wise can see where they are going, but fools walk in the dark.” Yet I saw that the wise and the foolish share the same fate. Both will die. So I said to myself, “Since I will end up the same as the fool, what’s the value of all my wisdom? This is all so meaningless!” For the wise and the foolish both die. The wise will not be remembered any longer than the fool. In the days to come, both will be forgotten. So I came to hate life because everything done here under the sun is so troubling. Everything is meaningless—like chasing the wind.

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Ecclesiastes 2:18-26 NLT I came to hate all my hard work here on earth, for I must leave to others everything I have earned. And who can tell whether my successors will be wise or foolish? Yet they will control everything I have gained by my skill and hard work under the sun. How meaningless! So I gave up in despair, questioning the value of all my hard work in this world. Some people work wisely with knowledge and skill, then must leave the fruit of their efforts to someone who hasn't worked for it. This, too, is meaningless, a great tragedy. So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety? Their days of labor are filled with pain and grief; even at night their minds cannot rest. It is all meaningless. So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that these pleasures are from the hand of God. For who can eat or enjoy anything apart from Him? God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please Him. But if a sinner becomes wealthy, God takes the wealth away and gives it to those who please Him. This, too, is meaningless—like chasing the wind.

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Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 NLT For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up. A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn away. A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:9-15 NLT What do people really get for all their hard work? I have seen the burden God has placed on us all. Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end. So I concluded there is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we can. And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God. And I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God's purpose is that people should fear Him. What is happening now has happened before, and what will happen in the future has happened before, because God makes the same things happen over and over again.

Ecclesiastes 3:15 That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

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Ecclesiastes 3:16-22 And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, *that* wickedness *was* there; and the place of righteousness, *that* iniquity *was* there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for *there is* a time there for every purpose and for every work. I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all *is* vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I perceive that *there is* nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that *is* his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

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Ecclesiastes 4:1-16 So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of *such as were* oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors *there was* power; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better *is he* than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun. Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This *is* also vanity and vexation of spirit. The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh. Better *is* an handful *with* quietness, than both the hands full *with* travail and vexation of spirit. Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun. There is one *alone*, and *there is* not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet *is there* no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither *saith he*, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This *is* also vanity, yea, it *is* a sore travail. Two *are* better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him *that is* alone when he falleth; for *he hath* not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm *alone*? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. Better *is* a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished. For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also *he that is* born in his kingdom becometh poor. I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead. *There is* no end of all the people, *even* of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

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Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice *is known* by multitude of words. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for *He hath* no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better *is it* that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it *was* an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? For in the multitude of dreams and many words *there are* also *divers* vanities: but fear thou God.

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12:9-14 Summing Up

Ecclesiastes 5:8-20 If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for *he that is* higher than the highest regardeth; and *there be* higher than they. Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king *himself* is served by the field. He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this *is* also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good *is there* to the owners thereof, saving the beholding *of them* with their eyes? The sleep of a labouring man *is* sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. There is a sore evil *which* I have seen under the sun, *namely*, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and *there is* nothing in his hand. As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also *is* a sore evil, *that* in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? All his days also he eateth in darkness, and *he hath* much sorrow and wrath with his sickness. Behold *that* which I have seen: *it is* good and comely *for one* to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it *is* his portion. Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this *is* the gift of God. For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth *him* in the joy of his heart.

Ecclesiastes 6:1-6 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it *is* common among men: A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this *is* vanity, and it *is* an evil disease. If a man beget an hundred *children*, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also *that* he have no burial; I say, *that* an untimely birth *is* better than he. For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known *any thing*: this hath more rest than the other. Yea, though he live a thousand years twice *told*, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?

Ecclesiastes

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1:1-11 Everything Is Futile

1:12-18 Knowledge Does Not Help

2:1-11 Pleasure Leads Nowhere

2:12-17 Everybody Has To Die

2:18-23 Achievement Means Nothing

2:24-26 Only God Gives Contentment

3:1-22 The Way God Made It

3:1-8 Everything In Its Time

3:9-15 Man In His Place

3:16-22 God Makes The Difference

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4:1-8 Man's Lot Is Miserable

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9:1-10 Life Is Short

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12:9-14 Summing Up

Ecclesiastes 6:7-12 NLT All people spend their lives scratching for food, but they never seem to have enough. So are wise people really better off than fools? Do poor people gain anything by being wise and knowing how to act in front of others? Enjoy what you have rather than desiring what you don't have. Just dreaming about nice things is meaningless—like chasing the wind. Everything has already been decided. It was known long ago what each person would be. So there's no use arguing with God about your destiny. The more words you speak, the less they mean. So what good are they? In the few days of our meaningless lives, who knows how our days can best be spent? Our lives are like a shadow. Who can tell what will happen on this earth after we are gone?

Ecclesiastes 7:1-22 NLT A good reputation is more valuable than costly perfume. And the day you die is better than the day you are born. Better to spend your time at funerals than at parties. After all, everyone dies—so the living should take this to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for sadness has a refining influence on us. A wise person thinks a lot about death, while a fool thinks only about having a good time. Better to be criticized by a wise person than to be praised by a fool. A fool's laughter is quickly gone, like thorns crackling in a fire. This also is meaningless. Extortion turns wise people into fools, and bribes corrupt the heart. Finishing is better than starting. Patience is better than pride. Control your temper, for anger labels you a fool. Don't long for "the good old days." This is not wise. Wisdom is even better when you have money. Both are a benefit as you go through life. Wisdom and money can get you almost anything, but only wisdom can save your life. Accept the way God does things, for who can straighten what he has made crooked? Enjoy prosperity while you can, but when hard times strike, realize that both come from God. Remember that nothing is certain in this life. I have seen everything in this meaningless life, including the death of good young people and the long life of wicked people. So don't be too good or too wise! Why destroy yourself? On the other hand, don't be too wicked either. Don't be a fool! Why die before your time? Pay attention to these instructions, for anyone who fears God will avoid both extremes. One wise person is stronger than ten leading citizens of a town! Not a single person on earth is always good and never sins. Don't eavesdrop on others—you may hear your servant curse you. For you know how often you yourself have cursed others.

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12:9-14 Summing Up

Ecclesiastes 7:23-29 NLT I have always tried my best to let wisdom guide my thoughts and actions. I said to myself, “I am determined to be wise.” But it didn’t work. Wisdom is always distant and difficult to find. I searched everywhere, determined to find wisdom and to understand the reason for things. I was determined to prove to myself that wickedness is stupid and that foolishness is madness. I discovered that a seductive woman is a trap more bitter than death. Her passion is a snare, and her soft hands are chains. Those who are pleasing to God will escape her, but sinners will be caught in her snare. “This is my conclusion,” says the Teacher. “I discovered this after looking at the matter from every possible angle. Though I have searched repeatedly, I have not found what I was looking for. Only one out of a thousand men is virtuous, but not one woman! But I did find this: God created people to be virtuous, but they have each turned to follow their own downward path.”

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12:9-14 Summing Up

Ecclesiastes 8:1-17 NLT How wonderful to be wise, to analyze and interpret things. Wisdom lights up a person's face, softening its harshness. Obey the king since you vowed to God that you would. Don't try to avoid doing your duty, and don't stand with those who plot evil, for the king can do whatever he wants. His command is backed by great power. No one can resist or question it. Those who obey him will not be punished. Those who are wise will find a time and a way to do what is right, for there is a time and a way for everything, even when a person is in trouble. Indeed, how can people avoid what they don't know is going to happen? None of us can hold back our spirit from departing. None of us has the power to prevent the day of our death. There is no escaping that obligation, that dark battle. And in the face of death, wickedness will certainly not rescue the wicked. I have thought deeply about all that goes on here under the sun, where people have the power to hurt each other. I have seen wicked people buried with honor. Yet they were the very ones who frequented the Temple and are now praised in the same city where they committed their crimes! This, too, is meaningless. When a crime is not punished quickly, people feel it is safe to do wrong. But even though a person sins a hundred times and still lives a long time, I know that those who fear God will be better off. The wicked will not prosper, for they do not fear God. Their days will never grow long like the evening shadows. And this is not all that is meaningless in our world. In this life, good people are often treated as though they were wicked, and wicked people are often treated as though they were good. This is so meaningless! So I recommend having fun, because there is nothing better for people in this world than to eat, drink, and enjoy life. That way they will experience some happiness along with all the hard work God gives them under the sun. In my search for wisdom and in my observation of people's burdens here on earth, I discovered that there is ceaseless activity, day and night. I realized that no one can discover everything God is doing under the sun. Not even the wisest people discover everything, no matter what they claim.

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Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 NLT This, too, I carefully explored: Even though the actions of godly and wise people are in God's hands, no one knows whether God will show them favor. The same destiny ultimately awaits everyone, whether righteous or wicked, good or bad, ceremonially clean or unclean, religious or irreligious. Good people receive the same treatment as sinners, and people who make promises to God are treated like people who don't. It seems so wrong that everyone under the sun suffers the same fate. Already twisted by evil, people choose their own mad course, for they have no hope. There is nothing ahead but death anyway. There is hope only for the living. As they say, "It's better to be a live dog than a dead lion!" The living at least know they will die, but the dead know nothing. They have no further reward, nor are they remembered. Whatever they did in their lifetime—loving, hating, envying—is all long gone. They no longer play a part in anything here on earth. So go ahead. Eat your food with joy, and drink your wine with a happy heart, for God approves of this! Wear fine clothes, with a splash of cologne! Live happily with the woman you love through all the meaningless days of life that God has given you under the sun. The wife God gives you is your reward for all your earthly toil. Whatever you do, do well. For when you go to the grave, there will be no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom. I have observed something else under the sun. The fastest runner doesn't always win the race, and the strongest warrior doesn't always win the battle. The wise sometimes go hungry, and the skillful are not necessarily wealthy. And those who are educated don't always lead successful lives. It is all decided by chance, by being in the right place at the right time. People can never predict when hard times might come. Like fish in a net or birds in a trap, people are caught by sudden tragedy.

Ecclesiastes 9:13-18 NLT Here is another bit of wisdom that has impressed me as I have watched the way our world works. There was a small town with only a few people, and a great king came with his army and besieged it. A poor, wise man knew how to save the town, and so it was rescued. But afterward no one thought to thank him. So even though wisdom is better than strength, those who are wise will be despised if they are poor. What they say will not be appreciated for long. Better to hear the quiet words of a wise person than the shouts of a foolish king. Better to have wisdom than weapons of war, but one sinner can destroy much that is good.

Ecclesiastes 10:1-20 NLT As dead flies cause even a bottle of perfume to stink, so a little foolishness spoils great wisdom and honor. A wise person chooses the right road; a fool takes the wrong one. You can identify fools just by the way they walk down the street! If your boss is angry at you, don't quit! A quiet spirit can overcome even great mistakes. There is another evil I have seen under the sun. Kings and rulers make a grave mistake when they give great authority to foolish people and low positions to people of proven worth. I have even seen servants riding horseback like princes—and princes walking like servants! When you dig a well, you might fall in. When you demolish an old wall, you could be bitten by a snake. When you work in a quarry, stones might fall and crush you. When you chop wood, there is danger with each stroke of your ax. Using a dull ax requires great strength, so sharpen the blade. That's the value of wisdom; it helps you succeed. If a snake bites before you charm it, what's the use of being a snake charmer? Wise words bring approval, but fools are destroyed by their own words. Fools base their thoughts on foolish assumptions, so their conclusions will be wicked madness; they chatter on and on. No one really knows what is going to happen; no one can predict the future. Fools are so exhausted by a little work that they can't even find their way home. What sorrow for the land ruled by a servant, the land whose leaders feast in the morning. Happy is the land whose king is a noble leader and whose leaders feast at the proper time to gain strength for their work, not to get drunk. Laziness leads to a sagging roof; idleness leads to a leaky house. A party gives laughter, wine gives happiness, and money gives everything! Never make light of the king, even in your thoughts. And don't make fun of the powerful, even in your own bedroom. For a little bird might deliver your message and tell them what you said.

Ecclesiastes 11:1-9 NLT Send your grain across the seas, and in time, profits will flow back to you. But divide your investments among many places, for you do not know what risks might lie ahead. When clouds are heavy, the rains come down. Whether a tree falls north or south, it stays where it falls. Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest. Just as you cannot understand the path of the wind or the mystery of a tiny baby growing in its mother's womb, so you cannot understand the activity of God, who does all things. Plant your seed in the morning and keep busy all afternoon, for you don't know if profit will come from one activity or another—or maybe both. Light is sweet; how pleasant to see a new day dawning. When people live to be very old, let them rejoice in every day of life. But let them also remember there will be many dark days. Everything still to come is meaningless. Young people, it's wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do. So refuse to worry, and keep your body healthy. But remember that youth, with a whole life before you, is meaningless.

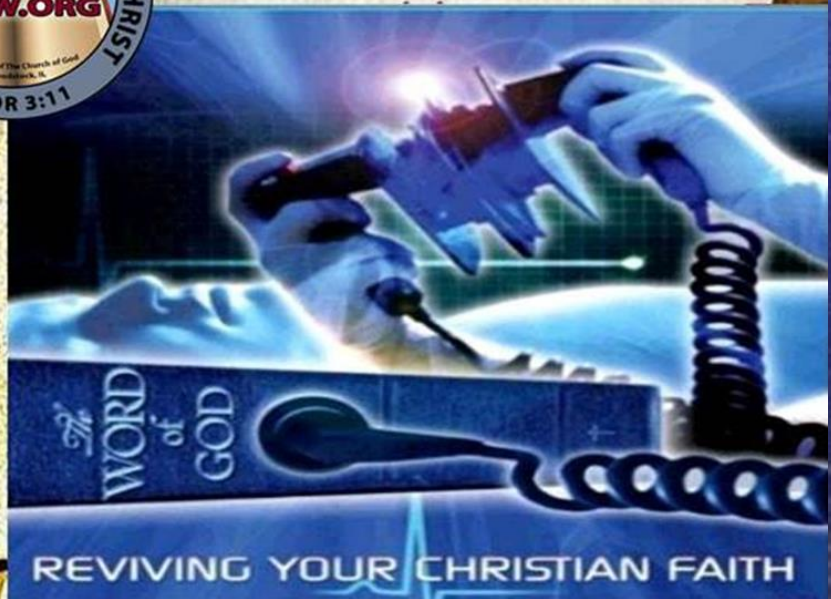
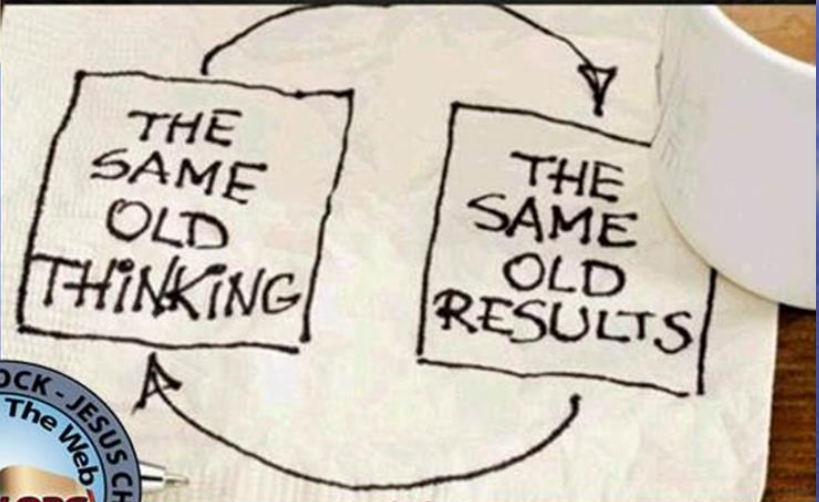
Ecclesiastes 12:1-13 NLT Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor him in your youth before you grow old and say, "Life is not pleasant anymore." Remember him before the light of the sun, moon, and stars is dim to your old eyes, and rain clouds continually darken your sky. Remember him before your legs—the guards of your house—start to tremble; and before your shoulders—the strong men—stoop. Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly. Remember him before the door to life's opportunities is closed and the sound of work fades. Now you rise at the first chirping of the birds, but then all their sounds will grow faint. Remember him before you become fearful of falling and worry about danger in the streets; before your hair turns white like an almond tree in bloom, and you drag along without energy like a dying grasshopper, and the caperberry no longer inspires sexual desire. Remember him before you near the grave, your everlasting home, when the mourners will weep at your funeral. Yes, remember your Creator now while you are young, before the silver cord of life snaps and the golden bowl is broken. Don't wait until the water jar is smashed at the spring and the pulley is broken at the well. For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. "Everything is meaningless," says the Teacher, "completely meaningless." Keep this in mind: The Teacher was considered wise, and he taught the people everything he knew. He listened carefully to many proverbs, studying and classifying them. The Teacher sought to find just the right words to express truths clearly. The words of the wise are like cattle prods—painful but helpful. Their collected sayings are like a nail-studded stick with which a shepherd drives the sheep. But, my child, let me give you some further advice: Be careful, for writing books is endless, and much study wears you out. That's the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.

Think BIBLICALLY



RENEW your mind

ROMANS 12:2



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