

Living In The Fullest Measure

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[0 : 00] would have sang that song? I think Peter would have sang that song. And he's so boisterous, he'd have filled this place up, right? I love that. Well, it is good.

I'm excited, and it's good to be back with you and be under the word in the fellowship of God's people. We're essential, aren't we? And why are we essential?

We are essential because we serve the essential one. And he has called us to gather as his people on a regular basis and exalt him and glorify him even as we edify one another, as we build one another up in the faith and serve one another according to his truth.

His truth. So we'll be back in Ecclesiastes today. We're going to start back in. And so you see, do you see?

Yeah. Living in the fullest measure. And we're going to do, what I want to do is set this stage a little bit. We're going to do just a little bit of a review of chapters one through six.

[1 : 12] There's so much there. As I was looking through this this week, I realized I've preached nine sermons in the first six chapters. That's pretty good for me. It could have been 12.

So nine sermons in the first six chapters. There was a lot there. So what I've done is I've lifted out just a few markers. And I want to bring them to you in the way of remembering, kind of reflecting.

And what my goal is by the end is just to give you enough to help you feel a little bit of the momentum again. Back into it. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Okay. I remember.

I remember. And then maybe that'll help set the stage for next Sunday, Lord willing, when we'll start off in chapter seven, because you'll see if you've already read ahead. Chapter seven is just full of Proverbs.

So it's going to be a little bit different in our approach as we look at that. So in the way of remembering, we'll turn to Ecclesiastes chapter one.

[2 : 17] And you might. Might remember this. I asked as we started in the book of Ecclesiastes, what is the good life? Because that is in large measure what Solomon, whom we believe wrote this book.

Solomon had in mind. What is the good life? Solomon chased the good life. Most of his adult life only to come toward the end as an older man and realize that much of what he had chased against the wisdom of the Lord was vanity.

We'll talk about in the way of remembering what that means. What is the good life? That's what he wants to deal with. And that's the question that he answers in this book. How does anyone really enjoy life?

This life, the life that they've been given so that they get the most from being alive. I think you and I would agree that most people, as they come into adulthood, really begin to take that question seriously and think about what do I want to do as the in a way of a vocation?

I want to grab as much of life as I can. People dream about getting a spouse and having a good marriage, possibly having children. They dream about getting a house, right?

[3 : 35] Having a nice car, having nice things, that kind of stuff. What constitutes the good life? Well, that's the question Ecclesiastes helps to answer.

Can you really know the ultimate meaning of life? Is that even doable for you to know that? Can you experience a true sense of fulfillment in this life?

Life is full of so many hardships and so many difficult realities and death and loss and change.

Can you really know a consistent and steady sense of fulfillment in life with all of these kinds of things? Ecclesiastes helps answer these questions and many more concerning the everyday issues of everyday life.

Or as the author puts it in our book, life under the sun. Life under the sun. Life under the sun is the same idea that the New Testament describes when it speaks about the world and everything in the world.

[4 : 49] You'll see that a lot through 1 John, won't you? So life under the sun is all about the New Testament concept of living in this world.

S-U-N, under the sun. It is the reality which all of us share as human beings created in the image of God and living under the effects of a sinful, broken, evil world.

It doesn't matter if you're a Christian or a non-Christian or what religion you are, where you come from, how much money you have, what country you live in.

It doesn't matter if you're human living on this planet, you share in the realities of a broken world.

You also share, however, in the reality that you were made in the image of Almighty God.

You were created. And even the people who deny that so strongly and live their lives in such rank rebellion against that reality, it doesn't change it.

[5 : 54] All of us are made in the image of God and we live in a broken world. So we all enter the world on that same plane. And then we have to navigate that reality.

And that's our life. What our life looks like is all about how we navigate those two truths. I was made in the image of God. I live in a broken world.

Now what? I was in a conversation recently with someone who is an unbeliever. And as I was witnessing to this person this past week, I just very gently came to the point where in this particular person's life, there was a number of things they were rehearsing about difficulties and being stressed out.

And I gently said at one point, you know, all of us have to come to a place in our lives where we decide why evil is present in the world and why these kinds of things happen to us and to other people.

What in the world do you think is wrong with this world? It's broken, isn't it? And I just kind of left it at that. I didn't preach them a sermon or anything like that. I just wanted to challenge them with the thought, how do you, in your worldview, explain the evil and brokenness and change and difficulty of this life?

[7 : 18] What's your explanation for it? Where does it come from? Why does it exist? Why does it have to be this hard? That is what we're dealing with.

That particular sinfulness, that brokenness, which every person feels and experiences in this life, creates a deep sense of futility. It can and often does.

It creates a sense of emptiness. It creates what Solomon calls or refers to as vanity. Vanity.

And he says that about the purpose and nature of our existence. It's just all vanity. But he has a specific context in mind as he does that.

We'll talk about that. Ecclesiastes then points us to a life under the sun. S-O-N. And that kind of is the overarching idea that I'm wanting to bring in this book.

[8 : 19] Life under the sun. S-O-N. That would be God's son, Jesus. God has brought us to Jesus.

Jesus has come to us as a man living on this earth. He died, he was buried, and he was raised again on our behalf.

So Jesus is God's one and only offer of fulfillment this side of heaven. So as we start talking about a fulfilled life, we're not going to find the name of Jesus written in the book of Ecclesiastes.

We're going to find him pointing to that reality as he tells us to look to God. The New Testament helps us understand that looking to God means looking to Christ, the son of the living God, for this fulfillment, for this hope.

Apart from Jesus, God has made no other way for us to know meaning in life. And we know that.

And we embrace that because God has opened our eyes to see that reality.

[9 : 23] But we live in a world that denies that vehemently and hates the idea of a savior because if I need a savior, it means I need saving.

And if I need saving, it means something's wrong with me. They don't like that. But we understand. All right. This book was not a downer for Israel.

We're going to read this in just a minute and it can just get gloomy real quickly. It sounds like he's saying everything is for nothing. So why even try?

That's not what he's saying. We have to take it in context. It's quite the opposite. It's not a downer for Israel. Just remind you. Do you remember when I was teaching in this? I told you Israel read

Ecclesiastes as an entirety, right?

During their harvest festival, during the time of the year when they're harvesting their food and there's plenty and they're all excited. Look what we're doing. Look what we're taking in. This is great.

[10:24] It's Christmas kind of thing, right? They celebrated its message of joy in God giving life to his people. The harvest festival was all about celebrating life, but they understood it as life coming from God.

This is why Dr. William Barak, a commentator that I'm reading throughout this time of study, subtitles his commentary on Ecclesiastes, The Philippians of the Old Testament, because the Philippians is all about joy.

That's the theme of Philippians. Joy. So this book of joy is for God's gathered people to share in. And that is the first priority that I've selected to share with you in this little list I've put together through these six chapters. Okay, I don't have any slides for you this morning, but the first point that I want to bring out in the way of remembering, reminding you is this.

Gathering as God's people. Gathering as God's people colon celebrating belonging to God.

Remember, Peter said we are chosen.

[11:31] We gather together and celebrate belonging to God. We're not celebrating ourselves. We're celebrating the fact that we are owned by God the Father.

And he gives us the reason for being here. He makes all of this possible and meaningful. Let's read in Ecclesiastes chapter one together.

The words of the preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem, and I've already identified that we believe this to be Solomon. Vanity of vanity, says the preacher, then vanity of vanities, all is vanity. There you go. It just starts out so gloomy. What advantage does man have in all his work, which he does under the sun? That that kind of captures the question that runs throughout the book.

A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. Also, the sun rises, the sun sets, hastening to its place, it rises there again, blowing toward the south, then turning toward the north.

[12:44] The wind continues swirling along and on its circular courses, the wind returns. All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is not full to the place where the rivers flow.

There they flow again. All things are wearisome. Man is not able to tell it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing or is the ear filled with hearing.

That which has been is that which will be. And that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun.

Is there anything of which one might say, see this? It's new. No. Already it has existed for ages which were before us. There is no remembrance of earlier things and also of the later things which will occur that will be for them no remembrance among those who will come later still.

I, the preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem and I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven.

[13:53] It is a grievous task which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with. I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun and behold all is vanity and striving after wind.

What is crooked cannot be straightened. What is lacking cannot be counted. I said to myself, behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge and I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly.

I realized that this also is striving after wind because in much wisdom there is much grief and increasing knowledge results and increasing pain.

It just drips with this gloominess. What in the world is going on? Well, I'm going to zero in on this part. Gathering the concept the idea and the activity of gathering is important to verse one.

Now, let me show you why the word preacher is the Hebrew term Kohelet and I had all of this up on the screen for you in your previous notes and all.

[15:17] I'm just moving through it real quickly here. It's the Hebrew Hebrew term Kohelet. It comes from a root word Kahal and it means to convoke an assembly.

It means to call people together or to assemble people together. So as my translation reads the words of the preacher in verse one, the words of the preacher preacher is actually assembler.

the one who assembles the announcer the one who is calling the people together. That's the idea of what's going on in all of this.

He assembles the people for instruction. So Solomon uses this term for himself seven times throughout this particular book.

And the Greek translation for Kohelet is Ecclesiastes meaning preacher.

[16:25] Ecclesiastes means preacher assembler the one who gathers the people together or the assembled ones.

And that is where the New Testament comes in with the term that we're probably most familiar with that we use for the church Ecclesia.

And you hear in Ecclesia Ecclesiastes Ecclesia means the assembled ones. The gathered together ones.

It's interesting that God uses that term to talk about his church. These are my gathered ones. These are my assembled together ones.

right? That's a very important concept that I wanted to point out to you and why we derive this as a critical or essential element that helps define who we are.

[17:26] This is one of the reasons that we not trying to put too fine a point on it but have said to each other if we have to go back to doing a virtual thing again then we'll do that.

You know that's but boy so far from the ideal. So far from what we've been called to and constituted to in the way of being God's people.

There's a special dynamic to gathering where you get to look at each other in the eye and sit under the word as a collective body. You get to hear the neighbor behind you and in front of you and inside of you singing.

You get to your kids get to see these people in your life doing the things you're doing and they realize the kids realize boy my parents aren't the only weird ones in the world. There are other weird ones that gather together and do this special thing.

So the aim of the preacher is clearly spelled out for us if you'll go to chapter 12. Chapter 12. Here is the aim of the preacher.

[18:28] Chapter 12 verses 9 and 10. In addition to being a wise man, the preacher the assembler also taught the people knowledge and he pondered searched out and arranged many proverbs.

So now this is this is zeroing in as we march through this. You'll see when we get here. This is the context of God's instruction that he's referring to here. And then verse 10.

The preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth. correctly. So this is not Solomon's truth.

This is not human wisdom. This is the wisdom of God and he has put a premium on that wisdom. The preacher then gathers God's people together to teach them God's wisdom and truth for living life.

Hear me to the fullest measure. Now I'm going to emphasize that again to live life to the fullest measure. So Solomon is not talking down about living a happy full life.

[19:43] We oftentimes kind of give happiness in Christian life a bad a bad rap. We either put way too much emphasis on happiness and define it in terms of some pretty shallow things or we come over here and we say happiness isn't even important to the Christian life.

God's more worried about you being holy. Well somewhere in the middle is where Solomon is as he says you need to understand that God wants you to live a full measured life.

That's a good thing. He wants you to embrace the life he's given you and live it to the fullest measure folks. Grab it embrace it in your marriage in your job in your career in your service and as we go through this together we'll just draw that up to the surface.

Christians should be some of the most happy bubbly exuberant full of life people on the planet. We have every reason to be but it is like anything else a matter of what perspective.

And so what is Solomon telling you to aim at? An eternal perspective. What else? With everything going like this and changing this is where he wants us to be.

[21:04] How Solomon then defines to the fullest measure is the point of the book of Ecclesiastes. It's its reason for being in the Bible.

Now who do you think stands as the aim and end game of living life to the fullest measure? Who would that be? Capital W. Who do you think?

Christ. Jesus. We're not aiming at a concept. We're not aiming at an ideal or a philosophy or a plan.

It's a person. We're being directed to Jesus. To God. Live your life to the fullest measure by living your life in relationship to God your creator. love him and to know him. So Ecclesiastes calls us to gather together under the assembler and the assembler is Jesus.

[22 : 06] Jesus is the preacher. The preacher. Gather together as the people of God, the chosen of God. Put yourselves under the truth of God for the glory of God.

God. Oh man, that's worth living for. That calls you that calls you out of yourself as it were. It calls you calls you out of the mundane of life.

It calls you beyond the hardships of life. And and puts things in perspective. As we hope for eternity. While keeping our feet on the ground as well.

So in our relationship with God, we find fulfillment. We find meaning in life. And that's what our hearts are so desperate for. That wonderful, freeing, fulfilling relationship with God is set against the contrasting reality of the vanity or futility or vapidness of life on this planet.

So you'll know, you might remember the term vanity is used 38 times in this book. 38 times in some form. But here's the thing I want you to remember about this and why I'm bringing it up.

[23 : 20] Vanity in Ecclesiastes has three nuances of meaning as far as I have been able to understand it. It can mean fleeting, vaporizing, like or transitory, transitory.

In other words, ever changing. The vanity of vanities, ever changing, fleeting. It can mean that. It means futile, empty or meaningless.

It can mean that. And it means incomprehensible, unknowable, deeply mysterious. So in any of these meanings, which meaning then is applicable as we read it in any given verse or chapter?

Well, it depends on the context. So we have to be careful students of the word in order to discern and understand which of those nuances we need to draw, draw out.

If you look at chapter 12, verse 8. Chapter 12, verse 8. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher, all is vanity.

[24 : 33] And then go back to chapter 1 and look at verse 2. Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

You hear an almost identical repeating statement of that idea and that concept. Right? So this theme bookends Ecclesiastes.

And this is why so many commentators and even Christians over the centuries have seen this book as kind of a gloomy, cynical expression of the emptiness of life.

You tell people, oh, if you want to read about how empty life is, go read Ecclesiastes. That'll really bum you out kind of thing. And boy, nothing could be further from the truth. Really?

Of course, it deals with that. We see it bookend. But listen, the Hebrew word that's being used here is Havel, Havel. And here Solomon is using it to describe the brevity or the breath like transitory, unsubstantial nature of daily life.

[25 : 41] That's a reality. Now, let me ask you real quickly and keep you drawn in here. Have you ever felt this before? In all honesty, have you ever had even a moment or a season in your life where you felt like in your particular situation, there was this transitory, unsubstantial kind of vapor-like feeling to your life?

You didn't feel quite like your feet were planted solidly. like, oh, I've kind of lost my bearings here. Oh, that's a horrible feeling, isn't it?

And if you let that thing go and put your hope in things that only make it worse because you put your hope in something and realize as that thing wears out or as that thing doesn't deliver, you're kind of in a worse place than you were before you hoped in it and that that just keeps happening and it just takes you down and down and down.

And that's why people end up in suicide. That's why people end up in all kinds of places where they have to be institutionalized or they just quit.

They just give up and lose themselves in something that will medicate them. You see, this is so he understands that these these are real things about living in a hard and very, very broken place.

[27 : 09] Commentator Michael Eaton, said it this way. Life is like an evaporating cloud. It can be. Now, let's just let that be real.

Life is like an evaporating cloud. But this is not the main idea of the book. If you look with me at chapter 12, verse 1.

Remember also your creator. If you just stop there, that's important. Remember also your creator in the days of your youth.

Before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, I have no delight in them. Now, isn't that good counsel? You need to get in the habit of remembering who's God and who God is.

So I tell all the young people, all the younger ones, right? Which most of you are younger than me at this point. That's kind of weird. That's just weird. All of you need to remember and reflect on the goodness of God, who God is, and get in the habit of it because guess what?

[28 : 17] Buckle up. Life's about to get tough. And as life gets tougher, it wants to draw you away from being centered in the reality of who really controls everything.

And it is not you. Life is going to let you know real quickly that you are not in control. You're going to see that all around you. And so he says, remember also your creator.

Look at verse six. Here it is again. In my translation, it begins. Remember him. Before the silver cord is broken in the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed.

It's like everything's falling apart, isn't it? Then the dust will return to the earth as it was and the spirit will return to God who gave it. Then notice verse a vanity of vanity, says the preacher.

All is vanity. But then how does it end? It's always helpful to kind of see where it's all headed. Right. So verse 13, the conclusion. Thank you.

[29 : 20] It took you all. It took you 12 chapters to get to this. The conclusion. When all has been heard is fear God and keep his commandments because this applies to every person.

You see, no one escapes. There's no clause that says, but there is a plan B and a plan C. So if you don't like the God thing, just do plan B or plan C and it'll be fine.

No, not at all. Why? Verse 14 for God will bring every act to judgment. Did you notice that he didn't say life?

No, he goes further than that. He's going to go right into your business. Every act. To judgment, everything which is hidden.

How about that? Say, well, does he know about this? He sure does. Did he know about when I did he sure does? That freaks some people out. Some people can't handle that.

[30 : 27] Christians need to be able to understand what to do with all of that. They don't have to fear God anymore in the way of being terrified of his judgment because we're told in the New Testament there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are.

Amen. In Christ Jesus. Now we're back to Jesus again. We just can't escape it. Praise the Lord. For God will bring every act of judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

Who gets to decide whether it's good or evil? God. God. That's right. And so the end game is an important reality to help us stay motivated and to keep us focused.

Remember God. Fear God in the way of of holding him in awe. High reverence. That's what that means. And obey God. Order your life by the truth of God.

Don't try to track your own way. God has made you for a purpose. And then what he says, because this applies to every person, God will bring it all the judgment.

[31 : 35] Every person faces God's judgment for the daily life they live on this earth. Every one of them. So I'll ask you again. What is your worldview offering you?

OK. With me. What is your worldview offering you? Does it sound anything like this? And if it does, does it sound more like the vanity part or does it sound more like the I want to serve God part?

You got to deal with that because every act will be brought to judgment. Even the hidden stuff. All right.

That's how we're to understand and interpret all of the counsel we find in this book. That's why I wanted to bring you back and remind you of all this. It all has to be filtered through a spiritual grid of our accountability to the Lord because our entire life is in God's hands.

Do you believe that unbelievers lives are in God's hands? If we say no, we discount a sovereign God is God in control.

[32 : 46] That's another way of saying it is God in control of an unbelievers life. Sure. God isn't out of control about any aspect of what he's made. And I said to you, we've all been made in his image.

So no one escapes that. We've all been made in his image and we're all accountable to him as our creator. Right. That truth guides our gathering as a celebration.

It's a celebration of knowing, loving and obeying God from thankful hearts. My friends, here's the summation. God saved us. God saved us.

Say, what did he save us from? We could make a list, but let me just give you this from a wasted life. God saved you, friend, from a wasted life. Saved me from a wasted life.

Point number two. God's good gift of time. God's good gift of time. Colon. Celebrating his seasons. [33 : 51] In your life. Celebrating God's seasons in your life. God's good. So now we're in chapter three. And I just have one more that we'll do together.

If you don't think I wasn't tempted to just start over and say, I'm just I'm just going to preach all nine of them again. You know, it's so good. Chapter three, beginning in verse one.

There is an appointed time for everything. That is a principle from scripture we need to hold on to. And there is a time for every event.

Under heaven. That is under the authority of God. A time to give birth and a time to die. A time to plant in a time to uproot what is planted.

A time to kill and a time to heal a time to tear down and a time to build up a time to weep and a time to laugh a time to mourn in a time to dance. A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones.

[34 : 55] A time to embrace in a time to shun embracing a time to search in a time to give up his lost. A time to keep in a time to throw away a time to tear apart in a time to so together a time to be silent in a time to speak a time to love in a time to hate a time for war in a time for peace what profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils I have seen the task which God has given the sons of men with which to occupy themselves as you encounter this list of seasons or times which we all face in the course of our lifetimes the question is this how do you understand and interpret these different seasons as you experience them it's not just hindsight as these seasons roll in to your life and roll to the next one and ebb and flow how are you interpret what is your grid that helps you interpret these seasons as you experience them okay you with me your responses in these seasons and to these seasons set the tone and course of your life so how we view life how we live life in these seasons that we all experience needs to be shaped and defined by scripture truth God's truth Solomon is saying lest we live a life that's wasted we need to interpret these seasons through the truth of God God will help us see these seasons for what they are and God will help us see meaning in these seasons through our relationship with him how we view and live life in these seasons that we all experience needs to be shaped by truth why because God is the appointer of these seasons in your life and God is the author of truth so you bring those two together God has appointed this season in my life and he has called me to interpret this season by his truth and God wrote the truth so this is a God thing you with me these seasons are a God thing everything I'm experiencing in my life in any given season really is all about me and God and there's just no getting away from it and the sooner that I bow my heart to interpreting this season the way God wants me to see it understand it and interpret it and live in it the more I will live in the fullest measure can I even live in the fullest measure and suffering in a difficult time in a hard time well absolutely if that weren't true then this would all be truly vapid vanity useless worthless what we find when we get into trouble and we're not living according to God's truth and interpreting these seasons in that truth what we find is it's it's like somebody pulling the rug out from underneath our feet we don't have anything substantial don't don't you find that out even Christians who are living very in a very shallow way not building their life with Christ not building their life on truth even Christians find when the hardest things in life hit them they feel like well where's my faith well I thought God would make all this right and it just feels so wrong and so hard and so desperate and I'm so sad my whole life is upside down if you don't have something more stable than gimmicks and man's wisdom and ideas to to guide you if you're not grounded in the truth that's a scary scary thing as a

Christian it's like where did God go you'll see that in the Psalms even every event in our lives is about God as the appointment of that event that's what I'm saying God has a plan he has a purpose so Solomon is calling us to make our responses to life about responding to God now folks can I just say that to you one more time real quickly and just hold on to this okay we all live in the reality of the ebb and flow and difficulties of life but what God wants for us to realize is as we are responding to life the greater reality is that we need to be responding to God in life you have to have some kind of response to the situation and the circumstance you do you got to figure out something and you got to act you got to think and you got to do I get it but what God is saying is don't let it just in there don't don't limit that understanding in response to I'm just I'm just trying to get through life I'm just

I'm just trying to make it to retirement I'm just you know the things we say respond to God this is about a God thing let me let me go a little further our God-given knowledge of time is God's gift to help us reach out to him in and even beyond this life time is a gift of the Lord look at verse 9 of chapter 3 what profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils what profit now that's a sobering question it corresponds to chapter 1 verse 3 so you need to write that in your Bible maybe chapter 1 verse 3 look at that what advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun chapter 3 verse 9 what profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils you see what he's doing he's just carrying in this little theme all the way through what profit is it we work work work work work we do we do we slave what is our worldview about work is it about responding to God what profit what advantage what benefit is there in all that you do in one season or another only to find that the opposite season now comes along and seems to cancel or wipe it all out oh that is so futile that who wants to live like that here's the point the point is that nothing in this life lasts okay everything in this life is changing I'm going to ask

Shelly Shelly have there been any changes in your kids over the last year no she says no no absolutely not I swear I Hannah walks into this place every Sunday and I see she look like she's grown six inches right and this gray hair is real I didn't used to look like this Greg everything's changing so don't build your life on the here and now don't root your life here that's a mistake now here's the thing I can hear this coming right at me as soon as I teach or talk about this okay what are you saying Jeff I'm saying that the point of all of this is that nothing lasts everything's changing so don't build your life on the here and now but Jeff we live in the here and now that sounds ethereal that sounds ephemeral that sounds uh I can't get my hand on that I live in the here and now but you're telling me not to root my life in the here and now what in the world does that look like is that fair how do I go to work every day how do I raise my kids how do I be married how do I do the things I do and pursue my hobbies and everything and not make it about the here and now I live in the here and now that's fair how do you follow through on that I'm going to tell you real quickly how to do that okay let's take marriage we'll start there start with your spouse for those of us who are married or have been married start with your spouse I I as a married man I can't think of anything more real and more here and now than my marriage my marriage has me very very rooted in the here and now as it were it's very real I I have a wife I have a soulmate right and if I if I don't have the a godly perspective on that it can get really out of whack and I can start expecting my wife and my soulmate and my best friend to be for me what only god can be for me and I can set her up for failure right so I'm grounded in the here and now only in the sense that I am living with this other person who is my soulmate so how do I keep a an eternal Jesus godly perspective on my marriage while I understand that I'm in the here and now and this is very real and I relate to her every single day but I don't want to make her an idol and I don't want to have a wrong understanding of how I'm supposed to relate to her that's very raw very real how do I keep on how do I do that here's how you do it you see him or her as a gift from God that changes everything this is a gift from God now what does that make me a steward I have been charged with the responsibility and privilege of being a steward a manager of this gift this gift is not being given to me to exploit it's not been given to me to boss around or you know all the negative things but this person has been put into my life as a gift from God and so listen I'm answerable to God for the way that I relate to this person and as I relate to this person I need to keep in mind I'm relating to God who gave me this person as a gift you see now you see how that's taking me out of rooting myself in the here and now and putting my perspective on the Lord while keeping my feet on the ground

I am married I do have a wife I need to relate to her but I need to relate to her understanding that God's given her to me and she belongs to me and I'm accountable to God in my relationship with her and this can be a sweet thing so I need to be married to her the way God wants me to be that's it so where do I go to do that to the truth so I don't get to make it up I don't get to go tell my wife these are all the ways that you need to be for me I don't get to do that and I've never done that right we all need that let me give you one quick more I think you get it but let me give you one quick quick other thing because this is this is even a little more raw uh even though it's not as there's not as much at stake as our relationships much more at stake but our stuff all right now let me just be real transparent with you I don't mind doing that so we have moved into another house you know that and so there's things to be done in the house and uh it seems like I do three and five more come or something like that I don't know how that happened so the last little while I've been doing projects around the house to kind of make the house more more us you know it feels more like us it kind of looks more like who we are it kind of expresses our personality our preferences you might come

into my house and say I'd never paint the walls that color that's fine it's not your house my house it's my personality I can paint them whatever I want that's what we do we do this with our stuff that's fine but but how do I keep that in perspective knowing that I live in this house there's all this stuff to do I'm telling you folks I could lose myself in my projects I go outside

I got a list of stuff I want to do and I love working outside it just trips my trigger to work outside especially if I get to rent machines and stuff that's all that's fine right but you could get lost in that and and that house could become such a thing in my mind and all these undone I am not a person that likes undone things I'm not I like things getting done and stuff so what do I do again I see it as a gift from God my home is a gift from God and that makes me a steward I'm a manager of a gift and God helps me keep that gift in perspective that gift is not to own me that gift is not to distract me from life no my hobby my house my spouse my kids my job anything anything can draw us away and so the key Solomon is saying he's saying all through this book the key to keeping the here and now in perspective is realizing that life is a gift from God all of it it's a gift and you're a steward of it so steward your life manage your life to the glory of God as his gift to you and you will be able to begin to live life to the fullest measure life will blossom into something beyond anything you could ever know apart from the Lord and that doesn't mean it's always peachy keen fine roses and flowers and stuff does it no because Solomon said that's not real well where do you go then to find any sense of steadiness grounding stability in this life that's so inconstant so unpredictable so changing look at verses 10 and 11 in chapter 3 and I'll move on and and finish up I have seen the task which God has given do you notice he keeps saying this

[49 : 44] God has given God has done God says the sons of men with which to occupy themselves God has given them a task to occupy themselves and then look at 11 he has made everything appropriate in its time God has also set eternity in their heart you'll remember I made a big deal of this when we got here I really put the brakes on yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime there it is see he wants us to be happy he wants us to rejoice moreover that every man who eats and drinks that's just do you see in eating and drinking that's the mundane every we got to do this is the everyday look what he says that every man who eats and drinks verse 13 sees good in all his labor look it is the gift of God

I know that everything God does will remain forever there is nothing to add to it there is nothing to take from it for God has so worked that men should be in awe of him fear him God has appointed to mankind the various issues of life that they need to navigate and what's God's end game he has put the knowledge of eternity into every single person your sense of being grounded or stable in this life is tied to your view of eternity it's based in your relationship to the God of eternity if your worldview says this is all there is so get all you can while you're here because when you die it's all done what do you think how do you think that affects the way you think about living I'm sure that it doesn't cause you to think God's given me this life as a gift and so I need to live it back to him no you're going to live it the way you want chasing all the things because this is it there is no God for you to meet at the end there's no hope of going on at the at your death that's so he says that's empty that's so empty people have a God given drive and desire to know about life after death and it's this and it's this way because listen

God wants them to consider their existence people run from that from their existence they run from it they redefine it God wants them to look beyond this life and they don't like doing that it's uncomfortable it's scary but God made us to anticipate and search out eternity it's a time when nagging questions plaguing issues unexplainable hardships terrible injustices the ever-shifting imbalances of life will all come into focus as we meet the Lord and are taken into heaven that's when everything becomes stable for eternity that's when everything comes to the conclusion that he has made we're all hardwired by God to want this kind of closure in our life and you'll see that in these verses I just read this is all a gift from God what God does and is doing matters because God's work in your life is what will stand the test of time you hear me

God's work in your life will stand the test of time you can count on that you can stand in that God is working worshipful humble trust in your heart for him let me do a quick third point and then I'll be finished God knows and does good God knows and does good colon celebrating his wisdom for your life and this is chapter 6 there is an evil which I have seen under the sun and it is prevalent among men a man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor so that his soul lacks nothing of all that he desires yet God has not empowered that man to eat from them that is to enjoy

them for a foreigner enjoys them this is vanity and a severe affliction if a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years however they be but his soul is not satisfied with good things and he does not even have a proper burial than I say better the miscarriage than me for it comes in futility goes into obscurity and its name is covered in obscurity it never sees the sun it never knows anything it is better off than he even if the other man lives a thousand years twice and does not enjoy good things do not all go to one place that is death all a man's labor is for his mouth and yet the appetite is never satisfied wow boy don't you just want the people in your life who aren't walking with the Lord and who are chasing the world to read this and understand it you're chasing your own tale right for what advantage does the wise man have over the fool and what advantage does the poor man have knowing how to walk before the living what the eyes see is better than what the soul desires this too is futility it's all a striving after wind whatever exists has already been named and it is known what man is for he cannot dispute with him who is stronger than he is for there are many words which increase futility what then is the advantage to a man and here it is for who knows this is where we left off for who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime during the few years of his futile life he will spin them like a shadow for who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun so God has put eternity into our hearts a God consciousness hold on to that a God consciousness everybody has that and he does that so that we cannot escape the realization of our need to know and to answer to God here is how Michael Eaton said it this way

I quoted him earlier our consciousness of God is part of our nature and the suppression of it is part of our sin and then Eaton quoted Augustine who said you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they can find peace in you folks I give that to you because that is wonderful wisdom and you can hold on to that about everybody you know especially the ones who are denying the Lord the ones you work with that you're around all the time the nominal Christians that you meet to the rank unbelievers who hate God and don't want to have anything to do with him all of them have this God consciousness in their life and they will never know peace until they know him but it's elusive because of our sin and it's exclusively experienced in a relationship with God through faith in Jesus here's what he said this is 1st John 5:11 and 12

[57:21] God has given us eternal life and this life is in his son he who has the son has the life he who does not have the son of God does not have the life in verse 10 of chapter 6 I pointed out to you that naming has everything to do with authority look at verse 10 with me whatever exists has already been named and it is known what man is it is known what man is by how he's been named and who named man God did God created and named Adam and Eve God allowed Adam to name the animals and God allowed Adam to name Eve all authority is in mind here here's how Dr. Barak explained it another commentator ancient near eastern peoples regarded giving a name to something or someone as an act of appointing it's his or her character character that is what defines you what defines you so God hasn't left anything without his stamp of ownership even in naming man mankind the Hebrew word for Adam is Adama or Adama

A-D-A-M-A-H Adama man is in his proper place as of the earth or earth bound that's what he means when he says it is known what man is man is of the earth one who is from the earth in contradistinction God is in the heavens because God is the authority and he determines the destiny the remaining verses here in chapter 6 give us the idea that there is no human reasoning or human argument that can change this reality God has set into man's heart eternity and God has defined who man is by his very nature man is of this world he's of this earth there's no advantage for him to gain over God or his situation in life which God ordains and then in verse 12 to end it up notice how he uses a couple of questions in verse 12 very potent and these questions are designed to stress God's sovereignty over man for who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime during the few years of his futile life who knows and then the second question who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun now the obvious answers for this entire chapter and for the entirety of the first six chapters is this no one but God himself no one but God himself we're just a shadow God is our maker God knows what's highest best he knows what's truly good for you my friends do you accept the reality you don't even know what's best for you do you realize if God left you to yourself you would do the kinds of things that would waste your life people say to me and you've heard them say it and this is this is demonic they say yeah but you know what I'm having a lot of fun it may not be about God in my life but I'm having a lot of fun you and I both know that that's a lie that they're under a great deception

God knows only God is worthy of controlling our destinies when I summed up chapter 6 here's how I ended these are some truths that David Hubbard used in his summary of chapter 6 here it is number one you'll have this in your notes probably because I put it up on a slide for you contentment is more satisfying than wealth you understand the world doesn't get that number two doing God's will is more important than gaining goods the world doesn't get that do they and doing God's will brings the highest wealth of all life without Jesus is a wasted life because it really is no life at all it's just a shadow and so

I'll remind you of what Peter said to those who reside as aliens scattered throughout Pontus Galatia Cappadocia Asia and Bithynia who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father and by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with his blood may grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure not without the sprinkling of the blood and not apart from obeying Jesus you want that fullest measure follow the Lord Jesus follow the Lord Jesus now I hope that that running quick speedy talking diatribe is going to help put you in the frame of mind and heart for moving on through the rest of Ecclesiastes God willing we'll hold on to those points and see what the

[63 : 10] Lord does with all of it in the coming weeks we'll just look to him let me pray for us before we transition into our song and just ask God's blessing on his word here as we've heard it Father just a brief prayer before you almighty God as we ask you to cleanse our lives through the sprinkling of this blood of the Lord Jesus on us spiritually that we would look to you God to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness you tell us that anyone who will come to you anyone who will truly humble themselves before you confessing that they are sinners that they are sinners they have lived wrong and done wrong in your sight and under your authority they have disregarded you they have rebelled against you they have even hated you in their hearts anyone who will come to you and bow before you confessing that reality and asking for your forgiveness so that they are putting their faith in

Jesus Christ to forgive them and to wash their sin away by the sprinkling of his blood you say those people will be forgiven and saved from their sins so we pray that all who would hear this would take careful stock of that wonderful wonderful offer and great privilege to know Jesus and to be forgiven for their sins by trusting in him and looking to follow him all the days of their lives we look to you and thank you for this great mercy that you showered on us in him in Jesus name we pray amen