Wealth + Wisdom + Work = Wind

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[0:00] That is one of the blessings in God answering prayer and sending Michaela to help us do this in a live way instead of the recordings from Micah who used to be doing this for us and moved away for a job.

We can do that. She could pick it right back up. If the recording had cut out, you just keep singing, but the recording would have been it. That's it. Right. It just would have stayed gone. But thank you. Beautiful, beautiful job.
It's all good in the Lord. He receives it from each of us. Now, friends, for those of you who are here, you've been here with me. We jumped back in after my illness away.
We jumped back in to Genesis and went through Sodom and Gomorrah. We went through some of 18 as well. Genesis 18. We landed in Genesis 20. And I want to I want to continue to hit the pause button.
OK, just let's pause Abraham just for a brief time. I want to I want to better set you up for you to think about and evaluate with me what you're seeing in Abraham in Genesis 20.
[1:01] Now, you know what's about to happen. I've said it several times. Here we are again. In father Abraham's life in Genesis 20, where he's going to throw Sarah, his wife, under the bus, isn't he?

You know, I use that phrase in Poland last year when we were there. And, you know, and I know better. I'm I know better than to use American idioms and stuff to.
And sure enough, at the end of it, when I said that, a guy came up to me and he said. There's no throwing under bus. That's murder. It's so that it went.
Right. He didn't. So I had to say, OK, brother, that was on me. That one's on me. Here's the deal. And explain it to him. Abraham is throwing Sarah under the bus by saying, listen to this, guys. Right. They've been married for a long time. I think at this point, Abraham is about ninety nine. Sarah is ninety. And he's going to give her away to another man for that man to have her to save his own skin.
[2:09] Now, doesn't that sound a lot like Lot and his daughters? So it's no accident by any means that Genesis 20 with Abraham follows right on Sodom and Gomorrah. And we see two men who should know better and do know better doing a very wicked thing.

Now, you need to be in a position to understand how did that happen? How did Abraham, the father of nations, the patriarch of Israel, how did he get to the point where he would take his wife and give her away like that and compromise her?
That is a grievous sin against the Lord and against his wife, against his household. How did Lot get to the point where he would give his daughters to these terrible, wicked men and say, ravage them all night long?
Derek, there's no way he you could have to cut his arms off and he still wouldn't do that. Right. These daddies. And yet that's what Lot did. And Lot did it for himself, for his own pride, for his own ego.
Abraham did the same thing for the same reasons in the same way. And so we need to understand, better understand how human beings get there because we're plagued with the same thing.
[3:19] Let me go ahead and ask you. Abraham's repeating the sin that he should know better and should have learned the lesson. Have you ever committed a sin that was a repeat of a sin that you had done before?

Okay. Okay. So we're all in that boat, aren't we? We're all in the boat of getting to the point. Why haven't I learned this? Why is this still? Well, we need to talk about that. Now, fortunately for us, the Bible, your father in heaven answers those issues that we struggle with as human beings.

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So what we're going to do this morning is we're going to be in Ecclesiastes. I'm going to return there with you from years ago when we were in this book together. Ecclesiastes chapter two.
And here's what I'm going to do. We ready? Yep. Okay. This is the title of my message and I want to qualify it just for a sec here. Ecclesiastes two.
Rather than do what I normally do and read through the entire passage I'll be dealing with before we jump into it, I'm going to wait and take it in sections as we get to it.
[4:21] I want to do a little bit in my intro with you first to whet your appetite. Now, as you see, I draw a line here and do a sum. Wealth plus wisdom plus work equals wins.

We're going to talk about what that win means, but obviously it's not a good thing. And so, Jeff, are you saying that wealth, wisdom and work are not good things? Well, in and of themselves, there's nothing wrong with wealth.
God blesses people with wealth. It's one of the things Proverbs 8 says wisdom will do for you. Wisdom will serve you well, and if God desires, He'll bless you with material wealth.
Some of us more than others at different seasons and stations in life. So there's nothing wrong with wealth in and of itself. I'm not saying that, right? I'm not saying it's all evil.
Money is all evil. What about wisdom? Well, there's nothing wrong with applying wisdom. And we call it this. When we're not talking about God's wisdom, we typically refer to another kind of wisdom this way.
[5:22] We call it common sense. President Trump ran on that ticket in a big way, didn't he? We just need to get back to common sense. Well, there's something better than common sense.

It's the wisdom of God, and that's what we're called to live in. And then work. God's called us to work. We need to be people who work. Make a living. Provide for our families.
There's nothing inherently wrong with work. But can work be an idol? Can we work for the wrong reasons? Can we have wrong motives in our work? Absolutely. So when you take the worldliness, the worldliness attached to wealth, wisdom, and work, you end up with wind.
That's according to the Bible. And I'm going to show you that this morning. Now, let me ask the question then. What is it that makes for a truly meaningful, fulfilling life?
Boy, lots and lots of people in this world are chasing the answer to that question. What makes for a truly meaningful and fulfilling life? Nobody wants to live a dud life.
[6:26] Well, that's exactly what King Solomon is exploring and answering in the entire book of Ecclesiastes. It's a book that helps you apply the wisdom of God to life and avoid the pitfalls that Solomon will tell you will ruin and waste your life.

The entire book. And we went through this years ago together. There is a particular author that I quoted here, author Gleason Archer.
And I want to share with you something that he said to sum this up. Look at this. This is what we're kind of operating from as a theme. The purpose of Ecclesiastes was to convince men of the uselessness of any worldview which does not rise above the horizon of man himself.
You track with that maybe? Yeah? So what is he saying here? He's saying something is useless. What is it? It is useless for any of us to have a view of our life and a view or perception, an interpretation of our life, of the world and the way the world works, which does not help us rise above ourself.
If the limit of your interpretation, valuing, prioritizing, begins and ends in you, you're in trouble. Because your life will never rise above the limitations of what and who you are.
[7:49] You're a sinner. You need to be a sinner saved by God's grace, His favor poured out on your life. And so Archer is saying Ecclesiastes helps us rise above self, above the idols that we form in our hearts to replace God in any given moment, and in that moment sin against the Lord.

He said, no, I can help you with that. Because I can show you a different priority for life and a different way of responding in life that will help you avoid a wasted life and can help you rise above who you are in yourself.
Look, what does the world tell us? The world tells us that the best way for you to live a fulfilled and meaningful life, the best way for you to find purpose in life, is to get in touch with yourself and be good to yourself.
Is that not true? Well, that's a lie. That is not true. I have another sermon in Ecclesiastes where I take one of the most prolific books written in our modern time, disseminated New York Times bestseller list, and it is full of the mantra of self.

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And it just catapulted. The woman who wrote it, a lesbian, divorced her husband in order to marry another woman, wrote this book. It took off.
[9:15] She's written several others. Now she has a... They said that she is, if not the most, one of the most influential podcasters on the planet. She has gained a following of millions of women across the world who are listening to her, and her basic idea is this.

You are what matters. And she says this, and I'm quoting, Be full of yourself. That's her gospel. Now, you guys, some of you who are here, you guys had just come to the church, and I think you heard this message.
I quote her extensively in one of my sermons from this series. I tell you what the book is. I talk to you about what she does, and I update you on some things that she has going on, and then I dive into Ecclesiastes to show you the Bible has exactly the opposite message where Jesus Himself says, Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me.
And we need to understand what that means. Now, according to Scripture, a meaningful life... Hear me carefully, my friends. A meaningful life is lived as a selfless response.
Let's start there. A meaningful life is a selfless response. You are responding to someone. It is a selfless response to a selfless sacrifice.
[10:38] That is the key to a meaningful life. Now, Ecclesiastes tells us this. If you look at chapter 2, verse 24. We'll get here in just a little while, but look at this.

In 2.24, there is nothing better. See? We're there. There's nothing better for a man, for a person, than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good.
Now, that's a way of saying there's nothing better for you than to live a good life. A good life. But what is the good life? Who's to say? This also I have seen that it is from what?
The hand of God. So, that's what He tells us in 24. But then He asks this question in 25. For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without God?
Without Him? That's the question. And He hits it right at the beginning of this book that He wrote. He gets us right to the issue. Certainly, all of us want to live the good life.
[11:48] Then He's saying there is no good life apart from God. There isn't. It's shallow. It's empty. He's going to tell you it's wind. And I'll help you see what that means.

Now, once again, think with me, folks. We are New Testament Christians living in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His cross. This is no longer a mystery as the Bible called it.
Mystery meaning something hidden. Abraham didn't know about Jesus. He knew there would be a deliverer and he put his faith in God's promise. I'm going to send somebody to reverse Genesis 3.15.
I'm going to send somebody to reverse the curse. Abraham didn't know it would be Jesus. But we do. We look back on what the New Testament has taught us and now we understand what God's plan was.
It was in His Son, right? To deliver us from sin and death through faith in Him and in Him alone. So we are New Testament Christians living in Christ and in the cross.
[12:45] And in the New Testament tells us that God's gift of a truly good life, hear me, is a godly life. It's a godlike life provided for us only through relationship to God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Now once again, I'm going to put this up on the screen for you. The Bible says, look at this up on the screen, the good life is a selfless response to God for a selfless sacrifice by God.
That's the good life. And it may or may not include material wealth. It will always include heavenly wisdom and it will involve much work.
We don't get away from that stuff. So what we're talking about here is a self-denying response to a self-denying sacrifice. We are responding in life primarily to the Lord.
Not to circumstances, not to people, not to goals, priorities, riches, you know, a good name or reputation.
[13:55] The primary motive in responding in life is that we want to be responding to God. And so we ask the question of ourselves, is what I'm about to say pleasing to the Lord?

Is the way that I'm dealing with this person, thinking about this person, operating in my relationship with this person, is that pleasing to God? It goes beyond what Jesus would do.
We know what He would do. It's written down for. Now we're asking ourselves, how do I apply in my own life and live out the character of the Lord Jesus in gentleness, kindness, peace, self-control.

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What does that look like when I deal with my husband, when I deal with my wife, as I raise my children? See, I love you guys sit on the front row. You make it so easy for me to, yeah, use you. What does that look like in life? Now, let me help you see this life of response and sacrifice a little more clearly before I jump in. Just a couple of quick passages.
[14:55] We're going to make it. We'll get through this together. It's in Mark 8. I just referenced it a few moments ago in something I said about self-denial. Mark 8.

Since I referenced the New Testament, I want to take you there and show you what the Lord says. I'm going to pick it up in verse 27. Jesus went out along with His disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi and on the way He questioned His disciples saying to them, and here it is, He's with His disciples.
It's an intimate time with the Lord. And Jesus prompts them and He says, Who do people say that I am? Well, they told Him some of the things they were hearing from the people.
Oh, this guy is John the Baptist. You know, kind of a reinvention of John the Baptist here. He's been brought back to life as a prophet. Others say Elijah, but still others, one of the other prophets.
Jesus continued by questioning His disciples in verse 29, But who do you say that I am? And Peter, being the spokesman, piped up right away, You are the Christ. That is, You are the Messiah.
[16:07] You are the Deliverer. You are the One promised to us to overcome sin. And so Jesus said in verse 30, He warned them not to tell anyone about Him at this time.

Don't spread that around right now. It's not quite time to release all that information. Now, in verse 31, we pick it up, And Jesus began to teach His disciples that the Son of Man, this Messiah, this Christ, Him as the Deliverer, must suffer many things, and He must be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed.
After three days, He would rise again. And Jesus was stating the matter very plainly. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Jesus. But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter. And He said something scathing to this Peter disciple, Get behind me, Satan. Why? For you are not doing something that is key to the Christian life.
You are not setting your mind. You could also put synonymously there, heart. You are not setting your mind, your heart, on God's interests but man's.
[17:19] There is your selfishness. There is your ego. There is your pride. There is your agenda. I mean, how much pride does it take to rebuke the Lord of glory?

Right? No, I got a better plan, Jesus. I know You made the whole world and sustain it every day, but I got a better plan. See, that's, He's not setting His mind on God's interests.
Verse 34, and so Jesus summoned the crowd now with the disciples. He said, Everybody, come on in. Move it in. Get close. Let's go. And then He said to them, If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.
For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it. Whoever loses his life for My sake gives it away for My sake, and the Gospels will save it. That's pretty clear, isn't it?
I don't think we have to do a whole bunch of commentary there. What we're talking about in these verses is a response. You are responding in self-denial.
[18:22] You are denying ego. You are denying anything in your life that would set itself up against the will of God for your life. That's a daily walk.

That's a daily habit in your life. Otherwise, you're going to default to wanting to do things your way and you're going to ask God to tag along and show up when you need Him. That is not the Christian life, friend.
Don't be deceived. People can try to live like that, but that is not an expression of being submitted to Jesus in great humility. Lord, use me today in whatever way pleases You most.
Whatever that will mean for me, I'm Your man. I'm Your woman. Whatever that looks like and sounds like. The second passage, just quickly, we'll read it.
You're very familiar. Here is in Romans chapter 12. So many passages I could have chosen. We'll be in verses 1 and 2.
[19:21] Very familiar passage to our church family. Paul is writing here to set the context. And he's transitioning from all the doctrine of the mercies of God that he has presented in the first 11 chapters of this wonderful theological treatise.

He comes to chapter 12 and he begins to say, now I want to help you apply that theology to how you live your life. And he begins this way. He begins with the issue of worship. Therefore, I urge

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you, I strongly encourage you, he's saying, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.
So you are making a response here and that response involves a presenting of all that you are encapsulated in this physical self, this physical body to God as an act of worship.
That doesn't just happen on Sunday morning. He's saying, this is your life. Your life is a life of responding to God in worship. Every moment of every day you are worshiping.
The question is, who? All right? He goes on to say in verse 2, do not then, because you have this mandate of responsive worship to God, presenting yourself as a living sacrifice to Him, do not do the thing that will help cut that off or change that.
[20:53] Do not be conformed to this world. The world is what works against you worshiping God. But instead, in contrast, be transformed.

So, conformity is something that you can give yourself to as the world presses in on you. Transformation is a spiritual work of God that you cooperate with through obedience to the Lord. But be transformed by the renewing of your mind, your heart. Let the work of God in His truth renew the way that you perceive life, perceive self, perceive others, perceive God, perceive what a good life is.
So that, purpose clause, you may prove what? What the will of God is. Your life becomes a living billboard, a living testimony of living out God's will for a human being.
And that will involve, notice the first word, that which is good. You want to live a good life? This is the life. It's the life in Christ. You want to live a life acceptable or pleasing to Almighty God?
[22:02] It's a life lived in Jesus. You want to live a perfect, that is a righteous life, a life that is put in right standing with God? Then live for Jesus. Now folks, look, is this basic stuff, this is just not hard to follow, is it?

I'm kind of slapping you back into, I see you going, and then you drift. And so I'm bringing you back. Stay with me. This is just intro. I haven't started preaching yet. So we want to do this.
We want to live the good, the acceptable, the perfect life before God and how God defines it. We've got to have all kinds of people, including our own heart, weighing in on what that good life should look like.
And we need to be very, very careful. We are living and holy sacrifices before the Lord. Let me put both of those references up there for you. All right?
So here's how I can sum all that up for you. The good life, it's right there at the bottom of the screen, the good life is a Godward life. We're going to be defining what Godward means.
[23:13] That's what Ecclesiastes does. So your life, making God known in His mercy to you is what we're talking about. A Godward life is you living back to God the life He is giving you under the sun as a gift in His Son.

You are simply living back to God what He has given you as the blessing of His heart. You say, Jeff, what is the best thing I can do in life to bless the Lord, to give back to God for all that He's given me in Jesus Christ and the cross?
What's the very best life I can live back to Him? Here it is. This is what the Bible is telling you. The best life that you can give back to God as an expression of your heart's gratitude, thankfulness, love, is the life that He's giving you in Jesus.
You live that back to Him. You can't get higher than that. You can't get a better gift to give back to God than the gift of His own Son given to you.
That's how that works. We call that the Christian life. Did that come across? If your eyes go cross on me, I'm going to do it again. Are you with me?
[24:30] We're talking about a life lived for Jesus and what that looks like for you each day of your life. If Abraham had trusted God in the promises that God had made him about, hey, this time next year I'm going to visit you again, you and Sarah are going to have a baby.

You don't worry about the fact that she's had a closed womb all her life and has not been able to have a child. You don't worry about it. You don't worry about the fact you're 99 and she's 90 and you guys haven't been together in a long time.
I'm going to take care of all of that and I'll be here next season and you'll have a baby boy and that baby boy is going to be used by me and eventually that bloodline is going to bring us Jesus.
Yeah, that's the promise of God and now Abraham wants to throw his wife under the bus, give her to another man and forfeit that entire promise and you say, what a bozo and I say, amen.

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You're also looking at a bozo. That's what I am when I sin. We all want to believe I wouldn't throw my wife under the bus like that. You've got to ask yourself, how did Abraham get there?
[25:39] Every time you sin, you want to ask, how did I get here? How did I get here? By God's definition, the good life is a life of godly gratitude and obedience.

Lived in love back to the Lord. God. So, that's how we understand what we're being taught in our passages for today in the entire chapter that we're going to be kind of dissecting in quick form as we move through it together.
Alright? So, let me give you a baseline here. This is a baseline of how we can think about this. It's at the bottom of the screen. Life under the sun, notice S-O-N, is God's one and only provision of lasting fulfillment this side of heaven.
If you skip Jesus, if you ignore Jesus, if you get apathetic about Jesus, you are not living God's will for the one and only provision of a fulfilling life.
There is no other person, no other name, according to Acts 4.12, that we can live under and by and through where we can experience the joys of heaven.
[26:57] There's only one name and it's the name Jesus Christ. Now, keep in mind Solomon's quest as it's expressed in his question about life in chapter 1, verse 3.

Just look over there real quick. What advantage does man have in all of his work which he does under the sun? That's the question that's going to drive all the way through the book of Ecclesiastes.
Now, we're only going to do a couple sermons here, but that's the question that we're dealing with so keep that in mind. Now, we can look into what I'm going to call three truths up on the screen Solomon declares about his deep dive into the value of worldly wealth, worldly wisdom, and worldly work for providing any kind of advantage to a meaningful life.
How do any of these three things done the world's way provide any degree of advantage to me in living a meaningful and purposeful life? Question.
Pop quiz. Do you know of, personally, or have you ever encountered, a person who is quite wealthy, maybe independently wealthy, and miserable?
[28:11] Do you know of a person like that? Have you seen that? Have you seen it through programming, documentaries, news things? How many people in Hollywood are filthy rich and live in mansions and they're miserable?

How many wives have they gone through? Husbands have they gone through? What's their money done for them? Right? The worldly way is a way that steers us away from that statement.
Because what it's telling people is there is a way for me to have the world, my cake, and eat it too. I can be a Christian, and I can love the world, and I can be about the world, and I can kind of bring God in on my life when I think it's necessary.
Otherwise, I just kind of ask him to stay out here. I'll talk to him every once in a while. I might read his word every once in a while. But basically, I'm living the life I want to live. And if that's the case, folks, you're living in lies and it is going to catch up to you if it hasn't already.
I promise you this is what we're being told here. All right, so these are the three big issues that we want to deal with as it comes to what people really trust to help them secure a happy, meaningful life.
[29:28] Wealth, worldly wealth, worldly wisdom, and worldly work. Work is a way for them to get what they most want. And so they give themselves over in a big way to it.

So let's deal with this first one, worldly wealth. Look at what it says in Ecclesiastes 2. Solomon is writing and he says, you know, I said to myself, now remember, Solomon is the wisest and wealthiest man on the planet at this time.
God made him wealthier than anyone had ever been in the history of the world to this moment. He says, I said to myself, come now, I will test you with pleasure.
So enjoy yourself. He's saying that he said this to himself at one time in his life. And behold, it too was what? What does your Bible say? What's the last word in verse 2?
Futility. Anybody got a different word than futility? Vanity. That's his favorite word to translate in this. That's wind. You'll see in just a moment.
[30:32] I said of laughter, so he went from pleasure, I said of laughter, it's madness. And then I said of pleasure, what does it accomplish? I explored with my mind how to stimulate my body.

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How many people do you hear about with that nonsense? He's doing it with wine. While my mind was guiding me wisely. Yeah, right. And how to take hold of folly until I could see what good there is for the sons of men to do under heaven the few years of their life.
Kind of reminds me of the people back in the 60s doing these LSD things because it got them in touch with the universe and killed thousands of them. Verse 4, I enlarged my works, I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself.
Notice how many times you see I and myself. I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in all kinds of fruit trees. I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees.
I bought male and female slaves and I had home-born slaves. Also, I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. Right, God had made him the richest man on the planet.
[31:43] Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. And then notice this, I provided for myself male and female singers in the pleasures of men, many concubines, see, many women.

Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me. All that my eyes desired, I did not refuse them. Boy, what a statement.
I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor, and this was my reward for all my labor. Verse 11, thus, I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold, all was vanity and striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun.
Now, folks, look, just as in our time, wealth was measured in Solomon's time by the kind of life a person could afford to pursue. And in this first section, Solomon's wealth is seen in his ability to gather and then to apply enormous, unimaginable amounts of resources in time, labor, people, materials, money to gain an experience that he would call the joyful life, the pleasurable life.
in verses 1 and 2, look back there with me, in verses 1 and 2, this is a little summation of what he did and what he discovered in this experiment that he's now entering into that will take him years to complete.
[33:27] This wasn't an overnight thing. This is very interesting to me because I'll put it up here on the screen. This was his goal. Solomon's goal was enjoy yourself.

Do you see that? Enjoy yourself. That's in verse 1. Come now, I will test you with pleasure, so enjoy yourself. That's my goal. That's the end thing for me in my life right now.
It has the idea of personally immersing himself in what one commentator called unfettered pleasure. So he wanted to test pleasure as the measure of a fulfilling life.
Pleasure, personal pleasure, unfettered, pleasured. In other words, I'm taking the shackles off, I'm taking the restraints off. If I think it could be pleasurable for me, I'm getting into it.
I'm doing it. It's going to involve women, wine, it's going to involve stuff, it's going to involve people, doing for me, slaves. If it's out there, I'm going to grab it and I'm going to try it.
[34:32] This is my experiment. Wisest man in the world at this time. he was going to milk life.

I say, milk life for all it was worth. And this was his conclusion. If that's his goal, here's his conclusion. Behold, it too was empty.
The wind, futility, vanity. It was the wind. It was just totally nothing. It came to nothing. All the money, all the time, all the labor, all the years, all the people.
It came to nothing. Why? Well, I want to get into it just a little bit more. Laughter here. Laughter. That he talks about in verse 2.
I said of laughter. Listen, this could be translated by us as party fun. I was a partier for a long time. I was a clubber. I think that's the phrase now.
[35:28] Let's go clubbing. Let's walk into a worldly den of whatever and do our thing. You need to be careful about where you take yourself, folks. Just don't flirt with that kind of stuff.

Please take that as good counsel. Laughter here is party fun. What does he say about that? This kind of laughter. Listen to me, please, folks. This is worldly laughter.
This is the kind of laughter that learns to laugh at sin. This is the kind of laughter that learns to take pleasure in sin, in sinful experiences, with other sinners.
You follow me? And you follow where that can take you? Think of Sodom and what people can get themselves into. We learn to laugh at sin. We learn to laugh at the things that breaks God's heart.

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Please don't think you can't get there. He says, you know what? Laughter, party fun, laughing like that, that's madness. It's madness.
[36:31] What does madness mean? In this context, it would better translate pretense. It's false. It's shallow. It's fake. It has no substance whatsoever. Oh, you laugh, but it has no depth.

And you know it. You drink yourself into it. You pill yourself. You inject yourself. You dance yourself. You sex yourself into all of these different things.
And then what happens? You wake up out of it just even for a moment and you think, what in the world? people feel that shallowness, that fake, don't they? Because that's what it is.
Then they have to go self-medicate with more of it. See, it's not that, we don't need psychology to tell us all this, guys. That's worldly wisdom. The Bible speaks to these issues.
Peter tells us that what you give yourself to is what will enslave you. So what they call addiction, we call, biblically, enslavement. And it's because you're giving yourself over to it to control you.
[37:32] And God says, okay, I'll give you over. If that's the idol of your heart, I'll give you over and let you live what you've chosen. You'll find that in Proverbs as well. This is what we see happening in these first verses.

The verbal root, I'm going to put it up here for you, the verbal root for this word laughter means a loss of judgment. So we're digging just a little bit deeper into the Hebrew here to help us understand the intonation, the meaning that the Hebrews would have picked up on reading this for the first time. Laughter means here a loss of judgment. He adds that this person drowns the hard facts of life in a sea of frivolity. This is Michael Eaton, a commentator that I read about all this.
The verbal root for laughter is a loss of judgment. It's a person who is drowning himself or herself in the hard facts of life because they want to escape it in a sea of frivolity.
This is a person who learns to live life making an issue of joking and clowning and being superficial to try and take the edge off the hardness of the realities of life.
[38:49] Folks, now look, you guys know I was saved in college, so I had some time as a young adult man to live apart from the Lord and chase things.

So I know the feeling that comes from chasing those empty things in a way that honors self and dishonors the Lord and feeling miserable about it but wanting to try to make everybody think you're cool, you got this.
this is endemic for us as human beings, is it not? And it's sad. It's sad when kids raised, and I'm pointing but I don't mean, I don't personally, don't just take it generally speaking.
We have many kids raised in Christian homes, I'm looking at you guys, and it is so tragic when kids raised in a Christian home where you're being told these truths and your mom and dad are striving like crazy to live it and then these kids get into college and decide I'm just going to do my thing. And they chase emptiness until it just about destroys them. I remember the first day that I figured out my parents weren't as, I need to find a different word than the S word, oh Nathan's not here, I can use the Bible word stupid, that my parents weren't as stupid as I thought they were.
[40:08] And I remember when I was sitting on our farm in a swing out underneath a magnolia tree with my mom in the calm of a summer evening and I said something to the effect of, you know mom, you and dad have been right about a bunch of stuff.

And my mom went, well listen to that. She didn't even cut me any slack. And my mom to this day will still tell you, I can tell you the day my son got wise.
Right? She teases me. You know folks, look, the point of all me saying that is this, God is so good to not leave us where we were. God is in the process of taking us where we need to be.
He's faithful. Thank God for growth that can come from Christ as we walk with him. There's hope, my friends. So we don't want this.
Now just to give you a quick idea of the magnitude of what we're talking about in Solomon's commitment to this experiment, I got to show you this. This was just mind-blowing to me.
[41:14] If you turn back to 1 Kings, 1 Kings, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles.

Let's see, I'm in chapter 4. This is just a quick, quick look now. 1 Kings chapter 4. I think I've got this right. Let me get to 1 Kings.
I'm in 2. Let me read this to you. It's in verse, I'm going to start in verse 20.
The title of this section in my Bible says, Solomon's power, wealth, and wisdom. There you go. So it's perfect. Here's verse 20. Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance.

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So many, many, many people. God had blessed them so fruitfully in this way. And they were eating and drinking and rejoicing. Something that Ecclesiastes speaks to.
[42:24] Now verse 21. Now Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the river to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.

They're saying, this guy is wealthier than anybody's ever been. He's had more power than anybody ever has. Israel is richer than it's ever been and enjoying the good life. Verse 22.
Solomon's provision for one day in this party atmosphere was 30 cores of fine flour and 60 cores of meal. It's okay if you don't know what a core is.
Just keep with me. Verse 23. Ten, now look, this is one day, folks. Ten fat oxen, 20 pasture-fed oxen.
You know how big oxen are? A hundred sheep. And that's besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl.
[43:25] For he had dominion over everything west of the river. And it tells about how far all of that went. Now here's the point of me sharing this with you. Back to Ecclesiastes.

Listen to this. All of that was provision for one day in this years-long experiment that he's doing in all these building projects and everything else. Commentator Walt Kaiser said this.
He said that some commentators estimate that it would have taken 30,000 to 40,000 people to consume that much food each day. 30,000 to 40,000 party-goers every day.
to consume that much food. Here's the idea. Solomon was filthy rich.
He celebrated big and he held back nothing and that is what he's telling you in this passage. I went big. I went as big as anybody had ever gone before me and then some.
[44:31] That's what he's saying. Look back again at chapter 2 in the first 11 verses and look at what I'm going to emphasize. If you start with verse 3, I'm just going to say what I've highlighted in my Bible.

He says, I explored. In verse 4, I enlarged. I built. I planted. Verse 5, I made. I planted.
Verse 6, I made. Verse 7, I bought. I possessed. Verse 8, I collected. I provided. Verse 9, I became. Verse 10, I did not refuse. I did not withhold. You see all that? This is what he's telling us. In verses 4 through 8, notice all the things that he's bragging about that he pursued for himself in this pleasure-seeking experiment.
Notice, houses. Not one, not two. Many, many houses. He bought. He built. Business investments and business projects.
[45:38] Private sanctuaries. Private. For him. For myself, he said. Full of lush vegetation and edible fruits. Personal land improvement projects.

Oh, he had more than one farm. He had many that were his playgrounds. He had slaves and servants to wait on his every need of every moment in any way he wanted.
He had tens of thousands of animals in his flocks and herds. He had storehouses that were full to the brim of gold, silver, jewels, and other valuables. He had the very best in the music of the day and he brags that he had many, many exotic women.
He eventually had 600 wives and 300 concubines. And the Bible says that those pagan women, they were all pagans, they were not God-fearers, those pagan women would eventually turn his heart away from the Lord.
In verses 9 and 10, we're just being told he didn't hold back. If he thought it would add to his pleasure, he secured it and tried it. So, add power, prestige, fame, all of that combined to give Solomon a rush, we would say.
[46:53] So, he was pretty pleased with himself for a little while. He was pretty pleased with his accomplishments. But, but, now the question, I'm going to put it on the screen, how deep did his satisfaction go?

How long did it last? And the answer is in verse 11, isn't it? Thus, after all of that, I considered all my activities. I added it all up.
I sat down and thought about it. I walked it. I looked at it. I took it all in, which my hands, my hands, which I had accomplished and done, and the labor which I had exerted.
This is all me. and behold, all was vanity, emptiness, and striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun.

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It afforded me nothing. That's the wisest man in the world. Now, if you look with me at verse 12, so I turned to consider wisdom, madness, folly.
[47:58] For what will the man do who will come after the king except what has already been done? And I saw, wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. Okay, that's good. The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness.

And yet I know that one fate befalls them both. Then I said to myself, as in the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?
Hmm? So I said to myself, this too is vanity. I haven't been wise. For there's no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool. Inasmuch as in the coming days, all will be forgotten.
I'm no better off than the fool. And how the wise man and the fool alike die. We're both going to face the same end. So it isn't about dying, it's about how I live.
So what did he say? Verse 17, I hated life. For the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me, taxing, distressing to me.
[49:08] Because everything is futility and striving after wind. Does that? Does that sound like a man who's putting his hope in the Lord? No. No. He spent years doing all this putting his hope in himself.

And now he comes to the end but he's honest and he says, you know what? I came to the point where I hated my life. I hated my life. I hated what I'd made. Listen to me, please. You can get to the point where you say, I hate my marriage.
Well, who made it? Who's making your marriage? You going to blame me? You going to blame your mother-in-law? This is what people do, right?
Come on! You just don't understand my circumstances. If you knew my husband better, if you knew my wife better, who makes the marriage?
Those who live in it. And so you get to the point where you say, I hate my marriage. Well, you need to ask yourself, what did I do to contribute to getting to the point where I hate what I'm living in?
[50:10] What did I do? We don't default there. We have to be brought there. If you want a great marriage, let God make it.

If you want a great life, let God make it. I know that, well, that sounds so simple, Jeff. But if you were in what I'm in right now, no, no, listen. We're turning now to this idea in this second part of worldly wisdom.
Worldly wisdom. We're returning to the idea of worldly wisdom, human wisdom as the means to search out and discover the meaning in fulfilling life. So as king, Solomon stands unequaled, as I've told you, in his ability to test this out.
No one comes after him is going to do a better job than he's done in this experiment. Because no one is going to be in Solomon's position to pool the resources of the world in such a way that they could pull this experiment off in such completeness.
Solomon said, look, nobody will do it better than I did it. In verse 13, look, verse 13, and I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. Is human wisdom about the things of life all bad?
[51:26] That's the question up on the screen. Is it all bad? You know, look, folks, there are plenty of people who haven't been believers who've given us wonderful things. There are things in the medical and scientific community.

Aren't you glad? You know, look, when I went in for my spine surgery a few months ago, I'll tell you what I did not do. Well, I didn't get a chance to talk to him because I didn't know where I was or who I was or anything.
Out you go. But if I had had the opportunity, I would not have asked the guy doing my surgery, are you a Christian? Are you a believer? What I wanted to know is you're a competent doctor.
Now, he knew what I was as a pastor because I told him. And I told him about my faith. And I told him, I'll be praying for you. You do that?
We are grateful for what the world gives us in these ways. What we cannot afford to do is let the world tell us how to live a good life.
[52:30] It has no idea. And it will tell you a lie. And it will waste your life as you chase the world's priorities. They have nothing to do with God.

Now, most of the adults in this room already have experienced and we know this. Listen, listen, please. Time and technology will not cure the problem of sin and selfishness and pride.

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Mankind will never think, invent, or create his way into a fulfilled life. Kids, kids, you young folks, don't let yourself believe that once you get out of mom and dad's house and you go into college or whatever you're pursuing, that college and science and the world and all the smart people you'll encounter will give you better than what mom and dad have given you when they've come to you and said, follow Jesus.
When you get Jesus, you get everything you need to live a godly, successful, productive, purposeful life. Everything else is gravy.
You'll learn all kinds of other things that might help you in your vocation, your job, and things like that. But there is nothing in this world, no matter how smart it sounds, that can replace your personal walk with Jesus day after day after day.
[53:55] That's what you need. It's what I need. It's what your parents are trying to teach you in the way of your need. Verse 13 speaks of some human wisdom.

But human wisdom is a poor substitute for God. Alright? What he's saying here is this kind of light is just a little bit more desirable than just darkness.
But wisdom over folly is best of all. Do you understand what he's saying? In verses 14 through 16, he's trying to give us an understanding.
At least the wise man's eyes are in his head, he says, where they should be. They're proving useful to him as he sees, evaluates, acts within the world. But look now, I'm going to put this up here.
The fool walks in. Walks here is defined by. The fool, however, is defined by. The fool's life is defined by a hopeless aimlessness.
[54:55] He's fumbling around in the darkness as if seeing nothing. Folks, here's the illustration. Listen to what he's trying to tell us now. A flashlight can help you in the dark.

It's better than nothing. If you've ever been outdoors, away from city lights and all that, and you didn't have any light at all, any artificial light at all, folks, it gets dark.
You do this and you're like, I cannot see. Yep, there it is. I cannot see my fingers. Hands. Have anybody ever done that? You ever? Is it scary?
It scared me. I was eight years old. I thought I'd gone blind. Okay. It's scary. Now look, I give you a flashlight, which is what my dad did in the tent because I started crying and he gave me that and I'd click, click, yeah, I'm still good.
That's how I got through the night, Matt. I'd be laying, I'd wake up. Am I blind? And I'd click. Look, that's okay. What would be better?
[55:59] Please God, let it be daylight. And that's what I asked. Daylight's better than a flashlight. Daylight. Human wisdom, it can get you through on some stuff, but it's nothing like God's daylight.

It's not like S-O-N light. All right. That's the point. I think you're tracking with me. I don't have to beat that one to death. Human wisdom, nor foolish living, is going to prepare you.
It's not going to save you from ultimately what he says the fool and the wise man face, and that's death. Human wisdom is limited to this life. It cannot forestall death.
It cannot contribute anything to your eternity. Do you hear me? Verse 17 sums it up. This dark outlook on life is just what so often surfaces in people when they live in the limits of a worldview without faith in Jesus.
It's a dead-end street. It's why we have such a high suicide rate. Sin makes life incomprehensible. So he says, I tested myself to see if life itself could fulfill me, and it didn't.
[57:04] It was grievous to me. And that's why we have verse 18. Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor. Isn't that sad? All the work I did, all the expense I went to, all the people in my household, I've just come to hate it all for which I labored under the sun.

I have to leave it to the man who will come after me. See, that was bitter to him. Mm! I've done all this, and I can't take it with me, and I'm going to have to leave it to somebody else.
And now look what vexes him. Verse 19. And who knows whether he's going to be a wise man or a fool. Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor. He's going to get it all for which I've labored by acting wisely under the sun.
This too is vanity. It's wind. It's emptiness. Therefore I completely despaired. How many times in this chapter has he talked about where he's, I hated life.
I hated all the fruit of my labor. I despaired. It all came to nothing. And now he says it again. I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor for which I'd labored under the sun.

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[58:11] When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, then he gives his legacy to the one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil. I'm going to pass this off to somebody who's never going to appreciate all that I went to to make this what it is.

For what does a man get in all his labor and all striving with which he labors under the sun? That's the question. Because all his days, his task is painful and grievous. Yeah, yeah. Even at night, his mind doesn't rest.
You ever been there? This too is vanity. It's just vanity. It all, chasing this only makes you more restless and more empty. It compounds on itself. So now you lay in bed figuring out how to keep, protect, safeguard, and get more of what has become so important to you.
And you know there are threats on every side. And it keeps you awake. It stresses you out. So now I've got to have anxiety meds. Now I've got to see a shrink. And it just goes on and on.
Now, you know, I've already lost one marriage over this. Now I have my second one and I'm not happy in it. I think I'll try for a third one. Then I'll probably give up. Verse 24.
[59:19] There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. That is just a good thing. This also I've seen that it's from the hand of God though. See, what I'm learning is I can't manufacture that.

That's a gift from the Lord. The more I live for the Lord, the more peace, the more prosperity I experience in my heart. Regardless of my circumstances, regardless of how much money I have or don't have, God will give me that kind of joy and that kind of fulfillment in my heart.
And the people around me will be blessed from what I'm living in my own heart. They'll share in that. For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without him?
Who can have a life like that without God? For to a person who is good in his sight, he is given wisdom and knowledge and joy. While at a center, he's given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight.
This too is vanity. This too is striving after wind. What does all of it come to? This is all worldly work that I just read to you.
[60:29] If you look back up at verse 10, all that my eyes desired, I didn't refuse. I didn't withhold anything from my heart. My heart was pleased because of my labor. And this was my reward for all my labor.

I could stand back and cross my arms and say, look what I did. He said, that's it. That's where it stopped. Look what I did. And then he came to the realization, so what?
I can't take any of this with me. Somebody else is going to get this. They're not going to appreciate it. They're not going to take care of it. And pretty soon it's all going to rot. Why did I do this?
Why did I make my life about this? Isn't there something greater and better and beyond me that I could have made my life about? This is where he's coming to.
What I enjoyed, now I loathe. Didn't last. Didn't deliver. And here's what he says. For I must leave it to the man who will come after me. See, that discouraged him so much.
[61:25] Verse 19. I can't even count on this person being good or wise. It's all going to go up in smoke. So he says this. This too is emptiness and futility.

I put it up on the screen. You see the progression here? Verse 20. Then I completely despaired. I completely I've abandoned hope. I've lost heart in all of this.
There's got to be a better way. It's such a gigantic letdown. Everything seems so random. I live my life in the randomness of this earthly way.
Then in verses 21 through 23. When people throw themselves into a life expecting it to give back great things or at least help them break even, they get the inevitable reality of this life, folks. Hardship, suffering, loss, and death. And so they despair. Why do they despair? The despair and depression are indications of where their eyes are, where their focus is.
[62:25] When you understand depression, not psychologically as in the world defines it, but biblically psychologically because psychology has to do with the soul. Sukos. The soul.

Right? That's biblical territory. When you understand that, the Bible explains depression and that kind of dejection as self-loathing. That's the root of depression.
It's anger turned inward. You got a raw deal. Things didn't turn out the way you want, now you're depressed. That's how the Bible...
So when we help depressed people, we don't help them cope. We help them with hope. And that hope is in a person. Now, to the world, that sounds terribly unsophisticated.

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But I say to you again, giving people Jesus and the truth of Jesus is the highest benchmark we can aim at. When we give them Jesus and the truth of Jesus, we've gone as high and as deep as we can possibly go.
[63:27] So what am I supposed to tell them? All I can do is give you Jesus and the truth, bud, and then you're on your own. Hope it works out. I don't have anything better than that. As if I'm shortchanging them.

You get Jesus and the truth. You get eternal life. I hope that's enough. Psychology tells us it's not. So much in the world today says, you know, that's so naive and too simple.
Yeah, well, there's nothing simple about what God did in giving His Son. The hardness of that leaves me speechless.
Well, Solomon realized that he brought all this on himself. You see that on the screen? He couldn't blame anybody. He did it. Now, here's the thing. Look on the screen here.
Solomon is a believer looking back on a long season of his life when he strayed from faithfulness to God on a daily basis. He took for granted the blessings of God on his life and he used those blessings to pursue foolishness.
[64:34] So we're talking about the contrast of life with God versus life ignoring God. Folks, you don't have to think in your own mind that you're rebelling against God.

You just be apathetic. If you're not pursuing the Lord in humility with a heart to honor Him in obedience by love, then you're living in the apathy and naivete, the pride of your own life.
And that's what we're saying here. He did. He lived a life ignoring God and he brought all of this on himself. It's sad. He worked long and hard and he got nothing.
And this can plague a person literally to death. The sleeplessness that's mentioned in the obsession and unfulfilled desires of the heart is a person who's lost hope.
Alright, to end, here's what I want to share with you and it relates to verses 24 through 26 that I've read a couple of times for you now. Here is how one commentator summarized Solomon's conclusion about this passage.
[65:40] He did it in three basic principles. Three basic principles. Here's what he said. Ready? Man is not good. God is the giver. And there is no enjoyment in life apart from God.

Now, please, you may say, Jeff, I know lots of unbelievers who are happy. Who are happy. Okay. Okay. And then finally, Walt Kaiser, another commentator that I really appreciate for his work here in Ecclesiastes.
He has a similar view but he goes a little bit more. And look at this. I had to share this with you. There is nothing inherently good in a person per se. That's the doctrine of depravity.
No one can really appreciate even such elementary things as eating and drinking apart from a personal relationship with the living God. Why?
You let a person just have eating and drinking and they'll abuse it. They'll turn it into an idol. We call it drunkenness, gluttony, whatever. God alone, not things or wisdom, is the giver of satisfaction and joy.
[66:50] What a statement. God also gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him. Here's how I want to end. nothing in this life leaves this life except your soul.

How are you living to benefit your soul in this life and in the next? Will you join me in prayer? Father, Father, as we look to you now and trust your heart and your judgment by what you've told us from this passage in chapter 2 of Ecclesiastes, we want to be doers of the word, not hearers only.
And so we ask you to help us make application to our own lives, to take careful consideration in stock like Solomon did. And before any of us go any further in wasting our life on ourselves, help us to look beyond ourselves to Jesus and trust that you can show us, you can help us repent.
And so, Lord, for my brothers and sisters now hearing my voice, I pray, help them not to live in despair or hopelessness. Help them to understand that it is never too late to turn to Jesus and repent.
It's never too late to look to Jesus Christ and ask for forgiveness, to ask Him, make me your child, help me to live a life of faith in You where I trust You with my life so that I can stop being my own God.
[68:17] I'm doing a terrible job of it. Help us, Father, to be saved from a wasted life, chasing the things of the world as if those things are going to give us something meaningful and purposeful only to find out that it all becomes more and more empty as we get older.

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I pray now for my brothers and sisters to rejoice in Jesus, to look to You, Father, as You have given us Your Son to give us life, life here on this earth and life forevermore.
Help us to be wise stewards of the resources of grace that You favor us with day after day. Thank You for our visitors who've joined us today. Thank You for bringing them here to Grace Church on this Sunday, this holiday weekend.
May You bless them, God. May You give them safe travels and may You help them to have an enjoyable time in the things that are offered here as they look to You and live for You. In Christ's name we pray.
Amen.

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