

## **Ecclesiastes' Wisdom for Today — Dr. Brian Luther**

Thank you. It's always a privilege and I feel a great responsibility to come before you and speak in chapel. When I come to speak in chapel, I always bring a lot more material that I'll ever be able to communicate. So part of my challenge in the next half hour, 35 minutes, is to try to convince you of something. So the message of my talk is Ecclesiastes' wisdom for today. So I am essentially trying to, in this short time, give you an overview of the book of Ecclesiastes that will be useful to you going forward. Now, all of us have to take the Old Testament class, and so you've heard maybe a few minutes on Ecclesiastes in the midst of, I think, the 33 other books of the Bible that you do in that course. So, you know, if you already think you're an expert, that's great. You can see if I know what I'm talking about because you've had it. But really what I hope to do is to open the book of Ecclesiastes to you and make it a book that is accessible to you in the brief time I have. What I'm going to be doing intentionally is challenging some of the conventional wisdom that sometimes floats around with Ecclesiastes and make this point: that it is wisdom for us today.

Ecclesiastes is a book that maybe you've already found yourself drawn to at times. It's a book that probably is my favorite because it addresses when we have questions like, what do we do when the life that we're living as a Christian doesn't make sense? What if I look around at the Christian church and say, what's going on with it? What if we see the things that are happening in our lives and we question God? Why would God allow that to happen? Why would God cause that to happen? Why doesn't he do things differently? Why doesn't he help more?

So these are questions that I've had throughout my adult life. These are questions that I've wrestled with in Ecclesiastes, and these are questions that I think are real questions. Sometimes we answer people with such questions with things like, the problem's with you, the person asking those questions. You're asking, why is it? You need more faith. You need to recognize that God has a bigger plan. And I can hear that and I can say, yeah, I'm sure he does have a bigger plan, but it doesn't make any sense to me. Sometimes those who are asking these questions are ignored, blamed for asking them, told that they just need to accept the simplistic answers that the Christian church sometimes offers. And when we're unsatisfied with those simplistic answers, as I am, the book of Ecclesiastes, I believe, has true wisdom as we see someone who has truly wrestled through those questions.

So maybe you say, I'm okay, I don't need this. Well, you have a long life ahead of you, and there may come a time where this is exactly the book you need. And so I just want to take this time to, like I said, try to open it up to you give you an approach to it. And really, the approach that I take, what I believe Ecclesiastes is, is a clear-eyed, realistic look at the world and life in this fallen world, that it is wisdom through and through. What I'll be doing is I'll be showing you very quickly some places that I would go to in the book itself to show you these things. I don't have time to fully develop this. If you're interested in Ecclesiastes, feel free to talk to me. I would encourage you, take Wisdom Literature class sometimes, because in that class, we have three or four weeks that we can just spend the time in Ecclesiastes, and it's great, at least for me. I don't know if the students think the same.

So where do I start in Ecclesiastes? I always start at the end of the book. At the end of the book, we read the final statement of the preacher who has been the, so this is Ecclesiastes 12:8-14, the final statements of the preacher who is our main speaker in the book of Ecclesiastes. And so he's quoted as saying, "vanity of vanity, says the preacher, all is vanity." That term vanity is sometimes translated meaningless, I will speak to that in a few minutes. But I want to see what follows, because what follows is our canonical inspired evaluation of what we just read. So what is our inspired evaluation? Sometimes this is called the epilogue or the frame narrator of the book. We're told by our inspired writer in conclusion, besides being wise, the preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many Proverbs with great care. The preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

To me, these are the, right there, the most important verses in understanding how to approach the book. Sometimes the book of Ecclesiastes is understood as some wisdom mixed with some folly. And we, the reader, are to pick and choose through the book of Ecclesiastes and say, well, there he seems to be going too negative, so that's folly. Other times maybe we get a glimmer of hope for him, and that's wisdom. I just point out in our inspired evaluation of the preacher, it doesn't say that. It doesn't say pick and choose. It doesn't say beware, he said things that are wrong. We get such words at the end of Job when the friends of Job, whose words are recorded in the Bible, are told by God, "You have not spoken right about me as my servant Job has." So we have every responsibility to go through the book of Job and evaluate what his friends said and said, eh, they're wrong in places. Some people will do that with the book of Ecclesiastes. I will strongly argue that that is not the correct approach, that that is not what we should be doing with the words of Ecclesiastes.

So you may have heard things going around about Ecclesiastes, conventional wisdom, and so I'm just making my case here that the way to approach this is to recognize that our preacher is a wise teacher. So what is he telling us? He is giving us wisdom. If we continue reading, we do see the words of the wise are like goads. If you know what a goad is, sometimes we use that figuratively, to goad someone on. A literal goad is what a shepherd would use, like a pointy stick, to jab the sheep or the goats to get them to go in the right direction. So a goad may prick, it may sting, it may hurt, but its goal is to get, in this case, us moving in the right direction. So if the words of the wise are like goads, that's a description of what we're reading in Ecclesiastes. There are things in this book that are hard to accept and hard to, sometimes hard to figure out exactly what he's saying, hard to accept and understand, but they are intended for our good continuing in this evaluation. They are like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings. No one knows what that means. Anyway, so it means something. It's either related to the goad or related to the status of the words.

"They are given by one shepherd. So my son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books, there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh." So that's true. And one of the things that our preacher says at the beginning of the book is, with much wisdom is much vexation. The more you know, the more you will the more sorrow there is. That's reality, that with much wisdom comes much vexation. It's looking at things clearly in this fallen and

broken world and recognizing the fallenness and the brokenness that is all around. Now we might say, and I'm not going to go here too often, but you know well, Jesus has come, he's died, he's risen. We're New Testament Christians. This is different. Well, the problem with that is that when Jesus came, he did great things. He died. He rose again. We have the assurance of salvation and resurrection in him. But what he didn't do is fix this world. He will when he comes again, but he has not yet done that. So we are still living in the same fallen world that we read about from our preacher in Ecclesiastes. And so these things, you know, weariness. So you don't necessarily have to write your own book of Ecclesiastes. It's already been written.

Then we get the final statements of the book: "The end of the matter, all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing whether good or evil." One approach to the book is to say at this point, aha! Now we have the answer. And this answer, fear God, keep his commands, recognize that God is going to bring everything into judgment, that fixes what he was missing earlier in the book. This is then the corrective lens that we look through and we say, well, in this chapter, he's forgotten to fear God. He's forgotten about God. He's just looking at things under the sun and so forth. And so this is used as a corrective, but I would argue strongly that it is not that. You can look in multiple verses, 5:7, 8:12, 3:17, and earlier in the book where he says well, God is the one you must fear. It will go well for those who fear God. God will bring things into judgment. Our preacher has already said these things, right? This is not something new. It's a final statement that emphasizes these things, but this is not new. It doesn't fix his problem because part of his problem is sometimes the book is understood that he's just looking at things under the sun, which means he's just looking down here and he's forgetting about God. No, he's looking at things under the sun because guess where we live? Under the sun on earth. And notice, read the book and notice how many times he mentions God. I did a quick search earlier this morning, 37, if you're keeping track, throughout the book. I compared it to Proverbs and Proverbs had like 90, but Proverbs is about three times as long. So there's many mentions of God in Ecclesiastes and Proverbs by length as far as I'm concerned. So he has not forgotten about God. And here's an even more important point. It's because he remembers that God exists that it's so frustrating. Someone who forgets about God, denies God's existence, should they expect life to make sense? I would say no. It's only someone who believes in God as our creator, as our sustainer, as one who is involved in this life who can say "well, life should make sense."

So what is he trying to do? Let me continue on. So what I'm trying to establish here is I need to, whenever I read Ecclesiastes, take it as wisdom through and through. So I jump back and I want to hit some highlights, again, summarizing what his problem and what he's wrestling with, and then seeing the real advice that he gives in light of his evaluation of life and of wisdom. So if we go back into 8:16-17, here he gives a summary of his conclusion. This is a conclusion that he draws: "When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night to one's eyes see sleep. Then I saw all the work of God." He recognizes that all is the work of God. He hasn't forgotten about God. "Then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out, even though a wise man claims to know he cannot find it out."

This is what he's saying. So sometimes the one thing that we know, we saw it quoted in the first slide, in 12:8, and throughout the book, is that he says something like vanity of vanities. Everything's vanity. We're probably even more familiar with the NIV translation that makes that really crystal clear. Meaningless. Everything is meaningless. If that's all we know about the book, and sometimes that's all we know, this guy says everything's meaningless, right? I as a Christian, do I know that things have meaning? Of course I do. So he says everything's meaningless. I know there's meaning, that causes a real separation between us and this book. He's wrong. So here's the problem. The word that is translated vanity or meaningless in Hebrew is hevel, and it just means breath or vapor. It doesn't mean meaningless. So the question is, what is that illustrating? What is that trying to capture breath? There's various suggestions. In a number of places, vanity or hevel is linked with grasping or chasing the wind. And many have suggested that that's a good link to see the meaning behind this word. So if your goal is to go outside and chase down the wind and catch it, do you think you're going to be successful? Probably not. In the same way, breath, vapor, what is it? As we exhale, where does it go? What does it do?

So my biggest point that I will make in order to, in my opinion, put you on the right track with Ecclesiastes is to say he does not say that everything is meaningless. He does not say that everything is vanity and meaningless. That's a traditional interpretation. You can look at the modern commentators and they make various suggestions, many of them disagreeing with that. So the idea of everything is absurd, everything is puzzling, everything is an enigma, everything is baffling or ridiculous, those are much better suggestions to capture this. Because here's the point. He doesn't say, he doesn't say, we have it up on the screen, I have looked at this and I've come to the conclusion that life doesn't make sense because it has no meaning. God doesn't exist or God isn't involved. He doesn't draw those conclusions. He says, I can't figure it out. That's very different. It's very different to say, I know there must be meaning, I know there must be an answer and a way to put all, illustration of a puzzle pieces that are life in this world there must be a way to put all those together, but I can't figure it out. I don't know exactly what the meaning is all the time is a very different sentiment than aha, I figured it out, life is meaningless.

Because I think we can agree with this, that sometimes life doesn't make sense. Whenever things happen to us and we're told, well, you know, like I said before, God has a plan, just have more faith. Yeah, I know he has a plan. I have faith in him. I know that he'll see me through whatever I, whatever comes into my life, but that still doesn't make sense at times. And I'll, time permitting, give us a couple examples eventually here. So he's searching and trying to understand everything. He says, I have the most wisdom. I should be able to figure it out and put all the pieces of this giant puzzle together. And he says again and again, no, I can't make sense of it. I don't know what the meaning is. He doesn't come to the much stronger conclusion, It is meaningless. That's important to me.

So let me just continue on to, I'm not going to do that one. We'll skip to that one. The very end of chapter nine and beginning of 10, I think he gives us, if we've made it this far in the book, and that's why I'm starting here, so we get there. If we've made it this far in the book, he's wrestled with life doesn't make sense. So often injustice takes place. So often what should be

happening? The righteous people should be flourishing and succeeding. The wicked people should be failing. That's what wisdom tells us. That's what the book of Proverbs tells us. Now the book of Proverbs is not a book of promises that say this will happen. The Proverbs, in wisdom, says this is how things normally take place or should take place. So Proverbs isn't opposed to the exception. But I think what Ecclesiastes, what our preacher is seeing is, I think his frustration is there are too many exceptions. Too often it doesn't turn out like it should based on our traditional wisdom. If you do the right thing, it's going to go well for you. If you're a big sinner and fool, it's going to go poorly. And he says, no, I see it all the time that it doesn't happen like that. Injustice happens. I work so hard and I'm so wise and what's going to happen at the end of my life? I'm going to die. And so does the fool. Well, at least maybe I know that all that effort I've made in my life, I'm going to leave it to the person who comes after me. But I don't know whether he's going to be a wise man or a fool. I have no guarantee there. So his evaluation now of wisdom is, I think, the biggest insights that we gain from the book from him when he looks at it very clearly. And he can't tell us, oh don't worry, everything's going to work out fine. He can't say that because he's seen it too often not working out the way we think it should.

So notice, wisdom, the end of chapter nine, "is better than weapons of war. But one sinner destroys much good." And then the first verse of chapter 10, I think, really goes along with it: "Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench. So a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor." So he is identifying here one of the weaknesses of wisdom. Wisdom is vulnerable. Wisdom is very tenuous. It's not as strong, in a sense, as folly. What does that look like? Last week I happened to hear this song. It's an old country bluegrass song that says, "it's a long, long way to the top of the world but only a short fall back down." That's what this is. You want to climb a mountain, how much work does it take? How much hard effort does it take to get to the top? How much effort does it take to fall off a cliff? A little folly. So in real life, to succeed at any activity, there has to be so much cooperative effort, so much has to go right, so many things have to fall in place, everything has to work to make something succeed. One little thing can throw that off. And again, as I was thinking about this, what came to mind are two space shuttle disasters, 1986 and what was the other one? 2003. Both of them traced back to, one of them was a rubber o-ring gasket that failed because it was icy and that caused the explosion that destroyed it and killed that crew. The other one was a piece of foam at lift off that broke off and knocked off some of the heat shields, so when they came back in, it failed. I mean think how many things had to go right and had to work together to make a successful, and they had many successful space shuttle missions, but the tiny little things that went wrong that brought calamity, that brought destruction and death, that's what wisdom looks like. If you're not following me, this one will do it. Why don't you like group projects? Because everyone has to do their work. If there's one weak link who doesn't do their work, it brings the group down. I always say this, why do we as professors give you group projects? Because life is a group project and you're going to have to figure that out, get along with others, work with others, and make something happen. I mean, that's just the way it is, but when you're dependent on others, they can fail. And that's, I think, a real insight into wisdom. It's vulnerable to folly. Everything has to work right. It's so much harder to build up than to tear down. One sinner destroying much good.

Continuing. All right. Again, evaluating wisdom. In chapter 10, “he who digs a pit will fall into it and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall. He who quarries stones is hurt by them and he who splits logs is endangered by them. If the iron is blunt and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength. But wisdom helps one to succeed.”

He never rejects wisdom in the book. He says it right here. Wisdom helps one succeed, but it doesn't guarantee success. Wisdom helps us succeed, but it doesn't guarantee success. So if I dig a big pit in my yard should I be wise enough not to fall into it? You would hope. And maybe I'll do myself a favor and put a little warning tape around it, put a little fence up there. But if I'm out in the middle of the night, not in the middle of the night, just after dark and taking out the trash, and I happen to forget that it's there and I fall into it, it could happen, right? I should be smart on that. Wisdom should help. All right.

How about this? If I'm breaking through a wall, should I be able to avoid the snake that jumps out and bites me? Some commentators say, well, yes, you should have known that that snake was there. And I respond to them, how? There's a wall there. Well, don't break down the wall. Well, if it's my job that day to break down that wall, I can use wisdom. I can use care. But sometimes there's the unexpected. I can't know that a snake's about to jump out and bite me. Cutting the wood, chopping the wood, getting the ax sharpened is going to help. Wisdom is going to help us succeed, but it can't guarantee success. And that to me is another big point that he makes that we miss sometimes as Christians. And time permitting, I'll give you an example or two where I think we've missed that. And we think that wisdom comes with a guarantee of success.

All right. Let me keep going. Why doesn't wisdom guarantee success? “A fool multiplies words, though no man knows what is to be. Who can tell him what will be after him?” This introduces the idea that wisdom, like us, doesn't know the future. Very important point. I'm saying all my points are important. I don't know. Wisdom doesn't know the future. What is wisdom based on? It's based on past experience, looking back. This is how things normally work. You can look at the present and use wisdom. Wisdom doesn't know what's coming next. And this is illustrated in the next passage I wanted to do. So let me just jump into it. So again, him applying his insights into wisdom and giving us real advice is what I want us to see here. So he says in 11:4, “He who observes the wind will not sow. He who regards the clouds will not reap. So if we think of the sower back in their days the S-O-W sower, planting the seeds, what do they do? We know the parable of the sower scattering the seed and it falls in various places. If it's a windy day, what's going to happen to all that seed? It's all going to blow off into the ditch and that round of sowing will be unsuccessful. So the farmer, the sower could say, well, it looks like a really windy day this morning, right? As I get up, it looks like a really windy day. I'm not going to sow. And the next day he gets up and he says, well, it's not windy now, but it looks like the wind could pick up a little later. I'm not going to sow. And then the next day and the next day, at some point there's going to be a problem. The seed has never gotten sown and he will have no crops, right?

“So, as you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with God with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything. In the morning sow

your seed and at evening withhold not your hand for you do not know which will prosper, this or that or whether both alike will be good.” We don’t know, if you’re the sower, that that round of sowing, the seed is going to be successful. But he turns it around and he says, but you know what? You don’t know that it’s going to be a failure. So sow it in the morning, sow it in the evening. One of them might succeed, maybe both. You don’t know. So he’s turning around the observation that, well, I don’t know what’s going to happen in the future. Wisdom can’t guarantee success. The books of wisdom, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, they’re not giving me prophecies about what’s going to happen. They’re giving me good advice based on collected human experience and they’re telling me this is the right way to do it. This is how you’re going to set yourself up for success. When he says, “we don’t know what’s going to come after, wisdom can’t tell us the future,” we could say, well I don’t have a guarantee of success, so I’m not going to try. But he turns it around and says “but wait a minute, it also doesn’t guarantee failure.” So what should you do? Keep trying. Wisdom helps one succeed, but it doesn’t come with that guarantee. And that’s what’s hard about it. But he’s looking at it clearly and giving us this advice based on that.

One other piece of advice that I do want to mention, and then give us a few thoughts in how what this looks like, a number of places throughout the book, and I just picked this one, he says this. He said, and I’m going to read it up there because I’ve fixed it, “I perceive that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live. Also that everyone should eat and drink and see the good in his toil, for this is the gift of God.” Sometimes our translations talk about take pleasure or things like that. NIV has a good translation there, see the satisfaction in his toil. This is not eat, drink, and be merry and forget about it. Live it up, party, doesn’t matter. That’s not what he’s saying. So whenever we have words like pleasure, I forget the other translations that are used there, I think they get us off track. So what is it? His advice is, in spite of all the observations he makes, that life doesn’t make sense, that all of these things are ridiculous, and the more wisdom I use the more frustrated I get because I can’t figure it out and put all the pieces together. But he takes a step back and says, “wait a minute, though. Do we recognize even in the midst of how ridiculous and frustrating life is, if we can eat and drink and see the good in our toil. So what is the good in our toil? Well, what can we do? It’s a gift of God to be able to take home a paycheck, put food on the table, put a roof over the heads of my family, and be able to sit down and share a meal with them. That is the simple life of contentment. That we would read about Paul being able to be content in every and any situation. That’s the message here, because he’s explored and wrestled with “What’s the real payoff of all this toil? Does it get me ahead if I get more and bigger and bigger? Is it going to make me happy?” And he says no, it doesn’t satisfy in that way. So he needs to take a step back and say, “Wait a minute. Each day I have here is a gift from God, and I need to recognize it as such.” This is real advice for us as Christians today, because sometimes we don’t recognize that. It’s easy for us to say “if only. It’s not good.” It may not make sense to us, but if we have another day to live, God will be there for us and see us through it.

So what do I do with all of this? I try to apply this. I’m calculating my time and what I want to try to do here. How often has the church said, “Follow these guidelines, and it will be like this.” For instance, “follow these guidelines on how to raise your children, and they’re going to grow up to

be good Christians. Follow these rules on love and dating, and you will find the right spouse. Follow these simple rules to divorce-proof your marriage. You might not quite be at that reading in the Christian literature section, but it's there. Pray these prayers, and God will bring, will bring physical healing. The problem with all of . . . whenever it is implied or stated this will happen, these are misapplications and misunderstandings of how wisdom works. So, how to raise your children so they will be good Christians, the Proverbs say these things happen. How do we raise our children? We should be raising them, teaching them about the Lord. But there's not guarantee of how someone is going to turn out.

Let me address this one. I'll address the marriage. Shouldn't it be that good Christians who are getting married should be able to, if they've done everything properly, they're going to have a successful marriage. A generation ago, in what is called the True Love Waits movement, it either stated or implied that message. It said, Christian young people if you do what is right, if you make the right choices in love and dating, and that certainly included voiding premarital sex, then God will give you the right spouse for you. You're going to get . . . There were many problems with that. But I'll just point out the problem that, well what about, well what do I think. For many Christians, God desires us to have godly marriages, and he will help us work those things out. But he doesn't guarantee that. He doesn't promise that. He doesn't say you will have this spouse. What about those who, for whatever reason, are going to be single for their whole lives? What does that message have for them? What about those that followed all those rules and instructions, they married their Christian sweetheart from youth group or Christian college, so they've done everything right. What does this say? It's going to work. But sometimes it doesn't. I mean, unfortunately, my wife and I are at an age where we can look around at the people that we knew growing up in church, Christians, half of them are divorced. I mean, that's the tough reality of this. Maybe you don't want to hear this, but there's no guarantee that your marriage is going to succeed. God doesn't guarantee that. You don't want to hear that, I know. But we're in Ecclesiastes, so that's where I am.

What does it mean? The True Love Waits movement had many things right. It's godly wisdom, it's godly instruction to do the right thing. Doing the right thing, doing the wise thing, doing the moral thing growing up in the areas of love and dating will set you up for success. That is true, that is wisdom. But remember, wisdom can't come with a guarantee. Why isn't success in marriage guaranteed? Because two sinners are involved in that marriage. That's just the reality. So what do we see? Seeing those things as promises or making those things as promises , I mean, has wrecked the faith of some of the Christian young people who grew up in that. Because they see, "wait a minute. I did everything right, and they told me . . . but my marriage has been terrible. And I see these other people I grew up with, they did all the wrong things and now they seem perfectly fine! That doesn't make sense. That's ridiculous!" That's Ecclesiastes. That's the reality. We have to distinguish what God has actually promised us and what we wish he has promised us. Because what has he promised us? If we are going through difficulties through our marriage eventually--since I'm on that topic--what does it mean? God is going to strengthen us. God is going to see us through. If we are faithful to him, he is going to be faithful to us. But he's not guaranteed that our marriage is going to be a success. Again, sorry if you don't want to hear that. But going into a marriage saying, "I need to work hard at this. It's not



going to just happen. I need to do everything right. I need to encourage my spouse. We need to be doing all these things to strengthen our relationship with each other and our walk with God.” Those things are necessary. This is difficult. As I just said, I’ve looked around at the people I’ve grown up with, and I see how many have just been hurt, and how tough that is. And then I read the stories of those who were made these promises, “Oh, if you do everything according to this list of instructions, it will all work out for you. God will be faithful.” He will be with us, but there’s no guarantee of exactly -- we don’t get to determine how things are going to work out. And that’s tough, but it’s looking, I think, this is my point, it’s looking at life very realistically and with clear eyes and not pretending, and sometimes as Christians, we’re asked to pretend. Oh, just have more faith. If you have faith, it will all work out. Until it doesn’t work out, at least the way we expect it to. God has a plan, God will do this. Maybe. But if he hasn’t actually promised that, we can’t bank on that. Bank on the real promises of God. That he will be with us.

Let me just, in closing, and there were other things and there were other ways I would apply it. But when we see this up here, sometimes our expectations for life might be too lofty. Have high expectations, that’s great. Have high goals. It’s not saying those. But what he’s saying is that we can’t control all these things. We can’t say what God is doing in all these situations. We don’t know what’s going to work out. Do we need to keep trying? Absolutely. He never gives up. And coming back to this advice that I still have up there, recognize it. That we should eat and drink and see the good in our toil, that that is God’s gift to us. That he is going to be faithful to us. That he is going to see us through any and every situation. We don’t get to pick what those situations might be and how it might look. So whenever we have the opportunity to just rest in him and rest in the fact that “wait, he has given me this day to live, and he’s given me these people in my life that I can share it. And maybe, I should recognize how good, what a good gift that is. And be content in that. And keep my expectations realistic in other areas.” Maybe that’s a positive note I can end on here. Remember, we’re in Ecclesiastes, so if we went further I would take that away from you in one way or another. Because, who knows if it will be there tomorrow, sorry.

Let me just close us here in prayer. And let me just say, my goal here is to encourage you. As much as the words of Ecclesiastes can sound discouraging at times, as much as I know the things I’ve said can sound discouraging at times, looking at life realistically and pushing forward in life despite the difficulties, in spite of not getting the explanations, that’s what we’re called to do as Christians. Let me pray on that.

Heavenly Father, I do thank you for this book of Ecclesiastes that is very challenging and yet I believe is so helpful to me and I hope is helpful to others as they face the difficulties, the vexations, the frustrations of even the Christian life, that you would be encouraging us, that you would be showing us that you will be with us and you will be faithful no matter what. And I pray this in Jesus’ name, amen.