

MEANINGLESS?

Unmasking the Myths that Make us Miserable

Have you ever gotten something you always wanted? Maybe you chased it for years, working, praying, and paying for it, and once you finally had it, you felt empty and unfulfilled. And so you kept going, chasing, and thinking, "If I only had a little bit more, then I'll be satisfied." But what if that's a lie? What if the things we're all chasing were never meant to satisfy us? For six weeks we'll learn some hard lessons from the book of *Ecclesiastes*. Written by King Solomon, *Ecclesiastes* is a cautionary tale about what happens when you get everything you ever wanted and it's still not enough. With this series, we'll expose life's darkest lies by holding them up to the light of God's truth.

May 3, 2026 - Myth #4: Happiness is Life's Purpose

Review question: What does *Ecclesiastes* teach us about rightly interpreting and understanding the Bible?

Today's topic is *happiness*. **To what extent do you think the pursuit of happiness drives the way that people are living today? To what extent has it driven the way that you live, the choices you make, etc?**

James 1:5-8 - If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

What kind of man - and what kind of "doubt," specifically - was James referring to here?

How does this pertain to King Solomon, the writer of *Ecclesiastes*?

Ecclesiastes 7:8-12 - The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride. Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools. Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?" For it is not wise to ask such questions. Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing and benefits those who see the sun. Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: Wisdom preserves those who have it.

What did Solomon get right in this passage?

Ecclesiastes 7:13-18 - Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked? When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider this: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, no one can discover anything about their future. In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: the righteous perishing in their righteousness, and the wicked living long in their wickedness. Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise — why destroy yourself? Do not be overwicked, and do not be a fool — why die before your time? It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes.

What did Solomon get wrong here?

What examples in the Bible do we have of godly people rejecting Solomon's philosophy and being *extreme*?

How did Jesus refute Solomon's philosophy about not being "too righteous" in Matthew 5:48? Even though none of us will ever be as perfect as our Father is, why is it still important to strive for perfection?

Ecclesiastes 9:1-3 - So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no one knows whether love or hate awaits them. All share a common destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not. As it is with the good, so with the sinful; as it is with those who take oaths, so with those who are afraid to take them. This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of people, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead.

How would you summarize Solomon's perspective on life in this passage?

How is Solomon's outlook out of step with the Truth revealed elsewhere in the Bible? What are God's promises for those who seek Him? (see below, and see also: 1 Kings 9:3-9)

Deuteronomy 5:33 - Walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

Isaiah 1:18-20 - If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Galatians 6:9 - Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

James 1:12 - Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

Ecclesiastes 9:7-11 - Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do. Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom. I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.

Biblically speaking, what's wrong with Solomon's take here, especially regarding "time and chance"? How does the Bible speak differently about things like purpose and destiny? (See Jeremiah 29:11, Romans 8:28, Psalm 138:8)

By the very end of Ecclesiastes, Solomon finally righted the ship and acknowledged the true purpose of life (See Ecclesiastes 12:13), **and then, in the very last verse of this book, he contradicted all his prior claims about "moderation" and the pursuit of happiness:**

Ecclesiastes 12:14 - For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

How is this a more biblical, truthful idea than some of those Solomon espoused in Ecclesiastes 7 and 9?

What does it look like to pursue joy and contentment instead of just happiness?

Your Notes:



Overflow for Students - TONIGHT!

The final Overflow for the school year is happening this evening from 6:30-8pm in The Loft. If you have a student in 6th-12th grade, drop them off for a time of worship and teaching, tasty dinner, fun games, and much more!



Weekly Prayer Room

Join us **Wednesdays at noon starting May 6th** for weekly prayer in the upstairs Chapel. This hour-long Prayer Room is designed to help you reflect on God's Word and feel His tangible presence as we pray in community. Learn more: **thestory.church/events**



Sign Up for Summer Core Classes

Registration is open for all of our Summer Core Classes happening in June & July on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings! View the full list of available classes and register on our website: **thestory.church/groups**