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# Meaning in the meaningless

*Ecclesiastes 1-2*

## ECCLESIASTES 1

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### EVERYTHING IS FUTILE

The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem.

- <sup>2</sup> “Absolute futility,” says the Teacher.  
“Absolute futility. Everything is futile.”
- <sup>3</sup> What does a person gain for all his efforts  
that he labors at under the sun?
- <sup>4</sup> A generation goes and a generation comes,  
but the earth remains forever.
- <sup>5</sup> The sun rises and the sun sets;  
panting, it hurries back to the place  
where it rises.
- <sup>6</sup> Gusting to the south,  
turning to the north,  
turning, turning, goes the wind,  
and the wind returns in its cycles.
- <sup>7</sup> All the streams flow to the sea,  
yet the sea is never full;  
to the place where the streams flow,  
there they flow again.
- <sup>8</sup> All things are wearisome,  
more than anyone can say.  
The eye is not satisfied by seeing  
or the ear filled with hearing.
- <sup>9</sup> What has been is what will be,  
and what has been done is what will be done;  
there is nothing new under the sun.
- <sup>10</sup> Can one say about anything,  
“Look, this is new”?  
It has already existed in the ages before us.
- <sup>11</sup> There is no remembrance of those who came before;  
and of those who will come after  
there will also be no remembrance  
by those who follow them.

## Sermon Notes

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## ECCLESIASTES 2

### THE LIMITATIONS OF WISDOM

<sup>12</sup> I, the Teacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> I applied my mind to examine and explore through wisdom all that is done under heaven. God has given people this miserable task to keep them occupied. <sup>14</sup> I have seen all the things that are done under the sun and have found everything to be futile, a pursuit of the wind.

<sup>15</sup> What is crooked cannot be straightened;  
what is lacking cannot be counted.

<sup>16</sup> I said to myself, "See, I have amassed wisdom far beyond all those who were over Jerusalem before me, and my mind has thoroughly grasped wisdom and knowledge." <sup>17</sup> I applied my mind to know wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly; I learned that this too is a pursuit of the wind.

<sup>18</sup> For with much wisdom is much sorrow;  
as knowledge increases, grief increases.

## 2 THE EMPTINESS OF PLEASURE

I said to myself, "Go ahead, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy what is good." But it turned out to be futile. <sup>2</sup> I said about laughter, "It is madness," and about pleasure, "What does this accomplish?" <sup>3</sup> I explored with my mind the pull of wine on my body—my mind still guiding me with wisdom—and how to grasp folly, until I could see what is good for people to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.

### THE EMPTINESS OF POSSESSIONS

<sup>4</sup> I increased my achievements. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. <sup>5</sup> I made gardens and parks for myself and planted every kind of fruit tree in them. <sup>6</sup> I constructed reservoirs for myself from which to irrigate a grove of flourishing trees. <sup>7</sup> I acquired male and female servants and had slaves who were born in my house. I also owned livestock—large herds and flocks—more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup> I also amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I gathered male and female singers for myself, and many concubines, the delights of men. <sup>9</sup> So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom also remained with me. <sup>10</sup> All that my eyes desired, I did not deny them. I did not refuse myself any pleasure, for I took pleasure in all my struggles. This was my reward for all my struggles. <sup>11</sup> When I considered all that I had accomplished and what I had labored to achieve, I found everything to be futile and a pursuit of the wind. There was nothing to be gained under the sun.

## Sermon Notes

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## ECCLESIASTES 2

### THE RELATIVE VALUE OF WISDOM

<sup>12</sup> Then I turned to consider wisdom, madness, and folly, for what will the king's successor be like? He will do what has already been done. <sup>13</sup> And I realized that there is an advantage to wisdom over folly, like the advantage of light over darkness.

<sup>14</sup> The wise person has eyes in his head,  
but the fool walks in darkness.

Yet I also knew that one fate comes to them both. <sup>15</sup> So I said to myself, "What happens to the fool will also happen to me. Why then have I been overly wise?" And I said to myself that this is also futile. <sup>16</sup> For, just like the fool, there is no lasting remembrance of the wise, since in the days to come both will be forgotten. How is it that the wise person dies just like the fool? <sup>17</sup> Therefore, I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me. For everything is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

### THE EMPTINESS OF WORK

<sup>18</sup> I hated all my work that I labored at under the sun because I must leave it to the one who comes after me. <sup>19</sup> And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will take over all my work that I labored at skillfully under the sun. This too is futile. <sup>20</sup> So I began to give myself over to despair concerning all my work that I had labored at under the sun. <sup>21</sup> When there is a person whose work was done with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and he must give his portion to a person who has not worked for it, this too is futile and a great wrong. <sup>22</sup> For what does a person get with all his work and all his efforts that he labors at under the sun? <sup>23</sup> For all his days are filled with grief, and his occupation is sorrowful; even at night, his mind does not rest. This too is futile.

<sup>24</sup> There is nothing better for a person than to eat, drink, and enjoy his work. I have seen that even this is from God's hand, <sup>25</sup> because who can eat and who can enjoy life apart from him? <sup>26</sup> For to the person who is pleasing in his sight, he gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy; but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and accumulating in order to give to the one who is pleasing in God's sight. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

## Sermon Notes

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# Life Group Discussion Guide

## Lean In

What is something you were convinced would make life better until you actually got it? A gift? A promotion? Something else? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Look Down

**Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-17 (pg. 18).** What do you learn about the teacher and his frustrations from the passage? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Look Out

In what ways does modern life promise meaning through pleasure, productivity, or personal achievement? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Look In

What are you tempted to make the center of your life, your source of ultimate meaning? Achievement at work? Fun experiences? Physical beauty? What is the “wind” you may be pursuing in your own life? \_\_\_\_\_

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# Family Discussion Questions

## Questions for Kids

What do people chase to be happy? \_\_\_\_\_

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If life is a gift from God, how should we live? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Questions for Youth

Why do you think our happiness (about what we have or what we've done) fades quickly? \_\_\_\_\_

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How can we be happy with the life God gives us—no matter what? \_\_\_\_\_

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RHYTHM  
REMINDER



Prayer

