

The Search for **Satisfaction**

ECCLESIASTES

Living in Search Mode

By Dr. David H. McKinley

Ecclesiastes = "Life Management Seminar"

"We humans cannot bear very much reality."
—T.S. Eliot

In Ecclesiastes 1, Solomon was saying, "The monotony of life is killing me. I've been there, done that. Now what?"

"Most men live out their lives in quiet desperation."
—Henry David Thoreau

"Life is like an onion—you peel it off one layer at a time, and sometimes you weep." —Carl Sandburg

*Most men ebb about
Here and there—eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving—
Nothing; and then they die.*

—Matthew Arnold's Rugby Chapel

"The basic fact about human experience is not that it is a tragedy, but that it is a bore. It is not that it is so predominantly painful, but that it is lacking in any sense." —H.L. Menken

Solomon made this investigation concerning life: "It's smoke, meaningless, a vapor, empty." Literally, he said, "I can't get no satisfaction!"

"An unexamined life is not worth living." —Socrates

SOLOMON USES THE SEARCH ENGINE OF EXPERIENCE TO EXPOSE COMMON MYTHS OF MEANING

Search #1 myth: Progress = Satisfaction

"Much learning earns you much trouble. The more you know, the more you hurt." Ecclesiastes 1:16-17

Search #2 myth: Excess = Satisfaction

I said to myself, "Come now, let's give pleasure a try. Let's look for the 'good things' in life." But I found that this, too, was meaningless. "It is silly to be laughing all the time," I said. "What good does it do to seek only pleasure?" Ecclesiastes 2:1-2

Search #3 myth: Success = Satisfaction

"Anything I wanted, I took. I did not restrain myself from any joy. I even found great pleasure in hard work, an additional reward for all my labors. But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless. It was like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere."
Ecclesiastes 2:10-11

Search #4 myth: Possess = Satisfaction

"Those who love money will never have enough. How absurd to think that wealth brings true happiness! The more you have, the more people come to help you spend it. So what is the advantage of wealth—except perhaps to watch it run through your fingers!"
Ecclesiastes 5:10-11

Search #5 myth: Impress = Satisfaction

Many people believe that if they can find a way to leave a lasting impression, then they will experience satisfaction.

Conclusion:

Solomon searched extensively for satisfaction only to find that the result of his search was "no matches found". But his search was limited to "under the sun". He looked *around*, but he didn't *look up*. Next week, we're going to broaden our search for satisfaction.

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My Clock is Ticking

By Dr. David H. McKinley

"Life is like a coin. You can spend it any way you want, but you can only spend it once."

Talking Points on Time:

"What time is it?"

"How much time will it take?"

"Time is up!"

"We're losing time."

"I don't have time."

"Daylight Savings Time"

"Value time because it is the stuff life is made of."
—Benjamin Franklin

Most of us believe with better life management there will be better life fulfillment.

While life may at times be chaotic, life is not chaos.

I. Time reflects order.

"Seasons of life":

- To be born and to die
- To plant and to harvest
- To kill and to heal
- To tear down and to rebuild
- To cry and to laugh
- To grieve and to dance
- To scatter stones and to gather stones
- To embrace and to turn away
- To search and to lose
- To keep and to throw away
- To tear and to mend
- To be quiet and to speak up
- To love and to hate
- For war and for peace

II. Time Reveals Outcome

"I have thought about this in connection with the various kinds of work God has given people to do. God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end."

Ecclesiastes 3:10-11

III. Time Requires Oversight

"And I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God's purpose in this is that people should fear him. Whatever exists today and whatever will exist in the future has already existed in the past. For God calls each event back in its turn."

Ecclesiastes 3:14-15

"Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor him in your youth before you grow old and no longer enjoy living."

Ecclesiastes 12:1

"Here is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is the duty of every person. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad." Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Five Ways to Maximize Your Days:

- View each day as a treasured gift from God
- Live in the present tense
- Set priorities for each day
- Refuse to procrastinate
- Choose to enjoy today

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With a Little Help From My Friends

By Dr. David H. McKinley

Confront the Myth of the Lone Ranger

"I realize the reason people work hard and try to succeed: they are jealous of each other. This, too, is useless, like chasing the wind." Ecclesiastes 4:4

"Again I saw something here on earth that was useless: I saw a man who had no family, no son or brother. He always worked hard but was never satisfied with what he had. He never asked himself, 'For whom am I working so hard? Why don't I let myself enjoy life?' This also is very sad and useless." Ecclesiastes 4:7-8

"As much as we admire solo achievement, the truth is that no lone individual has done anything of value. The belief that one person can do something great is a myth. There are no real Rambos who can take on a hostile army by themselves. Even the Lone Ranger wasn't really a loner. Everywhere he went, he rode with Tonto!" —John Maxwell

Reasons We are Empty and Lonely:

Preoccupation with Self

Renunciation of Need
"Spinning more plates doesn't increase your talent; it increases your likelihood of dropping a plate."

Isolation of Fear

Distracted of Greed

Estimation of Importance

"People have been known to achieve more as a result of working with others than against them."

—Dr. Allan Fromme

"One is too small a number to achieve greatness."

—John Maxwell

One of life's greatest moments of genuine achievement is when our lives begin to think in terms of "we" and not "me".

Consider the Value of a Partner

"Two people are better than one, because they get more done by working together. If one falls down, the other can help him up. But it is bad for the person who is alone and falls, because no one is there to help. If two lie down together, they will be warm, but a person alone will not be warm. An enemy might defeat one person, but two people together can defend themselves. A rope that is woven of three strings is hard to break." Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

The Benefits of Partnership:

Partnership Increases Productivity

Two ways to decrease productivity . . .

- 1) Work alone
- 2) Work apart

"We should not only use all the brains we have, but all that we can borrow." —Woodrow Wilson

Partnership Reduces Vulnerability

"I'll lean on you and you lean on me and we'll be okay." —Dave Matthews Band

"There are no problems we cannot solve together, and very few that we can solve by ourselves."

—President Lyndon Johnson

Partnership Provides Safety

*When you're down and out, when you're on the street,
When evening falls so hard, I will comfort you.*

I'll take your part.

*Oh! When darkness comes and pain is all around,
Like a bridge over troubled waters,
I will lay me down.*

"Shared joy is a doubled joy, shared sorrow is half a sorrow." —Swedish Motto

Partnership Increases Security

"Everyone needs someone to guard your blindside and your backside."

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Sometimes Life Seems Unfair

By Dr. David H. McKinley

Five Common Life Views:

- Optimism
- Pessimism
- Cynicism
- Criticism
- Realism

Life Seems Unfair Because of an Unavoidable Outcome

"This too, I carefully explored: Even though the actions of the godly and wise people are in God's hands, no one knows whether or not God will show them favor in this life. The same destiny ultimately awaits everyone, whether they are righteous or wicked, good or bad, ceremonially clean or unclean, religious or irreligious . . . Life leads to death. That is it."

Ecclesiastes 9:1-2, 4b

"I am not afraid to die; I just don't want to be there when it happens." —Woody Allen

Solomon's suggestion: "Seize life! Eat bread with gusto, drink your drink with a robust heart. O yes—God takes pleasure in your pleasure! Dress festively every morning. Don't skimp on colors and scarves. Relish life with the spouse of your love, each and every day of your precarious life. Each day is God's gift."

Life Seems Unfair Because of Unpredictable Challenges

"I took another walk around the neighborhood and realized that on this earth as it is—the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor satisfaction to the wise, nor riches to the smart, nor grace to the learned. Sooner or later 'bad luck' hits us all."

Ecclesiastes 9:11

"People can never predict when hard times might come. Like a fish in a net or birds in a snare, people are often caught by sudden tragedy."

Ecclesiastes 9:12

Three categories:

- 1) "in trouble"
- 2) "coming out of trouble"
- 3) "going into trouble"

- My **ability** does not provide automatic access to satisfaction or success.

- My **opportunity** will not provide access to satisfaction or success.

- My **adversity** cannot withhold my access to satisfaction or success.

While Life Seems Unfair, There are Often Unexpected Surprises

Charlotte Elliot spent many years of her life in frustration. She wanted her life to count in a significant way, but a childhood illness left her an invalid. She often wished her life could have the impact of her brother who was a preacher. She became bitter and despondent until her pastor, Dr. Cesar Milan, encouraged her to stop focusing on her limitations and give herself, just as she was, to God. After this conversation, alone and writing in a journal, she penned the words, later put to music, entitled "Just As I Am." That song was chosen by the Billy Graham team and has been sung at the time of decision at every Graham crusade around the world. It is amazing what can happen when we give our limitations to God.

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Confessions From a Man in Chapter 11

By Dr. David H. McKinley

He began his journal with a question: Is life worth living?

“Everything is meaningless, utterly meaningless. What do people get for all their hard work? Generations come and generations go, but nothing changes... history merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new.”

Ecclesiastes 1:2-4, 9

What did Solomon base this assertion upon:

- Monotony of life
- Vanity of wisdom
- Futility of work
- Corruptibility of wealth
- Certainty of death

A View From the Bottom

Life Discovery #1: Satisfaction is found in letting go, rather than holding on.

- Be generous in a world of greed
Common life motto: “Get all you can. Can all you get. Sit on the lid and poison the rest.”

“Success is not rare. It is common. Very few miss a measure of it. It is not a matter of luck or of contesting, for certainly no success can come from preventing the success of another. It is a matter of adjusting one’s efforts to overcome obstacles and one’s abilities to give the service needed by others. There is no other possible success. Most people think in terms of getting; success, however, begins in terms of giving.”

—Henry Ford

“Be liberal and generous to as many as you can and then some,’ is the way we should say it. So, make as many friends as you can, for you never know when you yourself may need some assistance. Instead of becoming miserly just because you fear that the future may hold some evil reversal of your fortunes, leaving you in poverty and want, you should all the more distribute to as many as possible so that you can have the blessing of receiving in the event of such reverses.” —Walt Kaiser

- Show kindness in a world of callousness
- Exercise faith in a world of fatalism

“Give a serving to seven and also to eight, for you do not know what evil will be on the earth.”

Ecclesiastes 11:2

Life Discovery #2: Satisfaction is found in your commitments, not your circumstances.

“When the clouds are heavy, the rains come down. When a tree falls, whether north or south, there it lies. If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.”
Ecclesiastes 11:3-4

Life Discovery #3: Satisfaction is found in accepting that we don’t have all the answers and acknowledging God’s rule.

“You don’t know where the wind will blow, and you don’t know how a baby grows inside the mother. In the same way, you don’t know what God is doing, and how He created every thing.” Ecclesiastes 11:5

“A little philosophy inclineth men’s hearts to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men’s minds about to religion.”
—Sir Francis Bacon

Life Discovery #4: Satisfaction is found as much in embracing the adventure as accomplishing the goal.

“Be sure to stay busy and plant a variety of crops, for you never know which will grow--perhaps they all will.”
Ecclesiastes 11:6 (NLT)

Life Discovery #5: Satisfaction is found in living to the fullest today, not rehearsing our yesterdays or projecting better tomorrows.

“People ought to enjoy every day of their lives, no matter how long they live.” Ecclesiastes 11:8

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The Secret to a Satisfied Life

By Dr. David H. McKinley

Typical Fields of Endeavor

Sex
Power
Achievement
Money

“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have not pleasure in them.’”
Ecclesiastes 12:1

What is Your Focal Point?

I have three specific reasons for my personal belief in God:

- 1) I believe in God because of creation.
- 2) I believe in God because of conscience.
- 3) I believe in God because of Christ.

What is Your Truth Source?

“The words of wise men are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one shepherd, and further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books, there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.”

Ecclesiastes 12:12

What is Your Life Quest?

“Here is my final conclusion: Fear God and keep his commands, for this is the duty of every person. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.”

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

“The measure of a life, after all, is not its duration but its donation.” —Corrie Ten Boom

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”
Proverbs 1:7

What is a satisfied life?

- Knowing your purpose—Give God your attention
- Growing to reach your maximum potential—Read the instructions
- Sowing seeds to benefit others—Live Beyond Yourself

“In the end, Ecclesiastes is a book that functions not as a meal, but as a bath. It is not nourishment; it is cleansing. It is repentance and purging. We read it to get scrubbed clean from illusion and sentiment, from ideas that are idolatrous and feelings that cloy. It is an expose’ and rejection of every arrogant and ignorant expectation we can live our lives by ourselves on our own terms... The author’s cool skepticism, a refreshing negation to the lush and seductive suggestions swirling around us, promising everything and delivering nothing, clears the air. And once the air is cleared, we are ready for reality—for God.”

—Eugene Peterson

“Thou hast made us for Thyself and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee.” —Augustine

Password: Christ

“I am come that you might have life and have it abundantly.” John 10:10

“These things I have spoken unto you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”
John 15:11

“But these things are written that you may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” John 20:21