

Ecclesiastes 6 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

- Ecclesiastes 6:1
- Ecclesiastes 6:2
- Ecclesiastes 6:3
- Ecclesiastes 6:4
- Ecclesiastes 6:5
- Ecclesiastes 6:6
- Ecclesiastes 6:7
- Ecclesiastes 6:8
- Ecclesiastes 6:9
- Ecclesiastes 6:10
- Ecclesiastes 6:11
- Ecclesiastes 6:12

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES					
The Search for Significance					
The Quest for Contentment					
The Pursuit of Purpose					
Exploration			Exhortation		
All is Vanity	Vanity of Doing	Vanity of Having	Vanity of Being	Using Life Well	Source of True Living
Eccl 1:1-18	Eccl 2:1-26	Eccl 3:1-6:12	Eccl 7:1-9:18	Eccl 10:1-11:10	Eccl 12:1-14
Declaration of Vanity	Demonstration of Vanity		Deliverance from Vanity		
Subject	Sermons		Summary		
Fickleness of Life					
Versus					
Fear of the Lord					
Place:					
"Under the Sun"					
Decades of Searching					
(in the days of King Solomon)					
circa 936BC					
King Solomon					
Author					

Ecclesiastes 6:1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun and it is prevalent among men-- (NASB95)

- KJV Ecclesiastes 6:1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men:
- NKJ Ecclesiastes 6:1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men:
- BGT Ecclesiastes 6:1 σπιν πονηρ α ν ε δον π τ ν λιον κα πολλ σπιν π τ ν νθρωπων
- LXE Ecclesiastes 6:1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is abundant with man:

NET Ecclesiastes 6:1 Here is another misfortune that I have seen on earth, and it weighs heavily on people:

CSB Ecclesiastes 6:1 Here is a tragedy I have observed under the sun, and it weighs heavily on humanity:

ESV Ecclesiastes 6:1 There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind:

NIV Ecclesiastes 6:1 I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on men:

NLT Ecclesiastes 6:1 There is another serious tragedy I have seen under the sun, and it weighs heavily on humanity.

YLT Ecclesiastes 6:1 There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it is great on man:

NJB Ecclesiastes 6:1 I see another evil under the sun, which goes hard with people:

NRS Ecclesiastes 6:1 There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy upon humankind:

NAB Ecclesiastes 6:1 There is another evil which I have seen under the sun, and it weighs heavily upon man:

GWN Ecclesiastes 6:1 There is a tragedy that I have seen under the sun. It is a terrible one for mortals.

BBE Ecclesiastes 6:1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is hard on men;

■ Ec 5:13

William Barrick - By application, the Preacher found the explanation for apparent inequalities in divine providence (Eccl 6:1–8:15). After discussing the role of wealth in one's life (Eccl 5:10–17), Solomon explains that people can enjoy God's gifts of possessions and wealth (Eccl 5:18–19). Such enjoyment provides relief from the toil and trouble of mortal life under the sun (Eccl 5:20). Now Solomon moves on to address an apparent inequity: someone can possess wealth but be unable to enjoy it. Life's manifold mysteries confound even a man as wise as Solomon. Mere mortals cannot adequately understand all that occurs in God's world. How is it possible for a person to gain all that his or her heart desires (gold, wealth, honor, family, long life, and education), yet never find any joy in those attainments? Thus, Solomon presents

- An evaluation of man's outward fortunes (Eccl 6:1–7:15).
- An evaluation of man's character (Eccl 7:16–29).
- A consideration of the role of government (Eccl 8:1–14). ([Ecclesiastes 6 Commentary](#))

There is an evil which I have seen under the sun and it is prevalent among men- This passage does not describe the **evil** but just states that it is **under the sun**, that is on the God-rejecting earth and secondly it is **prevalent**. For the specific **evil** go to Ec 6:2.

William Barrick - Case History #1: A Full Treasury (Eccl 6:1–2) By experience and by observation, Solomon comes to the conclusion that prosperity is not always as good as it might appear.¹ "There is" (Eccl 6:1) involves a common formula in Ecclesiastes (Eccl 2:21; 4:8; 5:13; 6:1, 11; 7:15; Eccl 8:14; Eccl 10:5) introducing specific examples or cases that he employs to formulate his argumentation. He clearly identifies the viewpoint of the discussion: "under the sun." Mere mortal beings who conduct their lives without God in this life will face enigmas seemingly without solution. An individual who lives by faith in the Creator and Sovereign of all things may experience the same enigmas, but God's sovereign control provides the means for enjoying His gifts in spite of the difficulties and discouragements. ¹ Daniel J. Estes, Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 334.

Two contrasts between Eccl 5:18–19 and Eccl 6:1–2:		
"Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting" (Eccl 5:18)	vs	"There is an evil which I have seen" (Eccl 6:1)
"every man to whom God has given riches and wealth" (Eccl 5:19)	vd	"a man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor" (Eccl 6:2).

Those good things that God has given look, in at least one situation, as though they bring nothing but evil, calamity, or trouble upon a person. How can this be? James 5:1–6 reveals one of the key causes of such a turn of events: the individual thus gifted spends his or her wealth on wanton pleasure while oppressing the poor. His heart is not right with God. To be sure, a wicked heart and wanton life style are not the only causes for gold's loss of glitter. A righteous individual might also lack the opportunity to enjoy possessions and wealth. But God alone controls both the giving and the enjoying—note that "God has not empowered him to eat from them" (Eccl 6:2). 2 Chronicles 1:11–12 also mentions "riches and wealth and honor" (Eccl 6:2) as gifts from God to Solomon

(cp. Eccl 2:1–8). If Solomon speaks of himself, the question that arises concerns the identity of the “foreigner” (or, “stranger”). The stranger might be someone outside the family. In Eccl 2:21 Solomon identifies an individual who did not work for what he receives. He might have Jeroboam in mind (see previous discussion of Eccl 4:13–16). The truth of the matter, according to William Brown, involves the fact that, “Ownership is, thus, a misnomer. One’s possessions are exclusively gifts of God, and as easily as God gives, so God takes away to give to others. The givenness of material possessions is a two-edged sword.”(Borrow [William P. Brown, Ecclesiastes, Interpretation - Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 2000, 65.](#)) In other words, there are no guarantees in life when it comes to one’s possessions and wealth. ([Ecclesiastes 6 Commentary](#))

David Wells - “We may now have everything, but none of it means anything any more. The most we seem able to do is to take daily inventories of personal needs and then try to match up people, products, and opportunities with them. The irony is that this psychological hedonism, in which self is the arbiter of life, is self-destructive. Not only are we betrayed; we betray ourselves. Meanwhile, we also pay the price of destroying all interest in the Transcendent, the sole source of genuine meaning in life. God, the supernatural, moral absolutes—these have become strangers in our modern, secularized world. We are like Yeats’s falcon, increasingly oblivious to the voice of the falconer. The center no longer holds. All is flung to the periphery, where its meaning is lost.” (Quoted by David Moore in [Holman Old Testament Commentary Volume 14 - Ecclesiastes](#))

F B Meyer - Under the sun.

The Preacher constantly refers to what is done under the sun; and is not this the clue to so much that is puzzling in this book? If your horizon is limited to what the sun shines on, it is impossible to get the true standpoint of vision, or discover the real policy of life. If this world and the time-day are all, we are entangled in an inexplicable maze. It is impossible to believe in the existence of a benign and wise Creator unless there is more than we can see, larger than we can grasp. We have no choice but blank materialism, unless we believe there is some one and something over and above the sun, and that the sun and his attendant train of worlds is but a speck in the vastness of his existence.

O Christian soul, let you and me get beyond the sun, which one day will be no more, to the Lord, who is an everlasting light. Let us sit with Him in the heavenlies, and thence look down upon man and his little life. What inconsiderable atoms do kings and empires appear; even our affliction seems to be but light, and for a moment! Not on this side of the sun, but on that lies our true portion and home, our enduring substance.

In order to live as we should, the sun must be under our feet, a position which is only possible to those who are in Christ Jesus. “I knew a man in Christ,” says the Apostle, “caught up into the third heaven, and he heard unspeakable things.” Would you be unworldly, seek to become other worldly. Do you want the sun to grow dim? — ask for the light which is above the brightness of the sun.

Set your affections on those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) HE DIED TOO SOON

I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on men: God gives a man wealth, possessions and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God does not enable him to enjoy them, and a stranger enjoys them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil. Ecclesiastes 6:1-2

In the first two verses of Ecclesiastes 6, Solomon tells a truly sad story. A man works years and years, climbing to the top of his profession. When he finally makes it to the top, everything is taken away from him. We aren't told what happened, but many explanations come to mind.

Perhaps he had a heart attack or lost his health and was forced to retire early. Or it could be that one of his employees conspired with the board of directors to remove him from power. Or he might have been falsely accused of wrongdoing and publicly humiliated. Solomon's point is clear: God gives wonderful gifts but that doesn't necessarily mean that we will enjoy them.

This is one of the mysteries of life. No one achieves wealth without the blessing of God, yet no one enjoys wealth without God's blessing. Once again Solomon brings us face-to-face with the seeming inequities of life and the inescapable fact that God alone controls the course of human events.

In one of his books, Watchman Nee wrote that we approach God like little children with open hands, begging for gifts. Because He is a good God, He fills our hands with good things—life, health, friends, money, success, recognition, challenge, marriage, children, a nice home, a good job—all the things that we count at Thanksgiving when we count our blessings. And so like children, we rejoice in what we have received and run around comparing what we have with each other.

Yes, we are like children, and when our hands are finally full, God calls us: "My child, I long to have fellowship with you. Reach out your hand and take My hand." But we can't do it because our hands are full.

"God, we can't," we cry.

"Put those things aside and take My hand," He replies.

"No, we can't. It's too hard to put them down." "But I am the one who gave them to you in the first place."

"O God, what You have asked is too hard. Please don't ask us to put these things aside."

And God answers quietly, "You must."

God's grace comes in many shades and variations. Sometimes we see His grace in the things He gives us; often we see it in the things He takes away. I hesitate to say that God always replaces what He takes with something better (though He does), because that might be misun-derstood in earthly terms. Some losses cannot be calculated because the

cost is so great. But of this much we may be sure: When God takes something from our hands, it is not an act of hatred—much less a quirk of cruel fate— but an expression of God's love as He leads us to a place where our trust will be in Him alone.

Gracious Lord, when I tempted to hold on too tightly, remind me that I never owned anything, because all that I have comes from You. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- What things in your life are you holding too tightly these days? Has God been asking you to let go?
- What must happen for you to loosen your grip?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read John 3:27; 1 Corinthians 4:7; and James 1:17.

Warren Wiersbe - Eat, Drink, and Be Thankful [Be Satisfied \(Ecclesiastes\)- Page 46](#)

Read Ecclesiastes 2:24–26

A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. Ecclesiastes 2:24

Solomon was not advocating "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die!" That is the philosophy of fatalism, not faith. Rather, he was saying, "Thank God for what you do have, and enjoy it to the glory of God." Paul gave his approval to this attitude when he exhorted us to trust in God, "who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment" (1 Tim. 6:17).

Solomon made it clear that not only were the blessings from God, but even the enjoyment of the blessings was God's gift to us (Eccl. 2:24). He considered it evil if a person had all the blessings of life from God but could not enjoy them (Ec 6:1–5). It is easy to see why the Jewish people read Ecclesiastes at the Feast of Tabernacles, for Tabernacles is their great time of thanksgiving and rejoicing for God's abundant provision of their needs. The farmer who prayed at the table, "Thanks for good food and for good digestion," knew what Solomon was writing about.

The important thing is that we seek to please the Lord (2:26) and trust Him to meet our every need.

Something to Ponder - What are your Top Ten blessings from God?

Ecclesiastes 6:1-6 The Difference God Makes

[Do not] trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. --1 Timothy 6:17

One evening a news program devoted its entire broadcast to the problems of many young athletes who suddenly become multimillionaire sports celebrities. They start out buying expensive cars, living luxuriously, and partying. Then they get into immoral conduct and illicit drugs. Soon their careers are in shambles.

The writer of Ecclesiastes could have empathized with these young athletes. In chapter 6, he illustrated the emptiness of a life that has wealth and riches but does not include God. Two men are portrayed. The first is either a workaholic or a playboy. He is a quick success but is unhappy and dies with no heirs (Ec 6:1-2). The second lives longer and has many children but is also unfulfilled and dies unloved (Ec 6:3-6). The writer concluded that it is better not to have lived at all than to be rich and famous but miserable!

The apostle Paul said that when we give God control of our lives, earthly blessings can be enjoyed, for He "gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17). And when we use money to do good, we are using it for God's eternal purposes, and we "lay hold on the true life" (a literal translation of verse 19). A bright future and a joy-filled present—that's the difference God makes! —Herbert Vander

You may have much gold and grandeur,
Yet by God be reckoned poor;
He alone has riches truly
Who has Christ, though nothing more.
—Anon.

To be rich in God is better than to be rich in good

Ecclesiastes 6:2 a man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor so that his soul lacks nothing of all that he desires; yet God has not empowered him to eat from them, for a foreigner enjoys them. This is vanity and a severe affliction.

KJV Ecclesiastes 6:2 A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 6:2 A man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor, so that he lacks nothing for himself of all he desires; yet God does not give him power to eat of it, but a foreigner consumes it. This is vanity, and it is an evil affliction.

BGT Ecclesiastes 6:2 ν ρ ὁ σε α τ θε ς πλο τον κα π ρχοντα κα ὁ ξαν κα ο κ σπιν στερ ν τ ψυχ α το π π ντων ν πιθυμ σει κα ο κ ξουσι σει α τ θε ς το φαγε ν π α το τι ν ρ ξνος φ γεται α τ ν το το μαται της κα ρρωστ α πονηρ σπιν

LXE Ecclesiastes 6:2 a man to whom God shall give wealth, and substance, and honour, and he wants nothing for his soul of all things that he shall desire, yet God shall not give him power to eat of it, for a stranger shall devour it: this is vanity, and an evil infirmity.

NET Ecclesiastes 6:2 God gives a man riches, property, and wealth so that he lacks nothing that his heart desires, yet God does not enable him to enjoy the fruit of his labor— instead, someone else enjoys it! This is fruitless and a grave misfortune.

CSB Ecclesiastes 6:2 God gives a man riches, wealth, and honor so that he lacks nothing of all he desires for himself, but God does not allow him to enjoy them. Instead, a stranger will enjoy them. This is futile and a sickening tragedy.

ESV Ecclesiastes 6:2 a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them. This is vanity; it is a grievous evil.

NIV Ecclesiastes 6:2 God gives a man wealth, possessions and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God does not enable him to enjoy them, and a stranger enjoys them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil.

NLT Ecclesiastes 6:2 God gives some people great wealth and honor and everything they could ever want, but then he doesn't give them the chance to enjoy these things. They die, and someone else, even a stranger, ends up enjoying their wealth! This is meaningless-- a sickening tragedy.

YLT Ecclesiastes 6:2 A man to whom God giveth wealth, and riches, and honour, and there is no lack to his soul of all that he desireth, and God giveth him not power to eat of it, but a stranger eateth it; this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.

- a man: Ec 5:19 1Ki 3:13 1Ch 29:25,28 2Ch 1:11 Da 5:18
- so: Ec 2:4-10 De 8:7-10 Jud 18:10 Job 21:9-15 Ps 17:14 73:7 Lu 12:19,20
- yet: De 28:33,43 Ps 39:6 La 5:2 Ho 7:9
- vanity: Ec 4:4,8 5:16

POSSESSING ALL BUT ENJOYING NONE

Solomon describes the "evil" of Ec 6:1...

A man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor ([kabod](#); [Lxx](#) - [doxa](#) - glory) **so that** (term of purpose/result) **his soul** ([nephesh](#); [Lxx](#) - [psuche](#)) **lacks nothing of all that he desires; yet** (term of contrast) **God has not empowered him to eat from them** - **NET** = "God gives a man riches, property, and wealth so that he lacks nothing that his heart desires, yet God does not enable him to enjoy the fruit of his labor— instead, someone else enjoys it!" This verse presents a tragic paradox of a man who has been given everything externally (riches, wealth, honor, and even fulfilled desires), but is unable to enjoy any of it. To look at this man with all of these external blessings, that speak of status, abundance, and societal favor, one would presume this man has everything. **God has not empowered him to eat from them** is the shocking statement. He has it all, but God has withheld the ability to enjoy it. He has possession without participation! **To eat from them** is literally, "to eat of them," meaning to personally benefit from or enjoy the possessions.

*'Because he has not the will to serve God with it,
God denies him the power to serve himself with it.'*
-- Matthew Henry

Charles Bridges - Our real happiness, therefore, is the thankful improvement of God's own gifts—acknowledging his prerogative to give the power of enjoyment, no less than the blessing to be enjoyed.

Charles Swindoll - The phrase "riches and wealth and honor" in verse 2 is found elsewhere in the Old Testament only in 2 Chronicles 1:11–12, where God spoke to Solomon with the same terminology. In Solomon's specific case, many of the things for which he labored in life were given after his death to a "foreigner": Jeroboam the Ephraimite. How could such a godly king be stripped of the enjoyment of his power and possessions— especially such a king as Solomon, to whom God gave not only great wisdom but also abundant riches and honor (1 Kings 3:5–14)? When he began his forty-year reign, Solomon "loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David" (1 Kings 3:3). But as Solomon's reign progressed, he drifted away from the close relationship he had with God. (See [Living on the Ragged Edge Workbook](#))

For (term of explanation) **a foreigner** ([nokriy](#); [Lxx](#) - [xenos](#) - stranger) **enjoys them** - Exactly what this indicates is difficult to state, but clearly the point is that someone else ends up benefiting from what he has accumulated. **Foreigner** is a stranger or outsider. This could point to death, war, injustice, or sudden loss, where the fruit of his labor goes to another.

TSK - A man may possess much earthly goods, and yet have neither the heart nor power to enjoy them. Possession and fruition are not necessarily joined together; and this is also among the vanities of life, and was and still is a very "common evil among men." It belongs to God as much to give the power to enjoy, as it does to give earthly blessings.

This is vanity ([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) **and a severe affliction** ([choli](#) - sickness; [Lxx](#) - [arrosteo](#) - to be unwell) - The phrase **severe affliction** (literally "evil disease" or "sickening evil") underlines how deeply painful and absurd this reality is. Have you ever loss a tidy sum in stock market? Then you know that "sickening evil" feeling Solomon is describing!

Ecclesiastes 6:2 shows us that having is not the same as enjoying. You can have houses, titles, health, even family—and still feel empty inside. Why? Because joy doesn't come from possessions—it comes from God. This is the danger of thinking success equals satisfaction. It doesn't. Only the Lord can enable the soul to taste the goodness in what He provides. As 1 Timothy 6:17+ reminds us "God... richly supplies us with all things to enjoy." Only God can give you the gift of gladness. Don't just seek riches—seek the God who gives riches with rejoicing.

Vanity (futility, idols, breath, delusion, worthless, emptiness) ([01892](#)) [hebel](#) means breath, vapor, vanity, emptiness, meaninglessness; idols. Hebel commonly has the figurative use of that which is evanescent and unstable. The first OT use refers to idols (Dt 32:21, cf 1 Ki 16:13, 26, Jer 8:19; Jeremiah 10:8, 15; Jer 14:22 Jer 51:18; Jonah 2:9; Ps 31:6), a fitting word picture for the worthlessness of idols! **Hebel** refers to breath because of its transitory fleeting character, as in Job's figurative use "my days are but a **breath**." (Job 7:16, cf similar idea Ps 39:5, 6, 11; Ps 62:9; Ps 78:33 where hebel parallels behālâ from root bāhal "to hasten": Ps 94:11; Ps 144:4) **Hebel** "generally appears in contexts where it is used as a simile emphasizing the transitory state of an object, never as descriptive of the biological function. A prime example would be "Humanity is like a breath (Ps. 144:4). Not only is breath ethereal and of short duration, but all things which breathe will die." (Gilbrant)

Michael Eaton adds **Hebel** means (i) brevity and unsubstantiality, emptiness (NEB), spelt out in Job 7 where the 'vanity' (Job 7:16, Heb.) of man's life is a 'breath' (Job 7:7), an evaporating cloud (Job 7:9), soon to be

ended (Job 7:8) and return no more (Job 7:9f.); (ii) unreliability, frailty, found also in Psalm 62 where God, a 'Rock' and a 'high tower' (Ps 62:6), is compared with man who is 'vanity' (Ps 62:9), a 'leaning wall' and a 'tottering fence' (Ps 62:3); (iii) futility, as in Job 9:29 (Heb.), where 'in vanity' means 'to no effect'; (iv) deceit (cf. Jer. 16:19; Zech. 10:2). Ecclesiastes includes each of these emphases. All is untrustworthy, unsubstantial; no endeavour will in itself bring permanent satisfaction; the greatest joys are fleeting. Between Eccl 1:2 and Eccl 12:8 the Preacher will echo this key statement about thirty times, showing that his book is in fact its exposition. Vanity characterizes all human activity (Eccl 1:14; 2:11): joy (Eccl 2:1) and frustration (Eccl 4:4, 7-8; 5:10) alike, life (Eccl 2:17; 6:12; 9:9), youth (Eccl 11:10) and death (Eccl 3:19; 11:8), the destinies of wise and foolish (Eccl 2:15, 19), diligent and idle (Eccl 2:21, 23, 26). (Borrow [Ecclesiastes : an introduction and commentary page 56](#))

Vine's summary of **hebel** - **First**, the word represents human "breath" as a transitory thing: "I loathe it; I would not live always: let me alone; for my days are vanity [literally, but a breath] (Job 7:16). **Second**, hebel means something meaningless and purposeless: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Eccl. 1:2). **Third**, this word signifies an "idol," which is unsubstantial, worthless, and vain: "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities ..." (Dt. 32:21, the first occurrence). See SPIRIT usage notes.

Warren Baker adds that **hebel** "refers to the vanity and ultimate emptiness and meaninglessness of all things in this life, whether they seem good or bad (Eccl. 1:2, 14; 2:11, 15, 3:19; 4:4, 7, 8; 5:7; 6:2, 4, 9; 7:6, 15; 8:10; 9:9; 11:8). Combined with itself in the plural, it means **absolute meaninglessness** (Eccl. 1:2). Idols and the vain religious customs associated with them are all delusions (Jer. 10:3, 15). It denotes an empty, vain life (Eccl. 6:12). Used with the verb *hāḇal*, it means to carry out vain talk or action or what is empty (Job 27:12). As an adverb, it means to talk in vain, emptily (Job 35:16). To walk after *hebel* means to go after or follow vanity (2 Ki. 17:15; Jer. 2:5). Anything obtained through evil is vain, such as wealth (Prov. 13:11)." (Borrow Complete Word Study Dictionary— Old Testament)

Victor Hamilton (See [TWOT](#)) on "the cluster of references (of [hebel](#)) found in Ecclesiastes (thirty-six). These may be grouped into several subdivisions. First are those passages in which the author states his inability to find fulfillment in work, both in his failure to be creative and in his lack of control over the privilege of free disposition of his possessions; this is "vanity": Eccl 2:11, 19, 21, 23; Eccles. 4:4, 8; Eccles. 6:2. Second are those verses in which the author struggles with the idea that the connection between sin and judgment, righteousness and final deliverance is not always direct or obvious. This is an anomaly about life and it is vanity": Eccles. 2:15; Eccles. 6:7-9; Eccles. 8:10-14. The meaning of *hebel* here would be "senseless." Thirdly are those verses in which the author laments the shortness of life; this is vanity": Eccles. 3:19; Eccles. 6:12; Eccles. 11:8, 10. Life, in its quality, is "empty" or "vacuous" (and thus unsubstantial), and in its quantity is "transitory." Rather than the above observations being final conclusions about life by the author of Ecclesiastes, perhaps they reveal something of his method and his concealed premise. He may be attempting to demonstrate man's inability to find meaning to life unaided by divine revelation and interruption. This solo quest will always end in futility.

HEBEL - 67X/64V - breath(5), delusion(2), emptily(1), emptiness(2), fleeting(2), fraud(1), futile(1), futility(13), idols(7), mere breath(2), nothing(1), useless(1), vain(3), vainly(1), vanity(19), vanity of vanities(3), vapor(1), worthless(2). Deut. 32:21; 1 Ki. 16:13; 1 Ki. 16:26; 2 Ki. 17:15; Job 7:16; Job 9:29; Job 21:34; Job 27:12; Job 35:16; Ps. 31:6; Ps. 39:5; Ps. 39:6; Ps. 39:11; Ps. 62:9; Ps. 78:33; Ps. 94:11; Ps. 144:4; Prov. 13:11; Prov. 21:6; Prov. 31:30;

Eccl. 1:2; Eccl. 1:14; Eccl. 2:1; Eccl. 2:11; Eccl. 2:15; Eccl. 2:17; Eccl. 2:19; Eccl. 2:21; Eccl. 2:23; Eccl. 2:26; Eccl. 3:19; Eccl. 4:4; Eccl. 4:7; Eccl. 4:8; Eccl. 4:16; Eccl. 5:7; Eccl. 5:10; Eccl. 6:2; Eccl. 6:4; Eccl. 6:9; Eccl. 6:11; Eccl. 6:12; Eccl. 7:6; Eccl. 7:15; Eccl. 8:10; Eccl. 8:14; Eccl. 9:9; Eccl. 11:8; Eccl. 11:10; Eccl. 12:8;

Isa. 30:7; Isa. 49:4; Isa. 57:13; Jer. 2:5; Jer. 8:19; Jer. 10:3; Jer. 10:8; Jer. 10:15; Jer. 14:22; Jer. 16:19; Jer. 51:18; Lam. 4:17; Jon. 2:8; Zech. 10:2

Deuteronomy 32:21± 'They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have

provoked Me to anger with their **IDOLS** (no god = ESV, so-called gods = CSB, false gods = NET)(hebel; Lxx - [eidolon](#)). So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,

Affliction (02483) choli (from **chalah** = to be weak or sick) means sickness. It denotes some kind of illness (1 Ki. 17:17; 2 Ki. 1:2, a serious illness). It is modified to indicate an illness that is strong or hangs on (Deut. 28:59). It is used of suffering brought on by the loss of one's wealth (Eccl. 6:2), "an evil disease." It is used figuratively of the ever-present evil of Jerusalem (Isa. 1:5; Jer. 6:7) that could not be healed by seeking out foreign powers for healing (Hos. 5:13). Idolatry was an especially heinous sickness of Israel before the exile (Jer. 10:19).

Carl Weber (Online [Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament](#),) - This noun follows the verb in meaning "sickness" whether from physical causes (the fall of Ahaziah, 2 Kings 1:2), or from disease (in Asa's feet, 2 Chron. 16:12; in the bowels of Jehoram, 2 Chron. 21:15). It may be applied figuratively to a nation (Hosea 5:13). It is used to describe a given situation as a calamity (Eccles. 6:2, RSV, "affliction"). The word is translated "grief" in Isaiah 53:3-4, although it may be better translated "sickness" (margin of ASV and RSV), whether physical or spiritual. The parallel is mak'ôb, meaning "pain," but translated "sorrow." Jeremiah (Jeremiah 6-7) uses the term to describe the spiritual depravity of Jerusalem (KJV, "grief"). The KJV also translates "grief" in Jeremiah 10:19 (RSV, affliction), but the use in context is similar to Eccles. 6:2 (above), perhaps to be translated "calamity."

CHOLI - 22V - affliction(1), disease(2), grief(1), griefs(1), illness(3), sick(1), sickness(14), sicknesses(1).
Deut. 7:15; Deut. 28:59; Deut. 28:61; 1 Ki. 17:17; 2 Ki. 1:2; 2 Ki. 8:8; 2 Ki. 8:9; 2 Ki. 13:14; 2 Chr. 16:12; 2 Chr. 21:15; 2 Chr. 21:18; 2 Chr. 21:19; Ps. 41:3; Eccl. 5:17; Eccl. 6:2; Isa. 1:5; Isa. 38:9; Isa. 53:3; Isa. 53:4; Jer. 6:7; Jer. 10:19; Hos. 5:13

She Won't Live in It

Think of the man who strives and labors and tries extra hard to satisfy his family with an enormous, beautiful mansion—and his wife doesn't even want to live there. So he winds up with a big pile of wood and stone, cabinets and carpet, elegant rooms lavishly furnished, but his wife won't even live there.

Such was the case of Glen Erie in Colorado Springs, Colorado, headquarters of The Navigators. That beautiful English-style mansion was built by a man who had hoped to please his wife. But after being there only a few days, she sighed, "Who needs this?" (What was she going to do with thirty-five rooms anyway?) It was eventually sold to The Navigators. They bought it and filled it! The irony of it all is that those who are right with God ultimately derive benefit from everyone's labor.

PACIFIC ISLAND SELLS SOUL - Craig Larson 1001 Illustrations

Topics: Choices; Consequences; Cost; Foolishness; Mistakes; Past; Regret; Responsibility; Shame; Stewardship

References: Ecclesiastes 6:2; Luke 12:15; 1 Timothy 6:10; Hebrews 13:5

Around the year 1900, two scientists from the Pacific Islands Company studied a piece of rock picked up on Nauru, a tiny Pacific Island east of New Guinea and twelve hundred miles from any sizable landmass. Instead of a fossilized rock, it was rich phosphate so valuable that it plunged Nauru violently into the industrial era.

During the years that followed, the country was colonized by a succession of European and Asian nations, who turned the island into a strip mine. Nauru achieved independence in 1968, but the Nauruan government continued the mining practices that had, by then, brutalized the island.

By the early 1980s, Nauru boasted the world's highest per capita income, but it didn't last. Midway through the 1990s, Nauru's wealth had been embezzled by corrupt financial managers, gambled away on risky investments, and squandered on extravagant luxuries. More than 70 percent of the island is a mined-out ruin, unable to offer the infrastructure or natural resources needed to support anyone. Nauru must now look for a new piece of land on which to relocate its population.

"When you're on Nauru, there's a palpable sense of shame at what was done," said reporter Jack Hitt. "The Nauruans literally sold off their homeland for a pot of wealth that is now lost." —This American Life, "The Middle of Nowhere," Public Radio International, episode 253 (December 5,

Peter Kennedy - Wealth and Life are Fleeting

Topics: ENJOYMENT, POSSESSIONS, TIME, WEALTH

Bible Verses: Ecclesiastes 5:19; Ecclesiastes 6:2

Just before the holidays in 1926, John and Mable Ringling moved into their new mansion in Sarasota, Florida. They called it C d'Zan—which means “House of John” in Venetian dialect—and it took more than two years to build at a cost of approximately \$1.5 million. John was one of the “Ringling Brothers” who made his fortune with his traveling circus. The new home was the winter home for the couple and they spared no expense.

The house is 200 feet long with 32 rooms and 15 baths. The exterior was covered with a flamboyant mix of glazed tiles, mosaics, stained-glass windows and cast stone. Another \$400,000 was spent to pack its interior with imposing furnishings and decorative objects from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The grounds were lush with tropical plants, statuary and a rose garden.

Mable was excited about the new home and in the first year she entertained at the home with many lavish parties. But Mable contracted diabetes and Addison's disease and died in June 1929, less than 2 and a half years after she had moved into the home.

John was devastated by his wife's passing and he died within seven years after suffering several strokes and other debilitating diseases. The couple did not have any children and the home was deeded to the State of Florida as a museum.

*Our time on earth is short
when compared to eternity.*

Ecclesiastes 6:3 If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, however many they be, but his soul is not satisfied with good things and he does not even have a proper burial, then I say, "Better the miscarriage than he,

good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 6:3 If a man begets a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with goodness, or indeed he has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better than he--

BGT Ecclesiastes 6:3 ν γενν σ ν ρ κατ ν κα τη πολλ ζσεται κα πλθος τι σονται μ ραι τ ν ατο κα ψυχ ατο ο κ μπλησθ σεται π τ ς γαθωσ νης κα γε ταφ ο κ γ νετο ατ ε πα γαθ ν π ρ α τ ν τ κρωμα

LXE Ecclesiastes 6:3 If a man beget a hundred children, and live many years, yea, however abundant the days of his years shall be, yet if his soul shall not be satisfied with good, and also he have no burial; I said, An untimely birth is better than he.

NET Ecclesiastes 6:3 Even if a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years— even if he lives a long, long time, but cannot enjoy his prosperity— even if he were to live forever— I would say, "A stillborn child is better off than he is!"

CSB Ecclesiastes 6:3 A man may father a hundred children and live many years. No matter how long he lives, if he is not satisfied by good things and does not even have a proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.

ESV Ecclesiastes 6:3 If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things, and he also has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.

NIV Ecclesiastes 6:3 A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.

NLT Ecclesiastes 6:3 A man might have a hundred children and live to be very old. But if he finds no satisfaction in life and doesn't even get a decent burial, it would have been better for him to be born dead.

YLT Ecclesiastes 6:3 If a man doth beget a hundred, and live many years, and is great, because they are the days of his years, and his soul is not satisfied from the goodness, and also he hath not had a grave, I have said, 'Better than he is the untimely birth.'

NJB Ecclesiastes 6:3 Or take someone who has had a hundred children and lived for many years, and, having reached old age, has never enjoyed the good things of life and has not even got a tomb; it seems to

me, a still-born child is happier.

NRS Ecclesiastes 6:3 A man may beget a hundred children, and live many years; but however many are the days of his years, if he does not enjoy life's good things, or has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.

NAB Ecclesiastes 6:3 Should a man have a hundred children and live many years, no matter to what great age, still if he has not the full benefit of his goods, or if he is deprived of burial, of this man I proclaim that the child born dead is more fortunate than he.

GWN Ecclesiastes 6:3 Suppose a rich person wasn't satisfied with good things while he was alive and didn't even get an honorable burial after he died. Suppose he had a hundred children and lived for many years. No matter how long he would have lived, it still would have been better for him to have been born dead.

- **a man:** Ge 33:5 1Sa 2:20,21 2Ki 10:1 1Ch 28:5 2Ch 11:21 Es 5:11 Ps 127:4,5 Pr 17:6
- **so:** Ec 5:17-19 Ge 47:9
- **and also:** 2Ki 9:35 Es 7:10 9:14,15 Isa 14:19,20 Jer 22:19 36:30
- **that an:** Ec 4:3 Job 3:16 Ps 58:8 Mt 26:24

Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 4:3 But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.

Job 3:16 "Or like a miscarriage which is discarded, I would not be, As infants that never saw light.

Psalms 58:8 Let them be as a snail which melts away as it goes along, Like the miscarriages of a woman which never see the sun.

THE UNSATISFIED SOUL: BETTER NEVER BORN

If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, however many they be- Solomon uses hyperbole and shock language to make a profound point that a life full of external blessings but devoid of satisfaction is worse than a life that never began. A hundred children speaks to the fact that in ancient Israel, many children were a sign of honor, legacy, and blessing (cf. Ps 127:3–5), so having a **hundred children** exaggerates this idea of great earthly success. **Lives many years** speaks of course of longevity which in Israel was also considered a divine blessing.

But (term of contrast - a striking contrast of excessive external fruitfulness BUT...) **his soul** ([nephesh](#); [Lxx](#) - [psuche](#)) **is not satisfied** ([saba](#); [Lxx](#) - [empiplēmi](#)) **with good things and he does not even have a proper burial-** Despite all the external trappings of success, this man's inner life was empty, for his soul was unfulfilled. Even worse **he does not even have a proper burial** for in Jewish culture an improper burial speaks of a dishonorable, even shameful end, and was a sign of disgrace and/or divine judgment.

Michael Eaton - "To die unburied was the mark of a despised and unmourned end. Better to miscarry at birth than to miscarry throughout life." (Borrow [Ecclesiastes page 105](#))

Then I say, "Better the miscarriage than he- Solomon makes a staggering statement that a miscarriage or a stillborn child, though it never saw life, is better off than a man who lives long, produces much, but dies without fulfillment of his soul! Solomon proclaims that even a man who seems prosperous is no better than a miscarriage if he does not discover the true path to satisfaction in life.

Solomon is not advocating despair—but rather driving us to the only place where soul satisfaction is found and that is in Christ. Jesus echoes Solomon's words in Mark 8:36+ asking "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?"

*Quantity of life means nothing
without quality of soul.*

Charles Bridges - The Preacher decides without hesitation upon this case. Better not to have been born at all—or if born, to have died at the birth—to have gone at once from the womb to the grave. 'Better is the fruit that drops from the tree before it is ripe, than that which is left to hang on till it is rotten. Job in his passion thinks the condition of an untimely birth better than his when he was in adversity. (Job, 3:1–16.) But Solomon here pronounces it better than the condition of the worldling in his greatest prosperity, when

the world smiles upon him.’¹

William Barrick - Case History #2: A Full Quiver (Eccl 6:3–5) Another apparent inequity occurs in life: someone who has “a hundred children and lives many years” (Eccl 6:3) may live an unsatisfying life (enjoying neither children nor wealth) and not even receive a proper burial. Scripture depicts numerous offspring as a significant blessing (Ps 127:3–5). Obviously, Solomon might match this particular description of many children, given his many wives and concubines (cp. Gideon’s 70 sons, Judg 8:30; Ahab’s 70 sons, 2 Kgs 10:1). Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, sired 28 sons and 60 daughters (2 Chron 11:21). Ironically, Solomon declares that a miscarriage (stillbirth or unborn fetus) is better off than this man with a hundred children (Eccl 6:3). A reference to a “miscarriage” occurs also in Job 3:16 where Job opines that he would have been better off as a miscarried infant rather than to have suffered the loss of all of his children and all of his possessions, as well as his health. In Psalm 58:8 David uses the condition of a miscarriage to describe how wicked and violent men should be removed from life. Such comparisons to a miscarriage focus on the quality of life rather than the duration of life. No one lives a shorter time than a miscarriage. Solomon characterizes the state of the miscarried infant as “futility” and “obscurity” (Eccl 6:4). Indeed, the last portion of verse 4 indicates that there is no memory of the miscarriage either because no one gave it a name or because no one recognizes the name since the individual never entered the sphere of their existence. Still, the unborn infant enjoys a better circumstance (Eccl 6:5) than someone who has brought one hundred children into the world, yet cannot enjoy his life or find satisfaction and rest.

The miscarriage “knows” nothing of the frustrations, disappointments, and enigmas of life under the sun. “It is better off than he” should be translated more literally, “**more rest has this one than that one.**” Interestingly, the proximity of this mention of “rest” to referring to someone living twice one thousand years (Eccl 6:6) and to names (Eccl 6:4, 10) both bring to mind Genesis 5:28–29 with the naming of Noah (derived from the root for “rest”) in a time when longevity could be just under one thousand years. Earlier, Solomon referred to “rest” in Eccl 4:6. The comparison between the miscarriage and the man who had a hundred children and lived many years reminds the reader of Solomon’s words in Eccl 4:2.

Old Testament writers consider burial (Eccl 6:3) to be a significant responsibility that the living must fulfill for the dead (cp. 1 Sam 31:11–13). Improper treatment of the corpse (such as exposure to the elements) comprises dishonor and is emblematic of being cursed (cp. 1 Kgs 14:10–11; 2 Kgs 9:33–37; Isa 14:19–20; Jer 16:4; 22:18–19).

The familiar spiritual, “This World Is Not My Home,” addresses the reason for a lack of satisfying rest “under the sun”:

This world is not my home, I’m just a passing through;
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.
The angels beckon me from Heaven’s open door,
And I can’t feel at home, in this world anymore.
(Jessie R. Baxter, Jr. Stamps-Baxter Music and Printing Co., 1946. The second line of the second stanza asks, “If Heaven’s not my home, then Lord what will I do?”)

The individual who seeks to make this world his or her focus tends to lay up treasures here and to place too much emphasis upon what one possesses and experiences in this life. Their fallen nature fails to include God in their worldview. A miscarriage might not experience any life under the sun, pass into obscurity, and remain unknown, but it will experience the grace of God and will be at rest with Him. ([Ecclesiastes 6 Commentary](#))

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) STILLBORN MISERY Ecclesiastes 6:3-6

Solomon’s tale of woe continues. He speaks now of a man with a hundred children (meaning that he had economic security and that his name is certain to live on after he is gone), and he himself lives many years. Suppose the man lives two thousand years, Solomon argues. Surely that man should count himself happy and blessed.

Not so fast. What if that man cannot enjoy his prosperity and what if he doesn’t have a decent burial? Well, then, it would have been better if he had never been born.

What’s going on here? This man is rich, blessed with children, and he lives to a ripe old age. Yet he doesn’t enjoy what he has and he dies either in misery or in shame or is somehow completely forgotten. Even his children don’t care enough to give him a decent burial.

Solomon means to drive home the point that satisfaction is a gift from God. Contentment is a precious gift that not everyone receives. A person can have it all—and still be miserable and unfulfilled.

Jesus told a parable to drive home this very point (Luke 12:13-21). He spoke of a rich man who decided to expand his barns because he had so much grain that he couldn’t store it all. Then he uttered these famous words: “And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry’” (v. 19). Little did he know that he would die that very night and someone else would own all his wealth.

I believe if Jesus spoke to a group of Christians struggling against today’s materialism, this is what He would say: “If you want to invest your money, find the investment that will give you the most security and the best rate of return over the longest period of time. There is such an investment open to you. But it’s not on earth. It’s in heaven.” (Review Matthew 6:19-24.) To “store up treasure in heaven” (6:19) means to live so that when you finally get to heaven, you won’t be disappointed with what you see.

Those who have invested only in this world will be paupers in the next. Don't let it happen to you. What are you sending ahead to heaven?

What will you find when you pass through the Jordan River on your way to the Celestial City?

O Lord, may I learn to value things in relation to eternity and to count as greater worth the prosperity of my soul than my prosperity in this world. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- What occupies your mind the majority of the time?
- How would you spend \$83,000 if you suddenly had that much "extra" money? What investments are you making today that will make a difference in eternity?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Job 3:11-26; Matthew 6:19-24; and Luke 12:13-21.

Ecclesiastes 6:4 for it comes in futility and goes into obscurity; and its name is covered in obscurity.

KJV Ecclesiastes 6:4 For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 6:4 for it comes in vanity and departs in darkness, and its name is covered with darkness.

BGT Ecclesiastes 6:4 τι ν ματαιι τητι λθεν κα ν σκ τει πορε εται κα ν σκ τει νομα α το καλυφθ σεται

LXE Ecclesiastes 6:4 For he came in vanity, and departs in darkness, and his name shall be covered in darkness.

NET Ecclesiastes 6:4 Though the stillborn child came into the world for no reason and departed into darkness, though its name is shrouded in darkness,

CSB Ecclesiastes 6:4 For he comes in futility and he goes in darkness, and his name is shrouded in darkness.

ESV Ecclesiastes 6:4 For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered.

NIV Ecclesiastes 6:4 It comes without meaning, it departs in darkness, and in darkness its name is shrouded.

NLT Ecclesiastes 6:4 His birth would have been meaningless, and he would have ended in darkness. He wouldn't even have had a name,

YLT Ecclesiastes 6:4 For in vanity he came in, and in darkness he goeth, and in darkness his name is covered,

NJB Ecclesiastes 6:4 In futility it came, into darkness it departs, and in darkness will its name be buried.

NRS Ecclesiastes 6:4 For it comes into vanity and goes into darkness, and in darkness its name is covered;

NAB Ecclesiastes 6:4 Though it came in vain and goes into darkness and its name is enveloped in darkness;

GWN Ecclesiastes 6:4 A stillborn baby arrives in a pointless birth and goes out into the darkness. The darkness then hides its name.

BBE Ecclesiastes 6:4 In wind it came and to the dark it will go, and with the dark will its name be covered.

RSV Ecclesiastes 6:4 For it comes into vanity and goes into darkness, and in darkness its name is covered;

- **name:** Ps 109:13

BORN IN OBSCURITY BETTER THAN MISERY

For (term of explanation) Solomon is explaining why "better the miscarriage" from Ec 6:3.

I t (referring to the stillborn child or miscarriage) **comes in futility** ([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness,

purposelessness) - Certainly from a human perspective, the lost pregnancy appears tragically meaningless for it was a life with no experience, contribution, or consciousness.

And goes into obscurity ([choshek](#); [Lxx](#) - [skotos](#) - darkness) **and its name is covered** ([kasah](#); [Lxx](#) - [kalupto](#)) **in obscurity** ([choshek](#); [Lxx](#) - [skotos](#) - darkness) - The miscarriage departs unnoticed, unseen by society and so in effect is hidden, unremembered, but is not exposed to the world's pain or pleasures. **Its name is covered in obscurity** alludes to the fact that to lack a name in Hebrew culture was to lack identity, legacy, and honor. The stillborn child is anonymous, buried in forgetfulness. What is Solomon's "takeaway"? He is saying that even the relatively hidden, nameless, and brief existence of the miscarriage is better than a long life devoid of satisfaction. In other words, even a life that seems empty and obscure (like a miscarriage or stillbirth) can be preferable to a long, full, and famous life devoid of joy and meaning. **Covered in obscurity** is literally "covered in darkness." In Hebrew culture, a name represents identity, reputation, and remembrance so to have one's name "covered in darkness" means to be forgotten or never known.

Charles Bridges - He cometh in with vanity,' seeming to have been born to no purpose. He departeth in darkness—leaving no trace or remembrance behind—his name—if indeed he can be said to have a name—is covered with darkness—he is immediately forgotten. He hath not seen the sun, nor known anything. His pleasures are momentary; yet unalloyed. He neither sees nor knows anything to connect him with a world of sorrow. It is a negation of enjoyment—a peaceful shadow of existence without guilt, disgrace, pain, or punishment. He had rest in the womb, and now in the grave

THOUGHT - Better Obscurity Than Emptiness - The point is not to devalue life or mock tragedy, but to shock us into re-evaluating what makes a life worth living. Solomon says that even a life that never breathes air is better than a long life lived without soul satisfaction and without lasting impact. The world idolizes legacy, longevity, and fame. But Solomon dismantles this illusion. The truth is that if you don't know true joy found only in a living relationship with Christ, your life lacks peace and contentment, even your great accomplishments and your lengthy obituary mean little. What am I living for—recognition or rest? Do I pursue a name that will be remembered, or a heart that is satisfied in Christ?

Ecclesiastes 6:5 "It never sees the sun and it never knows anything; it is better off than he."

KJV Ecclesiastes 6:5 Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing: this hath more rest than the other.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 6:5 Though it has not seen the sun or known anything, this has more rest than that man,

BGT Ecclesiastes 6:5 καὶ γε λῶν οὐκ ἔδεν καὶ οὐκ ᾔνω νῆπαις τοῦ τῆς πρὸ τοῦ

LXE Ecclesiastes 6:5 Moreover he has not seen the sun, nor known rest: there is no more rest to this one than another.

NET Ecclesiastes 6:5 though it never saw the light of day nor knew anything, yet it has more rest than that man—

CSB Ecclesiastes 6:5 Though a stillborn child does not see the sun and is not conscious, it has more rest than he.

ESV Ecclesiastes 6:5 Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he.

NIV Ecclesiastes 6:5 Though it never saw the sun or knew anything, it has more rest than does that man--

NLT Ecclesiastes 6:5 and he would never have seen the sun or known of its existence. Yet he would have had more peace than in growing up to be an unhappy man.

YLT Ecclesiastes 6:5 Even the sun he hath not seen nor known, more rest hath this than that.

NJB Ecclesiastes 6:5 It has never so much as seen or known the sun; all the same, it will rest more easily than that person,

NRS Ecclesiastes 6:5 moreover it has not seen the sun or known anything; yet it finds rest rather than he.

■ this: Job 3:10-13 14:1 Ps 58:8 90:7-9

THE STILLBORN'S

IGNORANCE IS MERCY

It (the miscarriage/stillbirth) **never sees the sun and it** (the miscarriage/stillbirth) **never knows** ([yada](#); Lxx - [ginosko](#) - know by experience) **anything; it** (the miscarriage/stillbirth) **is better off than he** - **Better off than** the man with riches, wealth and honor in Ec 6:2) Never sees the sun describes the stillborn who never experiences life in the physical world. In Hebrew thought, to “**see the sun**” symbolized living life on earth, experiencing both joy and sorrow. **Never knows anything** describes the fact that the child has no awareness, consciousness, or experiences but enters and leaves existence without knowing the pain, trials, or vanity of this life which is why it is better off than the man who lived a long, full, seemingly blessed life but never knew soul-satisfaction or received dignity in death.

*Non-existence is preferable
to miserable existence.*

-- Solomon

Ecclesiastes 6:6 "Even if the other man lives a thousand years twice and does not enjoy good things--do not all go to one place?"

KJV Ecclesiastes 6:6 Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?

NKJ Ecclesiastes 6:6 even if he lives a thousand years twice-- but has not seen goodness. Do not all go to one place?

BGT Ecclesiastes 6:6 κα ε ζησεν χιλ ων τ ν καθ δους κα γαθωσ νην ο κ ε δεν μ ο κ ε ς τ πον να τ π ντα πορε εται

LXE Ecclesiastes 6:6 Though he has lived to the return of a thousand years, yet he has seen no good: do not all go to one place?

NET Ecclesiastes 6:6 if he should live a thousand years twice, yet does not enjoy his prosperity. For both of them die!

CSB Ecclesiastes 6:6 And if he lives a thousand years twice, but does not experience happiness, do not both go to the same place?

ESV Ecclesiastes 6:6 Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good-- do not all go to the one place?

NIV Ecclesiastes 6:6 even if he lives a thousand years twice over but fails to enjoy his prosperity. Do not all go to the same place?

NLT Ecclesiastes 6:6 He might live a thousand years twice over but still not find contentment. And since he must die like everyone else-- well, what's the use?

YLT Ecclesiastes 6:6 And though he had lived a thousand years twice over, yet good he hath not seen; to the same place doth not every one go?

NJB Ecclesiastes 6:6 who would never have known the good things of life, even by living a thousand years twice over. Do we not all go to the same place in the end?

NRS Ecclesiastes 6:6 Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good-- do not all go to one place?

NAB Ecclesiastes 6:6 Should he live twice a thousand years and not enjoy his goods, do not both go to the same place?

GWN Ecclesiastes 6:6 Even if the rich person lives two thousand years without experiencing anything good- don't we all go to the same place?

- **even:** Ge 5:5,23,24 Isa 65:22
- **yet:** Ec 6:3 Job 7:7 Ps 4:6,7 34:12 Isa 65:20 Jer 17:6
- **do:** Ec 3:20 12:7 Job 1:21 30:23 Heb 9:27

TWICE A THOUSAND STILL EMPTY IN THE END!

Solomon's argument from Ec 6:3-5 continues, comparing the life of an unfulfilled man—rich, long-lived, and socially honored—with that of a stillborn child.

Even if the other man lives a thousand years twice- This is clearly hyperbole (2,000 years!) used to underscore the idea of the maximum human lifespan—far beyond normal expectations (cf. Methuselah in Ge 5:27 lived 969 years). Solomon is stressing the futility of time without joy.

And does not enjoy good things ([tobah](#); Lxx - [agathosune](#)) - Literally “he does not see good.” He never experiences or perceives good, despite long life. Even if such an unusually long life were experienced, Solomon says it is still empty if that person doesn't enjoy or experience lasting satisfaction. The Hebrew word for “**enjoy**” implies receiving good with delight.

Do not all go to one place? - Solomon ends with a rhetorical question with a sobering conclusion that death is the great equalizer. The rich and poor, long-lived and short-lived, wise and foolish all end in the grave. Without joy, even a long life is meaningless, meaningless! All die and go to Sheol (the grave). This echoes Ecclesiastes 3:20: “All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust.”

THOUGHT - Solomon dismantles one of the great myths of modern life, that *living longer* means *living better*. Solomon, inspired by the Spirit, says in effect that no amount of added time can make up for a life devoid of joy. And joy doesn't come from possessions, accomplishments, or calendar years. It comes from knowing and walking with Christ our Creator. This echoes what Moses prayed in Psalm 90:12+: “Teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.” And Paul in 1 Timothy 6:6+: “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” Am I living long... or living well? Is my life measured in years or marked by meaning? God's desire is not for mere longevity, but for abundant life (John 10:10+)—rooted in Christ Jesus our Lord.

William Barrick - Case History #3: A Full Life Span (Eccl 6:6) Literally, Eccl 6:6 reads, “Even if he lives a thousand years twice and does not see good.” Two thousand years doubles the lifespan of Methuselah, who lived 969 years (Ge 5:26–27). Adam himself lived 930 years (Gen 5:5). According to the Ten Commandments, a long life comes as a divine blessing to those who honor their parents (cf. Ex 20:12; Ps 91:16; Pr 3:16). Thus, the miscarriage (Ec 6:3), that lives such a short time, still has greater enjoyment than someone who lives twice as long as Methuselah. Having in his possession all that some people count as blessings, a person “can still depart unnoticed, unlamented and unfulfilled.” (4 Derek Kidner, Borrow [A Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance: Ecclesiastes & the Way of the World, The Bible Speaks Today](#), 59.) ([Ecclesiastes 6 Commentary](#))

Good things (02899) tobah (from tob = good) is An adjective meaning good, well-pleasing, fruitful, morally correct, proper, convenient. This word is frequently encountered in the Old Testament and is roughly equivalent to the English word good in terms of its function and scope of meaning. It describes that which is appealing and pleasant to the senses (Num. 14:7; Esth. 1:11; Ps. 52:9[11]); is useful and profitable (Gen. 2:18; Zech. 11:12); is abundant and plentiful (Gen. 41:22; Judg. 8:32); is kind and benevolent (1 Sam. 24:18[19]; 2 Chr. 5:13; Nah. 1:7); is good in a moral sense as opposed to evil (Gen. 2:17; Lev. 27:14; Ps. 37:27); is proper and becoming (Deut. 1:14; 1 Sam. 1:23; Ps. 92:1[2]); bears a general state of well-being or happiness (Deut. 6:24; Eccl. 2:24); is the better of two alternatives (Gen. 29:19; Ex. 14:12; Jon. 4:3). The creation narrative of Genesis 1 best embodies all these various elements of meaning when the Lord declares each aspect of His handiwork to be “good.” ([The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament](#))

Good (02896) tob “This root refers to good” or “goodness” in its broadest senses. Five general areas of meaning can be noted: 1) practical, economic, or material good, 2) abstract goodness such as desirability, pleasantness, and beauty, 3) quality or expense, 4) moral goodness, and 5) technical philosophical good. This article is organized as follows: 1) the verb ṭōb, 2) the adjective ṭōb together with its substantival uses, 3) the noun ṭōb. It is frequently difficult to distinguish between verbal and adjectival derivatives from ṭōb. This difficulty is insignificant for present purposes since both usages deal with the same range of meanings.”

The verb frequently occurs with an impersonal subject, “It is good . . .” This idiom may describe a state of happiness or well-being as in describing the illusory well-being of the Hebrews in Egypt (Numbers 11:18), the well-being of a slave with a good master (Deut. 15:16), and Saul's restful contentment resulting from David's music (1 Samuel 16:16). To be good to someone or in their eyes indicates that person's desire or will. It was good in God's eyes (i.e. God's will) to bless Israel (Numbers 24:1). Job asks God if it was God's will to oppress (Job 10:3). Balaam saw the tents of Israel as good, meaning, beautiful or fair (Numbers 24:5). Pleasantness or desirability is meant when the woman's love is “better” than wine (Song 4:10).

Wine being "good" indicates the joy produced by drinking (Esther 1:10).

The Hiphil means to actively engage in good, in contrast to the stative meaning of the Qal. It can refer to doing practical good to someone else, as the Hebrews promised to Hobab (Numbers 10:29, 32) or it can refer to doing the right thing. Both Jehu (2 Kings 10:30) and David (1 Kings 8:18) are thus praised. (Some alleged Hiphils of this verb are better classified under yātab q.v.).

ṭôb. Good, pleasant, beautiful, delightful, glad, joyful, precious, correct, righteous. (The nouns ṭôb and ṭôbâ are treated as substantival usages of the adjective, since there is no distinction in meaning between them.) Hebrew idiom often uses ṭôb where English idiom would prefer a more specific term such as "beautiful" or "expensive."

"Good" is well attested referring to practical or economic benefit. Good fruit (Genesis 2:9) and the grain of Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41:5, 36) were good for eating. The "good" of Joseph's enslavement (Genesis 50:20) included such practical benefits as food and national survival. Practical administrative disadvantages were involved in Moses' judging which was "not good" (Exodus 18:17). Other practical goods denoted by this term are: the promise of victory denied to Ahab (2 Chron. 18:7); hospitality and friendship (Genesis 26:29); beneficial counsel (2 Samuel 17:7, 14); general economic prosperity (1 Kings 10:7); agricultural prosperity (Hosea 10:1, ASV); and God's intentions (Amos 9:4). The violent life (Proverbs 16:29) and deeds which undermined the morale of the nation (Neh. 5:9) are called "not good." The "good" of labor may refer to the practical gain from work (Eccles. 3:13; but cf. RSV "pleasure").

"Good" is used in respect to a wide variety of abstract perspectives. A good name is better than descendants in respect to fame and reputation (Isaiah 56:5). David's loyalty to Achish, his feudal lord, is described as "good" (1 Samuel 29:9, RSV "blameless"). Elihu challenged his companions to determine what was good in respect to truth or validity (Job 34:4). For the wise men, slowness of anger was more desirable than the violent strength of the warrior ideal (Proverbs 16:32). Likewise, the poor wise child was better than the stubborn king (Eccles. 4:13).

Esthetic or sensual goodness may be denoted. It describes the beauty, or desirability, of the "daughters of men" to the "sons of God" (Genesis 6:2), Rebekah's beauty (Genesis 24:16), and Bathsheba's beauty (2 Samuel 11:2). English idiom prefers handsome when this term describes men (1 Samuel 16:12). Sensory delight is at issue in describing the sweetness of cane (Jeremiah 6:20), and in Namaan's judgment that the waters of Damascus were "better" than the muddy waters of the Jordan (2 Kings 5:12). Sensual desirability is included in describing one vintage as better than another (Judges 8:2).

"Good" frequently means "happy." It describes the happy occasion of a royal wedding (Psalm 45:1 [H 2]). A happy feast can be described as a "good day" (Esther 8:17; RSV "holiday"; cf. 1 Samuel 25:8). The "good heart" describes happiness (2 Chron. 7:10; Proverbs 15:15). Happiness may be induced by alcohol (Eccles. 9:7).

A related idiom is the usage of "good in [one's] eyes" to express preference or will. Examples are the escaped slave's preference for a domicile (Deut. 23:16; RSV where it pleases him) and Zelophehad's daughters' preferences for husbands (Numbers 36:6). God's will may be thus expressed (1 Samuel 3:18). It describes perverted, sinful desires (Genesis 19:8; Judges 19:24). In such cases, the idiom is without moral significance.

ṭôb may include ideas of superior quality or relative worth. As such it describes the pure gold of Havilah (Genesis 2:12) and high quality perfumed oils (Song 1:3; RSV anointing oils). Quality craftsmanship is thus designated (Isaiah 41:7), as is quality or nobility in human character, as when Moses is described as goodly (i.e. noble; Exodus 2:2).

An important usage of this term refers to moral goodness. The command, Depart from evil and do good" (Psalm 34:14 [H 15]) clearly contrasts good with moral evil. The good way which God will teach his reluctant people refers to moral life (1 Kings 8:36). "Good" and "right" yāshār, often occur as parallel terms for moral goodness (2 Chron. 14:1; 2 Chron. 31:20).

Finally, Ecclesiastes uses ṭôb in the sense of the philosophical summum bonum. Eccles. 2 tells the reader that there is no higher good than the life of hedonistic pleasure (Eccles. 2:24) and, in this context, raises the question of what is the "Good" which man should seek. Other references could be interpreted similarly (Eccles. 3:22; Eccles. 8:15).

Some usages blend two or more of the areas of meaning discussed above. The "good land" of the Old Covenant included practical, economic, and esthetic overtones (Deut. 1:25, Joshua 23:13). Likewise, the

concept of God as "good" is rich with the overtones of all possible meanings of the term good" (1 Chron. 16:34; Psalm 145:9). In light of the above discussion, each individual usage must be clearly examined to see which of the above meanings are possible.

A number of literary expressions need special treatment. Good and evil" serves as an idiom of universality (Numbers 24:13; 2 Samuel 13:22). Some have suggested that the tree of knowledge of good and evil involves no more than this idiom of universality (Genesis 2:9), but the total context of early Genesis is based upon a moral significance for the phrase. To acknowledge the word of another as "good" was to indicate assent or acceptance moral judgment is not the issue (2 Kings 20:19; cf 1 Samuel 20:7). The "good eye" indicates generosity (Proverbs 22:9; RSV "bountiful eye"). In Eccl, "to see Good" is translated as experiencing the good things or the joys of life (Eccles. 5:17; RSV "find enjoyment"; Eccles. 6:6; RSV enjoy no good"). (See Andrew Boling [Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament online](#))

W E Vine - "good; favorable; festive; pleasing; pleasant; well; better; right; best." This word appears in Akkadian, Aramaic, Arabic, Ugaritic, and Old South Arabic. Occurring in all periods of biblical Hebrew, it appears about 559 times.

This adjective denotes "good" in every sense of that word. For example, *ṭōb* is used in the sense "pleasant" or "delightful": "And he saw that [a resting place] was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear [burdens]..." (Gen. 49:15). An extension of this sense appears in Gen. 40:16, where *ṭōb* means "favorable" or "in one's favor": "When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph...." In 1 Sam. 25:8, the emphasis is on the nuance "delightful" or "festal": "...Let the young men find favor in thine eyes: for we come in a good day...." God is described as One who is "good," or One who gives "delight" and "pleasure": "But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works" (Psa. 73:28).

In 1 Sam. 29:6, this word describes human activities: "...As the Lord liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the [army] is good in my sight...." *Ṭōb* can be applied to scenic beauty, as in 2 Kings 2:19: "Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren." 2 Chron. 12:12 employs a related nuance when it applies the word to the conditions in Judah under King Rehoboam, after he humbled himself before God: "... Things went well."

Ṭōb often qualifies a common object or activity. When the word is used in this sense, no ethical overtones are intended. In 1 Sam. 19:4, *ṭōb* describes the way Jonathan spoke about David: "And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been [toward thee] very good." First Samuel Let 25:15 characterizes a people as "friendly" or "useful": "But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields..." Often this word bears an even stronger emphasis, as in 1 Kings 12:7, where the "good word" is not only friendly but eases the life of one's servants. God's "good word" promises life in the face of oppression and uncertainty: "... There hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant" (1 Kings 8:56). *Ṭōb* often characterizes a statement as an important assertion for salvation and prosperity (real or imagined): "Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (Exod. 14:12). God judged that man's circumstance without a wife or helpmeet was not "good" (Gen. 2:18). Elsewhere *ṭōb* is applied to an evaluation of one's well-being or of the well-being of a situation or thing: "And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness" (Gen. 1:4, the first occurrence).

Ṭōb is used to describe land and agriculture: "And I am come down to deliver them out of the [power] of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good [fertile] land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey..." (Exod. 3:8). This suggests its potential of supporting life (Deut. 11:17). Thus the expression "the good land" is a comment about not only its existing, but its potential, productivity. In such contexts the land is viewed as one aspect of the blessings of salvation promised by God; thus the Lord did not permit Moses to cross the Jordan and enter the land which His people were to inherit (Deut. 3:26-28). This aspect of the "good land" includes overtones of its fruitfulness and "pleasantness": "And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them..." (1 Sam. 8:14).

Ṭōb is used to describe men or women. Sometimes it is used of an "elite corps" of people: "And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses..." (1 Sam. 8:16). In

2 Sam. 18:27, Ahimaaz is described as a "good" man because he comes with "good" military news. In 1 Sam. 15:28, the word has ethical overtones: "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou" (cf. 1 Kings 2:32). In other passages, *tôb* describes physical appearance: "And the damsel was very fair to look upon [literally, "good of appearance"]..." (Gen. 24:16). When applied to one's heart, the word describes "well-being" rather than ethical status. Therefore, the parallel idea is "joyous and happy": "... And they ... went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David..." (1 Kings 8:66). Dying "at a good old age" describes "advanced age," rather than moral accomplishment, but a time when due to divine blessings one is fulfilled and satisfied (Gen. 15:15).

Tôb indicates that a given word, act, or circumstance contributes positively to the condition of a situation. Often this judgment does not mean that the thing is actually "good," only that it is so evaluated: "When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good..." (Gen. 40:16). The judgment may be ethical: "It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen. . .?" (Neh. 5:9). The word may also represent "agreement" or "concurrence": "The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good" (Gen. 24:50).

Tôb is often used in conjunction with the Hebrew word *ra'â* ("bad; evil"). Sometimes this is intended as a contrast; but in other contexts it may mean "everything from good [friendly] to bad [unfriendly]," which is a way of saying "nothing at all." In other contexts, more contrast is suggested: "And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad..." (Num. 13:19). In this case, the evaluation would determine whether the land could support the people well or not. In Gen. 2:9, *tôb* contrasted with evil has moral overtones: "... the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." The fruit of this tree, if consumed, would reveal the difference between moral evil and moral "good." This reference also suggests that, by eating this fruit, man attempted to determine for himself what "good" and evil are. ([Vine's Expository Dictionary](#))

Gilbrant - TOB - The idea of "goodness" in Hebrew is "what fulfills one's expectations." It refers to something that is appropriate, pleasing and beneficial. A good thing meets the need or the desire of the person. Usually, it exceeds the minimum expectations.

Good is a quality of something, what makes it desirable, useful or advantageous, a condition or state of being. However, it is often based on the effects on people or the environment—what a thing or an action produces or what results from it. Good soil produces plants that are healthy and fruitful (Ezek. 17:8); a good eye is generous (Prov. 22:9); good news refreshes (Prov. 25:25); a good person leaves an inheritance to the next generations (Prov. 13:22); and it is good to sing praises to God (Ps. 147:1). Jethro told Moses that making all the decisions for God's people himself was "not good," because it would wear him out (Exo. 18:17). "Good" here refers to healthiness and effectiveness over the long term.

The moral and spiritual sense is used when God's people are told to do "good" and seek "good" and not evil—moral right versus wrong (Ps. 34:14; Amos 5:14f). Goodness can pertain to every area of life: physical, mental, emotional, relational, moral and spiritual. It involves a value judgment which in the ultimate definition of goodness must be based on God's revelation. God is the only one who is truly good in every way (Pss. 100:5; 119:68; 141:1, 3). The nature of God—who He is—is called his goodness in Exo. 33:19. God defines what goodness is. Genesis 2 speaks of the knowledge of good and evil, referring to the full range of experience in life, from what is in harmony with God to everything that is opposed to his nature.

The adjective occurs far more than the verb or the noun. It is also used in Hebrew for comparisons to say something is better than something else—the one thing will more fully meet the need or expectation than the other, or will produce greater benefits than the other. Thus, it is preferable to the other, e.g., "Thy lovingkindness is better than life" (Ps. 63:3). The verb is used of things going well or being pleasing, or someone doing good. The noun is used of products of something—"goods," or goodness in the sense of character or works, especially of God (Ps. 27:13).

The adjective denotes other positive qualities as well. One who possesses a *tôv* *l'viv*, literally "a good heart," is one who is happy (Ecc. 7:14). Positive results of an act can be conveyed by this adjective (Gen. 40:16). Something which is pleasing can be denoted as *tôv* (2 Sam. 19:27), including one who tries to be obedient to God (Ecc. 2:26). Objects which are visually pleasing, e.g., an infant (Exo. 2:2) are also *tôv*. Humans can be *tôv* in the sense of "friendly" (1 Sam. 25:15), as can God (2 Chr. 30:18).

The first references to goodness are uses of the adjective in Gen. 1 and they show the basic idea of fulfilling

expectations. God declares everything He creates to be good, and finally, very good (Gen. 1:31). This means that it did what He intended it to do. It functioned appropriately and was pleasing to Him. It accomplished his purpose. The sense of having a pleasant quality or pleasing effect is seen in Zech. 1:13 where God's words are comforting and "good" or "kind." The physical sense is seen in Gen. 41:5, where Joseph dreams of grain that was "good," meaning "healthy, full, the best one could want." "Fine" gold in 2 Chr. 3:5 is "good" in the Hebrew, and so is "precious" oil in Ps. 133:2. The latter is one of a small handful of references, which some scholars believe are to a specific scented product of that day. However, it seems more likely that *tôv* sometimes means "excellent," of the finest quality, meeting and surpassing the highest expectations.

The opposite of goodness is evil, *ra'* (HED #7737). This word, like the English word "bad," refers to everything painful, harmful and morally evil. It covers everything simply undesirable to everything opposed to God. The two opposites are presented as the great choice God gives in Deut. 30:15 and 19, where He says, "I have set before you today life and prosperity [*tôv*], and death and destruction [*ra'*]" (NIV). All that the Lord wants for his people, all that He intended for his creation in health, wholeness, joy, pleasure, fulfillment, love, peace—in fellowship with Him, flowing out of His goodness—is summed up in this word. Thus, it overlaps with the word "blessing" (HED #1318).

Finally, this sense of God's sovereign, ultimate, purpose for the greatest human benefit, is seen in Gen. 50:20 where Joseph, looking back over his life, says to his brothers that they have meant evil or harm against him, but he realized that God has meant it for "good" to save many lives. God is good and is working for the greatest, eternal, good in people's lives. As a result, He wants his people to let his goodness flow through them to others. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

TOB - 364 VERSES - Gen. 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31; 2:9,12,18; 3:6; 6:2; 15:15; 16:6; 18:7; 19:8; 20:15; 24:16,50; 25:8; 26:7; 27:9; 29:19; 30:20; 31:24,29; 40:16; 41:5,22,24,26,35; 49:15; Exod. 2:2; 3:8; 14:12; 18:17; Lev. 27:10,12,14,33; Num. 10:29; 13:19; 14:3,7; 36:6; Deut. 1:14,25,35; 3:25; 4:21-22; 6:10,18; 8:7,10,12; 9:6; 11:17; 12:28; 23:16; 28:12; Jos. 7:21; 9:25; 21:45; 23:13-16; Jdg. 8:2,32; 9:2,11; 10:15; 11:25; 15:2; 18:9,19; 19:24; Ruth 2:22; 3:13; 4:15; 1 Sam. 1:8,23; 2:24,26; 3:18; 8:14,16; 9:2,10; 11:10; 12:23; 14:36,40; 15:22,28; 16:12; 19:4; 20:7; 24:19; 25:3,8,15; 26:16; 27:1; 29:6,9; 2 Sam. 3:13; 10:12; 11:2; 13:22; 14:32; 15:3; 17:7,14; 18:3,27; 19:18,27,38; 24:22; 1 Ki. 1:6; 2:18,32,38,42; 8:36,56,66; 12:7; 14:13,15; 18:24; 19:4; 20:3; 21:2; 22:8,13,18; 2 Ki. 2:19; 3:19,25; 5:12; 10:3,5; 20:3,13,19; 1 Chr. 4:40; 16:34; 19:13; 21:23; 28:8; 29:28; 2 Chr. 3:5,8; 5:13; 6:27; 7:3,10; 10:7; 12:12; 14:2; 18:12,17; 19:3,11; 21:13; 30:18,22; 31:20; Ezr. 3:11; 7:9; 8:18,27; Neh. 2:8,18; 5:9; 9:13,20; Est. 1:11,19; 2:2-3,9; 3:11; 5:9; 7:9; 8:5,8,17; 9:19,22; Job 10:3; 13:9; 34:4; Ps. 25:8; 34:8; 36:4; 37:16; 45:1; 52:9; 54:6; 63:3; 69:16; 73:1,28; 84:10; 86:5; 92:1; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 109:21; 111:10; 112:5; 118:1,8-9,29; 119:39,68,72; 125:4; 133:1-2; 135:3; 136:1; 143:10; 145:9; 147:1; Prov. 2:9,20; 3:4,14; 4:2; 8:11,19; 12:2,9,25; 13:15,22; 14:14,19; 15:3,15-17,23,30; 16:8,16,19,29,32; 17:1,26; 18:5; 19:1-2,22; 20:23; 21:9,19; 22:1,9; 24:13,23; 25:7,24-25,27; 27:5,10; 28:6,21; 31:18; Eccl. 2:3,24,26; 3:12,22; 4:3,6,9,13; 5:5,18; 6:3,9,12; 7:1-3,5,8,10-11,18,26; 8:12-13,15; 9:2,4,7,16,18; 11:6-7; 12:14; Cant. 1:2-3; 4:10; 7:9; Isa. 5:9; 38:3; 39:2,8; 41:7; 56:5; 65:2; Jer. 6:16,20; 24:2-3,5; 26:14; 29:10; 33:11,14; 40:4; 44:17; Lam. 3:25-27,38; 4:1,9; Ezek. 17:8; 18:18; 20:25; 24:4; 31:16; 34:14,18; 36:31; Dan. 1:4,15; Hos. 2:7; 4:13; Amos 6:2; Jon. 4:3,8; Mic. 6:8; 7:4; Nah. 1:7; 3:4; Zech. 1:13; 8:19; 11:12; Mal. 2:17

Larry Richardson - Even if he lives a thousand years" Ecc. 6:1–12. One of the most grievous evils identified by the Teacher is that, however long a man lives, it is not long enough. Even a person with wealth, possessions, and honor soon dies, with his appetites still unsatisfied.

In saying that "all man's efforts are for his mouth," the writer suggested that secular man is on a treadmill. He works to satisfy his physical needs and desires, yet however well-fed, he becomes hungry again, and however supplied with drink his thirst returns. In it all, his deepest need, the nameless desire for meaning, persists as an aching desire that no food or drink can quench. "Whatever exists has already been named." Life on earth is an endless repetition, a treadmill on which each new generation walks or runs until their "few and meaningless days" are over.

There is no meaning to be found in the life lived by secular man. (The 365 Day Devotional Commentary)

Ecclesiastes 6:7 All a man's labor is for his mouth and yet the appetite is not satisfied.

KJV Ecclesiastes 6:7 All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 6:7 All the labor of man is for his mouth, And yet the soul is not satisfied.

BGT Ecclesiastes 6:7 π ς μ χθος το νθρ που ε ς στ μα α το κα γε ψυχ ο πληρωθ σεται

LXE Ecclesiastes 6:7 All the labour of a man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite shall not be satisfied.

NET Ecclesiastes 6:7 All of man's labor is for nothing more than to fill his stomach— yet his appetite is never satisfied!

CSB Ecclesiastes 6:7 All man's labor is for his stomach, yet the appetite is never satisfied.

ESV Ecclesiastes 6:7 All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied.

NIV Ecclesiastes 6:7 All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.

NLT Ecclesiastes 6:7 All people spend their lives scratching for food, but they never seem to have enough.

YLT Ecclesiastes 6:7 All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not filled.

NJB Ecclesiastes 6:7 All toil is for the mouth, yet the appetite is never satisfied.

NRS Ecclesiastes 6:7 All human toil is for the mouth, yet the appetite is not satisfied.

NAB Ecclesiastes 6:7 All man's toil is for his mouth, yet his desire is not fulfilled.

GWN Ecclesiastes 6:7 Everything that people work so hard for goes into their mouths, but their appetite is never satisfied.

- **the labor:** Ge 3:17-19 Pr 16:26 Mt 6:25 Joh 6:27 1Ti 6:6-8
- **appetite:** Heb. soul, Ec 6:3 5:10 Lu 12:19

Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 1:8+ All things are wearisome; Man is not able to tell it. **The eye is not SATISFIED with seeing,** Nor is the ear filled with hearing.

Ecclesiastes 4:8+ There was a certain man without a dependent, having neither a son nor a brother, yet there was no end to all his labor. Indeed, **his eyes were not SATISFIED** with riches and he never asked, "And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?" This too is vanity and it is a grievous task.

Ecclesiastes 5:10+ **He who loves money will not be SATISFIED with money,** nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 6:3 If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, however many they be, but **his soul is not SATISFIED with good things** and he does not even have a proper burial, then I say, "Better the miscarriage than he,



**TOILING FOR BREAD
STARVING WITHIN**

All a man's labor ([amal](#); [Lxx](#) - [mochthos](#) = hard, difficult labor involving suffering) **is for his mouth and yet the appetite** ([nephesh](#); [Lxx](#) - [psuche](#)) **is not** (never) **satisfied** ([male](#) - to fill; [Lxx](#) - [pleroo](#)) - **Labor** is used in Ecclesiastes to describe wearisome human work that yields little lasting joy. **Mouth** symbolically refers to basic physical needs or consumption (especially food). Solomon describes the feeding of the body, and forgetting the soul. **Appetite** conveys a deeper meaning because the Hebrew noun is [nephesh](#) which is translated "soul" more than 200x in the OT. Therefore in this context **appetite** ([nephesh](#)) refers to the inner person, not just hunger but desire, craving, or life force and speaks of a deeper, spiritual dissatisfaction. Food, money, or comfort may sustain you temporarily, but they cannot fill the eternal longing of your heart. **Not** is probably better rendered *never*, (Greek has "[ou](#)" which signifies absolute negation) which speaks of a chronic emptiness, a desire that remains unfulfilled no matter how much is consumed. This verse vividly captures the experience of modern consumerism and ancient toil alike: we work hard, earn money, buy food, seek pleasure—and yet, our souls remain restless. Solomon is not saying **labor** is wrong, but **labor** by itself which ignores the soul's need is misguided. True satisfaction is not found in the fruit of your labor but in the presence of the Christ Who gives rest to the weary and food to the soul (Mt 11:28-30+, Jn 4:34+, Jn 6:41, 48, 51+).

*You can fill your life with activity
and still starve spiritually.*

Jesus addressed this soul need in John 6:27+ commanding those who were following Him **"Do not work** ([present imperative with a negative](#)) for the food which perishes, but (ED: IMPLIED "INSTEAD WORK") for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal."

*You can feed your body
and still starve your soul.*

William Barrick - The Elusiveness of Satisfaction and Rest (Eccl 6:7–9) From Eccl 6:3–6 the reader comprehends that, "Despite family, longevity and fame, life may so miscarry as to incur lifelong dissatisfaction and an unmourned death." (Borrow Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., [Ecclesiastes: Total Life, Everyman's Bible Commentary \(Chicago: Moody Press, 1979\)](#) Borrow Michael A. Eaton, [Ecclesiastes: An Introduction and Commentary, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries \(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983\), 105.](#)) Solomon has already addressed lack of satisfaction in Eccl 1:8; 4:8; 5:10; and Eccl 6:3. This proverb in Eccl 6:7 merely repeats the truth within the context of the previous three case histories. Each of those three situations speak to a lack of satisfaction. The term translated "satisfied" is actually "filled" (cf. Eccl 1:8). The proverb teaches that a person living as a mere human being without God in his or her life can never find satisfaction in quantity of possessions, wealth, children, or years of life. ([Ecclesiastes 6 Commentary](#))

Labor (mischief, toil trouble, anguish) ([05999](#)) [amal](#) from verb [amal](#) = to labor especially the dark side of labor, the grievous and unfulfilling aspects of work) means trouble, labor, toil. In Ecclesiastes the Septuagint usually translates [amal](#) with the noun [mochthos](#) which describes hard and difficult labor involving suffering hardship, struggle, strenuous toil. Note that [amal](#) is not just describing physical toil but can also describe mental anguish as in the following passages -- anguish (Ps. 25:18), Joseph's 'anguish' of mind (Ge 41:51), the 'misery' from which Israel was delivered (Nu 23:21NIV), Job's 'trouble' (Job 3:10).

Labor ([amal](#)) is used by Solomon in Ps 127:1+ explaining how man's labor is in vain without the LORD! = "Unless the LORD builds the house, They **labor** ([amal](#)) in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain."

Gilbrant - This is the noun that describes the labor that Qoheleth, the Preacher of Ecclesiastes, considered vanity, because the laborer could never enjoy the fruit of the labor (Ecc. 1:3; 2:11). The term is used figuratively to describe the heaviness of certain painful thoughts, particularly the psalmist's concern over the prosperity of the wicked (Ps. 73:16). 'āmāl can also refer to the fruit or produce of labor (Ps. 105:44; Ecc. 2:19) and the notion of trouble or vexation (general weariness or weariness of situations and circumstances). Joseph named his firstborn son Manasseh since God had made him forget all his toil (Gen. 41:51). The Lord heard the affliction and toil of his people in Egypt and sent Moses to deliver them (Deut. 26:7). Job's so-called friends are called "troublesome comforters" (Job 3:10; 16:2). The Suffering Servant, Jesus Christ, experienced for our sakes "the anguish of his soul" (Isa. 53:11). 'āmāl may also be translated "wickedness" (cf. Num. 23:21; Isa. 10:1), which conveys the emotion of vexation and anguish associated with sinful behavior, especially by those who are the recipients of such evil acts. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

AMAL USES IN ECCLESIASTES - Eccl. 1:3; Eccl. 2:10; Eccl. 2:11; Eccl. 2:18; Eccl. 2:19; Eccl. 2:20; Eccl. 2:22; Eccl. 2:24; Eccl. 3:13; Eccl. 4:4; Eccl. 4:6; Eccl. 4:8; Eccl. 4:9; Eccl. 5:15; Eccl. 5:18; Eccl. 5:19; Eccl. 6:7; Eccl. 8:15; Eccl. 9:9; Eccl. 10:15;

Appetite (soul, life, person, creature) ([05315](#)) [nephesh](#) feminine noun meaning breath, the inner being with its thoughts and emotions. The original idea of [nephesh](#) in Hebrew, as suggested by evidence from parallels in the related ancient languages of

Akkadian and Ugaritic, is "throat," "breath" and the "life" that they sustain. The idea seems to have been that the throat was associated with the basic needs of life (air, food and water) and the desires one feels for them. The nephesh, as personifying inner needs and desires, is therefore extended to refer to various feelings, emotions and thoughts.

Gilbrant - The Hebrew word nephesh, which is widely attested in Semitic languages, has been traditionally translated "soul" in many passages going back to the Greek translators of the Septuagint around 200 b.c., who used the word psuchfi (GED #5425). While the soul as a spiritual being inside the human body is often intended, the whole person may also be referred to. The Bible does not teach the Greek idea of a good soul trapped in an evil body. From the beginning, in [Gen. 2:7](#), people are described as formed by God from the material of the earth and given life by God's breath, thus becoming a living being (nephesh). There is no soul separate from God's breathing of life into physical flesh, according to the OT revelation. The word nephesh refers more to the person, regardless of whether including the body is meant.

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) A WARNING TO WORKAHOLICS Ecclesiastes 6:7-8

His appetite is never satisfied." The Hebrew word translated "appetite" may also be translated as "soul." This is yet another reminder by Solomon that we were made for more than food. A man may get up, go to work, come home, go to bed, and then do the same thing for the next fifty years. After that he retires to Arizona, plays golf, and then he dies.

So what? His soul has not been satisfied by anything he has done. He dies unfulfilled, even though his friends said nice things about him at his funeral.

As noted in The Rare Jewel of Contentment (Chapter 36), the workaholic, absorbed in his work, never finds deep satisfaction. Remember who the workaholic is? He or she is addicted to the job. For a workaholic, work is life; and the more one works, the better one feels. Here are three telltale signs that suggest you are prone to workaholism: First, your total energy is given to your work so that you have nothing left to give at home. Second, you constantly think about your work, even when you are not at work. Third, you find it difficult to relax when you are away from your work.

Workaholics generally are Type A personalities: Committed, aggressive, demanding, perfectionistic, goal-oriented, high achievers; impatient with weakness, easily frustrated, with enough stamina to work twelve hours a day, six (or seven) days a week. They love the long hours and the high-pressure job. One man said, "I don't know how I got rich. I only worked half-days: the first half or the second half."

From God's point of view, workaholics make three fundamental mistakes. To be more specific, they believe three heretical ideas:

1. "It all depends upon me."
2. "If I don't do it, nobody else will."
3. "My worth depends upon my work."

Like all heresies, there is a grain of truth in each statement. Work is good. It was created by God for the benefit of the human race (see Genesis 2:15). But to believe that your worth depends upon your work is to deny the truth of the grace of God. Workaholics are simply repeating the Galatian heresy—that we are saved by grace but kept by works (see Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 3:3).

The truth is, it all depends upon God. Everyone comes to that conclusion sooner or later. Unfortunately, some people have to die to find it out. Happy are they who understand the difference between living to work and working to live.

Lord God, when I am tempted to take matters into my own hands, grant that I may remember that Your way is always best. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- How important is your job to your self-image? Have you looked to your work to satisfy the needs of your soul?
- When you have success, who gets the credit?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Numbers 20:1-13; Job 40:1-14; and 1 Corinthians 10:1-12.

The search for self-fulfillment is endless, and endlessly frustrating. —James Hitchcock, Leadership, Vol. 4, no. 1.

Greg Laurie - THE NEVER-ENDING PURSUIT (Ecclesiastes 6:7)

Years ago I was visiting the home of Billy and Ruth Graham when I noticed a strange dog that would chase his tail all day long. At

one point, he came to a little embankment, still chasing his tail. I watched him, wanting to see how far this dog would go. He fell down the embankment, which was pretty steep. Then he scurried back up and started chasing his tail again. So I asked Mrs. Graham, "What's wrong with your dog?"

"He always does that," she told me.

I returned six months later and didn't see the dog. So I asked Mrs. Graham about the dog that chases his tail.

"He got it," she said. "He's dead."

A lot of people today are like that dog, chasing after things that will never satisfy. They go around in circles, never making any progress. James 4:2 says, "You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask." Note the words, "cannot obtain." If this verse tells us anything at all, it reminds us three times that the natural human heart is never content. This awful craving for the pleasures of life never stops. It just goes on and on and on. Trying to find satisfaction in the things of this life is like chasing after a mirage. It is always out of your reach. It always will elude you. James was essentially saying, "You lust. You kill. You fight. You are always reaching. You are always groping. But you are never going to quite have it."

It is a never-ending pursuit, like the dog chasing his tail.

The Painless Life

In the book *Gaily the Troubadour*, published in 1936, Arthur Guiterman wrote the following poem. Reading his observations, you wouldn't guess it was written nearly fifty years ago.

First dentistry was painless;
Then bicycles were chainless
And carriages were horseless
And many laws, enforceless.

Next, cookery was fireless,
Telegraphy was wireless,
Cigars were nicotineless
And coffee, caffeineless.

Soon oranges were seedless,
The putting green was weedless,
The college boy hatless,
The proper diet, fatless.

Now motor roads are dustless,
The latest steel is rustless,
Our tennis courts are sodless,
Our new religions, godless.

—Leadership, Vol. 5, no. 1.

See: Ecclesiastes 6:7; Ecclesiastes 1:10

Warren Wiersbe - LIVING VERSUS EXISTING [Wiersbe Bible Commentary 2 Vol Set - Page 18](#)

Rich and poor alike labor to stay alive. We must either produce food or earn money to buy it. The rich man can let his money work for him, but the poor man has to use his muscles if he and his family are going to eat.

But even after all this labor, the appetite of neither one is fully satisfied.

Why does a person eat? So that he can add years to his life. But what

good is it for me to add years to my life if I don't add life to my years? I'm like the birds that I watch in the backyard. They spend all their waking hours either looking for food or escaping from enemies. (We have cats in our neighborhood.) These birds are not really living; they are only existing. Yet they are fulfilling the purposes for which the Creator made them—and they even sing about it!

Solomon is not suggesting that it's wrong either to work or to eat. Many people enjoy doing both. But if life consists only in working and eating, then we are being controlled by our appetites and that almost puts us on the same level as animals. As far as nature is concerned, self-preservation may be the first law of life, but we who are made in the image of God must live for something higher.

Applying God's Truth:

1. Is your work a fulfilling activity for you? How might it become more fulfilling?
 2. How much enjoyment do you get out of eating? Do you make the most out of your meals?
 3. What things can you do to keep from letting routine activities (like working and eating) take control and prevent you from enjoying what is truly important in life?
-

Freedom Gone Wrong

Self-fulfillment soon grows into a quest for self-indulgence with a vocabulary of I, Me, Mine and self-indulgence, in turn, soon becomes unbridled. The self-indulgent pursuit of pleasure embraces tolerance of homosexuality, addiction to eroticism, addiction to drugs and alcohol, habitual divorce, vandalism and lawlessness. Thus liberty becomes libertinism. It is a dictatorship of permissiveness which enslaves its citizens, a dictatorship whose decrees are endlessly purveyed by the media. —Kitty Muggeridge in *Gazing on Truth*. Christianity Today, Vol. 34, no. 11.

Full Stomachs and Jaded Palates

Self-indulgence is the enemy of gratitude, and self-discipline usually its friend and generator. That is why gluttony is a deadly sin. The early desert fathers believed that a person's appetites are linked: full stomachs and jaded palates take the edge from our hunger and thirst for righteousness. They spoil the appetite for God. And they may therefore crowd out gratitude. —Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. in *The Reformed Journal* (November 1988). Christianity Today, Vol. 33, no. 2.

Self-Love First?

The reigning cliché of the day is that in order to love others one must first learn to love oneself. This formulation—love thyself, then thy neighbor—is a license for unremitting self-indulgence, because the quest for self-love is endless. By the time you have finally learned to love yourself, you'll find yourself playing golf at Leisure World. —Charles Krauthammer in *Time* (June 28, 1993). Christianity Today, Vol. 39, no. 3.

Os Hillman - LABOR ALONE WILL NOT SATISFY

All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not satisfied. ECCLESIASTES 6:7, NKJV

How would you feel about yourself if your job were revoked tomorrow? Let's imagine that your income wouldn't change, just what you do everyday.

One of the schemes that Satan uses in the life of Christian workers is to get them to base their value solely on the type of work they do and how well they do it. We call this performance-based acceptance. It says, "As long as I have a good job and as long as I do it well, I have self-esteem."

This is a slippery slope, and Satan can use these thoughts to keep our focus on our performance rather than on Christ. In reality, we are not meant to find our value in what we do. Instead, our value is based solely on who we are in Christ.

The apostle Paul wrestled with this after he came to faith in Christ. He had grown to the top of his field as a Jewish leader, and it was probably difficult for him to surrender his stature to identity in Christ:

If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith (Philippians 3:4-9).

You'll never really know the degree that your self-esteem is rooted in your work until your work is removed from the picture. Why not evaluate where you are in this area of your life? Affirm with God your desire to be known by your identity in Christ, not what you do to earn a living.

Ecclesiastes 6:7-12 Are You Full?

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing. --Romans 15:13

As a boy, I laughed and cried as I read *The Adventures Of Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. I gave little thought to the author of these books, though, until I saw a dramatized version of Mark Twain's life.

Twain had his share of tragedy. He blamed himself for his younger brother's death in a steamboat accident at age 20, and for the death of his only son, who died from diphtheria at 19 months. He grieved bitterly over the deaths of two of his daughters—one from meningitis at age 23 and one from a heart attack at age 29.

But instead of turning to God, Twain became bitter and pessimistic. When he died at 74, he was desperately lonely, unhappy, and hopeless.

Mark Twain had an emptiness that could not be satisfied with money and fame. His success as a writer only increased his misery and sense of loss. His life illustrates the folly of living without God, which is described in Ecclesiastes 6:7-12. If only he had trusted Christ for salvation and looked to Him for comfort and fulfillment!

Have life's hardships left you feeling empty and bitter, or have they strengthened your relationship with God and made you better? Turn in faith to Christ, and "the God of hope [will] fill you with all joy and peace" (Romans 15:13). —Herbert Vander Lugt

The sun that hardens clay to brick
Can soften wax to shape and mold;
So too life's trials will harden some,
While others purify as gold.
—Sper

Life's trials should make us better—not bitter

Ecclesiastes 6:8 For what advantage does the wise man have over the fool? What advantage does the poor man have, knowing how to walk before the living?

- **what:** Ec 2:14-16 5:11
- **the poor:** Ge 17:1 Ps 101:2 116:9 Pr 19:1 Lu 1:6 1Ti 6:17

THE LIMITS OF WISDOM & POVERTY

For what advantage ([yother](#); Lxx - [perisseia](#)) **does the wise man have over the fool** ([kesil](#); Lxx - [aphron](#))? - First of two rhetorical questions both calling for a negative response. On the surface, wisdom should be better than folly (as he says in Ecclesiastes 2:13–14), yet both the wise and the fool face the same end: death. In the grand scheme of life's brevity and futility, wisdom doesn't guarantee satisfaction or lasting legacy. There are only relative advantages for the wise person who does not know God.

NET NOTE - The rhetorical question in Hebrew implies a negative answer: the wise man has no absolute advantage over a fool in the sense that both will share the same fate: death. Qoheleth should not be misunderstood here as denying that wisdom has no relative advantage over folly; elsewhere he affirms that wisdom does yield some relative benefits in life (Ec 7:1–22). However, wisdom cannot deliver one from death.

What advantage does the poor man have, knowing how to walk before the living- Even a **poor man** who knows how to behave respectfully or wisely among others may still be stuck in hardship. His skill at navigating social norms doesn't deliver him from life's troubles. Solomon is not romanticizing the value of the poor and simple life!

Whether rich or poor, wise or foolish, no one can escape life's futility apart from God, no one has found the key to in innermost secrets of life. For the rich, earthly advantages provide little ultimate gain in a world governed by death and vanity. Ecclesiastes 6:8 breaks the illusion that wisdom, success, or even social intelligence offer lasting meaning. Solomon observes that both the wise and the fool, the poor and the savvy, end up facing the same frustrations and end. This leads us to realize that without God, even wisdom is futile. What is missing is not intelligence, skill, or success, but an eternal perspective. Only in Christ do wisdom and poverty find redemptive meaning.

William Barrick - Verse 8 employs a second proverb containing two rhetorical questions. Although translating and interpreting verse 8 has produced much scholarly wringing of hands, (Borrow [Hubbard Ecclesiastes, 154](#)) it is clear that both questions demand the same answer: "There is no advantage." Neither the wise man nor the fool have an advantage when it comes to satisfaction. A wise man might gain a temporary advantage over a fool. A fool might have a temporary advantage with his street smarts. However, neither one can gain any advantage over death or over God (see Ecc 2:12–17). ([Ecclesiastes 6 Commentary](#))

Advantage ([03148](#)) **yother** (from [yathar](#) = to be left over) means superiority, advantage, excess, profit, gain. Frequently used in

Ecclesiastes to ask, "What's the gain?" a recurring question about the meaning of life apart from God.

John Hartley - ([TWOT Online](#)) The wisdom school, especially Ecclesiastes, often employs this root in search of the real advantage or the true excellence in life. Proverbs emphasizes that abundance can be gained by toil and diligent effort (Proverbs 14:23; Proverbs 21:5). But abundance must not become the goal of life, for after necessities have been met that which is left then becomes the inheritance of one's family (Psalm 17:14).

Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) uses this word family to get across many of his ideas. One is not to be too wise or too righteous; i.e. one cannot authenticate himself by putting his wisdom and righteousness on display so that they appear greater than they really are (Eccles. 7:16). Truly the best advantage belongs to one with wisdom (Eccles. 7:11). He uses *yitrôn* in the manner of "advantage," "gain" or "profit." There is advantage for an agricultural community to have a king, no doubt so that its production can be fully realized (Eccles. 5:9 [H 8]). He also finds advantage or benefit in wisdom over folly (Eccles. 2:13). Wisdom shows man how to overcome a difficult problem and knowledge allows wisdom to preserve the life of its owner (Eccles. 7:12; Eccles. 10:10). Proverbs points out there is advantage in toil over laziness (Proverbs 14:23). But Ecclesiastes probes deeper by continually asking what profit does one gain from his toil (Eccles. 1:3; Eccles. 3:9). The answer is nothing, especially if it is to accumulate goods which cannot be taken at death (Eccles. 2:11; Eccles. 5:15). Ecclesiastes here feels the full force of the curse on man's work which makes it toil and he clearly sees that ultimate value can not reside in man's labor or its results.

Gilbrant - The sense of the root is particularly clear in 1 Sam. 15:15, which says that the Israelites spared the best of the sheep and oxen and destroyed "the rest." This term has economic overtones in the sense of "surplus," "profit" or "advantage." This sense of "advantage" is seen in the question, "What advantage does the wise man have over the fool?" (Ecc. 6:8 NASB; cf. v. 11). The statement that wisdom with an inheritance is "surplus" (Ecc. 7:11) is semantically equivalent to the English idiom of "icing on the cake." *Yôthfir* is also used adverbially and means "too much" or "excessively." This use is seen in the question, "Why then have I been extremely wise?" (Ecc. 2:15, NASB). The word is used similarly in the statement, "Do not be overly wise" (Ecc. 7:16, NASB). When followed by *min* (HED #4623), *yôthfir* means "more than" (Est. 6:6; Ecc. 12:12). One time it occurs with the relative particle *shā* (HED #8054). In this case, it can mean either "besides" or "it can be added that." ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

YOTHER - 8V - addition(1), advantage(3), beyond(1), extremely(1), more(1), overly(1) Est. 6:6; Eccl. 2:15; Eccl. 6:8; Eccl. 6:11; Eccl. 7:11; Eccl. 7:16; Eccl. 12:9; Eccl. 12:12

Fool ([03684](#)) **kesil** is a stupid fellow, a morally insensitive dullard, whether it be in spiritual, intellectual, or moral matters. These are stupid people who are totally confident in own wisdom, thinking they have it all figured out without God's assistance. **Swanson** adds that **kesil** refers to (1) foolishness, stupidity, insolence, i.e., the state of being in complete lack of understanding, implying rebellion (Pr 10:1); (2) fool, insolent person, i.e., one completely lacking understanding, implying to be a rebel against standard or person (Pr 10:18).

Vine - The **kesil** is "insolent" in religion and "stupid or dull" in wise living (living out a religion he professes)....They have knowledge of God but do not properly evaluate or understand what they know...(In Proverbs the fool) rejects the claims and teachings of wisdom. However, in the Bible wisdom is the practical outworking of one's religion. Therefore, even in these contexts there is a clear connotation of insolence in religion. ([Vine's Expository Dictionary](#))

KESIL - 69V - fool(35), fool's(2), foolish(6), foolish man's(1), fools(23), stupid(1), stupid man(1), stupid ones(1). Ps. 49:10; Ps. 92:6; Ps. 94:8; Prov. 1:22; Prov. 1:32; Prov. 3:35; Prov. 8:5; Prov. 10:1; Prov. 10:18; Prov. 10:23; Prov. 12:23; Prov. 13:16; Prov. 13:19; Prov. 13:20; Prov. 14:7; Prov. 14:8; Prov. 14:16; Prov. 14:24; Prov. 14:33; Prov. 15:2; Prov. 15:7; Prov. 15:14; Prov. 15:20; Prov. 17:10; Prov. 17:12; Prov. 17:16; Prov. 17:21; Prov. 17:24; Prov. 17:25; Prov. 18:2; Prov. 18:6; Prov. 18:7; Prov. 19:1; Prov. 19:10; Prov. 19:13; Prov. 19:29; Prov. 21:20; Prov. 23:9; Prov. 26:1; Prov. 26:3; Prov. 26:4; Prov. 26:5; Prov. 26:6; Prov. 26:7; Prov. 26:8; Prov. 26:9; Prov. 26:10; Prov. 26:11; Prov. 26:12; Prov. 28:26; Prov. 29:11; Prov. 29:20; Eccl. 2:14; Eccl. 2:15; Eccl. 2:16; Eccl. 4:5; Eccl. 4:13; Eccl. 5:1; Eccl. 5:3; Eccl. 5:4; Eccl. 6:8; Eccl. 7:4; Eccl. 7:5; Eccl. 7:6; Eccl. 7:9; Eccl. 9:17; Eccl. 10:2; Eccl. 10:12; Eccl. 10:15

Read through the uses of **kesil** in Proverbs for a more complete Biblical understanding of **a fool** - e.g., they are complacent, they will be destroyed, etc (Pr 1:32). Then read [Torrey's description of Fools](#)

KJV Ecclesiastes 6:9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 6:9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

BGT Ecclesiastes 6:9 γὰρ ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς ἢ ἡ πόρευ μὲνον ψυχῇ καὶ γέ τοιοῦτο ματαιότης καὶ προαρεσίς πνεύματος

LXE Ecclesiastes 6:9 The sight of the eyes is better than that which wanders in soul: this is also vanity, and waywardness of spirit.

NET Ecclesiastes 6:9 It is better to be content with what the eyes can see than for one's heart always to crave more. This continual longing is futile— like chasing the wind.

CSB Ecclesiastes 6:9 Better what the eyes see than wandering desire. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

ESV Ecclesiastes 6:9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite: this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

NIV Ecclesiastes 6:9 Better what the eye sees than the roving of the appetite. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

NLT Ecclesiastes 6:9 Enjoy what you have rather than desiring what you don't have. Just dreaming about nice things is meaningless-- like chasing the wind.

YLT Ecclesiastes 6:9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the going of the soul. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

- **Better:** Ec 2:24 3:12,13 5:18
- **soul** Job 31:7 Pr 30:15,16 Jer 2:20
- **this:** Ec 6:2 1:2,14 2:11,22,23 4:4



THE CHASE THAT NEVER ENDS

What the eyes see (visible, tangible) **is better than what the soul desires** (NIV - roving of the appetite) - NLT = "Enjoy what you have rather than desiring what you don't have" **What the eyes see** refers to what is present, real, and available, that is, what one already has or possesses. **The soul** refers to the inner person, including the will and emotions and suggests inner craving, longing for more, or even coveting. This phrase **what the soul desires** is more literally "the going of the soul" (Lxx "wanders in soul") which is a poetic way to describe the roaming or wandering of the inner life, i.e., unfulfilled desire, restless craving, etc. Sometimes our soul "wanders" because we believe the next thing will fix our hearts but Solomon says it won't. Ultimately only Jesus satisfies the sin-sick soul.

William MacDonald - It is far better to be content with the meals that are set before one than to be always craving for something additional. This business of always lusting for more is as foolish as grasping for the wind. As Leupold said, it's like "lustful straying about from one thing to another in quest of true satisfaction."

This too is futility ([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) **and a striving** ([reuth](#)) **after wind** ([ruah](#); [Lxx](#)- [pneuma](#)) - This is the chase that never ends! Even though contentment with what we see is **better** than constant longing, the human heart still chases dreams, imagining fulfillment always lies just beyond reach. Solomon warns us that this too ends up empty. It is better to be content with what is present than to constantly crave what you don't have—but even this pursuit of contentment, apart from God, is ultimately futile. **Striving** ([reuth](#)) **after wind** ([ruah](#); [Lxx](#)- [pneuma](#)) is an image of futile pursuit as in the picture above of a man chasing something that he can never catch!

THOUGHT- This verse speaks of a modern "plague" known as restlessness or discontentment. It is so easy to look at what others have or to dream about what might be and despise the blessings we already possess!

Have you ever been there? Solomon reminds us that what is present is better than what is imagined. But human nature doesn't easily accept that. We often believe the next job, the next relationship, the next possession will finally satisfy. We need to ask ourselves am I constantly longing for what I don't have, while ignoring what God has already provided? You might consider writing down what your soul is "desiring" and then ask "Would getting this truly satisfy me? Or am I chasing wind?" Desire, without direction toward Jesus, becomes a restless wind which is always moving, never landing.

*A bird in the hand is better
than two in the bush.*

William Barrick - The third proverb (Eccl 6:9a) presents an equivalent to "A bird in the hand is better than two in the bush." Dreaming about something does not bring it to pass or bring it into one's possession. Take what you have—what you can see—and do not count on your desires being fulfilled. In other words, better to be content with what I have than to waste my life desiring what I do not have. **"This too is futility [hebel] and a striving after wind"** (Eccl 6:9b) wraps up the three case histories with the same summation to which Solomon appeals again and again throughout the book of Ecclesiastes 1:14, 17; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 6, 16; 5:16. In fact, the author does not employ the phrase again in the rest of the book. The very next verse marks the middle of the Hebrew text of Ecclesiastes. Therefore, the first half of the book comes to a close with this phrase. The next three verses set up the remainder of the book and introduce the theme for the second half. ([Ecclesiastes 6 Commentary](#))

Striving (07469) **reuth** means longing, striving, vexation. Baker says it is "It refers to a person's efforts to attain something, to achieve or master something, to find out all about the world and its purposes. In Ecclesiastes, these efforts are considered vain (Eccl. 1:14; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 6; 6:9). All striving ends up being a striving after nothing, the wind."

REUTH - Eccl. 1:14; Eccl. 2:11; Eccl. 2:17; Eccl. 2:26; Eccl. 4:4; Eccl. 4:6; Eccl. 6:9

Wind (07307) **ruah/ruach** ([click for in depth discussion](#)) means breath, wind, spirit (76x to the Spirit), air; breeze; ; courage; temper; **Ruah/ruach** refers to the Spirit of God or Holy Spirit (Ps. 51:11; Ps 106:33; Isa. 63:10, 11), who inspired the prophets (Nu 11:17, 25; 1Sa 10:6; 19:20), moved the prophets in time and space (Elijah (1 Ki. 18:12 cf Ezekiel in Ezek. 2:2). **Ruah/ruach** can refer to an evil spirit from the Lord (1Sa. 16:15, 16; 1Ki. 22:22, 23). David was inspired to speak as a prophet by the Spirit (2Sa 23:2). The Spirit was present among the returned exiles in Jerusalem (Hag. 2:5; Zech. 4:6); and will be poured out in the latter days on all flesh, imparting prophecy, dreams, and visions (Joel 2:28). The Spirit of God was grieved by the rebellion of God's people (Isa. 63:10).

RUAH IN ECCLESIASTES - Eccl. 1:6; Eccl. 1:14; Eccl. 1:17; Eccl. 2:11; Eccl. 2:17; Eccl. 2:26; Eccl. 3:19; Eccl. 3:21; Eccl. 4:4; Eccl. 4:6; Eccl. 4:16; Eccl. 5:16; Eccl. 6:9; Eccl. 7:8; Eccl. 7:9; Eccl. 8:8; Eccl. 10:4; Eccl. 11:4; Eccl. 11:5; Eccl. 12:7

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) TOO SHORT TO BOX WITH GOD Ecclesiastes 6:9-10

*"Your arms are too short
to box with God."*

Solomon reminds us that God is sovereign and no one can argue with Him. Or as James Weldon Johnson reminds us: "Your arms are too short to box with God."

*God's sovereignty means that He is in charge
of the entire universe all the time.*

In the original Hebrew, the word sovereign is both a noun and verb. As a verb it means "to rule," and as a noun it means "king" or "master" or "absolute ruler." God's sovereignty means that He is in charge of the entire universe all the time. Sovereignty reminds us that God is God and we are not. When we think we're ready to advise God on how to run the universe, He just looks at us and says, "How many stripes do you have on your sleeve?"

It's like a person who visits my house and starts to criticize things. He doesn't like the color of the wallpaper, he doesn't like the decorations, he doesn't like the picture that hangs over the kitchen table. Once he is finished with his criticism, only one comment is appropriate. "Mister, whose name is on the title deed to this house? When you start paying the bills around here, you get a vote on the decorating. Until then, feel free to say nothing." When we recognize the rights of the Sovereign, we feel free to say nothing about the way God runs the universe.

Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan king, learned the truth about God's sovereignty the hard way. As he took a walk on the roof of the royal

palace, the king began to say, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). In that very moment God struck the mightiest man on earth. The great king lost his mind and began to run through the streets of Babylon, shedding his clothes as he went, bellowing like a cow. He made his way outside and began to live with the cattle. His hair grew long and his nails were like the claws of a bird. Seven years later he came to his senses (Da 4:31-34).

Then the king gives us the moral of the story: "All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'" (v. 35): You will search through all sixty-six books of the Bible and you won't find a better statement of what God's sovereignty really means.

Let's take a lesson from a pagan king. All God's ways are just. And those who walk in pride He is able to humble.

Sovereign Lord, do whatever it takes to humble me so that I might experience Your power in my life. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Have you ever tried to deceive God? What happened?
- What area of your life would you least like for God to examine publicly?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 51; 1 Corinthians 11:31; and 1 John 1:5-10.

Warren Wiersbe - [Wiersbe Bible Commentary 2 Vol Set - Page 18](#)

Scripture: Read Ecclesiastes 6:10

"Better what the eye sees than the roving of the appetite. . . . Whatever exists has already been named, and what man is has been known" (Ecc. 6:9-10a).

IT'S YOUR CHOICE

Since what's going to be is going to be, why bother to make decisions? Isn't it all predestined anyway? Whatever exists has already been named, and what man is has been known (v. 10a). To the Jewish mind, giving a name to something is the same as fixing its character and stating what the thing really is. During the time of creation, God named the things that He made; and nobody changed those designations. Light is light and not darkness; day is day and not night.

Our name is "man"—Adam, "from the earth" (Gen. 2:7). Nobody can change that: we came from the earth and we will return to the earth (3:19). Man by any other name would still be man, made from the dust and eventually returning to the dust.

The fact that God has named everything does not mean that our world is a prison and we have no freedom to act. Certainly God can accomplish His divine purposes with or without our cooperation, but He invites us to work with Him. We cooperate with God as we accept the names He has given to things: sin is sin; obedience is obedience; truth is truth. If we alter these names, we move into a world of illusion and lose touch with reality. This is where many people are living today.

We are free to decide and choose our world, but we are not free to change the consequences. If we choose a world of illusion, we start living on substitutes, and there can be no satisfaction in a world of substitutes.

Applying God's Truth:

1. Does the fact that you serve an omniscient God make you feel that your life has less spontaneity and choice than it should have? Why?
2. What are some of the changes you would like to make in your life?
3. How do you think you might begin to cooperate with God to bring about some of the changes you have listed?

David Jeremiah - ENJOY WHAT YOU HAVE -ECCLESIASTES 6:9 [David Jeremiah Morning and Evening Devotions: Holy Moments ...](#)

In his book *Racing to Win*, NFL coach and race car owner Joe Gibbs recounts some of his financial failures. As a young coach seeking to make more money, he invested in three different ventures, all of which failed—the last taking nearly five years of frugal living to pay off. It was only after he started seeking God instead of wealth that he became successful.

When Benjamin Franklin wrote that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," he might have been paraphrasing King Solomon, who wrote that "a living dog is better than a dead lion" (Ecclesiastes 9:4). In other words, God's provision is far more secure than something that exists only in our dreams and fantasies. Solomon also said that "the hand of the diligent makes rich" (Proverbs 10:4).

Get-rich-quick schemes are a dime a dozen, and they usually confirm the old saying, "If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is." Focus today on your work and enjoying the fruits of your labor. Both are gifts from God.

Truth is better than time, talent, and treasure. The truth of abundant life is about enjoying what we have been given, not lusting after what we have not.

Martin Luther - ENJOYING WHAT YOU HAVE Ecclesiastes 6:9

Enjoying what you currently have is better than letting your heart wander. You should make use of what is in front of you instead of wandering around full of desires. This is what the dog in Aesop's writings did when it chased after the reflection in the water and lost the meat it had in its mouth. You should use what God has placed before you and be satisfied with it. You shouldn't try to satisfy your own desires, because they will never be satisfied. Instead, you should use whatever God has placed in front of you. All of it is very good (Genesis 1:31).

Faithful people are pleased with what they currently have and consider it all to be a gift from God. Unbelievers, however, act differently. Everything they see in front of them is nothing but a nuisance. They don't use these gifts or enjoy them. Rather, they allow their hearts to roam in discontent. If they have money, they don't find pleasure in it or enjoy it. They always want something different. If they have a spouse, they want someone else. If they acquire a kingdom, they aren't satisfied with just one. Alexander the Great, for example, wanted another world to conquer.

We should keep our eyes on what we already have in front of us. We should delight in all of it. We should enjoy it and give thanks to God for it. God doesn't want our hearts to wander to thoughts of other things. This passage points out that we should make use of what we currently have. Letting our hearts wander around filled with desires is meaningless.

Outline

- 1:1–6:9 Can't change the past.
- 6:10–11 Don't know the future.
- Therefore, enjoy life one day at a time.

Joseph Stowell - MARVEL-WORLD [Strength for the Journey: Day By Day With Jesus - Page 351](#)

WHAT THE EYES SEE IS BETTER THAN WHAT THE SOUL DESIRES. THIS TOO IS FUTILITY AND A STRIVING AFTER WIND.—Ecclesiastes 6:9 NASB

We live in a world that offers us new and intriguing toys that scintillate us at megabyte speed. High definition TV; wireless communications; videophones; e-mail; speedier Internet connectivity; online shopping; online education; online anything. Special effects stretch our imaginations beyond the bounds of reality, and virtual experiences of every kind are available at the touch of a finger. In-car voice-activated navigational systems enable men never to have to humble themselves to ask directions, and futurists speak glibly about the day we will be able to laser beam 3-D images of ourselves, or anything else for that matter, to wherever technology exists.

Still, our hearts hunger. The fancier we get, the more alone we feel. Awe and wonder no longer exist. We have seen and experienced it all in marvel world. The dullness we feel reminds us that we have lost something of life. God and His satisfying power have been eclipsed by the fleeting glitz of technology.

Peter Kreeft (See [Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Heaven: But Never](#)) speaks to the loss when he writes,

If we are typically modern . . . we are bored, jaded, cynical, flat, and burnt out. When the skies roll back like a scroll and the angelic trump sounds, many will simply yawn and say, "Pretty good special effects, but the plot's too traditional." If we were not so bored and empty, we would not have to stimulate ourselves with increasing dosages of sex and violence—or just constant busyness. Here we are in the most fantastic fun and games factory ever invented—modern technological society—and we are bored. . . . Medieval people by comparison were like peasants in toy-less hovels—and they were fascinated. Occasions for awe and wonder seemed to abound: birth and death and love and light and darkness and wind and sea and fire and sunrise and star and tree and bird and human mind—and God and Heaven. But all these things have not changed; we have. The universe has not become empty and we, full; it has remained full and we have become empty, insensitive to its fullness, cold hearted.

Let your "soul . . . delight itself in the richest of abundance" (Isaiah 55:2 NKJV).

Ecclesiastes 6:10 Whatever exists has already been named, and it is known what man is; for he cannot dispute with him who is stronger than he is.

KJV Ecclesiastes 6:10 That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 6:10 Whatever one is, he has been named already, For it is known that he is man; And he cannot contend with Him who is mightier than he.

BGT Ecclesiastes 6:10 ε πι γ νετο δη κ κληται νομα α το κα γν σθη σιν νθρωπος κα ο δυν σεται το κριθ ναι μετ το σχυρο π ρ α τ ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 6:10 If anything has been, its name has already been called: and it is known what man is; neither can he contend with him who is stronger than he.

NET Ecclesiastes 6:10 Whatever has happened was foreordained, and what happens to a person was also foreknown. It is useless for him to argue with God about his fate because God is more powerful than he is.

CSB Ecclesiastes 6:10 Whatever exists was given its name long ago, and it is known what man is. But he is not able to contend with the One stronger than he.

ESV Ecclesiastes 6:10 Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he.

NIV Ecclesiastes 6:10 Whatever exists has already been named, and what man is has been known; no man can contend with one who is stronger than he.

NLT Ecclesiastes 6:10 Everything has already been decided. It was known long ago what each person would be. So there's no use arguing with God about your destiny.

YLT Ecclesiastes 6:10 What is that which hath been? already is its name called, and it is known that it is man, and he is not able to contend with him who is stronger than he.

NJB Ecclesiastes 6:10 What has been is already defined -- we know what people are: They cannot bring to justice one who is stronger than themselves.

NRS Ecclesiastes 6:10 Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what human beings are, and that they are not able to dispute with those who are stronger.

NAB Ecclesiastes 6:10 Whatever is, was long ago given its name, and the nature of man is known, and that he cannot contend in judgment with one who is stronger than he.

GWN Ecclesiastes 6:10 Whatever has happened in the past already has a name. Mortals are already known for what they are. Mortals cannot argue with the one who is stronger than they.

- which: Ec 1:9-11 3:15
- and it: Ge 3:9,17-19 Job 14:1-4 Ps 39:6 82:6,7 103:15
- neither: Job 9:3,4,32 33:13 40:2 Isa 45:9,10 Jer 49:19 Ro 9:19,20

THE FINAL WORD BELONGS TO GOD

Whatever exists has already been named— **NET** = "Whatever has happened was foreordained" In Hebrew thought, to name something is to define it, to exercise authority over it or to assign its nature and purpose (cf. Ge 2:19–20). Solomon is saying that all things, including mankind and his fate, are already established, predetermined by God. This also speaks of His [sovereignty](#) over His creation. Everything—including human nature, limits, and destiny—is under God's control.

And it is known what man (adam) is - **NET** = "what happens to a person was also foreknown." **NIV** = "It was known long ago what each person would be." Humanity is limited, mortal, and unable to transcend his nature. This echoes the theme of man's frailty and powerlessness seen throughout Ecclesiastes.

William MacDonald - **Man** here represents the Hebrew word adam and means "red clay." How can red clay dispute with the Creator?

Michael Eaton - To "give something a name" is to study or (as here) to appoint its character. Both the world (*what is*) and man have settled characters. One *Who is stronger than he* is God. Thus the Preacher is underlining the impossibility of changing the basic character of life. Man cannot escape his limitations, nor can he completely unravel the world's anomalies (cf. 1:15). He may, like Job, wish to debate the matter with God, but God is altogether greater (Borrow [Ecclesiastes page 107](#)).

Donald Glenn - Solomon introduced his discussion on the limitations of human wisdom by reverting to two themes he had used earlier to demonstrate the futility of human toil, namely, the immutability (1:15; 3:14; cf. 1:9) and inscrutability (3:11, 22) of divine providence. Solomon said that the nature and essence of everything that exists, including people, was foreordained long ago...."calling by name" parallels "creating," Isa. 40:26 (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Wisdom - Page 272](#))

For he cannot dispute with him (GOD) who is stronger than he is - NET = "It is useless for him to argue with God about his fate because God is more powerful than he is." **What man is** refers to man's nature as mortal, limited, and earthbound (from *adamah*, earth). Solomon says man cannot argue, resist, or change what God has ordained. his is an acknowledgement of God's supreme authority and man's humble position. He (man- Adam) cannot dispute means man cannot bring a case against (legal/judicial term) God. Man cannot argue or litigate against God's sovereign will.

Glenn adds "Solomon said it was useless for a person to argue (no man can contend) about what is foreordained because God who had done it is too powerful for man." (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Wisdom - Page 272](#))

ESV Study Bible - The Preacher thus confesses that God rules over all things, and he points out that it would be foolish for mankind to dispute with God's sovereign ordering of the world; to do so would only produce more words and more vanity.

In a culture obsessed with self-definition, autonomy, and control, Ecclesiastes 6:10 speaks a countercultural truth: You are not your own creator, and your destiny is not entirely yours to script. Your limitations are known. Your identity is established. Your final authority is God. This isn't meant to crush us—but to liberate us from illusions. When we embrace our smallness and rest in God's wisdom, we stop fighting and start trusting. As Paul says in Romans 9:20: "Who are you, O man, to answer back to God?"

William Barrick - A Sovereign Lord (Eccl 6:10–12) In effect, Eccl 6:10–12 comprise Solomon's reflection upon the Fall. (Borrow Garrett, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, page 317) The passive "**been named**" (Eccl 6:10) infers that God is the actual agent. Ancient Near Eastern peoples considered the giving of a name to something or to someone as appointing its, his, or her character. Naming displays authority (cp. Gen 2:19–20). The Creator established His authority over creation by naming the day, night, expanse, waters, land, seas, and man (Gen 1). He revealed His authority over the stars by naming them (cf. Isa 40:26). God named the first human being "man" ('adam), a word that comes from the word for earth ('adamah, Gen 2:7; 3:19; Eccl 3:20; 12:7). Thus, he has been properly named. He is earthly—made of earth and tied to the earth. That name puts all mankind in their proper place (cp. Eccl 5:1). ([Ecclesiastes 6 Commentary](#))

G Campbell Morgan —Ec 6.10

After the paragraph on religion in the previous chapter, the Debater went on to look out upon political matters, those of poverty resulting from the maladministration of justice, and of the uselessness and futility of wealth, and even of knowledge, in the midst of such conditions. In these words we have the expression of fatalism. A man finds himself in the midst of these things, and is himself the creature of a destiny from which he cannot escape. He has no freedom in life, and no certainty of what may lie hidden in the great beyond This is a hard and crushing view of God, and of the order of life; but it is logical. To this view men invariably come whose outlook is only that of the earth and of circumstances. It is only when man begins with a knowledge of God, coming by revelation rather than investigation, that he escapes from this crushing sense of a destiny which leaves him no room for action. It is impossible to read all this without realizing how great is the contrast between this outlook upon life, and that which inspired the poetry and prophesying of those men of the same nation who were familiar with the revelation of God as Jehovah; and yet how much greater is the contrast between it, and the outlook on life which is found in the New Testament as the result of the revelation of God in Christ! The value of these inspired confessions of one who lived under the sun is that they reveal this contrast.

Warren Wiersbe - [Wiersbe Bible Commentary 2 Vol Set - Page 18](#)

Scripture: Read Ecclesiastes 6:10b-12

"No man can contend with one who is stronger than he" (Ecc. 6:10b).

QUESTIONING GOD

Solomon seems to say, "It just doesn't pay to argue with God or to fight God. This is the way life is, so just accept it and let God have His way. You can't win, and even if you do think you win, you ultimately lose."

But his is a negative view of the will of God. It gives the impression that God's will is a difficult and painful thing that should be

avoided at all cost. Jesus said that God's will was the food that nourished and satisfied Him (John 4:32-34). It was meat, not medicine. The will of God comes from the heart of God and is an expression of the love of God. (See Ps. 33:11.) What God wills for us is best for us because He knows far more about us than we do.

Why would anyone want to have his or her own way just for the privilege of exercising freedom? Insisting on having our own way isn't freedom at all; it's the worst kind of bondage. In fact, the most terrible judgment we could experience in this life would be to have God give us up and let us have our own way (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).

God is free to act as He sees best. He is not a prisoner of His attributes, His creation, or His eternal purposes. You and I may not understand how God exercises His freedom, but it isn't necessary for us to know all. Our greatest freedom comes when we are lovingly lost in the will of God. Our Father in heaven doesn't feel threatened when we question Him, debate with Him, or even wrestle with Him, so long as we love His will and want to please Him.

Applying God's Truth:

1. What kind of emotions does the thought of God's will bring to your heart?
2. Do you think God is displeased when you question His will for you? Why?
3. Is it easy for you to trust that God knows best and leave things in His hands? Or do you want to understand everything that's going on as it is happening?

C H Spurgeon - Eccl 6:10 - Solomon urges that it is idle and vain for one to attempt to contend with God. There is no hope for us in such contention, yet how frequently do we—even we who are his children—begin to contend with our God. If he chastens us, if he takes away our comforts, if he permits us to be disappointed in our aspirations, immediately we begin to enquire, “Why is this?” Our dear one was taken away and we called God cruel. If we did not say as much, we thought it. And we have kept the anniversary of that bereavement, year after year, still unforgiving toward our God. That kind of rebellious spirit creates ten times more pain than the affliction itself did. We ought to feel how absurd it is that we, who are but as a fly, should fight with the flame, for we can but burn ourselves by such folly. Since I am such an ephemeral creature, the insect of an hour, an aphid creeping on the bay leaf of existence, how dare I think of contending with God, who was long before the mountains were brought forth and who will be when mountains are gone forever?

Ecclesiastes 6:11 For there are many words which increase futility. What then is the advantage to a man?

- Ec 1:6-9,17,18 2:3-11 3:19 4:1-4,8,16 5:7 Ps 73:6 Ho 12:1

THE FUTILITY OF MUCH TALK

For there are many words which increase futility ([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#) - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) - Solomon is continuing his critique of human limitations and vain pursuits, now turning to the futility of excessive words and reasoning. **There are many words** suggests the endless human tendency to talk, argue, philosophize, or explain life. In other words, it refers to multiplied speech, theories, or arguments which are a hallmark of man's attempt to master the mysteries of life intellectually. Solomon observed that talk is cheap, and words can multiply without providing real value. **Which increase futility** emphasizes that instead of bringing clarity or fulfillment, too many words only add to the sense of meaninglessness ([hebel](#))! Overthinking and over-talking are meaningless exercises.

Donald Glenn writes that "The more man argues with words against God, the less he accomplishes (cf. Ecc. 10:12–15). (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Wisdom - Page 272](#))

[Michael Eaton](#) - Words cannot change the world; they may even add to its futility.

What then is the advantage ([yother](#); [Lxx](#) - [perissos](#) = exceeds usual expectation) **to a man?** This is a rhetorical question, similar to the one in Ecclesiastes 1:3+ “**What advantage does man have in all his work?**” Solomon is asking what real profit or benefit is there in talking or analyzing endlessly? The answer clearly is that endless words and speculations cannot overcome the vanity of life. True meaning is not found in human reasoning, but in God's wisdom and fear of Him (cf. Ec. 12:13).

The Noise of Futility - In our world of 24/7 media, opinions, social commentary, and self-help philosophies, Solomon's words pierce through the noise: “Many words increase futility.” Not all speech is helpful. In fact, much of what we say, hear, or read may distract, confuse, or mask the truth rather than reveal it (just look at most of the major network news programs which are filled with lies, “fake news,” character assassinations, and lately [2025] cursing by politicians!). Words without God become noise. They can't answer the

deepest questions: Why am I here? (Listen to this haunting song - [Imago Dei](#)) Where am I going? What truly satisfies? The Bible consistently teaches that true wisdom comes not from many words, but from fearing God (Ec. 12:13; Pr 1:7). Am I looking for meaning in human wisdom, endless debates, or intellectual explanations? Have I allowed too many voices to cloud God's voice out of my soul? Ask God to give you the grace to hear His Word above all others. Avoid speaking or consuming content that leads nowhere (much of the so-called "news" in 2025). Remember that wisdom listens while the fool floods life with noise. Don't chase philosophies that add futility. Let God's Word define your reality. While many words lead to vanity, God's Word leads to life (Psalm 119:105, John 6:68). When words multiply, meaning often vanishes—unless those words come from God.

D A Carson - Devotional from [For the Love of God](#)

*God help us! We need a Deliverer
from outside our myopic horizons.*

The chapter ends with a series of blistering rhetorical questions, all designed to substantiate the thesis that, under the sun, everything is "utterly meaningless" (Ec 1:2). We work to eat, and eating gives us the strength to go on working: what is the point? (Ec 6:7). But if someone replies that a person may not only work and eat, but become a "wise man" (Ec 6:8), is it all that clear that the wise are better off than fools? After all, much wisdom may simply bring much frustration and grief, as Qoheleth has already pointed out (Ec 1:18). Moreover, isn't it better to be satisfied with the material world—with what one can touch and hear and see and feel, with "what the eye sees"—than to pursue "the roving of the appetite," i.e., all the things hidden from view that we hanker after? For this, too, "is meaningless, a chasing after the wind" (Ec 6:9). Is this too wretchedly pessimistic to be realistic? But for those who are "under the sun" (Ec 6:12) and nothing more, what else is there? We talk too much and know too little (Ec 6:11–12). God help us! We need a Deliverer from outside our myopic horizons. (See [For the Love of God \(Vol. 2\): A Daily Companion for ... - Page 19](#))

(ED: PLAY RICH MULLINS' SONG - [MY DELIVERER](#))

Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) TRUE HAPPINESS Ecclesiastes 6:11-12

Life poses many questions that it does not answer. We instinctively search for happiness, but we're frustrated by the fact that we don't know where to look. So we spend our days running down one blind alley after another, desperately seeking something we can never find.

What's the meaning of life? In the first half of Ecclesiastes, summarized in verses 11-12, Solomon has considered the question from many standpoints: education, pleasure, justice, prosperity, business success, busy activity, and being the king on his throne. He finds no satisfactory results and no lasting answers. Indeed, the longer he looks, the more questions he has. Life is short, like a shadow that disappears when the sun goes behind a cloud. Everything about this life lacks substance. Then we die, and who knows what happens then?

Would you like a happy life? The Bible says it is possible. Consider the familiar words of Jesus in Matthew 5:3-12, the verses commonly called the Beatitudes. Each of the Beatitudes begins with the word "Blessed." But the word translated "Blessed" actually means something like "deeply and profoundly happy." That throws a different light on this passage.

God says that the truly happy people of the world are those who have chosen to follow Jesus' teaching.

They are poor in spirit. . . but theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They mourn ... but they are comforted. They are meek . . . but they inherit the earth. They are hungry for righteousness. . . then they are filled. They are merciful . . . in the end they receive mercy. They are pure in heart. . . as a result they see God. They are peacemakers . . . now they are called the sons of God. They are persecuted ... but great is their reward.

Do you have the courage to be happy? "Courage?" you say. "What does courage have to do with it?" Everything. Happiness comes from making the right moral choices in life. Happiness is not a goal you seek; it's the by-product of seeking the right goals.

Happy are those who love the Lord.

Happy are those who put Him first.

Happy are those who respect God's laws.

Happy are those who are not ashamed of Jesus.

Happy are those who live according to the Bible.

They are blessed—and shall be the happiest people on earth.

Father, I pray for the wisdom to make godly choices that lead to true happiness. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Name three Bible characters who discovered that there is no lasting satisfaction in this life—and that ultimate satisfaction can be found in God alone.
- How would you answer the person who says, "Why bother searching if I can't find the answers I need?"

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read 1 Chronicles 29:10-16; Matthew 11:1-6; and John 5:36-47.

Ecclesiastes 6:12 For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow. For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?

KJV Ecclesiastes 6:12 For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

NKJ Ecclesiastes 6:12 For who knows what is good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow? Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun?

BGT Ecclesiastes 6:12 π τ ς ο δ εν τ γ α θ ν τ ν θ ρ π ν τ ζ ω ρ ι θ μ ν μ ε ρ ν ζ ω ς μ α τ α ι τ η τ ο ς α τ ο κ α πο η σ εν α τ ς ν σ κ ι π τ ς πα γ γ ε λ ε τ ν θ ρ π τ σ τ α ι π σ ω α τ ο π τ ν λ ι ο ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 6:12 for who knows what is good for a man in his life, during the number of the life of the days of his vanity? and he has spent them as a shadow; for who shall tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

NET Ecclesiastes 6:12 For no one knows what is best for a person during his life— during the few days of his fleeting life— for they pass away like a shadow. Nor can anyone tell him what the future will hold for him on earth.

CSB Ecclesiastes 6:12 For who knows what is good for man in life, in the few days of his futile life that he spends like a shadow? Who can tell man what will happen after him under the sun?

ESV Ecclesiastes 6:12 For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?

NIV Ecclesiastes 6:12 For who knows what is good for a man in life, during the few and meaningless days he passes through like a shadow? Who can tell him what will happen under the sun after he is gone?

NLT Ecclesiastes 6:12 In the few days of our meaningless lives, who knows how our days can best be spent? Our lives are like a shadow. Who can tell what will happen on this earth after we are gone?

YLT Ecclesiastes 6:12 For who knoweth what is good for a man in life, the number of the days of the life of his vanity, and he maketh them as a shadow? for who declareth to man what is after him under the sun?

NJB Ecclesiastes 6:12 And who knows what is best for someone during life, during the days of futile life which are spent like a shadow? Who can tell anyone what will happen after him under the sun?

NRS Ecclesiastes 6:12 For who knows what is good for mortals while they live the few days of their vain life, which they pass like a shadow? For who can tell them what will be after them under the sun?

NAB Ecclesiastes 6:12 For who knows what is good for a man in life, the limited days of his vain life (which God has made like a shadow)? Because-- who is there to tell a man what will come after him under the sun?

GWN Ecclesiastes 6:12 Who knows what may be good for mortals while they are alive, during the brief, pointless days they live? Mortals pass by like a shadow. Who will tell them about their future under the sun?

- **who knows:** Ec 2:3, Ec 3:21 12:13 Ps 4:6 16:5 17:15 47:4 La 3:24-27 Mic 6:8
- **during the few years of his futile life** Ec 8:13 9:6 1Ch 29:15 Job 8:9 Job 14:2 Ps 39:5,6 Ps 89:47 Ps 90:10-12 Ps 102:11 109:23 Ps 144:4 Jas 4:14
- **For who can tell a man:** Ec 3:22 8:7 Job 14:21

Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 2:19 And **who knows** whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all

the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 3:21 **Who knows** that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth?

Ecclesiastes 8:1 Who is like the wise man and **who knows** the interpretation of a matter? A man's wisdom illumines him and causes his stern face to beam.

Mark 10:29–30+ Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, 30 but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

Psalm 144:4+ Man is like a mere breath; His days are like a passing shadow.

James 4:14+ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

WHAT IS GOOD FOR MAN - ONLY GOD KNOWS.

For who knows (yada) what is good (tob; Lxx - agathos - beneficial) for a man (adam) during his lifetime (his entire life), **during the few years of his futile (hebel; Lxx - mataiotes - emptiness, nothingness, purposelessness) life?** - Who knows is a rhetorical way of expressing man's ignorance! Solomon is questioning man's ability to discern what is truly beneficial in a fleeting life? There can be only one answer that is correct and beneficial and that is ONLY GOD KNOWS what is good for a man! This question challenges our assumption that we know what's best in life.

*Only God, who controls all things and cannot be controlled,
is able to provide true meaning and purpose*
-- Charles Swindoll

He will spend them like a shadow - Solomon uses the metaphor of a shadow, for life like a shadow is insubstantial and fleeting. This metaphor emphasizes life's ephemeral nature and lack of certainty.

Ryken on shadow - At other times shadow can be an image of the ephemeral nature of life. Associated especially with "evening" shadows (Ps 102:11; 109:23), the ephemeral nature of life is depicted as a shadow (1 Chron 29:15; Job 8:9; Eccles 6:12). It is uncertain whether the image is based on the non-substantial nature of shadows (Job 17:7) or on their transitory nature (Job 14:2; Ps 144:4). See also the sense of lost opportunity suggested by evening shadows in Jeremiah 6:4. Evening shadows may, however, represent the peaceful end of the righteous (Eccles 8:13) or even a time for romantic repose (Song 2:17). The ephemeral nature of shadows is applied in the NT [NT NT. New Testament] to the institutions of the Mosaic covenant (Col 2:17), which are but a shadow of the heavenly realities to come (Heb 8:5; 10:1). (Online [Dictionary Of Biblical Imagery page 2623](#))

For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun? - NLT - "Who can tell what will happen on this earth after we are gone?" Not only is life short and unclear, but we also don't know the future or our legacy. No one can accurately predict what will happen after death or even after one's decisions.

Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be!
Lead me by thine own hand;
Choose out the path for me.

I dare not choose my lot;
I would not, if I might;
Choose thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.
---Bonar's Hymns, p. 258.

"Only God Knows What Is Good" This verse is not meant to plunge us into despair, but into humble dependence. Solomon dismantles every false confidence—riches, wisdom, pleasure, even time—and concludes: we do not know what is best, or what comes next. So what do we do? We listen to the One who does know. Jesus said in John 10:10, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." Only God defines what is truly good—not based on circumstances, but on what leads us to Him. And only He

knows what lies ahead. The proper response is found in Ecclesiastes 12:13: "Fear God and keep His commandments..." Am I chasing what seems good to me? Or am I seeking what God says is truly good? Do I accept that my time is short and my vision limited? We don't know the best path—God does. We must seek His guidance daily. What seems "good" now may be eternally empty. Invest in what lasts beyond the shadow. Because life is short and unpredictable, every day is sacred. Use it to worship, serve, and obey. Rest in God's sovereignty over your legacy. You don't control what happens after you—but you can live faithfully now, trusting God with the fruit. The wisest life is one lived in fear of the Lord, trusting Him to define good and direct our fleeting days.

Who Knows What Is Good?"

Whatever is, was named before,
By One whose strength we can't ignore.
Man cannot argue, strive, or stand
Against the might of God's own hand.

We speak in streams of countless words,
Yet find no rest in what is heard.
The more we say, the less we gain,
Just echoes lost in wind and rain.

What is good for fleeting breath?
Who can outrun life's end—its death?
Like shadows stretch and fade away,
So pass the numbered, restless days.

We chase the wind, we seek to know,
What lies ahead, what seeds will grow.
But who can tell what time will bring?
Or what awaits beyond the king?

So hush the tongue, the wisdom seek,
Walk humbly, still, content, and meek.
For only God can show the way
That leads through shadow into day.

CORAM DEO LIVING Adoniram Judson once wrote

A life once spent is irrevocable. It will remain to be contemplated through eternity... If it has been a useless life, it can never be improved. Such will stand forever and ever. The same may be said of each day. When it is once past, it is gone forever. All the marks which we put upon it, it will exhibit forever... Each day will not only be a witness of our conduct, but will affect our everlasting destiny (**Note:** Not in loss of salvation but of rewards - cp 1Co 3:11-15⁺, Jn 15:5, 2Co 5:10⁺, cp 1Ti 4:7, 8⁺). No day will lose its share of influence in determining where shall be our seat in heaven. How shall we then wish to see each day marked with usefulness! It will then be too late to mend its appearance. It is too late to mend the days that are past. The future is in our power. Let us, then, each morning, resolve to send the day into eternity in such a garb as we shall wish it to wear forever. And at night let us reflect that one more day is irrevocably gone, indelibly marked. (See page 33-34 of [A memoir of the life and labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson](#))

William Barrick - Eccl 6:12 opens with a question that implies that it is God who "knows what is good for a man during his lifetime." "Good" operates as a bridge to what follows in chapter 7. A brief statement to emphasize the brevity of a person's life follows ("He will spend them like a shadow"). "Shadow" depicts the ephemeral nature of human existence (Eccl. 8:13; 1 Chron 29:15; Job 8:9; 14:12; Pss 102:11; 109:23; 144:4). Then Solomon asks a second question with the same implication as the first question: only God can reveal to a person what will happen "under the sun." This verse is a fitting wisdom summary for the thematic elements in both Ecclesiastes 1–6 and Isaiah 40–46.

According to **Roland Murphy**, "The uncertainty of life tomorrow is as bad, if not worse, than the uncertainty of 'life' after death." (Roland E. Murphy, Ecclesiastes, Word Biblical Commentary, p 59. - Borrow [related book by Murphy](#)) The ultimate message is that human beings do not possess control over the present or future. (See Romans 9:20+) Solomon carefully demolishes every question, every observation, that mere mortals might make in the process of questioning their Creator's wisdom. Solomon draws the reader to the conclusion that only God can control one's destiny. The reasons things are as they are is due to the fact that the Sovereign Lord

of creation does it that way for His purposes. As **Michael Eaton** puts it, “Like the Mosaic law (cf. Gal. 3:22), the Preacher is slamming every door except the door of faith.” (Borrow [Eaton, Ecclesiastes, 108](#))

Hubbard aptly summarizes Ecclesiastes 6 with a series of truths the reader must acknowledge:

- Contentment is more satisfying than wealth.
- Doing God’s will is more important than gaining goods.
- Doing God’s will brings the highest wealth of all. (Borrow Hubbard, [Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon](#))

In Mark 10:29–30+ Jesus speaks clearly to this matter of not finding satisfaction in possessions, family, and longevity. May we learn these lessons well and continue to look up, beyond the sun, to our Creator. Satisfaction comes only through obedience to His will and in accepting all things He grants to us with thanksgiving and joy.

Questions:

- What are the essentials for enjoying a satisfied life?
- Why are some people unmourned in their death?
- Why do large families (many children) sometimes fail to provide satisfaction and joy?
- What are some of the disadvantages of a very long life? ([Ecclesiastes 6 Commentary](#))

C H Spurgeon - Ec 6:12 “For who knows what is good for anyone in life, in the few days of his futile life that he spends like a shadow? Who can tell anyone what will happen after him under the sun?” Humanity is but vapor; we appear for a little while and then vanish away. We are as thin and airy and insubstantial as our own breath. We come and we go—we are here such a little while that we can scarcely be said to be, for we do but begin to be before we close our being so far as this world is concerned. We do not know what is best for us—not even in temporal things, much less in spiritual things. Which is better for someone in this life—wealth or poverty, health or sickness, fame or obscurity? All depends on our being where God puts us. We had better be content to remain just as we are and be satisfied and thankful to be where God has placed us in his providence. Who knows what is good for us? God does, and that is better than for us to know. Furthermore, it is not for us to know what will happen when we are called away from the earth. Many are plotting and planning to settle what will happen after they are gone, yet much of their scheming is in vain. Somebody else will take that house we have had such trouble to build. Are we not to leave the future as we leave the present—in the hands of God? And will not all be well? The Lord did very well without us before we were born, and he will do very well without us after we are dead. It is not for me to be worried because of what happens to me, or to quarrel with God about it. It is for you and me to know that God sees further than we do and not to begin to measure his work with our ruler. Just leave it all with him, you who are troubled either about the present or the future.

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS ECCLESIASTES 6:12; MARK 8:36

Contentment; Desire; Fulfillment; Greed; Happiness; Joy; Materialism; Satisfaction

In Dangers, Toils & Snares, John Ortberg writes:

When we take our children to the shrine of the Golden Arches, they always lust for the meal that comes with a cheap little prize, a combination christened, in a moment of marketing genius, the Happy Meal. You’re not just buying fries, McNuggets, and a dinosaur stamp; you’re buying happiness. Their advertisements have convinced my children they have a little McDonald’s-shaped vacuum in their souls: “Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in a happy meal.”

I try to buy off the kids sometimes. I tell them to order only the food and I’ll give them a quarter to buy a little toy on their own. But the cry goes up, “I want a Happy Meal.” All over the restaurant, people crane their necks to look at the tight-fisted, penny-pinching cheapskate of a parent who would deny a child the meal of great joy.

The problem with the Happy Meal is that the happy wears off, and they need a new fix. No child discovers lasting happiness in just one: “Remember that Happy Meal? What great joy I found there!”

Happy Meals bring happiness only to McDonald’s. You ever wonder why Ronald McDonald wears that grin? Twenty billion Happy Meals, that’s why.

When you get older, you don’t get any smarter; your happy meals just get more expensive.

Citation: John Ortberg, Dangers, Toils & Snares: Resisting the Hidden Temptations of Ministry (Multnomah, 1994), pp. 99–100

The Image of Time

Greek mythology has the image of time being like a man with long hair in front and bald in the back. The picture is of one you must catch coming toward you, because once it has passed, nothing is left to grab. (See study of Greek Word [kairos](#), name of this Greek god depicted below. See also study on Redeem the Time.)



Epigram On the statue of Kairos

Who ... was thy sculptor? Lysippos.

And who are you? Kairos (opportunity) who subdues all things.

Why do you stand on tip-toe? I am ever running.

And why you have a pair of wings on your feet? I fly on the wings of the wind.

And why does your hair hang over your face? For him who meets me to seize me by the [forelock](#). (Ed: Notice the forelock but no hair on back of Kairos' head!)

And why is the back of your head bald? Because none may clutch me from behind, howsoe'er he desire it, when once my winged feet have darted past him.

Application: As someone has well said "Seize your opportunities as they come." God presents believers with all manner of opportunities and one of the tragedies of life is that we so often fail to even see them (unconfessed sin being a great impediment to spiritual vision), much less to grasp them for our good and God's glory. (If you feel like time is flying by, first of all you are correct, but second, you can do something about it - you can seize the moments, those God ordained opportunities that come and go so quickly - if your spiritual passion is waning, let me suggest that you read John Piper's free book [Don't Waste Your Life](#))

Only one life

Twill soon pass

Only what's done for (in) Christ will last