

Ecclesiastes 1 New International Version (NIV)

Everything Is Meaningless

1 The words of the Teacher,^a son of David, king in Jerusalem:

² “Meaningless! Meaningless!”
says the Teacher.

“Utterly meaningless!
Everything is meaningless.”

³ What do people gain from all their labors
at which they toil under the sun?

⁴ Generations come and generations go,
but the earth remains forever.

⁵ The sun rises and the sun sets,
and hurries back to where it rises.

⁶ The wind blows to the south
and turns to the north;
round and round it goes,
ever returning on its course.

⁷ All streams flow into the sea,
yet the sea is never full.
To the place the streams come from,
there they return again.

⁸ All things are wearisome,
more than one can say.
The eye never has enough of seeing,
nor the ear its fill of hearing.

⁹ What has been will be again,
what has been done will be done again;
there is nothing new under the sun.

¹⁰ Is there anything of which one can say,
“Look! This is something new”?

It was here already, long ago;
it was here before our time.

¹¹ No one remembers the former generations,
and even those yet to come
will not be remembered
by those who follow them.

Wisdom Is Meaningless

¹² I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in
Jerusalem. ¹³ I applied my mind to study and to
explore by wisdom all that is done under the
heavens. What a heavy burden God has laid on
mankind! ¹⁴ I have seen all the things that are
done under the sun; all of them are
meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

¹⁵ What is crooked cannot be straightened;
what is lacking cannot be counted.

¹⁶ I said to myself, “Look, I have increased in
wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over
Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much
of wisdom and knowledge.” ¹⁷ Then I applied
myself to the understanding of wisdom, and
also of madness and folly, but I learned that
this, too, is a chasing after the wind.

¹⁸ For with much wisdom comes much sorrow;
the more knowledge, the more grief.

Footnotes:

- a. **Ecclesiastes 1:1** Or the leader of the assembly; also in verses 2 and 12

Discussion Questions

1. Who is the author of this book, and what does its title, *Ecclesiastes*, mean?
2. What is meant by the phrase, “under the sun”? Where does this leave God?
3. In what ways does the author argue that our deeds and our wisdom are meaningless? Do you agree?
4. What is meant by the phrase, “the more knowledge, the more grief”? Is this true?