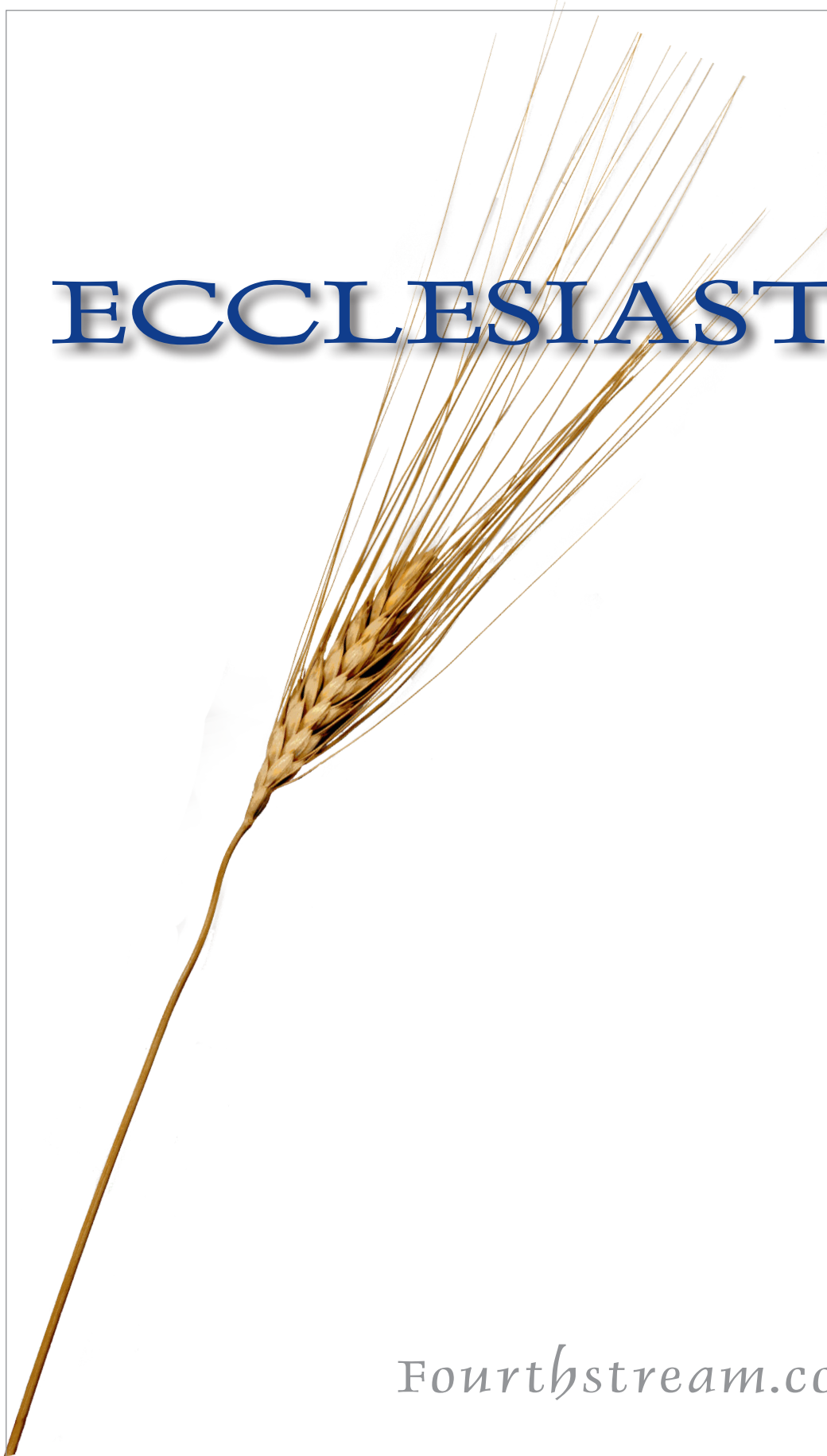


# ECCLESIASTES



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## Welcome to the book of Ecclesiastes!

To begin your study of Ecclesiastes, meditate upon the contents of the book reflected in the overview chart. As you consider each section and title, relate each one to the theme of vanity (or futility). The book of Ecclesiastes gives us a proper view of daily life in relationship to eternity, and causes us to evaluate our priorities as we maintain an open heart. You could look at this as a book of reflective wisdom, written from the point of view of very experienced eyes!

# ECCLESIASTES

# Vanity Below

<i>The Vanity of:</i>			<i>Be Wise!</i> 12:1-14
<b>DOING</b> 2:18-23	<b>HAVING</b> 5:10-17	<b>BEING</b> 9:11; 10:5-7	
1-2	3-6	7-10	11-12

*"And behold, all was vanity and striving after wind." - 2:11*

Also note the references listed within the overview chart. Take this opportunity to investigate each one, looking for the relationship between section titles and key verses. Use these passages as guideposts to unlock the message of the book. What have you learned thus far about the book of Ecclesiastes? The final chapter is painfully inciteful for Solomon and critically relevant to those who would follow him (that's us!!). In this book we encounter the specific questions that provoke the spiritually minded man or woman every day!

## *Open your heart as you read!*

In Proverbs we encountered the wisdom of a man as he progressively considered life's circumstances and recorded his well thought-out and God-inspired conclusions. In Ecclesiastes we see that same man ravaged by wrong choices and lacking in the heart to find comfort from his own writings! Recognition, accumulation, and engaging in a full range of activities can bring little comfort if, in the final analysis, we cannot share them with our Creator!

## **AUTHOR and DATE**

King Solomon, third of the united kingdom's kings of Israel. Saul had no heart for God. David had a whole heart, even though he was quite flawed. Solomon had half of a heart. Even though he had it all, he neglected the most important priority of all and payed dearly for it! (1: 1, 12). The book was probably written in the later years of Solomon's reign, around 940 B.C.

## **OTHER BACKGROUND**

Someone has said that Solomon probably wrote the Song of Solomon as a young man, filled with love for life and the bride of his youth. Proverbs was written during his prolific and inspiring building years, as the eyes of the entire earth fixed their gaze upon his splendor. Ecclesiastes reflects the bitterness of old age, where the great Solomon in all his wisdom views the meaningless futility of life apart from God!

There is probably no better life-advice than that found in Ecclesiastes 12. As we seek identity, position, wealth, and life...let us remember now our Creator in the days of our youth, before the evil days come and we find no delight in them! The Scriptures tell us that to remember our Creator is to embrace the One whom He has sent: Jesus Christ, Lamb of God and Wisdom of God! (John 10:10; 17:3)

### *Why study the book of Ecclesiastes?*

Life can often seem meaningless and futile. These are some of the times that we can be on the verge of personal wisdom! God has many unusual ways of drawing men to Himself. With Job, He used suffering. With David, He employed the life of a fugitive. With Christ, He used the body of a man for the very dwelling place of God! Reject the vanity of having and doing and being as the center of your life. Remember your Creator every day!



# Ecclesiastes Chapter Chart

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The Theme

Read Chapter 1

**Chapter Title**

**Key Verse**

1		
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**KEY QUESTIONS:**

1. Another word for vanity is futility. Why does Solomon emphatically state that there is nothing new under the sun?
2. What examples does he use to make his point and why do you think that each example was chosen? In what ways do they give you a clear picture of his theme?

**What about today?**

Life goes on! In what ways are Solomon's initial thoughts discouraging? What things in your life do you find wearisome? Would you consider yourself an encouraged or discouraged person?

**My thoughts about life being futile and meaningless:**

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
1		
2		

### **KEY QUESTIONS:**

1. Why is Solomon so frustrated (1:12-18)?
2. Make a list of his activities in 2:1-11. In what specific ways would you correlate these activities into your own life?
3. In what ways does he contrast wisdom and folly?
4. What is the focus of his complaint (2:18-23)?
5. What do 2:24-26 teach us about the place of work in our lives?

### **What about today?**

Make a list of your leisure activities. How do you feel about your career? Do your activities frustrate you or fulfill you? Is it wrong to enjoy leisure activities? Do you feel that you experience Biblical balance in your life?

### ***My thoughts about what makes my life fulfilling:***

# Everyone's Stalker!

# Read Chapters 3-4

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
3		
4		

### KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What is Solomon attempting to communicate in 3:1-8?  
What does this section tell you about life?
2. In what ways could or should 3:11-22 affect our attitudes toward other men?
3. What does 4:13-16 teach us about our relationship with leaders and rulers?
4. How does 4:9-12 have application to our friendships?

### What about today?

The finality of death can be a sober reality as we embrace it through our own frailties or those of another. What are your feelings about death? To what degree do you live as though you were invincible? Based upon these chapters, do you feel you have an informed big picture on your life?

### ***My thoughts about having the big picture on my years on earth:***

# Ritualism Kills

# Read Chapters 5-6

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
5		
6		

### **KEY QUESTIONS:**

1. Reread 1-8. This describes man's natural inclination in worship. What does it teach about worship? About prayer?
2. What should be our attitude as we approach God? Remember, prayer is intended to be a two-way experience. We speak to God and God listens, but He wishes to speak to us and requires an attentive ear!
3. What is the grievous evil?

### **What about today?**

We must be careful not approach God brashly or ritualistically.  
What parts of your Christian experience could become a ritual?  
What can you do about it?

### ***My thoughts about ritualism in my life:***

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
7		
8		
9		

### KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What type of balance is Solomon implying in 7:15-18?
2. What devices (7:29) have already been referred to in the book?
3. What cannot man discover (8:17)?
4. Is it true that we are to enjoy life (9:9)?
5. Notice 9:11-12. Here we have examples that reflect men whom our culture holds in high regard. Who are some 20th century examples?
6. What insights does Solomon reveal about them?

### What about today?

God's intent is that humans would experience great joy and fulfillment in life. The idea of a strict, celestial killjoy is just a question of perspective. Like our own children, as children of God we are to mature into the image of our Creator. It is little wonder that our prolonged choice for juvenile spiritual behavior is met with the disapproval of God, and that our subsequent responses to His rebuke are so childish and self-centered. From this passage, list the things that you believe that God wants for you in order to enjoy quality life!

### ***My thoughts about what makes my life quality***

(and what makes it lack quality):



Chapter	Title	Key Verse
9		
10		
11		

**KEY QUESTIONS:**

1. Reread 11:1,2. What do you think these verses mean to man or woman of today?
2. The preacher begins to conclude his theme in 11:7-12:8.  
What specific advice does he give that would be useful to a teenager?
3. In what specific ways does he describe the old age of one who has not remembered God in his or her youth?

**What about today?**

We must be careful not to expend our life striving after wind!  
 What does it mean for you to grasp the wind?  
 What can a person grasp?

***My thoughts about things that I can take hold of that will endure:***

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
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12		
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**KEY QUESTIONS:**

1. What is the conclusion of Solomon's discourse?
2. How would you summarize his evaluation of his own life?
3. What are his reasons behind his conclusions?
4. What does Solomon's choices of images reveal about his perspective on his later years?

**What about today?**

Why is it important to master the collections found in the wisdom books?  
What does it mean to be a well-driven nail?

***My thoughts about my own life being well-driven:***