St. Matthew AME Church
Orange, New Jersey
Rev. Melvin E. Wilson, Pastor/Teacher
Sis. Ruth Deas, Presenter

Women's Bible Study Fellowship

June 13, 2026

Summer-Fall Theme: "LIFE"
Scripture: "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."
Ecclesiastes 12:13 NIV

Session I: "Experience Counts"
"I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind."
Ecclesiastes1:14 NIV

I. **Background of Theme and Scripture**

What is this thing called life? The book of Ecclesiastes is a book about life-and how not to waste it.

Almost 3,000 years ago, Solomon spoke of this human dilemma (life), and the insights and applications of his message remain relevant in our time. Ecclesiastes, Solomon's written sermon, is an analysis of life's experiences and a critical essay about its meaning. Solomon takes us on a mental journey through his life, explaining how everything he tried, tested, or tasted was "meaningless"-useless, irrational, pointless, foolish, and empty-an exercise in futility.

These words (book of Ecclesiastes) are from one who "had it all"-tremendous intellect, power, and wealth. Solomon made his triumphant conclusion: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." Ecclesiastes 12:13,14

II**. Solomon's Desire for Wisdom**

When Solomon became king, he asked God for wisdom.

That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." Solomon answered God, "You have shown great kindness to David, my father, and have made me king in his place. Now,

Lord God, let your promise to my father David be confirmed. But you have made me king over people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, who is able to govern this great people of yours?" God said to Solomon, "Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth, riches, or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for long life, but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, riches and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have." II Chronicles 1:7-12

Solomon became the wisest man in the world. He studied, taught, judged, and wrote. Kings and leaders from other nations came to Jerusalem to learn from him. But despite his practical insight into life, Solomon failed to heed his own advice and began a downward spiral.

For all his wisdom, Solomon had some weak spots; he could not say no to compromise or to lustful desires. Solomon took seven hundred foreign wives and three hundred concubines, who turned his heart away from God. Whether he married to strengthen political alliances or to gain personal pleasure, these foreign wives led him into idolatry.

IMPORTANT!!!!!

You may have strong faith, but you also have weak spots-and that is where temptation usually strikes. Strengthen and protect your weaker areas, because a chain is only as strong as its weakest link (the overall success, reliability, or capability of any system, organization, or team is determined by its most vulnerable or least capable part).

IF SOLOMON, THE WISEST MAN, COULD FALL, SO CAN WE!

III. **Solomon's Perspective**

Solomon is highly qualified to be the author of this book because he had it all and tried it all. He experienced everything life could offer, yet he's going to say that a life perspective that's disconnected from God is not truly living.

Near the end of his life, Solomon looked with an attitude of humility and repentance. He took stock of the world as he experienced it, hoping to spare his readers the bitterness of learning through personal experience that everything apart from God is empty, hollow, and meaningless.

Although the tone of Ecclesiastes is negative and pessimistic, we must not conclude that the only chapter worth reading and applying to our lives is the last one, where Solomon draws his conclusion.

In reality, the entire book is filled with practical wisdom (how to accomplish things in the world and stay out of trouble) and spiritual wisdom (how to find and know eternal values).

SOLOMON WAS HONEST!

"Meaningless! Meaningless!" Says the Teacher. Utter meaningless! Everything is meaningless. What does a man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun? Ecclesiastes 1:2-3

Solomon begins with a summary of the book: Absolutely meaningless, everything is meaningless. (1:2) In other words, he opens by telling us he doesn't have anything to talk about! Everything is empty and meaningless, at least from a merely human perspective. The phrase "under the sun" (1:3) refers to living from an earthly perspective, as "under the sun" is where people live, work, play, and raise their families. What does a person gain for all his efforts… under the sun? (1:3)

Solomon had a very honest approach to life. All of his remarks relating to the futility of life are there for a purpose-to lead people to seek true happiness in God alone. He was not trying to destroy all hope, but to direct our hope to the One who can truly fulfill it.

Solomon affirms the value of knowledge, relationships, work, and pleasure, but only in their proper place. All of these temporal things in life must be seen in the light of the eternal.

IV. **Solomon's Personal Experience**

Solomon had a purpose for writing skeptically and pessimistically. Near the end of his life, he looked back over everything he had done, and most of it seemed meaningless.

A common belief was that only good people prospered and that only the wicked suffered, but that hadn't proven true in Solomon's experience.

Solomon wrote this book after he had tried everything and achieved much, only to find that nothing apart from God made him happy. He wanted his readers to avoid these same senseless pursuits. If we try to find meaning in our accomplishments rather than in God, we will never be satisfied, and everything we pursue will become tiresome.

Solomon's kingdom, Israel, was in its golden age, but Solomon wanted the people to understand that success and prosperity don't last long.

A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry? "All men are like the grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of Our God stands forever."

Isaiah 40:6-8

God commanded Isaiah to cry out (40:6). The words given to him contrast frail human life with the eternal word of God. Verse 7 is not about mere grass, but about humanity. The strongest man, then, is still just a man. God gives human life, and His sovereignty takes it away. But the word of Our God remains forever. This was an assurance from God to His people that His promises are trustworthy. He will fulfill them.

All human accomplishments will one day disappear, and we must keep this in mind in order to live wisely. If we don't, we will become either proud and self-sufficient when we succeed or sorely disappointed when we fail. Solomon's goal was to show that earthly possessions are ultimately meaningless.

Only the pursuit of God brings real satisfaction. We should honor God in all we say, think, and do.

Solomon tests our faith, challenging us to find time and lasting meaning in God alone.

As you take a hard look at your life, as Solomon did his, you will see how important it is to serve God and how He asks us to rethink our purpose and direction, just as Solomon did in Ecclesiastes.

V**. Searching for Meaning**

Solomon searched for satisfaction almost as though he were conducting a scientific experiment. Through this process, he discovered that life without God is a long and fruitless search for enjoyment, meaning, and fulfillment. True happiness is not in our power to accumulate or attain because we always want more than we can have. In addition, there are circumstances beyond our control that can snatch away our possessions or attainments.

People are still searching. Yet the more they try to get, the more they realize how little they really have. No happiness is possible without God. Without Him, satisfaction is a lost search. Above everything, we should strive to know and love God. He gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy.

God's Wisdom

"For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength." I Corinthians 1:25 NIV

Paul highlights that even God's "foolishness" far surpasses the greatest human minds.

Human wisdom doesn't contain all the answers. Knowledge and education have their limits. To understand life, we need the wisdom that can be found only in God's Word to us-the Bible.

When we realize that God will evaluate all that we do, we should learn to live wisely, remembering that God is present each day, and learn to obey his guidelines for living. But to have God's wisdom, we must first know and honor Him.