

Message #4

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

Solomon was the best and the brightest student to ever live. No one could outthink him or outstudy him. He had been divinely equipped by God when it came to his wisdom (I Kings 3:11-12). Solomon went after academics. He plunged headfirst into education and the lesson he learned is one we need to hear:

WHEN A BELIEVER PURSUES EDUCATION WITHOUT GOD BEING AT THE CENTER OF HIS LIFE, HE WILL WIND UP EMPTY AND MISERABLE .

If you pursue any area of study without God at the center of your life, you will discover just what Solomon did; you just aren't happy. It doesn't bring lasting fulfillment or contentment. It will leave you empty and miserable.

CATEGORY #1 – Who Solomon was . 1:12

As we have already pointed out, the verb “have been” is perfect tense, meaning Solomon had been King from some point in the past and continued to be King. William Gesenius, in his Hebrew grammar writes: “The perfect serves to express actions, events, or states, which the speaker wishes to represent from the point of view of completion, whether they belong to a determinate past time, or extend into the present, or while still future, are pictured as in their completed state” (*Hebrew Grammar*, p. 309).

You and I will never have the money, the brains or the opportunity to explore things like Solomon did. Our explorations will be very meager compared to his. He had wealth, wisdom and blessings that are on a whole different level than even the best in this world will ever have. Therefore, before we go off on our own search, it is wise to sit down and listen to his search.

CATEGORY #2 – What Solomon did . 1:13

Notice what Solomon did—he set his mind to seek and to explore by all wisdom under heaven, all things that had been done.

- 1) The words “I set my mind” literally mean this is what Solomon devoted his heart’s ambition toward. Solomon is not devoting his heart to God; he set his heart on wisdom under heaven (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 427).
- 2) The word “wisdom” refers to a level of knowledge that is skilled and intelligent, that is way beyond surface level to a level that can make judgments and discernments (*Ibid.*, p. 277-278).
- 3) The words “seek” and “explore” indicate that Solomon went after a deep and thorough knowledge level of whatever he studied.

The word “seek” indicates Solomon searched the root of a matter. He trampled down a path right to the roots of everything he studied (*Ibid.*, p. 209).

The word “explore” indicates Solomon studied everything carefully. His study was from all sides and all angles (*Ibid.*, p. 859).

Frankly, these words describe a brilliant student.

- 4) The words “under heaven” indicate this study was not entered into with God at the center of it. It was done from an earthly perspective, not heavenly.
- 5) The words “sons of men” in Hebrew literally read “sons of the man.” The point is every man is going to try and figure out some way to have meaning in life. God has put this quest within every human and without God, no matter what you pursue or accomplish, you will come up empty.

CATEGORY #3 – What Solomon saw. 1:14-15

He thoroughly researched everything, seeing if it could really bring a man meaning and fulfillment.

He came to four conclusions:

- 1) Any pursuit apart from God is empty. **1:14a**
- 2) Any pursuit to try and find meaning without God is like chasing the wind. **1:14b**
- 3) Any pursuit without God at the center is a crooked pursuit which will never lead one straight to fulfillment and meaning. **1:15a**
- 4) Any pursuit without God is so lacking in bringing meaning that one cannot even count or calculate how far short it falls. **1:15b**

Solomon saw this and experienced this firsthand. He looked everywhere under the sun and kept coming up empty.

CATEGORY #4 – What Solomon said. 1:16

Solomon is so empty he is talking to himself. He was the smartest man in all the world, but he was also one of the loneliest. He had magnified wisdom more than any other man. His mind had grasped wisdom and knowledge. These words imply Solomon knew all things he studied at the most intelligent level possible. He was a true genius. His ability to learn and grasp things was at the ultimate level. He was the epitome of the word scholar. Solomon’s mind went for it all, every possible educational pursuit. This man had a flair for learning. If any man could have found happiness in education, it certainly would have been Solomon.

CATEGORY #5 – What Solomon realized. 1:17-18

The word “realized” is one that means here is what Solomon discovered or perceived by his experience (Gesenius, p. 333).

The word “folly” suggests that Solomon tried to give attention to anything that made man happy whether it were wise or not (*Ibid.*, p. 790). Notice Solomon purposed in his mind and heart not to know God, but to know things under the sun that men consider wise. The word “madness” means Solomon went after anything man deems brilliant (p. 226). If it shined, if it stood out, Solomon went after it. His mind was totally focused on under the sun wisdom and under the sun education.

Conclusion #1 - Trying to find meaning in education, apart from God, is like chasing the wind. **1:17b**

You’ll never grab hold of the wind and you will never grab hold of meaning to life in any education. For awhile, it may stimulate your mind, but it will soon wear off and you’ll be looking somewhere else; you’ll be looking for something else.

Conclusion #2 – Trying to find meaning in education, apart from God, will lead one into great grief. **1:18a**

Truth is the more one learns under the sun, the more confused one becomes. The Hebrew word “grief” speaks of an irritation even to the point of being angry (*Ibid.*, p. 409).

Conclusion #3 – Trying to find the meaning in education, apart from God, will lead one to increased pain. **1:18b**

The word “pain” speaks of a sorrow of soul (*Ibid.*, p. 470). Instead of happiness, the academician winds up sad and irritated. Life is empty. The education doesn’t fill the void. Something is missing no matter how great the scholar.

Solomon couldn’t find any happiness and meaning in an education under the sun. But if he would only look above the sun, real meaning is there waiting for the taking.

Solomon did not lack discipline or seriousness. Solomon did not lack brainpower or opportunity. What he lacked was a proper focus on God and he wasn’t happy and we won’t be, either.