

# How to Enjoy Life under God



**Ecclesiastes 1:16-18, 2:12-26**

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I want you to think about how many different places you went to try to get information this week. Maybe you have certain patterns just of your normal day. When you wake up, where is the first place you go to get information? Maybe your phone alarm goes off, you pick it up, you open it, and what's the first app you hit on your phone? Is it the Bible app? Is it your email app? Maybe it's the news app, because you know stuff happened last night that you don't know about this morning, so you go through all those alert and you read the headlines because you want to be informed. You want to know things. Maybe you open up social media to see what everybody's saying about everything or what your friends did last night. Did anybody vacation somewhere that you need to know about? Where are the places you go throughout the week to get information? I think you will notice you actually go to a lot of places to get information. Perhaps you read a book this week, perhaps you went to a meeting to get some information, but we had these different places we go from information. How many of you Googled something this week? Did anybody *not* Google anything this week? That would be a better question, right? The point is we all seek information. We all seek wisdom. We all want to be in the know. We want to just gain perspective. We want to know what's happening. We don't

want to be left out. We want information. We want wisdom. We are people that seek to know. That's part of what it means to be human. We are knowledge seekers.

But what if you actually knew it all, not just you think you know it all but you actually knew it all? What if you really got to the place where you knew everything? You are the smartest person in every room that you walked into. You had all the information. Somebody could ask you and you give them all the wisdom. You are the person everyone runs to. Would that make you happier? Would that solve the problems in your life if you could just figure out everything about life? We are going to look at a guy who is writing Ecclesiastes, I think it's Solomon, and we are going to see he is a wise guy, one of the wisest if not the wisest man apart from Jesus to live. He is going to conclude that actually the more he knows, the more sorrow he has. The smarter he gets, the more life seems to just not make sense. So more information led him to despair, not to what he thought it would lead him to. Let's see the reality of wisdom and also the reality of work. What I hope we will see that wisdom and work are actually joy when our goal is to please God, not prosper self. That's where Solomon is going to get us to, but it's going to take a while to get there. If you are trying to be wise and work hard to prosper yourself only it will not work, just listen to Solomon. If you use your brain and your hands to please God, then you see that wisdom and work can be gifts that you actually enjoy for the glory of Christ.

## **Scripture**

***"There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?"*** (Ch. 2 V. 24–25)

I think these verses are a burst of light. It's like, "Oh, we can have joy!" We can have some pleasure in life because he's been leading us down this trail to say that everything's vanity, everything is worthless — just go home and do your thing because you can't get any joy out of life. Now he has given us this little burst of light under the sun to say you can actually

have enjoyment in your work and in your labors. It's connecting it back to God, seeing it as a gift from Him, from His hands; that's how you get enjoyment from the things you are going to do tomorrow and all through your work week. But it's going to take a little bit to get there. He's actually going to go to an experiment to see, first of all, does it work to just pursue wisdom and work apart from the Lord. If we say we aren't going to look at the Lord we are going to look below the sun, can we find joy in our work and our wisdom if we disconnect them from God?

So let's go back to chapter 1, we left out these verses last week because Solomon went through pleasure first and now he's going to go through wisdom and work. Verses 16–18 say, "I said in my heart, 'I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.' And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow." He's saying he's going to seek out both wisdom, and madness and folly; he's going to pursue both. He's going to pursue what it looks to be wise. He's going to pursue what it looks like to be a fool because he wants to see if it is something that we can gain under the sun. Is there any good in it?

First of all, we need to see that we have a really wise man who is doing this. For instance, just think about what the Bible tells us about King Solomon. In 1 Kings, chapter 3, God asked him, what can I give you? Imagine if God came to you and said...*I just noticed you are walking around down there, do you have any request? I would just love to just give you something. Just name it. Anything you want, I'll give to you.* What would you ask God for? That's Solomon, he had this question from God, this moment he could ask whatever he wanted, and notice what Solomon says in verse 9, "Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil." Solomon asked God for a good thing — can I just have wisdom? I mean, it's a pretty smart thing to ask for, right? You already had quite a bit of wisdom if you are asking God for wisdom. Because he knows he's the king, he knows he's going to govern this people, he knows he has to make

decisions, and he wants wisdom from God. I think what we find is in Solomon's life he used his wisdom from God in good ways. We can read in his younger years that that he started out well. He wrote Proverbs and it has a lot of wisdom from God. But then, we can also read his story and know that he took that wisdom and he disconnected it from God and started living his life however he wanted. He gave himself to all sorts of idols. He walked away from the Lord.

See, I think Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon when he was an old man in his rocking chair, looking back at those moments of his life when he took his wisdom and disconnected it from God and tried to get life under the sun. We already saw his quest with pleasure last week — let's just take God out and let's just have fun, just get all that we can, just get the whole world. But when he got the whole world, the whole world was actually empty, so now he's going to try to get wisdom — what if we just knew enough, if we got smart enough, if we became wise. He is taking his wisdom, it's important that phrase, under the sun, he's disconnecting it from God.

So, you have the richest guy and the smartest guy and he basically concludes this, verse 18, "For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow." He says, the more you know, the more sorrow you will have. Great, right? The more you know the more you are probably going to realize everything's broken. Think back to when you were a kid. When you were a little boy or a little girl, you didn't know anything. You didn't know how the world worked. You didn't know how politics worked. You hardly knew anything. All you knew is what your parents told you, and you just smiled a lot and ran outside; life was pretty good, right? It was just happy everywhere! And then you begin to grow, and you went to school and you got knowledge and you figured out the world. You started reading things and seeing perspectives and you gained all this understanding but it didn't actually lead you to a happier place, it led you to sorrow. How many of us would want to go back to that little boy or little girl who didn't know anything? Wouldn't that be great just to see life optimistically? Everything was great, everybody is great, and the whole world is great! It's all Mickey Mouse Clubhouse. It is just awesome. We all

share together. And then, you get out and you start meeting people and reading things and you are like, whoa, we don't share at all! This is not Mickey Mouse Clubhouse; this is a crazy world! The more Solomon knew the more sorrow he felt. The more he figured things out the more vexation he got, because he realized you can't figure it out. It's all broken. It's all disjointed. I think what he's seeing is the effects of the fall, the effects of this side of Eden — things are actually broken. The pieces of the puzzle are broken and they don't really fit together anymore, and you are trying to put it together but we have lost the box so we don't have the picture that shows us where the pieces are supposed to go. We are just trying to figure out life but it makes no sense. That's Solomon — the more I know the more sorrow I feel.

When you think about our relationship with wisdom and knowledge, I mean, Solomon was a wise guy but he didn't have Google. Think about. We have Google at our fingertips. We can ask any question at any time and get an answer to it. In some ways, we have more wisdom and knowledge than Solomon. We have all the answers we could ever want at our fingertips, yet we are in the Google effect. The Google effect means basically because we have so much information at our fingertips we are actually dumber. We don't have to know things. We don't have to remember things. We don't have to study things. We don't have to deeply know how math works because you have a calculator on your phone. We have all this information. It's everywhere. You just put in a word and you can find out whatever you want to know. We have this like all-knowing Google. By the way, if you ask Google "What is Google's IQ" (you can Google Google's IQ!) you will see that Google's IQ is forty-seven. This basically means Google's IQ is below a six-year-old. So with all of Google's information, what is it actually producing as far as real-world knowledge? It's about like asking a five-and-a-half-year-old. The next time you Google something, instead just go to your five-year-old! They are probably going to have about as much *true* knowledge as Google does. But it's the source we go to for all of knowledge, all that we need to know, and yet I don't know that we are becoming smarter. We have a lot of information but it's not leading, necessarily, to transformation. That's what Solomon saw — the more information I had, it didn't solve my world.

I just want to talk for a moment about wisdom outside of Eden, because when we step outside the garden we have wisdom at man's disposal apart from God like we wanted, right, the knowledge of good and evil. We wanted knowledge apart from God. Outside of Eden, what does it actually look like? What has wisdom turn into? Well, Paul in Romans will say in Romans chapter 1:22–23, it says, "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things." So Paul is looking at his culture and he's saying when I look at culture, here's what I see. I see people claiming to be wise but what they are doing is actually foolish, and in what ways? Not because they aren't smart, it's because they are taking the glory of God. They are made by God to enjoy God and worship God, that's what they are created for. That's the wise thing to do, but they become fools and they have exchanged the glory of God for images of birds and reptiles. In other words, they make up their own gods and that's what they worship. He says they become so smart, so skilled, that they can actually make gods for themselves and they can worship them, and he says that's actually foolishness. It's not wisdom.

If you think about even our short history that we can remember from wisdom, we had the enlightenment, which led to modernity. The good thing about modernity is you didn't have to ask the theology department anymore. You didn't have to open your Bible. You could actually understand the world just by scientific processes. The scientific evolution opened us to say we don't need God to explain how the world works. We can actually examine it on our own. We can come to our own conclusions. We can understand the whole world apart from God. We don't need the theology department, we just need the science department, we need philosophy, and we need sociology. We disconnected from God and we got modernity, our own truth, our own way. We discovered these things apart from God, but modernity soon led to postmodernity or postmodernism where what we started to understand that we can get to truth on our own. And then, we all collectively decided there actually is no such thing as truth, that Truth doesn't exist, and we actually all have our own versions of truth. So whatever you or I determine is truth, that's actually true. Even if we disagree with one another, we are all true; therefore, nothing is true at

the same time. See, in our own process of wisdom, we have gone from let's leave God out, let's arrive at truth. Then we got to truth and we realized we don't even think there is such thing as truth, so how about let's just all do our own thing. And now, we are living in a culture that is so past modernity, so past a connection with God and wisdom that we have trouble answering questions that five-year-olds in previous generations would have easily answered. Things like, what does it mean human? What does it mean to be man and woman? We can't even answer those questions anymore because we have arrived at so much wisdom that we can't answer things that five year olds a hundred years ago would have thought is very obvious. We have this slippery slope where we have become wise, but in reality, we have become fools. Paul was not just talking about just Roman culture in Romans 1, this is every culture since Adam and Eve walked out of the garden. Every culture has pursued wisdom on their own, and we are no different. We have exchanged the glory of God in our culture, not for images of birds and reptiles; we have exchanged the glory of God for ourselves. We have become gods. We have become our own source of wisdom, truth, and identity. We can just claim whatever we want and that makes it true.

So, we see this this experiment of wisdom, just where it's gotten us in real time in history, when you disconnect it from God, it doesn't lead to more wisdom it leads to foolishness. So, what is true wisdom? I think it's important, as we get ready to move on. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." When Solomon still had wisdom connected to God, he says here is what wisdom is — the beginning of it is the fear of the Lord. The very beginning of knowledge is the fear of the Lord, and fools despise wisdom and instruction. Wisdom without fear is foolishness. If you don't have fear of the Lord with your wisdom, it is going to end up being foolishness, because if you look at the world under the sun apart from God, you see the world through yourself. Every thought is taken captive — how do *I* interpret this? What do *I* see? What do *I* want? You turn the world into how you want it to be, and that is foolishness because there is a reality to how the world really works and what *true* wisdom is — it's seeing that life is supposed to be lived above the sun, that through Christ you can actually see the world

how it really is, and that is wisdom. So wisdom starts with the fear of the Lord. If you don't have the fear of the Lord, it will lead you to foolishness. So Solomon said I had all the wisdom in the world and the more I know the more sorrow I felt, and we can see that even in our own culture. The more wisdom we get, the more knowledge we have, it leads us often to sorrow rather than hopefulness and happiness. It doesn't fix our problems.

Let's move on to chapter 2, starting in verse 12. Remember, Solomon had that stint of going after pleasure and now he's going after wisdom. He is asking, what is point of all this wisdom? Why should we pursue wisdom? In verses 12–14, Solomon says, "So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done. Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness. The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness." So the first thing he says is what can anybody do who comes after me? He is kind of like challenging anybody — if you think you can do a better job of figuring out if wisdom save you and completes your life — I am the wisest and richest guy, so after me, whatever you try is going to pale in comparison. So just let me do the experiment and you just listen to what I conclude because you would not do better if you tried it yourself. That's what he's kind of saying there.

Then, Solomon concludes some things about wisdom. First, wisdom is better than folly. Well, that that makes sense, right? In other words, it's better to be wise than a fool, and he gives this illustration — it's better to walk in light than to walk in darkness. So a person who is wise walks in light, and a person who is a fool walks in darkness. It's an illustration that's very easy for us to understand. I mean, if we turned all the lights off and made it pitch black and told you all to leave it would be a lot harder, right? If we leave the lights on and tell you to leave, there's going to be no issues. When it's dark and you can't see it's a lot harder to navigate. That's why we have flashlights built into our phones, just in case there's ever a moment where it's dark, you can take your phone out, turn on the flashlight, and you can see where you are going. Why would we have a flashlight on our phone? Because light is better than darkness. We don't



like dark we like light, and it's better to walk in light because you aren't going to bounce off of stuff. So it's a real simple conclusion — if you are wise, if you know things, if you are smart rather than a fool, then you are going to know how to make good decisions. When you have decisions in your life, if you have good information you are going to know to pick this and not that. You are going to know to do this and not do that, and it's actually going to help you to walk through life. You are going to have the eyes in your head, but the fool, they are in darkness.

So, the idea that wisdom is better than folly, it's probably going to work out better if you are wise rather than a fool. This is why we try to get our kids to make good grades in school. None of us say... *Wow, a D, that's great! Just keep going. How about an F? That would be cool too. What if you just flunked out? That would be fun, then you can stay at home with me...* says no parent ever! We are all like... *You got a B? Why didn't you get an A. Hmm. No more basketball for you, you need to get the grades up.* Why do we want them to get the grades up? Why do we care that our kids get good grades? Because we instinctively know that if they are wise, if they know more, they are probably going to do better in life. It's going to be like walking in light rather than walking in darkness. That's why we want our kids to go to college. College sounds good because then they will know more and have a better life. They will be able to see things better, navigate things better. We want our kids be smart because we instinctively know wisdom is better than folly. If you are a fool, your life is not going to go well. If you make all foolish decisions, your life is not going to go well. That's the fabric of the universe. If you are a constant fool, life will not go well. If you are a wise person, life seems to go better.

So, Solomon is looking out at his kingdom saying when I look out the wise people seem to be getting better off. The foolish people seem to not be doing so well so let me conclude one thing, it's better to be wise than a fool. Seems pretty basic right now, right? That seems pretty reasonable. But then, he's going to have some real problems with wisdom, and here's his problem with wisdom — even though it's better, you still die. That's a big problem. Wisdom might lead you to a better life but wisdom can't save you. You still die. And notice what it says in the verses 14–17. It says, "And

yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind."

So here is Solomon's conclusion:

1. Wisdom is better than folly
2. Wise people still die
3. Wise people are all going to be forgotten

This is really troubling to Solomon. I can be really wise, listen to all the best podcasts, read all the best books, make all the best financial decisions, win at work, and I become super smart and figure all of life out, and then I have a buddy that doesn't care about anything, just does whatever he wants — at the end we both die. We are both buried and we are both forgotten, so why am I trying so hard? Why am I reading books? We all just die and we are all forgotten. Solomon says I actually hated life. So his wisdom didn't lead him to be happier, it led him to be miserable. The Atlantic had an article that had the title: Why so many smart people aren't happy? So if you aren't smart, this is a good article, but if you are smart, this is not good. Research says, "Being better educated, richer, or more accomplished doesn't do much to predict whether someone will be happy. In fact, it might mean someone is less likely to be satisfied with life." So they did all this research about smart people, educated people, people who have a lot of stuff. Are they happier? The conclusion was it really doesn't make them happy. In fact, most people who are really smart, well-educated, and have a lot of stuff are actually the least likely to be happy. Why is that? It's the Solomon principle. The more you know the more sorrow you have. The more stuff you get the more it doesn't fulfill you. It is this endless seeking, seeking, seeking, under the sun for yourself, but it doesn't work. It's a broken quest. That is what he's trying to get us to see.

Then, Solomon is going to take that wisdom to a place that we are all very familiar with, and that is work. He says I am going to try to take all my wisdom and take it into my work and be really good at my job, and hopefully, wisdom and work put together will do it. I will figure out life and I will move from sorrow, hatred, and vexation to being joyful and happy and actually having what I consider the good life. But notice what he says about his work. Verse 18 says, "I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun..." He said I am looking at my work, and through all of my wisdom and all of my work and all of my accomplishments, when I look at it, I am angry. I am upset with all that I have accomplished. Now, why would he be angry at all of his work? Why would he be angry at all of the stuff that he got from all of his work? Well, he's going to tell us. See, we don't often think about the end but he thought about the end a lot. He says this in verses 18–21, "...seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil." He basically says here's the problem...when I use all my wisdom and do all my work and all my accomplishments, I think about my legacy, I die and I have to leave it to someone else. All that I accomplished, all that I did, I have to leave it all at my death. Here is his fear...what if the person who gets all of my stuff, companies, and influence, and houses and things is a fool rather than a wise person? In other words, what if they squander all away? All the stuff I spent my whole life getting, what if I leave it to my kids and they just squander it all. What if the master of all of my stuff, who didn't earn it, didn't work for it, didn't use their skills to acquire it, they just get it because I died. That doesn't sound fair. It seems like they should have to work for it, but instead they just get it because I die and I am not sure what's going to happen to it.

We have seen people with companies in our own culture who feel that same tension. The founder of Patagonia is older in age and was deciding what to do with his multi-billion-dollar company. He decides he's going to

just give it away. He's not going to pass it down, he's not going to give it to his family, give it to his friends; he's just going to give it away and set up a nonprofit that will fight climate change. This guy has made it. He's got all this money, and he's just going to give it to the environment, surely that will take care of it more than people can. I mean, you have the founder of Hobby Lobby, family company, family owned, the Green family, like billions of dollars, and he decides wealth is actually a curse. So he's not going to give it to his kids and grandkids because he doesn't want them to have to deal with what he dealt with. He doesn't want to leave his grandkids with a whole bunch of money and a whole bunch of decisions because he knows what it did to him, and it's actually a curse.

So, this isn't just Solomon being crazy, this is real people in our culture that have made it and realize they have to die and they don't know what's going to happen next, and they are worried about that. They would rather give it away than have to deal with actually transferring it and thinking about the legacies that are going to leave it with and what they might do with it. Perhaps Solomon was thinking about his own son when he wrote this, because Rehoboam was the one who took over as king and got all of Solomon's stuff. If you read 1 Kings, chapter 12, the heading is The Folly of Rehoboam. So you pretty much know how this is going to go, and in fact, he actually lost ten-twelfths of all of Solomon's wealth. He didn't make good decisions. He wouldn't listen to wise counsels, he was listening to his buddies, and he made terrible decisions and lost all of the fortune. So maybe Solomon saw this coming, like...*I've made all this stuff. I'm looking at my son. I'm thinking he's not that bright and I have leave it to him? God, really, is there no other way? Can I keep it or manage it from Heaven maybe? This is not going to go well. He's going to squander it.* And guess what he did? It's all squandered. Solomon's temple is broken now. The house is broken now. All the stuff that he built and did is all squandered and it didn't actually last.

So, this gets Solomon to ask this question, what is the worth of our work? Verse 22 says this, "What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun?" Notice, the beneath the sun language is all over this text. He is trying to get us to see work apart from

God. Under the sun, under Heaven, let's take God out, let's just try to seek wisdom and work away from God. So that's clearly his view. And what does he conclude? Verse 23, "For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity." He says I am working myself to the bone; I can't even sleep at night because I am so worried about my work.

Does that sound familiar? An NPR article says that one in three American adults admit to have trouble sleeping. Lots have to medicate to go to sleep. Why is that? Because we can't turn it off. There's so much to do. There's so much left undone at the end of the day that you are still thinking about it...*Man, what I should've done that, I should have done this, I forgot to do this and tomorrow I have to get the to-do list out.* We just can't turn it off because the emails keep rolling in. We have to keep checking them. We have keep responding. We can't turn ourselves off because there's so much to do. We have all this stuff and so we get to the point at the end of our day when it's time to rest, and what do we do? We just spend our whole night thinking about work the next day.

Solomon says that's my life. All I think about is work and go, go, go. And I am seeing my boy, Rehoboam, and this is not going to go well! He's really upset. He says what am I really gaining here? And then he says nothing! There's nothing to be gained. I'm wise and I'm rich. I have prospered myself and I'm going to die, and it's all going to be squandered, and at the end of the day, it hasn't gained one thing in my life. He's in this place of despair! But at the place of despair, we get this hope, and this is a beautiful hope. This is a burst of light that just comes beaming off the pages of Scripture. I want you to just feel it because work and wisdom become joy when our goal is to please God and not prosper ourselves. I want you to remember that and flip that script — that when it comes to your work and your wisdom, you aren't trying to prosper yourself you are trying to please God. And if you will please God with your wisdom and your work, you will find joy in it, not frustration, vexation, and sorrow. It will be joy for you because you have connected it back to God.

So, how does Solomon tell us this? Look down at the text with me in verse 24, "There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink

and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?" Do you see in the language what he is trying to do? You can actually have enjoyment in your labors, in your work, those things that you are thinking about and working for. There can be enjoyment but you have to connect them back to the hand of God seeing that nothing is apart from God. Do you see how much different that is than life under the sun? Life under the sun says let's take God out of the equation. Let's try to just be smart and hard workers and try to figure this thing out. He said it's not going to work. What you have to do is see that all of your life and everything you have is from the hands of God, that nothing you do is apart from God. Know that and connect it back to God. And if you will connect your wisdom and your work to God and see that everything you have is from His hands as a gift to you, your work tomorrow can be joy rather than frustration, because you aren't trying to prosper yourself you are trying to please God. That is one of the secrets to actually enjoying this life we have now in preparation for the Kingdom to come. Solomon talks about eating and drinking, and finding enjoyment, but we see 1 Corinthians 10 would tell us, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Paul knew the life filled with joy. It's whether you do mundane tasks like eating and drinking, or working or playing, whatever you do, do all of that for the glory of God. Do you know what we are tempted to do? To do all those things for the glory of *me*. That's the tension. That's Solomon under the sun, doing everything to prosper himself. We need to make a switch and do everything to please God. We need to do everything for the glory of God not the glory of self, and in doing that, we can find actually joy that lasts.

Notice what Solomon says in verse 26, "For to the one who pleases Him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner He has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind." Notice that there are two people that Solomon mentions in those verses. There is one who pleases God and there is the sinner. Who is this one who pleases God? Now, we can know on a theological level that no one can please God; it's only in Christ that we please God. But how is Solomon using that term, the one who pleases God? I think he is using it as the one who is connecting

their life to God. They are seeing that it's connected to God, and all they have is from the hands of God. It's the person who lives above the sun rather than below the sun; they are the person that pleases God. The sinner is the one live their life under the sun — let's forget God, let's just do life for ourselves.

For both of these people, they both get a gift. There are two people and there are two gifts. The first gift for the one who pleases God, it says that God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy. What is Solomon trying to seek? Wisdom. What does he want? Joy. He wants pleasure. He wants life to make sense. He wants the good life, and no, he's connecting it pleasing God — when I look at life to the one who pleases God, God graciously gives them a gift, and it is joy and wisdom and knowledge. It's a gift from the Lord that if you would spend your life pleasing God rather than prospering self, you can actually find joy in your pursuit of wisdom, and using your wisdom to complete your work. You can find joy in it.

But notice there is another person; it's the sinner. What has God given the sinner? The business of gathering and collecting. What's your whole life? Gathering and collecting. Does that sound like anybody you know? Does that sound like you? Does it sound like our culture? That's just what we do — we gather and collect, we gather and collect. It's our business. We get up early and work hard because we want to gather and collect and gather and collect. The more we gather and the more we collect, the more happy we will be. But the fact is, the more we gather, the more collect, the smarter we get, it has the opposite effect. God actually said He is doing that so you will have to give it all to the one who pleases Him. In other words, the meek is going to inherit the earth. You are going to die and the Kingdom of God is going to survive past your death, so whatever you good you accomplish, it's going to be left in the kingdom, not in your hands. So, what is he trying to say? There are basically two ways to live life. The first way is the wrong way, and it is to live the life of the sinner, under the sun. Take God out of the equation and your life will be about gathering and collecting, about prospering yourself. That's the whole goal. Your wisdom and your work, your brain, and your hands — you are doing everything you can to prosper yourself. And Solomon says I got there and I had more

than you are ever going to have and at the end of it, it was all empty, so don't try it. But there is a second way to live, and it's to live a life that pleases God. It's the life above the sun. It's a life connecting your life to the glory of God, seeing that you are a creature under Him and He has given you a brain to pursue Him and to pursue knowledge through Him. He has given you hands to work and do good things under Him and for Him, and to the good of your neighbors. You can actually use your work to glorify Him and serve others. And there, it all has meaning. If you disconnect God from the picture, nothing has meaning. If you bring God in the picture and you live your life under Him, a life to please Him, everything has meaning, and in that there is joy.

See, Solomon is trying to say that both your wisdom and your work can bring joy in your life if you use it to please God, not just prosper yourself. So it brings us to the obvious question, how are you living your life? How are using your brain and your hands? What's your pursuit of knowledge and what's your pursuit of work? Is it to prosper yourself, to make yourself great, to make yourself happy, to fix all of your problems? Is it the business of gathering and collecting? He is trying to say if you get it all, you are going to die, and you aren't going to have anything. So if you choose that route, it's going to be empty in the end. Or, are you living your life to please God? Pleasing God is sometimes a prosperous life — He might prosper you beyond imagination as you please Him, but He also might not. You might be a millionaire or you might be poor, but you are pleasing God and you are using His stuff for His glory and the good of your neighbor, and your goal is to please God not prosper yourself. If you will do that, you will find joy in all the mundane tasks, even eating and drinking you will have joy. You will go to bed at night and sleep because you aren't worried about your gathering and collecting the next day. You are just sitting and resting in the presence of King Jesus. You are satisfied in Him and you are living your life to please Him.

So, which life are you living for? Are you gathering and collecting, or are you trying to please the Lord in everything you do? One is empty and one is full. In order to do this, you have to have Christ. He is the way that we get above the sun. As he says in Luke, there is someone greater than



Solomon who is here, and it's Jesus. He is here. He is the greater wisdom of Solomon. In fact, He is our wisdom from God, and it's through Him and in Him that we can have wisdom that is true and work that truly matters. So how are you living your life? Is it above the sun in the person of King Jesus so that in all of your wisdom and all of your work you are pleasing the Lord? You are saying Lord I want you to be glorified, I want your Kingdom to go forth, and I want my life, my brain, my hands, everything to be for you. Solomon says if you will live like that, then you will actually have a full meaningful life. But if you disconnect your life from God, if you live your life outside of King Jesus, then you will use your own wisdom and your own work to try to gather and collect enough stuff so that you will matter. Solomon says when you get it all it won't matter. It will all be empty. See, the truth is the whole book is everything is meaningless apart from Christ. But in Christ, everything is meaningful. Your wisdom and your work under the sun, it's not going to last. But if you are connected to Jesus above the sun, it will last forever. So, here is your challenge. This week, take your wisdom, take your work, and use it not to prosper yourself, use it to please God. If you will do that, you will find joy rather than sorrow in everything that you do.