

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

BEYOND MY UNDERSTANDING: ECCLESIASTES 6-8

Memory Verse: "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil." Ecclesiastes 12:13-14



1. Our wisdom/knowledge has limits under the sun (Ecclesiastes 6)

- Ecclesiastes 6:2
- Even the blessing of abundance has effects we cannot understand
 - Ecclesiastes 6:10-12
- Remember that vanity (**hevel**) literally means vapor, breath, or mist; it cannot be contained or controlled in human terms.
- God never explained Job's suffering; He simply revealed Himself to Job
 - Deuteronomy 29:29
 - Ecclesiastes 7:1-3
- Augustine explained God's workings this way: ***If you can understand it, it is not God***

2. Our response to God's ways/workings should be JOY (Ecclesiastes 7)

- Ecclesiastes 7:13-14
- Solomon came to understand that celebration and sorrow are under God's providence; prosperity theology is man's attempt to profit from other men's desires.
- Enjoy God's gifts, Fear God, Trust God's sovereignty...Believe God. That is true wisdom (**chokmah**)
 - Ecclesiastes 7:19
- God's wisdom strengthens rather than just solves our questions
 - Ecclesiastes 7:29
 - Romans 5:3-5

3. Fear God, even when it doesn't make sense (Ecclesiastes 8)

- Ecclesiastes 8:5-6
- Do right...always...do right
 - Ecclesiastes 8:12-13
- The Hebrew for fear (**yare**) means reverent submission, trusting obedience **NOT** terror or hiding
- Even when it looks unfair or unknown, we must trust our God and obedience is the outward sign of a faithful heart.
 - Ecclesiastes 8:17
 - Proverbs 3:5-6
- What we understand is limited by our position **under the sun**, our faith/fear allows us to rise above the sun to see the eternal through the eyes of the Son
- Adoniram Judson (missionary to Burma) lost his wife, children, his health, imprisoned for two years, and did not see any converts for years; yet, his translation of the Bible into Burmese transformed lives decades after his life.
- God is writing a larger story than you can understand, now. Are you willing to trust the divine Author with the content of your story?
 - 2 Corinthians 5:7, 9-10

Questions:

1. Read Ecclesiastes 6:10-12; Deuteronomy 29:29; Job 38-42; Romans 11:33-36. Why does Solomon repeatedly emphasize the limits of human understanding in Ecclesiastes 6, and how should that shape the believer's response to unanswered questions? After suffering immense loss, Job never received an explanation for every trial. Instead, God's self-revelation transformed Job's perspective from demanding answers to worshipping the Lord (Job 42:1-6). Compare Solomon's reflections with Paul's doxology in Romans 11:33-36. How does worship become the proper response to divine mystery? Are there unanswered questions in your life that have become obstacles to trusting God?
2. Read Ecclesiastes 7:13-14; James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5; Philippians 4:11-13. How should believers respond to both prosperity and adversity as gifts under God's providence? During the 16th-century Reformation, Martin Luther experienced personal loss, illness, and fierce opposition. Yet he continued preaching and writing because his confidence rested in God's sovereign care rather than favorable circumstances. Which is more difficult for you: remaining humble in success or faithful during hardship? How can gratitude become a discipline in every season of life? Study Joseph's life in Genesis 37-50 and identify how God used both suffering and prosperity to accomplish His purposes.
3. Read Ecclesiastes 7:11-12, 19; Proverbs 1:7; James 3:13-18; Matthew 7:24-27. How does Biblical wisdom differ from worldly intelligence? Dietrich Bonhoeffer demonstrated biblical wisdom by refusing to compromise with Nazi ideology. His discernment and obedience to Christ ultimately cost him his life, showing that true wisdom values faithfulness over self-preservation. In what areas are you tempted to rely more on education, experience, or success than on God's wisdom? What are some practical habits that help cultivate godly wisdom? Compare Proverbs emphasis on wisdom with James 3. How does New Testament wisdom fulfill Old Testament teaching?
4. Read Ecclesiastes 8:11-13; Psalm 73; Habakkuk 1-3; 2 Peter 3:8-13; Revelation 20:11-15. How should Christians respond when evil appears to prosper? The abolition of the British slave trade was a decades-long effort led in part by William Wilberforce. Despite repeated defeats in Parliament, he persevered because he believed God's justice would ultimately prevail, illustrating faithful endurance in the face of prolonged injustice. How do you react when evil seems to go unpunished, even rewarded? What difference does belief in God's final judgment make in daily life? Compare Psalm 73 with Ecclesiastes 8. How did Asaph's perspective change when he entered God's presence?
5. Read Ecclesiastes 8:16-17; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 1:1-3, 11; 1 Corinthians 13:12. How does the Gospel enable believers to live faithfully amid mystery and questions? What current circumstance requires you to *walk by faith, not by sight*? How does Christ's death and resurrection give confidence when God's purposes remain hidden? Trace the theme of *walking by faith* from Abraham (Genesis 12; Hebrews 11) to the New Testament church. How does God's unfolding revelation culminate in Christ, enabling believers to trust even when they cannot fully understand?