

'All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.'
2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

The Book of Ecclesiastes

Chapter 4



Kerrville Bible Church

Fall Semester 2023

Ken Johnson



Ecclesiastes – Chapter Three

Review – The Monotony of Life

- ❑ LOOK UP – God is Sovereign! He is in control, and everything matters “under heaven”
- ❑ LOOK WITHIN – Life is a gift from God, He has set eternity in your heart, so you can come to fear Him
- ❑ LOOK AHEAD – Death is coming, and God will make everything right in His time
- ❑ ENJOY LIFE – Enjoy your lot in life, one apple at a time, we cannot see the future but, God is control, we can trust Him and be at peace



Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)



¹Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them.

- **LOOK AROUND** (4:1-5:9). Koheleth observes real life and finds it is anything but monotonous and meaningless
 - It is marked by Oppression - Innocent people being kept down by unjust use of force or authority
 - I have mine ...and you can't have it
 - You have yours ... and I want it
 - Pain, sorrow And hopelessness in the lives of the victims
 - No one to bring comfort to the victims



Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)

²So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living.

³But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.

- ❑ **LOOK AROUND** - So Solomon congratulates the dead.
- ❑ Not negative, just realistic considering this life was not widely considered the prelude to eternity in heaven. Death was preferable to living under oppression.
- ❑ Job cried out, “Why did you bring me out from the womb?” (JOB 10:18)
- ❑ Those who die, or who “never existed” miss so much toil, trouble, heartache, misery, injury, suffering, despair, oppression, violence ... all the evil works of sinful man



Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)

⁴I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor This too is vanity and striving after wind.

- ❑ **LOOK AROUND** In life, some are industrious ... which brings out competition ... and jealousy ... and envy
- ❑ Competition can bring out the best in all.
- ❑ But too many cheat, steal and destroy to win at all costs
- ❑ How much injustice is produced by envy/jealousy?
- ❑ So much time/energy/pain is wasted in getting.
- ❑ The industrious man often thinks that money will bring him peace – but he leaves himself no time to enjoy it
- ❑ “Hebel!”



Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)

⁵The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.

- ❑ **LOOK AROUND** Some are lazy ... which is foolish
- ❑ “Folds his hands” in Hebrew is expression for laziness.
- ❑ Yet, laziness leads to destruction. “Consumes his own flesh” is to destroy yourself ... health, dignity, sanity ...
- ❑ “The desire of the sluggard puts him to death; for his hands refuse to work” Proverbs 21:25
- ❑ The idle man thinks doing nothing will bring him peace, but his life-style destroys him.
- ❑ “Hebel”



Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)

⁶One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.

- ❑ **LOOK AROUND** Some are balanced. Here is the man who is productive in his work but also takes time for quietness.
- ❑ He does not grasp at labor and striving with “both fists”.
- ❑ He manages to keep “one hand full of rest” and does not run in the endless rat race.
- ❑ The result is gain in one hand and quietness in the other.



Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)

⁷Then I looked again at vanity under the sun.

⁸There was a certain man without a dependent, having neither a son nor a brother, yet there was no end to all his labor. Indeed, his eyes were not satisfied with riches, and he never asked, "And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?" This too is vanity, and it is a grievous task.

- ❑ **LOOK AROUND.** Some are Independent/Solitary
- ❑ Alone. No dependents. Wanted no help.
- ❑ A man never satisfied ... always wanting MORE.
- ❑ Never asking
 - For whom am I doing this labor?
 - Why am I sacrificing the joys of life to amass more money?
 - What happens to all I am accumulating when I am gone?
- ❑ “Hebel!”



Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)

⁸There was a certain man without a dependent, having neither a son nor a brother, yet there was no end to all his labor. Indeed, his eyes were not satisfied with riches, and he never asked, "And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?" This too is vanity, and it is a grievous task.

- ❑ **LOOK AROUND.** Some are Independent/Solitary
- ❑ God blessed man with labor
 - To earn what he needs to provide for himself and his family
 - To use what he has earned to sacrificially benefit others as he is able
 - To balance his time and resources to enjoy this gift of life for the purpose of rest and peace
- ❑ This man was hopelessly UNBALANCED. His life was truly meaningless ... a miserable business!

Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

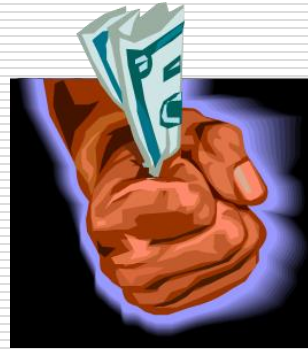
The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)



□ LOOK AROUND.

Next, Solomon describes two things we need to get the most out of our brief time “under the sun”:

- First, build Significant relationships.
- Second, never stop seeking Wisdom.



SUCCESS
Man's Wisdom

Bringing Value to SELF

*I must increase ...
You must decrease!*

**Oppressive
Competitive
Compulsive**

"Hebel"



SIGNIFICANCE
God's Wisdom

Investing in OTHERS

*I must decrease ...
You must increase!*

**Loving
Peaceful
Content**

Eternal

Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)



- **LOOK AROUND.** First, Build Significant Relationships.
 - God created man for relationships: “It is not good that man should be alone.” (GEN 2:18)
 - Made in God’s image, only in relationships can we manifest some God’s most precious attributes: Love, grace, mercy, kindness, goodness, forgiveness.
- Characteristics of a Significant Relationship:
 - Will be there when you are in need: “A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (PROV 18:24)
 - Will be honest: “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” (PROV 27:17)
 - Will give good counsel: “... the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.” (PROV 27:9B)

Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)



⁹Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.

¹⁰For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.

- **LOOK AROUND.** Build Significant Relationships.
 - Two are better when working because:
 - They can get the work done much faster
 - Even when they divide the profits, so fast they still get a better return than if they had worked alone
 - And they get difficult jobs done more easily because one can be an encouragement to the other
 - Two are better when we fall:
 - Physically – a helping hand from a stumble or worse
 - Spiritually – some wise counsel or a stern admonishment to help us restore ourselves to the narrow path

Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)



¹¹Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone?
¹²And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

- ❑ **LOOK AROUND.** Build Significant Relationships.
 - One alone cannot be warm and can be overpowered
 - Two together can keep warm
 - Two together can resist being overpowered
 - But three ... a cord of three is the strongest
 - ❑ If two cords are better than one
 - ❑ Then three cords are much better than two
 - Solomon is thinking beyond cords ... he is painting a beautiful picture of significant relationships



Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)

¹³A poor yet wise lad is better than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive instruction. ¹⁴For he has come out of prison to become king, even though he was born poor in his kingdom. ¹⁵I have seen all the living under the sun throng to the side of the second lad who replaces him. ¹⁶There is no end to all the people, to all who were before them, and even the ones who will come later will not be happy with him, for this too is vanity and striving after wind.

- **LOOK AROUND.** Second, Never Stop Seeking Wisdom:
 - This story teaches two truths:
 - The Instability of Political Power, and
 - The Fickleness of Popularity.



Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)

¹³A poor yet wise lad is better than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive instruction. ¹⁴For he has come out of prison to become king, even though he was born poor in his kingdom. ¹⁵I have seen all the living under the sun throng to the side of the second lad who replaces him. ¹⁶There is no end to all the people, to all who were before them, and even the ones who will come later will not be happy with him, for this too is vanity and striving after wind.

- ❑ **LOOK AROUND.** The **Instability of Political Power.**
- ❑ A wise young man was born poor and was sent to prison. (v13)
- ❑ The old king was rich, but it didn't make him any wiser. (v13)
- ❑ The young man got out of prison and took the throne. (v14)
- ❑ Wealth and position are no guarantee of success and poverty is no barrier to achievement. The key is **Wisdom**. (v15)



Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)

¹³A poor yet wise lad is better than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive instruction. ¹⁴For he has come out of prison to become king, even though he was born poor in his kingdom. ¹⁵I have seen all the living under the sun throng to the side of the second lad who replaces him. ¹⁶There is no end to all the people, to all who were before them, and even the ones who will come later will not be happy with him, for this too is vanity and striving after wind.

- ❑ **LOOK AROUND.** The **Fickleness of Popularity.**
- ❑ The young man took the throne by popular demand. (v15)
- ❑ The new crowd deposed him and appointed somebody else. (v16)
- ❑ Popularity is no guarantee of success – it is endlessly fickle.
- ❑ This too is vanity and striving after the wind!
- ❑ Remember ... God raises up and puts down rulers for His purposes



Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)

- No matter where Koheleth looked as he studied life, he learned important lessons from the Lord that confirmed that life had purpose and was definitely worth living:
 - When He LOOKED UP, he saw God was Sovereign, in control and everything matters “under heaven”
 - When he LOOKED WITHIN, he saw Life was a gift from God, man was made for eternity so he could come to fear God.
 - When he LOOKED AHEAD, he saw the last enemy, death, was coming and, that God will make everything right ... beautiful ... in His time

Ecclesiastes – Chapter Four

The Monotony of Life (3:1-5:9)



- No matter where Koheleth looked as he studied life, he learned important lessons from the Lord that confirmed that life had purpose and was definitely worth living:
 - When He LOOKED AROUND:
 - He saw that life was complex, difficult, and not easy to explain.
 - He saw that our “lot” was to accept the apple God presents to us each day and, with God’s help, to make the most of it.
 - God WILL make all things beautiful for those who fear Him in His time ...



The Book of Ecclesiastes



"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Psalm 111:10
