

VOTC 2 - Ecclesiastes 1:12-18 – “Searching for Satisfaction in Wisdom”

Welcome back to another episode here at VOTC. We continue our series in Ecclesiastes as we seek to answer the question, “what is the meaning of life?” Now, we come to the Preacher’s own search for satisfaction in the things of this world.

We live in world that tells us that the most important thing in life is our own *personal happiness*. But even with all the resources available to us, it seems we are more restless than ever. The preacher here in Ecclesiastes shares his own personal quest for satisfaction. But the more he tried to squeeze meaning out of life, the more it seemed to leave him searching for more. Nevertheless, he begins his search for satisfaction pursuing wisdom or knowledge.

The Pursuit of Wisdom (1:16-ff)

1. In the bible, pursuing wisdom is a good thing. But there are 2 different starting points in this pursuit. On the one hand, there is pursuing wisdom by *1st acknowledging God is our Creator*, and we learn about life by leaning on him. OR there is the *autonomous pursuit* of wisdom, where we, by our own intellect try to figure out the meaning of life.
 - a. Early Greek Philosophy prized this kind of wisdom that was dependent on reason, observation, and experience alone. ***Which path does the Preacher take? Is this faith seeking understanding? Or is this an autonomous search for wisdom?
2. Although the Preacher is a believer who knows God, for a season we see him pursuing wisdom in the wrong way, and from the wrong starting point.
 - a. He says, *I have set my heart* to do this. *I have acquired* great wisdom. At the beginning of his search for satisfaction, references to God are completely absent, & this will cont. throughout his quest. But apart from God, he was able to acquire knowledge of many things, and was successful in one sense in his pursuit!
 - b. He says in v.16, *I have attained greatness*. He became the kind of man who had lots of fancy degrees on his wall. He was the Jordan Peterson of the day who would be invited to speak on the Joe Rogan Podcast. You might be able to find his books on the Best Seller Wall at Indigo bookstore.
3. The pursuit of knowledge in this life is a great thing, & we live in a culture that likes to listen to podcasts, news, books, & audiobooks. We should all value the pursuit of knowledge. But the preacher teaches us through his own experience that when we pursue wisdom from the *wrong* foundation, it leads to frustration and sorrow.
 - a. In Christianity, *deconstruction*, has been a popular word. This word can refer to a process of analyzing our Christian faith to consider what parts of our faith come from God’s word, and what comes from the culture or bad tradition. This can be a good exercise. But there is also a bad kind of deconstruction, where we set aside God himself & his Word as the starting point & try to gain wisdom from a different foundation.

- b. That is wrong/dangerous. That is what the Devil tempted **Adam & Eve** to do. Set aside God's word in order to become wise in a different way & that led to death.

Before his conversion St. Augustine said in his *Confessions*, "I was trying to find the origin of evil, but I was quite blind to the evil in my own method of research." HOW we pursue knowledge matters! If we try to become wise apart from the fear of the Lord, we will end up in the pit of despair. See **v.17-18**

2. His wisdom led to *grief/frustration*. That is why it's said ignorance is bliss. It's not good to have your head in the sand in this world, but it's also not always helpful to try and dig into everything. The more you know, the more sorrowful you can become.
3. Moreover, the preacher shows us why being wise doesn't lead to ultimate satisfaction in the end. Why?? Because of death. Death is the big party crasher in this quest for satisfaction. **V.14, 16**

Well, when it comes to WSD, the wise might see life rightly & know more than the fool who walks in darkness, but the problem is the same fate happens to them both. They both *die & are forgotten*. Death is no respecter of men & in the grave you can't distinguish the bones of the wise man from the fool.

So what are we to do? The preacher calls us to start with God. The proverbs reminds us that the *fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*. Only by trusting in Christ's life, death, and resurrection can our crooked hearts become straight, and our broken lives become whole. There is a God in heaven to give wisdom and he gives life to us when we look to Jesus as our wisdom and righteousness before God. That is what we see in.

4. In **2:24-26** we see a **sacred shift**. God's name *reappears*. At the end he reminds us of "God's hand," & 3x's we are told God gives to us – wisdom, knowledge, and joy.
 - a. Here we see that the good gifts of God must be received and enjoyed in the right way. When it comes to having wisdom in this world of why we exist, what we are hear for, and where we are going, we must begin with God.

So, dear listener, in this world of confusing, may you look to Jesus Christ as your wisdom, and trust that when you call out to God for wisdom, he will give it free to all who ask. James 1:5-6 says, *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, without doubting*

Start your pursuit of knowledge with Jesus Christ at the centre, and God will give you wisdom, and he will give you life.

We hope you'll join us next time as we consider the preacher's search for satisfaction in pleasure and material wealth. Until then, may God bless you and keep you.