



It Doesn't Make Sense

Open it

1. If you could bring one person with you to a deserted island, who would it be and why?

Daily Devotions

Day 1 — Today's Theme: Explore It

Read Ecclesiastes 3:16–4:16.

2. Who is in the place of judgment?
3. Who will God judge?
4. Who has no comforter?
5. What is better than one and why?

Day 2 — Today's Theme: Injustice

Read Ecclesiastes 3:16–22.

I am a big fan of the NFL, the Bears in particular, but like the rest of the NFL fans, I am not a fan of the referees. It always seems like the refs are against the team you want to win and constantly make bad calls, but there is nothing we can do about it. However, in the NFL they can review the plays, and even have people talking into their earpiece telling them what the call should have been. While this system isn't always perfect, it is much better than what a ref can do on his own.

In the first part of this passage, Solomon talks a little about the injustice in the world. He specifically is talking about judgment here on earth. The ones who sit in the place of judgment are wicked, and so is the justice laid out. The wicked are acquitted and the righteous are found guilty. How can this be though? How could Solomon, the king, observe this injustice and let it continue? No matter what Solomon did to resolve the matter it would never compare to God's judgment. In God's perfect timing both the righteous and wicked will be judged. Their judgment will be just, and it is all under God's control.

In the second part of this passage Solomon starts comparing humans to the animals of the earth. Solomon talks about God testing us so that we may see that we are no better than the animals. That doesn't make sense though. Aren't humans God's special handcrafted creations made in His own image? So how are we just like the animals? While we are created in the image of God, no matter what we do on this earth we will always meet the same fate as animals: death. It may seem that we do have some advantage over the animals being that we are more intelligent, have more wisdom and authority, but it does not matter. No matter how smart you are you will still meet the same end as the beasts. Surely our soul is what sets us apart, right? How can we know? We can't. While we remain on this earth we will never know. Only God will know, because *"Who [else] knows if the human spirit rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?"*

Similar to the end of chapter two, Solomon leaves us with a slight pick-me-up after saying we live in an unjust world and are no better than the animals. He tells us to enjoy our work while we are still here. We do not know what lies ahead of us in our future, so we must have faith in God as everything happens in accordance with His will.

6. How can you stand up to the judgment of the wicked?

7. How can you know for sure if your spirit is going to go to Heaven?

8. How can you go about life and be happy with your "lot" if everything is meaningless?

Day 3 — Today's Theme: Never-Ending Oppression

Read Ecclesiastes 4:1–3.

I work at The Home Depot as a supervisor of multiple departments. One of my departments is hardware. As the supervisor, I have to keep track of the clearance in the department, which for hardware is a never-ending nightmare. If I manage to get rid of ten items from the clearance list one day, the next day ten more will pop back in for me to handle. It is a battle that has no end. I have been able to work it to a point where it is manageable, but then it just fills back up and the process starts all over. This is something that I am not going to miss when I am no longer supervisor of hardware, but it is not something I wish I had never experienced either. The relief of not having to deal with it is not better than never having to deal with it at all. The only way that there will not be clearance is if the store closes. Until then, clearance will always be a battle that someone will have to fight, and unfortunately for the moment that person is me.

It doesn't make sense—even though God deals with the wicked, the righteous still suffer. The power lies in the hands of the wicked, and they use it to oppress. When humans have power, they use it to oppress others when they could use it for good. They lack any sympathy for the ones they do oppress and leave them without a comforter. The oppression is so bad that Solomon says that the dead are better off than the living because they no longer experience oppression. To take it a step further, he says that the one who is yet to be born is best off because not only do they not experience oppression, but they have also never experienced it. Mankind is always going to deal with the issue of oppression. If one wicked person is dealt with in a just manner, another will take his place. To fight oppression may have some short-term effects, but in the long run it is like chasing after the wind. The only way that the oppression will stop will be God's bringing judgment on all those who are wicked. Then and only then will oppression be no more.

9. Have you ever experienced oppression from someone in a position higher than yours? What was it, and how did you feel?

10. How can you respond to the oppression of others?

Day 4 — Today's Theme: Balance

Read Ecclesiastes 4:4–6.

Two wrongs don't make a right, but two Wrights make an airplane. The invention of the airplane was a groundbreaking moment in history—flight had been made possible! The airplane the Wrights made is nothing like the ones that we have today, however. Human innovation and competitive nature to improve and make things better drastically changed the plane. While all for the better, the original airplane is no longer in use. Many people put many hours of time and effort into redesigning the plane to be better, only for a newer, even better one to be made later. The time that someone puts into improving upon the latest plane is only enjoyed for a short time, and then the next one comes along and pushes the last one out. So, what is the point of working to improve, build, design something if it eventually is going to become obsolete? Sure, you can make a groundbreaking invention like the Wright brothers did, but if you don't, someone else will.

What is the point of work? If our work will go away someday, then why work? Why not just do nothing? If you do nothing then you will ruin yourself. Lazy habits start to form, and inactivity is the way of the fool. If you sit with your hands crossed then you will consume yourself. What do we do then? All of our work is chasing after the wind, gone tomorrow, but if we do nothing we ruin ourselves. So what is the solution? We must find a balance between the two: work that is meaningless and tranquility that ruins ourselves. If we find a balance then our work will not be wasted as we are not giving ourselves enough time to bring ruin, while still giving us time to relax and do nothing.

11. What can you do to make your work have meaning during the time it lasts?

12. What can you do during your times of tranquility to keep from ruining yourself?

Day 5 — Today's Theme: Two is Greater than One

Read Ecclesiastes 4:7–12.

In any team sport you need all the players to work together to achieve the team's goal. If the team is not communicating well, and not playing together, 99 times out of 100 the team will fail. During my junior year of high school, we had a lot of good senior players on the football team. On paper, our roster was pretty solid. But that didn't matter. Even though we had a lot of star talent, they did not like to work together and did not play well as a team. Almost all of our star talent wanted to do things their own way, and as a result our team was left defenseless. It wasn't an 11v11, it was an 11v1 for each player on my team.

In my senior year, on paper our roster had gotten worse. The difference was that we worked as a team. We each would stick to our role and work as a unit and support each other. Despite being worse on paper, we played better than the year before. Similarly in life, if we do not have someone to lean on, or a community to help us up, then when we fall it will be hard to get up.

The man that Solomon talks about at the beginning of this passage is alone. His work has no end, he has no one to share life with, and no adequate amount of riches. His work is meaningless and never ending. Not only can he not enjoy it, but there's no one else to enjoy it either. It doesn't make sense as to why he works for his thirst for riches that he will never be able to quench if he is never able to enjoy them. What the man lacks is a partner, a community. Solomon goes on to talk about two people. Solomon says "Two are better than one" for many reasons. As opposed to one, two can help each other up. Two have a better return on their work and can keep each other warm. Finally, two have a better chance of defending themselves as compared to one.

13. How has having someone, or a community, to depend on helped you through a situation in the past?

14. How have you been that second person to someone else in the past?

15. What do you think Solomon means when he says, "A cord of three strands is not quickly broken"?

Day 6 — Today's Theme: Out with the Old, In with the New

Read Ecclesiastes 4:13–16.

I am really big into shoes. I've always wanted the new shoe that dropped, and I would stop appreciating the shoes that I already had because I desired the newer "cooler" pair. Every time I got the new shoes it was really nice, for about a month, and then I would see another pair. Then my attention would be on the other pair instead of the pair I just got. I was ungrateful for what I had in the moment because of my comparison to the new shoe. This also caused me some unhappiness in not having the newest shoe. When I learned how to look at what I have now, and appreciate it for what it was and use it to its fullest, I stopped my comparisons. I would spend more time being thankful for the shoes that I have in the moment instead of looking for the next drop.

In this part of the passage, we have a young lad who has come out of "prison," which the original phrase is *bayith'acar*¹, which means to depart from the oppressive dwelling. We have an example of a young, wise but poor person coming out of oppression to take over kingship from the old, foolish king. The old king could no longer heed any warnings and was doing things his own way. The new young king rose up to the position because of his cunning and wisdom. To be a good leader you have to be able to listen for an answer sometimes instead of insisting on being correct. The old king was not good at hearing advice and turned to an oppressive way. This story is the classic case of out with the old and in with the new. Soon, however, the new king would not be liked either. He was liked when he was compared to the old king, and even though he may still be better, there will still be comparisons made. The subjects will want the even newer, better king, and so on and so forth. It's another cycle in life that is chasing after the wind. Comparison can lead people to be ungrateful for what they have. It is also possible at times to think that something is better, but when you get it, you wish you'd kept what you had.

16. When have you gotten the "New Thing" only to realize that what you had before was more than enough?

17. How can you learn to appreciate what you have in the moment?

¹ <https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/eccl/eccl-4/ecclesiastes-413-16/>

Note: This study was written by Avery Tindall. www.villagebible.church/students.