



Humility

It doesn't make sense, and it never will. We will never fully understand why God does what He does. Why does He let the wicked live long, glorious lives? Why does He allow good people's lives to be cut short?

Searching for the answer to these questions is like chasing the wind, an endless battle with no results. All the time I hear the phrase "you can only control what you can control." But what can I control? Last time I checked, God is in control of everything. All I can do is trust in Him. We need to remember that everything happens according to His will, and learn to humbly submit to Him.

So that brings me to the question, who do you think of when you think of someone humble? Maybe you think of NFL players after making a big play, or the popular girl from all of those 2000's high school movies. If you ask me, I think of myself. I am the humblest person I know, but let me tell you, it is hard to be humble when you are perfect in every way.

In all honesty though, the first thing to pop in our head when we hear the word humility should be Jesus! As believers, we walk daily with God as disciples in our path of sanctification, to be more like Jesus. Jesus should be, and is, our finish line for living the Christian life, including humility. In Philippians 2:1-11 Paul lays out how to be humble like Christ. Jesus, being fully equal to God the Father, came down from heaven as fully man, fully God, to die on the cross for our sins. In verses 6 and 7, Paul tells us that Jesus sacrificed a perfect and painless life in heaven and was made into the likeness of man to live in this imperfect and painful world. Also, in verse 7 Jesus serves the Father by "taking the very nature of a servant" and lived His life on earth serving God. In verse 8 Jesus submits Himself to obedience and suffers on earth and even dies on the cross!

Looking at your own life, you want to say that you imitate Christ's humility. Obviously we will never be able to reach Jesus's level of humility, but we are able to imitate it. Christ was willing to sacrifice, serve, submit, and suffer for all of us. How willing are we to do that for each other? By doing these things, we will imitate Christ's humility.

Open it

1. **Who is your favorite celebrity, and why?**

Daily Devotions

Day 1 — Today's Theme: Explore It

Read Ecclesiastes 8:1–17.

2. What brightens a person's face?
3. Why should you obey the king's command?
4. Who knows the future?
5. What happens when the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out?
6. Why does it not go well with the wicked?
7. What is there nothing better for a person to do?
8. What will no one ever comprehend?

Day 2 — Today's Theme: Submission and Obedience

Read Ecclesiastes 8:1–8.

In the NFL, all 32 football teams have a head coach. The head coach puts other coaches in positions of authority over the players in the positions they coach in hopes that they will teach them to be better players. By listening to and obeying their position coaches, players show that they are trusting their head coach since he has put those other coaches in place. They submit to the authority above them because of their trust in the head coach to do what is best for the team.

Submitting to authority means obeying them. If the team has a good head coach, then as long as the players are obedient and disciplined, most of the time they will win. Sometimes however you get a bad head coach, and you can tell when players do not submit to them. It leads to messy scenarios and a team that is not well disciplined, leading to losses.

As Christians though, we will never be in a scenario where we have a “bad coach.” We have God to submit to and put our trust into. Like it says in Proverbs 3:6, *“in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight.”* God will never lead us down the wrong path or steer us the wrong direction. If we submit to Him and obey His commandments He will take us all the way.

In the beginning verses of chapter 8, Solomon talks about submission. He tells us to obey the king's command and to avoid insurrection *“for he will do whatever he pleases.”* God controls everything, including the authority that is placed above us. In Israel, God chose who the king would be, even though He is the true King. While kings came to Israel out of a lack of trust in God among the people, submission to the king shows trust and submission in whom God has given authority.

The same concept applies today, whether it be at a national level or small town, God planned for that person to be in that position at that time.¹ When we submit to those authorities we are showing our trust in God and His plan, and submitting to His will.

9. What authorities has God placed in your life?

10. How does submission to these authorities help you trust God?

11. What can you do this week to show your own submission and obedience to God?

¹Romans 13:1

Day 3 — Today's Theme: Consequences

Read Ecclesiastes 9:9–13.

Some of the decisions you make can affect the rest of your life. Maybe you decide to buy a lottery ticket and in a matter of seconds you're a millionaire. Maybe you try something that you shouldn't, like drugs, or something dangerous, and it changes the rest of your life in a negative way. The rest of your life on earth can change in a matter of seconds based on the decisions you make and their consequences, both positive and negative.

That's why before we make decisions we like to think about the consequences, but most of the time only have our sights set on the outcome "under the sun." Yet, some decisions we make may have eternal consequences, like putting our trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. In verses 9–13 Solomon talks about these consequences, though sometimes we don't even see them in our lifetime, and he gives us reassurance that it will go better for whoever fears God. This isn't a promise about an easy life on earth, but a glorious one afterwards.

In verses 9 and 10 Solomon talks about the wicked who had authority over others. The wicked rulers would use their authority to inflict pain on those beneath them. At the same time, they would also go into their "holy" places to receive favor from their gods that they thought had authority over them. And ever so "humbly" in most cases, those wicked rulers would often then claim to be gods themselves in order to receive more praise from those they rule.

While some rulers are wicked because of the abuse of their power, others are wicked because of the lack of punishment of the wicked. In verse 11, Solomons points out that "*When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people's hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong.*" If there were no police on the road to pull anyone over for speeding, almost everyone would speed; if you could steal anything without getting in trouble, a lot of people would steal. If the precedent is set that an action is okay, then others will tend to view the action as something they can do as well.

But what about the people who seem to get away with doing bad things and even benefit from it? Solomon talks about this in verses 12–13. While it may seem that some people get away with it, in the end, it will always catch up to them. The Bible says it will always go better for those who fear God because by living for God they'll find the fulfillment that nothing else can offer. Our life is such a small part of eternity, and to spend it not fearing God and trusting Him is like throwing away eternity for the short period of time we are here on earth.

12. What consequences have you experienced in life, good or bad?

13. How have you seen someone benefit from a wrongdoing, and how did you react?

14. Have you ever done something thinking it was okay to do when it wasn't?

Day 4 — Today's Theme: Blissful Ignorance

Read Ecclesiastes 8:14–17.

Some things in life don't always make sense to me. Like the concept of forever, eternity in Heaven, it throws my head for a loop. Or why is cereal considered a morning meal? I like cereal the most at night for dinner sometimes. Or technology, all of our technology came from the earth. It's crazy to me that we went from dirt and rock to computers and phones. Clouds also are kind of cool; they don't look as high up as people say that they are. Even life in general, how things happen, what makes people do the things they do, like why did someone bring a dog into The Home Depot just to have it pee on the floor and then leave? Most things in life are a mystery to me, but that's okay. God is in control of it all, even that dog and its owner. Things in life don't have to make sense to me as long as they make sense to God, and since He is the one who created it all, we don't have much to worry about.

In verse 14 it says that *"There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: the righteous who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked who get what the righteous deserve."* It shouldn't be that way in life, but it is at times. Life is unfair. So what do we do? Solomon tells us to relax, and enjoy the pleasures in life. If we try to understand why things happen the way they do, and comprehend how God works, we will always keep looking for the answer. Even the wisest men and women will never find the answer, no matter how long they search for it. Trying to understand God's ways is impossible for us as humans to do.

Solomon spends most of Ecclesiastes trying to figure out life from the lens of the human eye, but no matter what he did, he never found the answer, because it all starts with our faith in God. Have faith that it is all going according to God's plan, because it is! When our foundation for our understanding is built off of faith and gratitude instead of our own reasoning and experience, then we will learn to find the joys in life.

So the best thing for us to do as we carry on in life is to enjoy what God has given us. Our lives aren't meaningless; God gave them to us for a reason. We are here to bring glory to God and have a relationship with Him. While doing that, trust in God and enjoy your work and the rewards and pleasures that God gives you, and do so in a way that always honors Him.

15. How has life felt unfair to you before? Have you ever wondered why God would let something happen?

16. How can you help others who are going through a situation that leaves them questioning God and His sovereignty?