

Ecclesiastes, written by King Solomon toward the end of his life, takes its name from a rough translation of the Hebrew word *qoheleth* -- "one who calls an assembly of people." In other words, the person is both a leader and a teacher. The *qoheleth* doesn't wait for people to ask advice; instead, the teacher wants so desperately to pass along the great lesson of life, that he calls everyone together to listen.

"Don't miss what I have to say," he exclaims. "I can save you lots of trouble and heartache because I have investigated everything of human experience -- pleasure and pain, wisdom and folly -- and it all adds up to nothing."

Although that sounds a bit depressing and negative, Solomon's point is actually quite encouraging if we understand what he is saying, and why. Several different times in this book, Solomon uses the expression "under the sun" to tell us that he is talking about this earthly life, not about spiritual life. He contrasts the empty pointlessness of the worldly reality with the sureness of spiritual reality.

"I can save you a lifetime of searching for the meaning of life," says the *qoheleth*. "If you only look 'under the sun,' you won't find any. But if you look beyond the sun, further into the heavens, you will find God, who puts everything into proper perspective."

Chapter 12

^{12:1}Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them";

²before the sun, the light, the moon, and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain;

³in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble, and mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few, and those who look through windows grow dim;

⁴and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low, and one will arise at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song will sing softly.

⁵Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself

along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street.

⁶*Remember Him* before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed;

⁷then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

⁸"Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "all is vanity!"

¹¹The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of *these* collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd.

¹²But beyond this, my son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion *to books* is wearying to the body.

¹³The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is*: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person.

¹⁴For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.