

# Make a life, not just a living.

## Lesson for Sunday, July 14, 2024

TEXT: Ecclesiastes 9

### INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ Start with Isaiah 55:8-9. What do these verses clearly teach us?
  - Isaiah clearly teaches us that there are two ways in life.
  - Think of life as a choice between two roads. One road is called Man's Way.
    - Solomon wrote in Proverbs 14:12. Man's Way leads to death/destruction/to an empty life.
  - The other road is God's Way, and it leads to life. See John 10:10
- ⇒ As we have worked our way through Ecclesiastes, we recognize that Solomon, at one time or another, lived on both of those roads!
  - Solomon went after pleasure, work, and money. He had access to every resource and he had more wisdom than anyone else. We read his conclusion in Ecclesiastes 1:2-3, and he was even more direct in 2:17 – "I hated my life."
- ⇒ Most of us know this is true. We know that we ought to be living according to God's Way, but what are we supposed to do? Are we just to spend all our time at the church? Reading our Bibles? Meditating and praying all day?
- ⇒ In Ecclesiastes 9, Solomon answers that question. His advice: Don't just make a living – make a life.

### BIBLE STUDY:

1. Solomon's Summary (vs. 1-6): Solomon begins by reminding us three important realities.
  - a. First, **God is in control** (vs. 1-3).
    - i. We will experience good times – we will experience bad times. But all our times are in the hand of God.
    - ii. Some preach that if you give your life to Christ, bad times will not come. Tell that to Paul, tell that to the apostles, tell that to the prophets.
    - iii. When bad times come we must remember that God has allowed them to come. He doesn't always cause them – but He has allowed them. And God wants to use the bad times to make you better – to make you look more like Christ.
  - b. Second, **everyone dies** (vs. 2-3).
    - i. Verses 2-3 – There is "one event" that is common to all men (good and evil). That event is death.
    - ii. Solomon is reminding us of our own mortality. Solomon points out that rich people die, and poor people die. Wicked people die, and righteous people die.
    - iii. In light of that reality we should strive to make the most of the life God has given us. Life is short, so don't waste your life!
  - c. Third, **only the living can change** (vs. 4-6).
    - i. In verse 4, Solomon makes an obvious point: It is better to be a living dog than a dead lion! (Solomon is sarcastic.) Why is it better?
    - ii. Vs. 5-6: It is better because once we die there is nothing more we can do.
    - iii. No matter how bad your life has been – you are still alive! No matter your current circumstances – you are still here – you can still do something about it.
    - iv. Solomon is challenging us to take personal responsibility for our lives.
    - v. We live in a world that blames everyone else for their problems. Nothing is ever your fault. We blame our boss, our spouse, our teachers, our coaches...our past!
    - vi. As long as it is everyone else's fault we will never accomplish anything.
    - vii. Solomon says as long as you are living there is something you can do! Take control of your life!

2. Solomon's Counsel (vs. 7-10): In light of these three realities, what can we do to make a meaningful life? He provides four practical applications for us to consider and apply.
  - a. Verse 7: **Eat a meal with family and friends.**
    - i. Notice he begins with "Go..." – do this, don't be sluggish, this is God's best for you!
    - ii. Eating and drinking is not pictured here as fatalistic and like a party scene, but RATHER as simply enjoying the blessings that God has provided.
    - iii. Proverbs 15:15-17 describes the contentment that a good meal can provide. This was common in that Jewish culture (& common today in many cultures around the world).
    - iv. For too many Americans, dinner is eating in the car on the way to practice. We are often too busy to slow down and enjoy meaningful fellowship with family and friends. If you want your life to count, this will be a priority.
  - b. Verse 8: **Take comfort and be content with God's provisions.**
    - i. White garments & oil would have provided great comfort in a harsh climate.
    - ii. Food, clothing and shelter are God's provision for the man/woman who seeks God's way first. And we can trust God to always provide for our needs. Rest in this truth. Instead, many of us live lives full of discontentment.
    - iii. Group exercise idea. 1) Read Matthew 6:25-34. 2) As you read the passage, answer the following 2 questions:
      1. What are my responsibilities in this passage? Don't worry about my needs (25), realize my limitations and need for God (27), put God's Word & Work FIRST in my life (33), don't be overly concerned about the future – instead focus on obeying God today (34).
      2. What are God's responsibilities in this passage? Hint – v. 26, 30, 33.
    - iv. Discuss: How do we often get Jesus's teaching backwards in our lives?
  - c. Verse 9: **Focus on your spouse.**
    - i. Marriage is the most important earthly relationship. Marriage can be a huge solace, comfort, sanctuary in the middle of the frustrations of life. "All the day of the life" – this is to be a life-long love.
    - ii. Discuss: How do we maintain a great marriage?
    - iii. For those that are single, this reminds us of the need for close, meaningful relationships. What are we doing to cultivate these?
    - iv. Discuss: How do we become intentional at developing meaningful relationships?
  - d. Verse 10: **Work hard at what you work at.**
    - i. Give 100% in your work, as unto the Lord. This includes our family, church, work, and most importantly our personal relationship with Him. Christians should strive to glorify God in everything they do.
    - ii. Discuss: God, family, church and work are the building block of life. Our primary efforts and energies ought to be spent in these areas. Why do so often spend our energy on other areas and neglect these core areas? What is the potential risk in doing this?
    - iii. How conscientious are you in all your work?

CONCLUSION: Solomon is philosophical in Ecclesiastes, but he is also very practical. That is the balance that each of us must strike. Remember the words of James, "Be ye doers of the Word..." You know the philosophy of this chapter, but are you living it? That is our challenge!