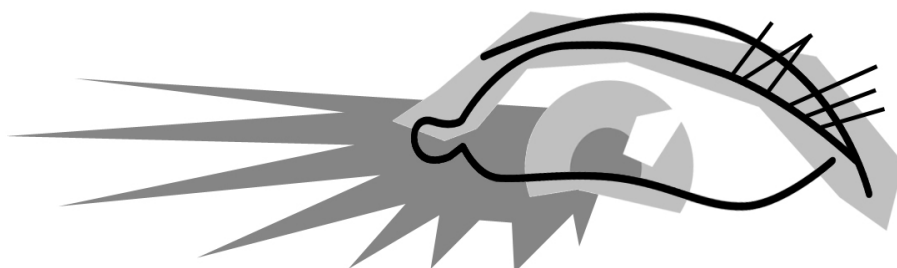


# “Everything My Eyes Wanted”



## SABBATH—JANUARY 13

**READ FOR THIS WEEK’S STUDY:** Ecclesiastes 2; Proverbs 3:13-28.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “What does a man get for all his hard work on earth? What does he get for all of his worries?” (Ecclesiastes 2:22, NIV).

“I have studied, sadly, philosophy,<sup>1</sup>  
Law, and medicine,  
And, help me God, theology,<sup>2</sup>  
With enthusiasm through success and failure.  
And here, poor fool, I stand once more,  
Not any wiser than I was before.”

—Adapted from Johann von Goethe, *Faust* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), p. 12.

**THE ABOVE “POEM” SUGGESTS THAT FAUST WAS NOT ANY MORE SATISFIED WITH KNOWLEDGE THAN SOLOMON WAS.** Even the study of theology, without a humble and honest heart, leads nowhere.

Solomon did not openly sell his soul to the devil for happiness’ sake as Faust did. But Solomon might as well have done so, because of how far he fell. Luckily for Solomon, Jesus stooped even lower. Jesus became “sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21) so He could lift even the lowest of us from sin’s hold.

This week, we will study more of Solomon’s words about his frustration with life far from God. If we listen carefully to Solomon’s words, there will be some valuable lessons for us. Why make the same mistakes he did?

<sup>1</sup>philosophy—the study of wisdom.

<sup>2</sup>theology—the study of God.

**SUNDAY—JANUARY 14****WORKING AFTER WIND  
(Ecclesiastes 1:16–2:3)**

Ecclesiastes 1 ended with Solomon complaining about the wisdom and knowledge he had received over many years (Ecclesiastes 1:16-18). For Solomon, it was all meaningless (useless), working after (for) wind (nothing). How sad that Solomon should end up with these feelings when the Bible often talked about how people were impressed with the wisdom of his earlier years (1 Kings 4:29-34; also read 1 Kings 10:1-8).

**Contrast<sup>3</sup> Solomon’s attitude<sup>4</sup> toward wisdom with the attitude he showed earlier in Proverbs 3:13-26. What do you think made the difference?**



**Wisdom is worth more than . . . whatever is on the right side of the scale.**

Solomon, old and bitter, had lost his way. All the knowledge and wisdom he received meant nothing to him. But the wisdom Solomon talks

<sup>3</sup>contrast—show how things are different.

<sup>4</sup>attitude—how a person thinks and feels toward God, other people, or things.

<sup>5</sup>principle—a basic rule of life.

about in Proverbs is a wisdom centered on a knowledge of God. God is the Author and Center of all true wisdom and knowledge. This point is made even more powerfully when Solomon connects knowledge and understanding with God as the Creator (Proverbs 3:19). This proves again how the foundation (basis) of all knowledge and wisdom begins with God. Notice that this wisdom is not just deep thoughts about the nature of God or the limits of His power. Instead, Proverbs 3:13-26 says that true wisdom is shown in how we live our lives. When Solomon lost his way, he lost the true wisdom he once had. Instead, he found only worldly wisdom. So in Solomon’s mind, life became useless.

**What is Solomon talking about in Ecclesiastes 1:16–2:3?**

**How common for humans to go from one worldly interest to another! They foolishly try to find happiness and satisfaction in life. What has been your own experience in trying to find worldly happiness? Why does it never work?**

**MONDAY—JANUARY 15****THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE<sup>5</sup>  
(Ecclesiastes 2:1-3)**

Solomon finds wisdom to be a dull hobby. So he goes after pleasure instead. The search for pleasure is called “hedonism.” Most people who

are pleasure seekers (searchers) are just looking for a good time. Some people believe that pleasure is all good. They think that whatever pleasure they have is good.

**Put yourself in the mind of someone who does not believe in God. He or she may think this way: *Life is all there is. There is no life after this life. Then we are not responsible for any moral<sup>6</sup> law. So why not just enjoy ourselves any way we please, even if we harm others?* What answer do you have for someone like this?**

Compare<sup>7</sup> what Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 2:1-3 with what he wrote in Proverbs 6:23-29, Proverbs 7:6-27, Proverbs 20:1, Proverbs 23:1-6. How is he explaining in Ecclesiastes the same thoughts that he wrote out years earlier?



**Riches grow wings and fly away like an eagle (Proverbs 7:5).**

There is something very tricky about looking for pleasure for pleasure's sake. When we find pleasure, it

does not satisfy us. Sooner or later, the pleasure loses something. Then we need more and more pleasure to reach the same kind of satisfaction it had given us before. Sooner or later, we realize that life means much more than just having pleasure. We also find that pleasure leaves us feeling empty and dissatisfied. This is a lesson Solomon learned the hard way.

**Solomon warned people about lust.<sup>8</sup> But he ended up with “seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred mistresses” (1 Kings 11:3). Solomon also warned against overeating. But he would eat like a pig (1 Kings 4:22, 23). How easy it is to fall! What lessons can you take away from Solomon's fall?**

## TUESDAY—JANUARY 16

### “EVERYTHING MY EYES WANTED” (Ecclesiastes 2:4-11)

Lee Iacocca is one of the most famous and successful businessmen in American history. He ran the Chrysler Corporation for many years. He once said, “Here I am in the twilight [closing] years of my life, still wondering what it is all about. . . . I can tell you this, fame and fortune is for the birds [nothing].”

**What is the important point of Solomon's message in Ecclesiastes 2:4-11?**

<sup>6</sup>moral—having to do with knowing the difference between right and wrong.

<sup>7</sup>compare—show how things are the same.

<sup>8</sup>lust—strong sexual desire.

Solomon gained a certain satisfaction from his success (Ecclesiastes 2:10). But in the end, his satisfaction did not continue. It did not satisfy the most basic desires of his soul (Ecclesiastes 2:11). If owning things could bring happiness, Solomon should have been the happiest person in the world. As you read Ecclesiastes, you can see that these are not the words of a happy man.

**Read again Ecclesiastes 2:4-11. What things did Solomon get? Also read 1 Kings 7; 1 Kings 10:10-29. Why was he still not happy?**

All that Solomon had were physical things. All his physical desires were satisfied for a short time. But there is more to life than what our bodies need. We have a spiritual part that all the physical things in the world cannot satisfy. Solomon was proof of that. It is interesting to see that people in poor nations are often happier than people who have everything in wealthy nations.

**How could Matthew 6:33 have solved Solomon’s problem? What does this verse say to you about your own temptations?**

### **WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 17**

#### **THE FATE (FUTURE END) OF A FOOL (Ecclesiastes 2:15)**

Solomon is having a hard time. He

believed that all his wisdom did him no good. Then he tried to look for pleasure and found it empty. Even being the richest man in the world did not satisfy the most inner needs of his soul. He found that “nothing had any meaning. It was like chasing the wind” (Ecclesiastes 2:11, NIV).

As if all this was not bad enough, it gets worse.

**What is Solomon complaining about in Ecclesiastes 2:12-17? How valid<sup>9</sup> are his complaints? How would you answer him?**

Jesus said something that is close to what Solomon is saying. Jesus is talking about the Father. Jesus said, “He [the Father] causes his sun to shine on evil people and good people. He sends rain on those who do right and those who don’t [do not]” (Matthew 5:45, NIV). In another place, Jesus was talking about some Galileans. “Pilate had mixed their blood with their sacrifices” (Luke 13:1, NIV). Jesus then said, “Do you think they were worse sinners than all the other Galileans? I tell you no! But unless you turn away from your sins, you will all die too” (Luke 13:2, 3, NIV; also read Luke 13:4, 5). In both of these places, Jesus is talking about what seems clear to all of us: The wicked are not the only people to experience pain and suffering. The good suffer, too. Solomon believes everything we do is useless because we all end up dead. But Jesus thinks

<sup>9</sup>valid—based on facts and good thinking; true.

differently: “‘Unless you [if you do not] turn away from your sins, you all will die too’” (NIRV). Jesus was pointing the people to something better than just the final end of either the wicked or the just.

**How does your faith in God help you deal with death? What Bible promises offer you the greatest hope when you think about dying?**

### THURSDAY—JANUARY 18

#### LEGACY<sup>10</sup> (Ecclesiastes 2:17-26)

Solomon does not know when to give up. It is bad enough that all his worldly pleasures came to nothing. It is bad enough that everyone, both the wise and the fool, die. But now Solomon is complaining about what happens even *after* he dies.

#### **What is his complaint in Ecclesiastes 2:17-26?**

Solomon does have a good point. People are concerned (worried) about their legacy. How depressing it is to think that you work so hard all your life to build up something. Then someone comes after you and brings it all to nothing. In a way, Solomon’s concern is a mystery. Think about the life Solomon lived after he had taken over the throne. We might wonder what his father, David, would have

thought about what Solomon did with David’s legacy. But maybe it was that very thought that got Solomon to think about what his heirs<sup>11</sup> would do with their inheritance.<sup>12</sup>

#### **What is Solomon saying in Ecclesiastes 2:24-26?**

These verses are hard to understand. But Solomon seems to be saying, well, since there is nothing I can do about what my heirs do, I might as well live well now. He is not encouraging sexual pleasure. (He has been there and done that already.) Instead, Solomon seems to be following the Bible idea that living with God’s will can bring many earthly blessings. These blessings include physical enjoyment. “You [God] make the grass grow for the cattle and plants for people to take care of. That’s [that is] how they get food from the earth. There is wine to make people glad. There’s [there is] olive oil to make them healthy. And there is bread to make them strong” (Psalm 104:14, 15, NIRV).

**You are an heir receiving the greatest legacy from your heavenly Father (Romans 8:17; Galatians 3:29; Galatians 4:7). This is salvation in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:28, 1 Peter 1:5). What daily choices are you making so you do not throw away this “legacy” from God?**

<sup>10</sup>legacy—what we leave behind when we die.

<sup>11</sup>heirs—people who receive a person’s things and gifts after that person has died.

<sup>12</sup>inheritance—gifts received from family members after they die.

**FRIDAY—JANUARY 19**

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals [Basics] of Christian Education*, p. 422; *The Ministry [Work] of Healing*, p. 364; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 258.

“He [Solomon] gives us the history of his search for happiness. He was involved in looking for wisdom. He satisfied his love for pleasure. He carried out his plans for business and trade. He was surrounded by the glamour [bright side] of court<sup>13</sup> life. . . .

“Solomon sat upon a throne of ivory with solid gold steps and six golden lions. His eyes looked upon beautiful, well-cared for gardens. These palace grounds were very lovely. . . . Birds of every kind with colorful feathers flew from tree to tree. They made the air noisy with sweet songs. Youthful servants, well-dressed, were always ready to obey his commands. Parties, music, sports, and games were arranged for his enjoyment at great expense.

“But . . . dissipation<sup>14</sup> had left its mark upon his once handsome and intelligent [smart-looking] face. . . . His forehead was wrinkled with worry and unhappiness. . . .

“Solomon’s destroyed nerves and wasted body showed the result of breaking nature’s laws. He admitted to living a wasted life. It was an unsuccessful chase after happiness.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White,



**Solomon had everything. But he was still unhappy.**

*My Life Today*, p. 167.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- ❶ A university professor once told a Seventh-day Adventist student, “I do not need your Jesus. I am famous. I have a good home. I have a good job. What do you have that I do not have?” How would you answer?
- ❷ As a class, talk about a modern-day Solomon, a rich and famous person who seems to have everything but who shows how terribly unhappy his or her life has been. What lessons can you learn from this person?
- ❸ Was there ever a time when you got some worldly thing that you really wanted? Did it really make you happy and satisfied? What advice would you give to a young person who wants a lot of money and things?

<sup>13</sup>court—the workers and family of a king or queen.

<sup>14</sup>dissipation—careless living.