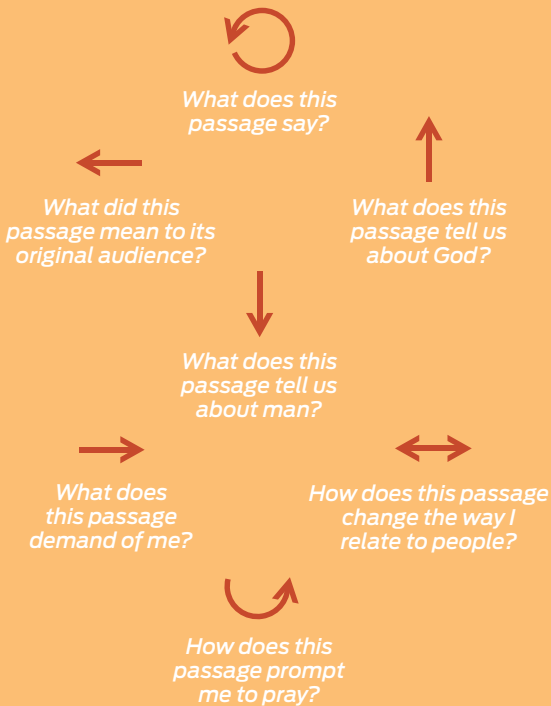


Daily Devotions



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day 1

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

Reading Ecclesiastes, the overall feeling is disillusionment and despair. It's the kind of book that, if you didn't know better, might surprise you was even in the Bible. But God's Word is absolutely true—not just in what it says about God, but in what it says about us as well.

As Solomon himself said, "There is nothing new under the sun (v. 9). How do you resolve this crisis? We know the answer that Solomon yearned for: Christ Jesus. Because of Christ, we need not despair. Life is not devoid of purpose. In Christ, we have been given treasure upon treasure, one of which is understanding that we live not for today, or for tomorrow, but for eternity.

What could you change today to keep you from feeling like Solomon at the end of your life?

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

In verses 16-18, Solomon seems to make the same mistake many of us make: treating wisdom and knowledge as synonyms. But in the Hebrew, they are two distinct concepts. Knowledge is the apprehension fact while wisdom is a moral, rather than an intellectual, quality.

As someone said, knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit and not a vegetable. Wisdom is knowing not to put one in a fruit salad.

But we can go a step further. Wisdom is not just a moral quality. Solomon himself personified divine wisdom in Proverbs 8:12. Paul called Christ God's power and His wisdom (1 Cor. 1:24). So wisdom is not an intellectual fact or simply a moral quality. Wisdom is a Person Who can dwell with you. The key to resolving the crisis of old age Solomon discovered in the preceding verses is to continually abide with Jesus (Col. 1:27).

How has abiding in Christ kept you from despair?

Ecclesiastes 2:1-3

“I said to myself.” Numerous stories that begin this way and end the same way as well: badly. Often, what we tell ourselves is terrible. We give ourselves horrible advice. We lie to ourselves. We flatter ourselves.

There are six times in Scripture (all in Ecclesiastes) where the phrase “I said to myself” is used. And in all six, the Hebrew literally reads, “My heart said...” In our world, following one's heart is a romantic notion. It's what dreamers, poets, and adventurers do. The only problem is that, according to Jeremiah 17:9, the heart is more deceitful than anything else. The sinful, unregenerate heart will get us in trouble—every single time. Which is why we can't follow our heart. It's the worst possible option. The path to fulfillment is not to follow our heart but to ask God for a new one. It is to have God rip the old, sin-ravaged, deceptive, heart of stone out of your chest and replace it with a new, grace-saturated, redeemed heart of flesh (Ezra 36:26). Only a new heart, given to us by God, inclined toward God, and controlled by God, is worth trusting.

The last time you followed your heart, was it your old heart of stone or your new heart of flesh? What was the result?

Ecclesiastes

2:4-17

Look at Solomon's description of his life in verses 4-17. He had the best of everything, but when he considered all he had accomplished and worked for, he found everything to be futile.

When you come to the end of your life, will your first-class flight have delivered you to your desired destination? This is a question with eternal implications as well as earthly ones. From an earthly perspective, you may find yourself like Solomon, feeling like you have wasted your life trying to please yourself instead of investing your life on behalf of others. But Solomon knew that God has set eternity in our hearts (Ecc. 3:11). We are all headed to one of two eternal destinations. It's important to know that. But it is also important to consider what we are doing as we travel along the way.

How are you investing into eternity today? In what other ways can you begin to live more for eternity than today?

Ecclesiastes

12:12-14

After Solomon's thought experiment is complete, he offers a conclusion to life when viewed under heaven.

What does this section say about God and how God puts all things in perspective?

How might we read this section in light of Jesus?