

Abundant Life in a Meaningless world – Part 6

Chapters 6-9 Summary

Chapter 6

His reflections on riches leads Solomon to conclude that man's labor might feed his mouth, but it does not really satisfy the soul. It is better to have the sight of the eyes (i.e., to enjoy what you see), than to have the wandering of desire which is meaningless and grasping for the wind.

Since man cannot change that he is subject to life's meaninglessness and unable to contend with God, accumulating many things may only increase meaninglessness in this life. By asking who knows what is good in this short life, and who can tell what will happen in this life after we are gone, Solomon implies that only God (and not the accumulation of wealth) provides the answer to the meaninglessness of life "under the sun" (vv. 7-12).

Chapter 7

In the first six chapters Solomon has shared with us his search for meaning (1:1-2:24) and observations gathered during the course of his search (3:1-6:12). He has repeated his conclusions time and again...

- Life "under the sun" is meaningless - 1:2,14; 2:11
- Yet there is good that one can do, provided one is blessed by God - 2:24-26; 5:18-20

In the remaining six chapters Solomon shares his counsel through a mixture of proverbs and narration. He imparts wisdom designed to make the most of life "under the sun". In other words, while life under the sun is "meaningless", how then should we live? The first half of chapter seven offers "counsel for better living" with a series of comparisons. For example, honor is better than luxury, your day of death is better than your day of birth, a funeral is better than a party, etc. His estimation of what is better may often sound strange, but it comes from who has learned from both experience as well as inspiration (vv. 1-14).

The second half of the chapter offers "counsel for balanced living." There are challenging and difficult statements which should be understood in their context, and in the context of the Bible as a whole. It appears Solomon is mainly warning against extremism, and against the presumption that one can find the answer to every question in life (vv. 15-29).

Chapter 8

Among the "meaningless" in life is living in circumstances over which we have little control. Such as the kind of government ruling the country in which we live. Solomon observed that evil men are often in positions of power, and offers his counsel for enduring such "meaningless." Wisdom is helpful, capable of softening one's countenance (so one is not overly troubled?). Submitting to governing authorities is important, especially in view of the power wielded by those in authority.

There will be times when the wicked rule, bringing misery. Be patient, while judgment against such evil may be delayed it will come in its own time and the wicked will soon be forgotten after their demise. In the meantime, it is best to fear God (vv. 1-13).

Another "meaningless" is how the righteous sometimes suffer while the wicked prosper. Solomon reiterates his conclusion that it is best to seek to enjoy what good God gives in one's labor under the sun. Even the wisest man is unable to discern all that God is doing, no matter how hard he tries. A lesson similar to the one taught in the book of Job (vv. 14-17).

Chapter 9

Solomon continues to share counsel gleaned from observations on life made during his search for meaning. He noted that all things come alike to all, it matters not that you are righteous or wicked. One thing that certainly happens to all is death, after which one is soon forgotten and has no share in this life (things done "under the sun"). Should one therefore despair? No,

Solomon again encourages us to live joyfully, especially with the wife of our youth, and to work diligently in what time we have in this life. Once you die, you won't be able to continue your efforts in the grave. This is our portion in life, and God has already accepted our works (vv. 1-10). Solomon also observed that time and chance happens to all, and that evil times come suddenly. The uncertainty of life can be softened with the aid of wisdom, which Solomon praises as better than strength and the weapons of war. Thus the words of the wise should be heard, even when spoken softly, or coming from a poor man (vv. 11-18).



Chapter 10 – The Anatomy of Folly (aka What Makes a Fool?)

In the Old Testament the word 'fool' means - someone who is unwise.

Some people have little going for them and yet get much from life because they live wisely. They may not have money, education, status or even health-but they have wisdom. And that is to be prized above all. Others have everything going for them but ruin it all because they are fools. They make the wrong choices, they lack discernment and discretion, and everything they do to get out of the mess they create just makes it worse.

We may know of people who keep making the wrong choices, who ruin good friendships and relationships, who cut people dead who long to help them, who fritter away money they desperately need for basics and who show no understanding at all about building relationships. In a nutshell, fools show no understanding of responsibility.

1. What comparison is used to illustrate how folly ruins the reputation of the wise? (v. 1) _____

 - a. As dead flies cause the perfumer's ointment to give off a foul odour
 - b. Wise people will stay away from folly!
2. Where is the heart of a wise man and the heart of the foolish man? What is he saying? (v. 2) _____

 - a. Wise at his right hand; Fool at his left hand
 - b. Why is one person foolish and another wise? It all depends on the inclinations of the heart
 - c. Solomon was referring to the centre of one's life, the "master control" within us that governs "the issues of life"
 - d. In the ancient world, the right hand was the place of power and honor, while the left hand represented weakness and rejection (Matt. 25:33, 41).
3. When does the fool display his folly to everyone? (v. 3) _____

 - a. Even when he walks along the way
 - b. People try to correct the fool, but he refuses to listen

The Foolish Ruler (10:4–7)

4. How should one respond when the spirit of the ruler rises against them? (v. 4) _____

 - a. By remaining at their post (i.e., maintaining their faithfulness)
 - b. By seeking reconciliation ("Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone" (Prov. 25:15 niv)
 - c. The picture here is of a proud ruler who easily becomes angry and takes out his anger on the attendants around him.
5. What evil had Solomon seen under the sun relating to government? (vv. 5-7) _____

- a. Error proceeding from the ruler
- b. Folly set in great dignity while the rich are set in a lowly place
- c. Servants on horses while princes walk on the ground
- d. if a ruler lacks character and courage, he will put fools in the high offices and qualified people in the low offices.
- e. The best rulers (and leaders) are men and women who are tough-minded but tender-hearted, who put the best people on the horses and don't apologize for it.

Foolish Workers (10:8–11)

6. What four illustrations appear to depict the lack of wisdom in business? (vv. 8-9) _____

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- a. Digging a pit, then falling into it
 - b. Breaking through a wall, only to be bit by a serpent
 - c. Being hurt by the stone one quarries
 - d. Endangered by the wood one splits

7. When the ax is dull, what is required? What will bring success? (v. 10) _____

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- a. More strength; wisdom

8. To what is a babbler compared? (v. 11) _____

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- a. A serpent that may bite when not charmed

- Section is talking about overconfidence in work where you can end up either hurting yourself or making your job harder. Making decisions too quickly or rashly, not putting thought into it.

Foolish Talkers (10:12–15)

9. How are the words of the wise? What will the lips of a fool do to him? (v. 12) _____

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- a. Gracious
 - b. Swallow him up
 - c. DESTRUCTIVE

10. What do the words of a fool begin with? How do they end? (v. 13) _____

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- a. Foolishness; with raving madness
 - b. UNREASONABLE

11. What else is said about a fool? (vv. 14-15) _____

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- a. He multiplies his words
 - b. His labour wearies him
 - c. UNCONTROLLED & BOASTFUL

- The fool blurts out whatever is on his mind and doesn't stop to consider who might be hurt by it.

- In Scripture, destructive words are compared to weapons of war (Prov. 25:18), a fire (James 3:5–6), and a poisonous beast (James 3:7–8).
- What the fool says doesn't make sense. And the longer he talks, the crazier it becomes.
- The fool is "full of words" without realizing that he is saying nothing. James writes tongue controls whole body, Jesus says let your Yes be Yes and your No be No.
- Foolish people talk about the future as though they either know all about it or are in control of what will happen.
- The fool is so busy talking about the future that he loses his way in the present.

Foolish Officers (10:16–20)

12. When is there woe upon the land? (v. 16) _____

- a. When the king is a child, and the princes feast in the morning

13. When is a land blessed? (v. 17) _____

- a. When the king is the son of nobles, and princes feast at the proper time

- INDULGENCE
- exposes the folly of the officers who work under those rulers, the bureaucrats who were a part of the machinery of the kingdom.
- Real leaders use their authority to build the nation, while mere officeholders use the nation to build their authority.

14. What is evidence of laziness and idleness? (v. 18) _____

- a. Decaying buildings and leaking houses

- INCOMPETENCE
- These foolish officers are so busy with enjoyment that they have no time for employment, and both the buildings and the organization start to fall apart.

15. What observations are made about feasting, wine and money? (v. 19) _____

- a. Feasting is made for laughter
 b. Wine makes merry
 c. Money answers everything

- INDIFFERENCE
- This verse declares the personal philosophy of the foolish officers: Eat all you can, enjoy all you can, and get all you can.
- The courts might not catch up with all the unscrupulous politicians, but God will eventually judge them, and His judgment will be just.

16. Why should one not curse the king nor the rich? (v. 20) _____

- a. What you say (even in private) may eventually get back to them

- INDISCRETION
- Even if we can't respect the person in the office, we must respect the office (Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–17).

- This completes Solomon's review of his fourth argument that life is not worth living, "the certainty of death" (2:12–23). He has concluded that life is indeed worth living, even though death is unavoidable (9:1–10) and life is unpredictable (9:11–18). What we must do is avoid folly (ch. 10) and live by the wisdom of God.
- This also concludes the second part of his discourse. He has reviewed the four arguments presented in chapters 1 and 2, and has decided that life was really worth living after all. The best thing we can do is to trust God, do our work, accept what God sends us, and enjoy each day of our lives to the glory of God (3:12–15, 22; 5:18–20; 8:15; 9:7–10). All that remains for Solomon is to conclude his discourse with a practical application, and this he does in chapters 11 and 12. He will bring together all the various strands of truth that he has woven into his sermon, and he will show us what God expects us to do if we are to be satisfied.