

BaptistWay Bible Series for July 29: Toward a more meaningful life

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Toward a more meaningful life

- Ecclesiastes 9:7-10; 12:1-8, 13-14

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What is the meaning of life? It is a popular question among people of all faiths, cultures and ages. The question has been asked in countless forms of media including everything from movies to comic strips.

Charlie Brown and Lucy even had the discussion once. Lucy asks, "Why do you think we're put here on earth Charlie Brown?" He replies, "To make others happy." Lucy responds, "I don't think I'm making anyone very happy. Of course nobody's making me very happy either. Somebody's not doing his job!"

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We as Christians ask the same question. However, we are not the first ones to inquire about the meaning of life here on earth. Solomon sought the answer to that same question throughout his prosperous life and writes to us about the answer he discovered.

Some might try to interpret Ecclesiastes 9:7-10 as an excuse to pursue all the pleasures of this world. However, they seem to be missing the recurring theme present throughout the entire book. Solomon constantly reminds us in Ecclesiastes that earthly pleasures do not last and do not satisfy. We often call these “temporal,” because they last only last a time.

Instead, Christians find in this passage the urgency both to be satisfied with what joy God has given us here on Earth and to be diligent with the work we need to do before leaving this life. The passage is both a call to simplicity and a call to service, both of which bring joy and meaning to our life.

Ecclesiastes 12:1-8 declares, “Everything is meaningless!” We all have had those same thoughts at different times in our life. Something happens to us in life, and we understand the futility of pursuing earthly gain and worldly delights. It is in these moments when we choose to simply survive this time on earth, living day to day, or we choose to pursue heavenly rewards and seek the will of God, not man.

When reading this passage of Ecclesiastes, do not forget that Solomon is unaware of the life of Jesus Christ who came speaking of eternal life.

Despite this fact, both Solomon and Jesus arrive at the same conclusion—the things of God are far greater than the things of this world.

When we lose focus and only see things through our own eyes, we cannot see this world as God does. We are unable to see things from the eternal and heavenly perspective, and we miss the great things God has for us here on Earth.

Finally, in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, Solomon dares to give us the answer to the question that has been asked so many times in so many different ways. What is the meaning of life? “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” Perhaps our response is like so many of the responses we see in movies and television shows that have sought to answer the question in a simple way. “That’s it? That’s the answer?”

If we take a step back from our own personal perspective of life, and attempt to see our life with an eternal or heavenly perspective, we just might understand Solomon’s answer. It seems too simple an answer for such a difficult and complex question. After all, is not life complex and filled with difficulty and paradox? Yes, it is, but we do not have to understand all of life to find out its meaning.

Solomon, filled with wisdom and understanding, did not know everything about life. However, he knew the one who did know everything. So, Solomon does not tell us the difficult and complex answer to all of life’s secrets, but instead assures us we do not need all of life’s answers to find meaning in life. We only need to know the one who has all the answers, who can see everything with an eternal perspective, and we need to be obedient to him. Our obedience to his will is a direct response to how much we trust in God to bring us meaning, pleasure and fulfillment in life.

Discussion question

- In what areas of your life do you find meaning? Pleasure?
- Knowing our time here on earth is short, what are some things you need to be doing in life?
- Describe a time in your life when things seemed meaningless. Was your response to this time in life positive or negative?
- How does Jesus' message about eternal life affect our perspective of life here on Earth?
- What actions do you need to take that will increase your sense of meaning in life?

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