

*Life is fragile
handle with Prayer*

DANNY ANTHONY, Edna Toole's cousin - cancer
CHERYL BARRON, Stan Raley's sister
BECKY BROWN, Sherri Clopton's mom
LINDA BULLOCK
DWIGHT CALLENS
LINDA COLLIE
ALAN DES ORMEAUX, Vinson friend; cancer
STEVE DAWKINS, health issues, doing better
CHARLES DOOLEY, surgery recovery
TAMMIE DUNN, Linda Bullock's daughter
ALANA FAIR
JAMES GORDON, Bridget Smith's dad
ANTORIAS GROVES, Ethel Clark's son-in-law
EVELYN GUY, health issues
TERRY HARPER, Cindy's husband health issues
THERMAN HODGE
BILLY JOHN, health issues
LAMAR KING
WALTER KING, Lamar's dad
JACK MEARS
CHARLENE RALEY, Stan's mom – health issues
STAN RALEY, surgery recovery
GRADY RICHARDSON, Angela Duncan's dad
AL ST. CLAIR
THELMA TALBERT, Shirley Raley's mom
RUTH TAYLOR, Brookdale/Meridian
ANNIE THOMAS, Edna Toole's mother, health
TERRY TRIBBLE, Renée Cumberland's friend
DICK VINSON, Bladder Cancer; surgery 6/17
SAMANTHA WARD, Caleb Warren's fiancée
ANNIE WEBB, Cindy Harper's g-grand-daughter
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ANNIVERSARY & BIRTHDAY

December 27 : Kathy St. Clair

Life-Tested Advice on How to Have a Happy & Contented Life

~continued from cover~

Like many of us, Solomon tried almost all this world has to offer in search for happiness. For example, he tried wisdom and knowledge of everything under the sun (1:13); pleasure—wine, women, and song (2:1-3); great works and success (2:4; 3:9); personal fame (2:9); longing for fairness and justice among men (3:16); indulging his physical self to the neglect of God and his own spiritual self (3:19-22); having power and prestige as king (1:1; 4:16); even withdrawing into despair and depression (2:20; 4:2-3). Yet, he describes life with the word “Vanity” twenty-three times, and three times, with “Vanity of Vanities.” In both Hebrew and Greek versions of Ecclesiastes, “vanity” indicates “emptiness” or “lacking something.” Yes, Solomon's life of luxury and worldly pleasure left him empty with something lacking--unhappy.

As we struggle with important questions, we often ask, “What does the research show?” So, what does the research show about how to find happiness in life? Ecclesiastes is Solomon's research report related to this question. The answer is based on both scientific research and divine revelation. Solomon says Ecclesiastes is his research report.

Ecclesiastes begins, “The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem” (1:1). In the Hebrew Bible, the word translated “preacher” (Qoheleth) means “Collector” or “preacher.” Solomon is called “the preacher” because he had collected and interpreted information relating to the question, “How can we have happy and meaningful lives?”

The Greek version of Ecclesiastes supports this meaning. Ekklesiastes is from the same Greek root as the word “ekklesia,” translated “assembly” or “church.” When referring to people, it refers to people being called out and gathered together. When referring to information, it refers to facts being searched out, assembled, interpreted, and shared. So that's why Solomon calls himself a “preacher.”

Ecclesiastes is something like a preacher's sermon. Preachers are researchers, and sermons are research reports. Preachers seek to know the people--their pressing questions, problems, and needs. The Bible was written as a response to the questions, problems, and needs of people. Accordingly, preachers search the Scriptures for answers to those

questions, problems, and needs. They compose and preach sermons about what the Bible says meets those needs. In the present COVID pandemic, we are constantly told to follow the science. Ecclesiastes is not only a statement of Solomon's belief system. It is report on scientific research. Solomon's study involved both physical science and behavioral science, along with divine revelation. It involves (1) the recognition and formulation of a problem (a lack of happiness in life); (2) the collection of data through observation and experience (facts Solomon gathered while living a self-indulgent secular life); and (3) drawing of only such conclusion as is warranted by adequate relevant evidence (Solomon's conclusions that a life of pleasure doesn't result in happiness; the way to happiness is to reverence God and keep His commandments). The psalmist says that the natural creation reveals God to people of every nation and language. He says, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” Psa. (19:1-4). Thus, believers value nature and science, but we value divine revelation more. Scientists sometimes make mistakes in their methods and conclusions. But, God does not make mistakes! Solomon's proposal about what leads to happiness requires faith in God. He says, “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil” (12:13-14). An intense fascination with science and false views of science cause many to ignore God and even deny that He exists. But, true science requires observation and rational thought. Logic and rational thought dictate that we cannot ignore the reality of the supernatural. What we observe about the existence, vastness, and incomparable design of the natural universe requires a supernatural designer and maker, someone that transcends “things under the sun.” It is irrational to reason that the universe is self-existent, came from nothing, or evolved without a designer and builder. In our quest for happiness, the wise will accept what both science and divine revelation show as reported in Ecclesiastes. There can be no doubt that a God such as ours is the supreme source for happiness!

The pressure to follow the science has given birth to a culture that is secular and materialistic. This almost cultic focus on science makes it difficult, almost impossible, for many to even conceive of God and supernatural intervention in life. It has shaped conceptual and interpretive mindsets that have no place for the spiritual, supernatural, and miraculous. Conceptually, our culture has ruled out God, miracles, the spiritual, and life beyond what we see “under the sun.”

True believers value what we observe in nature and science. We abide by the law of rationality: we seek relevant and factual evidence and strive to draw only such conclusions as are supported by the evidence. That is why our conceptual and interpretive paradigms enable us to conceive of the supernatural and spiritual as presented in Ecclesiastes. Both God's natural revelation and His divine revelation support this.

As a final word on how to be happy, Solomon urges us to look at life's experiences through the lens of faith. He urges us to give thanks and enjoy what life presents as gifts from God (2:24-26; 3:12; 4:6; 5:18; 6:9; 9:7-10; 11:9). We should live every day like it is a party, eat every meal like it is a scrumptious banquet, and enjoy the companionship of our marital partners like every day is a honeymoon. While we are making the most of life, we must submit to God's order of things. Solomon concludes, “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil” (12:13-14). While the people of this world clamor for power through elections, political conquests, wars, and exercises of strength, the way of Jesus teaches us a paradox if we have the eyes of faith to see it. True conquering in this life is not getting more power, but in laying down our lives. Jesus reigns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (19:16) by being slaughtered. The church will always struggle to advance the mission of God in this world when she seeks to conquer through any means other than Jesus Christ, the slaughtered and enthroned Lamb. To the church at Laodicea, Jesus says, “To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on His throne. Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (3:21-22). Do we have ears to hear? Will we conquer as the Lamb of God has taught us? Will we join the slaughtered Lamb on His throne?