

CHASE

"LIVING WITH A DEADLINE" ECCLESIASTES 9:1-12

This Week's Core Competency

Humanity – I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior. John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

When I took a college course in Logic, I was introduced to the syllogism:

All men are mortal.

Socrates is a man.

Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

The syllogism is both valid and true. All human beings are destined to die. The Teacher repeatedly acknowledges as much. In Ecclesiastes 2:16 he says, "Like the fool, the wise man too must die!"—no "get out of death" card for the sage. And in 3:1-2 he declares, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die." Death is unavoidable; it is "the destiny of everyone" (7:2). In 9:1-6 he laments this fact primarily because death robs people of the opportunity to enjoy the pleasures of life that God gives. "Even a live dog," considered a disgusting scavenger in that day, "is better off than a dead lion!" admired as the mightiest of beasts (Pr 30:30). At least the dog can enjoy its life—such as it is. The lion can enjoy nothing at all on earth. Verse 5 is a verse that can easily be misunderstood.

*Time and chance both have a way
of taking matters suddenly out of our
hands.*

— Derek Kidner

"The dead know nothing," he says, "they have no further reward." At first glance it appears that the Teacher is painting a pretty ugly picture of life after death. It sounds like the dead exist in some nebulous state of suspended animation—unconscious and unaware.

In fact, Ecclesiastes 9:5 has been used by some to support the doctrine of *soul sleep*. In response to this wrongheaded view one theologian writes:

"The fact that souls of believers go immediately into God's presence also means that *the doctrine of soul sleep is incorrect*. This doctrine teaches that when believers die they go into a state of unconscious existence, and the next thing that they are conscious of will be when Christ returns and raises them to eternal life . . . Support for the doctrine of soul sleep has generally been found in the fact that Scripture several times speaks of the state of death as 'sleep' or 'falling asleep' (Matt. 9:24; 27:52; John 11:11; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Cor. 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13; 5:10. Moreover, certain passages seem to teach that the dead do not have a conscious existence (see Pss. 6:5; 115:17 [but see. 18!]; Eccl. 9:10; Isa. 38:19). But when Scripture represents death as 'sleep' it is simply a metaphorical expression used to indicate that death is only temporary for Christians, just as sleep is temporary . . . As for the passages that indicate that the dead do not praise God, or that there is a ceasing of conscious activity when people die, these are all to be understood from the perspective of life in this world. From our perspective it appears that once people die, they do not engage in these activities any longer. But Psalm 115 presents the full biblical perspective on this viewpoint. It says, 'The dead do not praise the LORD, nor do any that go down into

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silence.' But then it continues in the very next verse with a contrast indicating that those who believe in God will bless the LORD forever: 'But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD!' (Ps. 115:17-18)" (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 819-20).

The Teacher's point in Ecclesiastes 9:5 is that the dead are neither conscious of what goes on in this life nor involved in any activities in this life. As verse 6 explains, "never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun," i.e., in this earthly life.

For Discussion

The Teacher repeatedly advises his readers to enjoy life. In Ecclesiastes 9:4-6 he tells them to enjoy life *while they can*. How good are you at following the Teacher's advice? Give yourself a score from 1 – "I seldom follow his advice" to 5 – "I always follow his advice." Then explain your score.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

1 So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no man knows whether love or hate awaits him. 2 All share a common destiny--the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not.

As it is with the good man,
so with the sinner;
as it is with those who take oaths,
so with those who are afraid to take them.

3 This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of men, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead. 4 Anyone who is among the living has hope--even a live dog is better off than a dead lion!

5 For the living know that they will die,
but the dead know nothing;
they have no further reward,
and even the memory of them is forgotten.

6 Their love, their hate
and their jealousy have long since vanished;
never again will they have a part
in anything that happens under the sun.

7 Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favors what you do. 8 Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. 9 Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun--all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

11 I have seen something else under the sun:
The race is not to the swift
or the battle to the strong,
nor does food come to the wise
or wealth to the brilliant
or favor to the learned;
but time and chance happen to them all.

12 Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come:
As fish are caught in a cruel net,
or birds are taken in a snare,
so men are trapped by evil times
that fall unexpectedly upon them.

Cf., verses 1-3 in another translation

So I reflected on all this, attempting to clear it all up. I concluded that the righteous and the wise, as well as their works, are in the hand of God; whether a person will be loved or hated--no one knows what lies ahead.

2 Everyone shares the same fate--the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the ceremonially clean and unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not. What happens to the good person, also happens to the sinner;

what happens to those who make vows, also happens to those who are afraid to make vows. 3 This is the unfortunate fact about everything that happens on earth: the same fate awaits everyone.

In addition to this, the hearts of all people are full of evil, and there is folly in their hearts during their lives--then they die. (NET)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Box "So" indicating *result* in v. 1.
- * Circle "all this" in v. 1.
- * Bracket "in God's hands" in v. 1.
- * Circle "clean" and "unclean" in v. 2.
- * Box "as" and "so" indicating *comparison* in vv. 2, 12.
- * Circle "oaths" in v. 2.
- * Circle "evil" in v. 3a.
- * Underline "evil" and "madness" in v. 3.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 5, 11.
- * Circle "reward" in v. 5.
- * Circle "white" and "oil" in v. 8.
- * Circle "meaningless" in v. 9.

day **2** EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. To what does "all this" in verse 1 refer? (Cf., 7:14b; 8:7)

2. Explain the *contrast* in verse 1 (cf., NET).

3. Identify the "common destiny" (cf., "same destiny" v. 3) or "same fate" (NET) shared by all people.

4. Put the point of the *comparison* in verse 2 in your own words.

5. Verses 2-3 teach that "all dogs go to heaven" so to speak. Right?

6. Why quote the proverb, "a live dog is better off than a dead lion," in verse 4?

7. How does verse 6 clarify the meaning of verse 5?

8. Summarize the Teacher's advice to the living in verses 7-10.

9. **Discussion:** Talk about how the Teacher's observation in verses 11-12 makes taking his advice even more urgent.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

In Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 the Teacher draws a conclusion after reflecting on observations he previously made. He then offers what is by now familiar practical advice based on that conclusion, and follows it up with an afterthought that makes taking his advice especially urgent. While commentators divide the chapter differently, it appears to contain two "hard" breaks and one "soft" break. The hard breaks occur between verse 6 and 7, and between verse 10 and 11. The soft break, marked by the word "moreover," occurs between verse 3a and verse 3b.

Verses 1-6 contain both bad news and good news. The bad news is no one knows what will happen to him in this life. After reflecting on the fact that no one "can discover anything about his future" (7:14), that no one "knows the future" (8:7a), and that no one "can tell him what is to come" (8:7b), the Teacher concludes that "no one knows whether love or hate awaits him" (9:1). Put differently, no one knows whether tomorrow will bring prosperity or adversity. The future is in God's hands. This is true for everyone; there are no exceptions! He *emphasizes* this point by citing four pairs of opposites when one would have been sufficient (v. 2a) and then *summarizes* with a *comparison* (v. 2b). What is true of the good person is also true of the sinner. What is true of the devout person is also true of the disinterested person. One thing that everyone has in common is the inability to see what the future holds. That is the "common destiny" and the "same destiny" shared by all people mentioned in verse 2 and verse 3a respectively.

The good news, which follows the soft break, is anyone who is alive has "hope," and by hope the Teacher means the opportunity to enjoy the rewards that life has to offer. The fact that no one knows the future together with the fact that often "the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out" (8:11) leads people to behave badly. To make matters worse, "afterward they join the dead" (v. 3b). Fortunately, "anyone who is among the living has hope" (v. 4). Unlike the dead, they can follow the Teacher's advice to live life to the full (vv. 7-10). The dead are gone, oblivious to the affairs of this

life (v. 5); "never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun" (v. 6). Verse 5 does not mean that the dead experience something like suspended animation; it simply means that the living have the opportunities and the capacities to live rewarding lives that the dead obviously do not.

Verses 7-10 contain what is by now familiar advice to the reader. One writer places them in their train of thought: "In view of the uncertainties of what the future may bring, whether adversity or prosperity (vv. 1-3), and in view of the certainty of death with the loss of all opportunity for enjoyment (vv. 4-6), Solomon again recommended enjoying life as God's good gift (cf. 2:24-26; 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-19)" (Donald R. Glenn, "Ecclesiastes," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 999). "Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart," he says. And then, unlike in previous passages, in these verses the Teacher adds some additional details. People are to enjoy *food* that sustains life and *wine* that adds joy, *festive clothes* and *pleasant lotions*, too. *Life with one's spouse* is also to be enjoyed. But then he carefully cautions that time for the enjoyment of these pleasures is running out. This "fleeting" life that God has given "under the sun" is passing away; its days are "fleeting" by. So whatever one intends to do must be done now and be done with gusto.

Verses 11-12 contain an afterthought that makes taking that advice especially urgent. Not only is the opportunity to enjoy life threatened by death, it is also threatened by "time and chance," which in the words of one writer, "have a way of taking matters suddenly out of our hands" (Derek Kidner, *A Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance*, 84). The efforts of the "swift," the "strong," the "wise," the "brilliant," and the "learned" can all be undone by misfortune. It goes without saying that merit is not always rewarded, and that the world can be terribly unfair. To make matters worse, nobody knows when their hour of misfortune will come. But whenever it does, they will be found trapped by their bad luck just as *unexpectedly* as fish and birds are caught in a net or taken in a snare. The point of all of this can be expressed in just two words: *carpe diem*.

The Message of the Passage

*No one knows what the future holds since it is in God's hands, so
don't let time and chance rob you of the opportunity
he gives you to live life to the full.*

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 1 **So** "This verse closely relates verses 2-10 to the preceding section, as indicated in the NIV translation" (Glenn, 998). "A further confirmation is here set forth of the result there arrived at, to wit, of the unsearchableness of the ways of God" (Ernest W. Hengstenberg, *A Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, [n.p., 1869; reprint, Minneapolis: James and Klock, 1977], 207).
- v. 1 **all this** "The 'all this' that Solomon 'reflected on' is human ignorance of the significance of righteousness and wickedness in God's sovereign disposition of adversity and prosperity (chaps. 7-8)" (Glenn 998).
- v. 1 **God's hands** "People are not the masters of their own fate; people and 'what they do' are subject to God's sovereign will (i.e., they 'are in God's hand'; cf. Prov 21:1 for a similar use of this figure)" (998).
- v. 1 **love or hate** Cf., "Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him" (ESV). The "destiny of just people, and wise, is entirely at God's disposal, contrary to the sage's belief that they controlled their own destiny" (James L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, OTL, 159). Not even the righteous and wise are able to control what the future holds (cf., 7:14). According to some commentators, this implies that they cannot know whether they will be loved or hated. "Since one does not know God's providence, neither does he know whether he will experience prosperity or adversity, or whether he will be the object of love or hate (for a similar use of these two nouns; cf. Mal. 1:2-3)" (998; based on v. 6 another agrees, Michael A. Eaton, *Ecclesiastes*, TOTC, 125). According to other commentators, this implies they cannot know whether they will be loved or hated by God, i.e., experience divine favor or disfavor (Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 330). "Men are not directing the course of their lives so that, being wise and good, they can do such works as invariably lead to God's showing favor to them. These persons and the works they do are in God's hands, and He does as He pleases" (H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, 207).
- v. 2 **common destiny** "There is some ambiguity as to the nature of that fate because of a common failure to relate the beginning of verse 2 to the end of verse 1. The same fate or destiny relates to the 'love or hate,' adversity or prosperity, referred to in verse 1. The Hebrew is literally, 'whether it will be love or hate, no man knows'; both (i.e., love and hate-for this use of *kol*; cf. 2:14; 3:19; 7:18) are before them (i.e., the righteous and the wise, 9:1). Both love and hate are experienced by everyone; there is one fate (or destiny) for the righteous and the wicked" (Glenn, 998).
- v. 2 **take oaths** Is it good or bad to be afraid to swear an oath? Some say good: "In the previous pairs, the first unit was good, the second bad. Following this pattern, those who are afraid to take an oath would be those who were hesitant to accomplish things for God" (Tremper Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, NICOT, 227). Since swearing "by the Lord's name" (Dt 6:13; 10:20) was a mark of obedience to the covenant, refusing to do so would be a mark of disobedience (Eaton, 125). Others say bad: According to them it refers to profane swearing, i.e., taking the name of the LORD in vain (Ex. 20:7 NKJV, ESV) (Glenn, 998; Crenshaw, 160).
- v. 3 **evil** Cf., "This is the unfortunate fact about everything that happens on earth: the same fate awaits everyone" (NET); "It seems so tragic that everyone suffers the same fate" (NLT); "One fate comes to all alike, and this is as wrong as anything that happens in this world" (GNT). In a nutshell, no one, whether he is righteous and wise or wicked and foolish, knows what God has in store. This is their "same destiny" (v. 3) = the "common destiny" (v. 2).
- v. 5 **reward** The dead are oblivious to this life (cf., "know nothing") and have lost all opportunity for enjoyment and reward from their labor. "Reward likely refers to the end of all earthly wages or benefits . . . the thought [of heavenly rewards] does not even cross his mind" (Longman, 229). "Solomon was not describing what the state of the dead is; he was stating what it is *not*. He did this to emphasize the lost opportunities of this present life, opportunities for serving God and enjoying His gifts (cf. Isa. 38:11, 18-19 for similar ideas). Solomon added that the dead never again . . . have apart in anything that happens under the sun [i.e., in this life]" (Glenn, 999).
- v. 7 **God favors** "The statement 'God has already approved your works' means that possessing God's gifts and the ability to enjoy them evidence God's prior approval that one can do so; if God had not so approved the gifts, one could not enjoy them" (999).
- v. 8 **white** "Athalya Brenner, in her study of OT color terms, synthesizes the biblical evidence on white garments and concludes that they can symbolize 'purity, festivity, or elevated social status.' While pietistic interpreters have gone with purity, the context makes it clear that joy is the reason for white here (compare 2 Chron. 5:2; Esth. 8:12 among other places)" (Longman, 230).
- v. 9 **meaningless** "'Meaningless' here (hebel) should be rendered 'fleeting' (cf. comments on 3:19; 6:12; 7:15)" (Glenn, 999); cf., "Enjoy life with your beloved wife during all the days of your fleeting life that God has given you on earth during all your fleeting days" (NET).
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Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Special programming note: Because of our two limited programming Sundays (August 11 & 18) and our Move Up series (August 25 & September 1) texts and Core Competencies may vary from adult *Scrolls*. This week kid's teaching will be focusing on Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 and *Giving Away My Money*.

All summer long in children's ministry, our Life on Mission series has challenged us to take a bold stand for Christ. We learned important life lessons from many missionary heroes. Eric Liddell taught us to make sure that our worship was sincere even if it was costly. Perpetua demonstrated stewardship, even giving up her very life because she knew it didn't belong to her. Jim Elliot taught us that sometimes bad things happen to good people but God always has a bigger plan and we can trust Him. Gladys Aylward chose to show kindness to 100 orphaned children in 100-mile trek, trusting in God as her strength. I am listing the missionaries we studied this summer so you can have the opportunity to choose one with your child for further study. May their stories of faith and obedience challenge you to live life on mission for Him!

Missionary Heroes from the Torchlighters Series: Richard Wurmbrand, John Bunyan, William Tyndale, Jim Elliot, William Booth, Eric Liddell, Perpetua, Samuel Morris, Gladys Aylward and Amy Carmichael.

www.torchlighters.org

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

"Casting your bread upon the water" is another way of saying "be generous." Read Proverbs 11:24 and list what happens to the person who gives freely and the person who does not.

What Do You Think

God wants us to be generous in our giving just as He is generous in all the gifts He has given to us, especially his Son, Jesus! What are some ways you can be generous with what you have?

What R U Going To Do

Ask your parents help you find a missionary or choose one our local compassion ministries (listed on www.pantego.org). Write a letter saying thank you for the way they generously help others and mail it to them. Don't forget to pray for them this week too!

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Giving Away My Money - I share my money to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

Colossians 1:15-20 "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible . . ."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse ____ . Family completed **Say** ____ **Think** ____ **Do** ____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.