Chapter 5

- 1. Why should we not marvel when we see oppression, and perversion of justice and righteousness? (vv. 8-9; 3:16; 4:1)
- 2. Why is it vanity to love riches and pursue the accumulation of wealth? (vv. 10-12; 2:1-11; 1Tim 6:10)
- 3. What do verses 13-17 tell us about putting faith and security in our wealth? (Mt 6:19-21)
- 4. What does the Koheleth again say is good and fitting for one to do? How can we accomplish this? (vv. 18-20; 2:24-26)

Chapter 6

- 1. What is the "evil" which is described in these verses? Why can this man not enjoy his wealth and honor? What would it take for him to find enjoyment? What is the significance of the statement about the stranger? (vv. 1-2; 2:21; 5:14)
- 2. How is a stillborn child better than one who cannot enjoy their prosperity? (vv. 3-6; 2:15-16; 3:20-21; 4:1-3; Ps 127:3-5)
- 3. What makes man's labor a meaningless or futile endeavor under the sun? What can it not provide? (vv. 7; 4:7–8; 5:10–12, 17)
- 4. Is there any circumstance "under the sun" which frees us from this vanity? (i.e., wise or fool, rich or poor) (vv. 8; 2:12–17)
- 5. What advice does the Koheleth give for dealing with this futility? (v. 9)
- 6. Who knows everything about man? Who does the word "stronger" refer to? Why should we limit our words before God? (vv. 10-11; 3:11-14; 5:1-2; 8:17; 12:12)
- What is man unable to determine about his life? (vv. 12; Job 8:9; 14:2; Ps 102:11; 109:23; 144:4)

Notes & Answers

Chapter 5

Ecclesiastes 5:8–9 (ESV)

⁸ If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, do not be amazed at the matter, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them. ⁹ But this is gain for a land in every way: a king committed to cultivated fields.

1. Why should we not marvel when we see oppression, and perversion of justice and righteousness? (vv. 8-9; 3:16; 4:1)

This is the nature of life "under the sun." Everybody is looking out for themselves, even the rulers.

Too often the struggle for power brings suffering for the underdog. On the whole he sees an advantage in a supreme ruler truly concerned for the welfare of the land. One hopes for a wise person at the head of the country or a business or an institution—one who has both ability and humility.¹

Unfairness, oppression, and injustice constitute a large part of what makes life senseless.²

Ecclesiastes 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness.

Ecclesiastes 4:1 (ESV)

¹ Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them.

¹ Wright, J. S. (1991). <u>Ecclesiastes</u>. In F. E. Gaebelein (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Vol. 5, p. 1169). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

² Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Ec 5:8). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Ecclesiastes 5:10–12 (ESV)

¹⁰ He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. ¹¹ When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? ¹² Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.

2. Why is it vanity to love riches and pursue the accumulation of wealth? (vv. 10-12; 2:1-11; 1Tim 6:10)

Highlights the inability to reach any meaningful gains. Material wealth does not satisfy because consumption or appetite increases as much as goods increase.³

The Koheleth has already explored this extensively in chapter 2 – the pursuit of money will not bring happiness or fulfillment in life:

Ecclesiastes 2:1–11 (ESV)

¹ I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity. ² I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?" ³ I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life. ⁴ I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. ⁵ I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. ⁶ I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. ⁷ I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. ⁸ I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.

⁹ So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. ¹⁰ And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. ¹¹ Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

The pursuit (love) of money is a root of evil:

1 Timothy 6:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

³ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Ec 5:11). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Ecclesiastes 5:13–17 (ESV)

¹³ There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, ¹⁴ and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. ¹⁵ As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. ¹⁶ This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind? ¹⁷ Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.

3. What do verses 13-17 tell us about putting our faith and security in our wealth? (Mt 6:19-21)

All things that we accumulate could go away at any time and will definitely not be retained past death.

Matthew 6:19–21 (ESV)

¹⁹ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Ecclesiastes 5:18–20 (ESV)

¹⁸ Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. ¹⁹ Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. ²⁰ For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

4. What does the Koheleth again say is good and fitting for one to do? How can we accomplish this? (vv. 18-20; 2:24-26)

We have to seek to please God rather than ourselves. We have to seek to see life from "above the Sun."

Ecclesiastes 2:24–26 (ESV)

²⁴ There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, ²⁵ for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? ²⁶ For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

Chapter 6

Ecclesiastes 6:1-2 (ESV)

¹ There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind: ² a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them. This is vanity; it is a grievous evil.

1. What is the "evil" which is described in these verses? Why can this man not enjoy his wealth and honor? What would it take for him to find enjoyment? What is the significance of the statement about the stranger? (vv. 1-2; 2:21; 5:14)

Stranger could either be having to leave things to someone else after death....

Ecclesiastes 2:21 (ESV)

²¹ because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.

Or losing everything in a bad venture...

Ecclesiastes 5:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand.

The key to enjoying life and what we have is to put our faith (treasure) in God / Heaven instead of in our own ability to find happiness, contentment, etc.

Ecclesiastes 6:3-6 (ESV)

³ If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things, and he also has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. ⁴ For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered. ⁵ Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he. ⁶ Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good— do not all go to the one place?

2. How is a stillborn child better than one who cannot enjoy their prosperity? (vv. 3-6; 2:15-16; 3:20-21; 4:1-3; Ps 127:3-5)

Must remember that this is the perspective from "under the sun." All suffer the same fate....wise / foolish Man / beast

Ecclesiastes 2:15–16 (ESV)

¹⁵ Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. ¹⁶ For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool!

Ecclesiastes 3:20–21 (ESV)

²⁰ All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. ²¹ Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?

Dead more fortunate / Even better not to have been born

Ecclesiastes 4:1–3 (ESV)

¹ Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. ² And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. ³ But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.

Having many children was considered a blessing from God...

Psalm 127:3–5 (ESV)

³ Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.
⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth.
⁵ Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!
He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Ecclesiastes 6:7 (ESV)

⁷ All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied.

3. What makes man's labor a meaningless or futile endeavor under the sun? What can it not provide? (vv. 7; 4:7–8; 5:10–12, 17)

See Chapter 5, Question 2 above. The answer is the same.

Ecclesiastes 4:7–8 (ESV)

⁷ Again, I saw vanity under the sun: ⁸ one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business.

Ecclesiastes 5:10–12 (ESV)

¹⁰ He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. ¹¹ When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? ¹² Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.

Ecclesiastes 5:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.

Ecclesiastes 6:8 (ESV)

⁸ For what advantage has the wise man over the fool? And what does the poor man have who knows how to conduct himself before the living?

4. Is there any circumstance "under the sun" which frees us from this vanity? (i.e. wise or fool, rich or poor) (vv. 8; 2:12–17)

No....must look "above the sun" to faith in God...

Ecclesiastes 2:12–17 (ESV)

¹² So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done. ¹³ Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness. ¹⁴ The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. ¹⁵ Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. ¹⁶ For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! ¹⁷ So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

Ecclesiastes 6:9 (ESV)

⁹ Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite: this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

5. What advice does the Koheleth give for dealing with this futility? (v. 9)

Be content with what you see ("sight of the eyes") and don't go pursuing the things of your appetite.

Ecclesiastes 6:10-11 (ESV)

¹⁰ Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he. ¹¹ The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man?

6. Who knows everything about man? Who does the word "stronger" refer to? Why should we limit our words before God? (vv. 10-11; 3:11-14; 5:1-2; 8:17; 12:12)

God knows everything, and God is in control. We should limit our words because God is in heaven and we are on the earth (5:1-2).

Ecclesiastes 3:11–14 (ESV)

¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. ¹² I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; ¹³ also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man. ¹⁴ I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him.

Ecclesiastes 5:1–2 (ESV)

¹ Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. ² Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.

Ecclesiastes 8:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.

Ecclesiastes 12:12 (ESV)

¹² My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

Ecclesiastes 6:1-12 (ESV)

¹² For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?

What is man unable to determine about his life? (vv. 12; Job 8:9; 14:2; Ps 102:11; 109:23; 144:4)

If our focus is "under the sun" then we will not be able to determine what is "good" in life or what will come after us. Life is so short.

Job 8:9 (ESV)

⁹ For we are but of yesterday and know nothing, for our days on earth are a shadow.

Job 14:2 (ESV)

² He comes out like a flower and withers; he flees like a shadow and continues not.

Psalm 102:11 (ESV)

¹¹ My days are like an evening shadow; I wither away like grass.

Psalm 109:23 (ESV)

²³ I am gone like a shadow at evening;I am shaken off like a locust.

Psalm 144:4 (ESV)

⁴ Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.