

Study of Ecclesiastes: Chapter 9
Questions for Discussion

1. What did the Koheleth consider about the righteous and the wise?
(v. 1; Phil 4:6-7; Rom 8:28)

2. The Koheleth again reminds the reader that one fate awaits all men, regardless of their circumstances. (vv. 2-6; Matt 25:31-46; Rom 12:14-21)
 - Can this common fate be used as an excuse for living however we want?

 - What advantages do the living have over the dead?

 - Why does he use the dog and the lion to make his point?

3. What does the Koheleth again counsel the living to do?
(vv. 7-10; 2:24; 3:12-13; 5:18-20; 8:15; Matt 6:19-21; Acts 16:22-26)

4. What does the Koheleth say is God's view of our current circumstances? (v. 7)

5. Why is it important for us to follow the Koheleth's instructions right now?
(v. 10; John 9:4)

6. How can we maintain faith in God's plan while accepting the factor of chance?
(vv. 11-12; Phi 4:10-13; 2 Cor 11:24-25)

7. What observations did the Koheleth make about wisdom?
(vv. 13-18; Romans 8:16-25; James 1:12)

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Illustration: Love of Math – I like the way everything fits together.

Ecclesiastes 9:11-12 (ESV)

¹¹Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. ¹²For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.

Life does not fit into an equation... (v. 11)

Illustration: Once when Bob Hope received a major award he responded, "I don't deserve this, but then I have arthritis and I don't deserve that either."

Philippians 4:10-13 (ESV)

¹⁰I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹¹Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹²I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

II Corinthians 11:24-25 (ESV)

²⁴Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea

How can I find contentment, and be ready for the unexpected and unfair events in life?

*6. How can we maintain faith in God's plan while accepting the factor of chance?
(vv. 11-12; Phi 4:10-13; 2 Cor 11:24-25)*

I. The Sovereign Ruler

I am ready for the unexpected and unfair if I believe in my heart that God is in control of my life.

*1. What did the Koheleth consider about the righteous and the wise?
(v. 1; Phil 4:6-7; Rom 8:28)*

Ecclesiastes 9:1 (ESV)

¹But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him.

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Illustration: *Blessing from Tragedy* - Louis Braille (1809-1852)

Six dots. Six bumps. Six bumps in different patterns, like constellations, spreading out over the page. What are they? Numbers, letters, words. Who made this code? None other than Louis Braille, a French 12-year-old, who was also blind. And his work changed the world of reading and writing, forever.

Louis was from a small town called Coupvray, near Paris—he was born on January 4 in 1809. Louis became blind by accident, when he was 3 years old. Deep in his Dad's harness workshop, Louis tried to be like his Dad, but it went very wrong; he grabbed an awl, a sharp tool for making holes, and the tool slid and hurt his eye. The wound got infected, and the infection spread, and soon, Louis was blind in both eyes.

All of a sudden, Louis needed a new way to learn. He stayed at his old school for two more years, but he couldn't learn everything just by listening. Things were looking up when Louis got a scholarship to the Royal Institution for Blind Youth in Paris, when he was 10. But even there, most of the teachers just talked at the students. The library had 14 huge books with raised letters that were very hard to read. Louis was impatient.

Then in 1821, a former soldier named Charles Barbier visited the school. Barbier shared his invention called "night writing," a code of 12 raised dots that let soldiers share top-secret information on the battlefield without even having to speak. Unfortunately, the code was too hard for the soldiers, but not for 12-year-old Louis!

Louis trimmed Barbier's 12 dots into 6, ironed out the system by the time he was 15, then published the first-ever braille book in 1829. But did he stop there? No way! In 1837, he added symbols for math and music. But since the public was skeptical, blind students had to study braille on their own. Even at the Royal Institution, where Louis taught after he graduated, braille wasn't taught until after his death. Braille began to spread worldwide in 1868, when a group of British men, now known as the Royal National Institute for the Blind, took up the cause.

Now practically every country in the world uses braille. Braille books have double-sided pages, which saves a lot of space. Braille signs help blind people get around in public spaces. And, most important, blind people can communicate independently, without needing print. Louis proved that if you have the motivation, you can do incredible things.

Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV)

⁶*do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* ⁷*And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Romans 8:28 (ESV)

²⁸*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

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If you don't believe in God you have to believe in chance. You have to believe the reason for your success is that you were in the right place at the right time. If you happen to be unsuccessful, you have to believe if it was not for bad luck that you would have no luck at all.

I am so glad that as a Christian I believe God is in control and nothing happens in my life unless God allows it. And whether what happens in my life is perceived by me to be good or bad I know that God ultimately has a purpose for it and He will work it out for my eternal good.

If that is true, as a Christian I ought to be better able to accept the things that happen in my life after all the events of my life are guided by the hand of God and not blind fate. How well are you at accepting the good and bad that happens in your life?

Illustration: Dealing with Difficulties Without God

Barbara Outhier at the Hospital (for Frank's Open-Heart Surgery) – I couldn't imagine facing this without God.

II. The Sure Retribution

I am ready for the unexpected and unfair if I believe that eternity will correct the injustices of this life.

2. The Koheleth again reminds the reader that one fate awaits all men, regardless of their circumstances. (vv. 2-6; Matt 25:31-46; Rom 12:14-21)

- *Can this common fate be used as an excuse for living however we want?*
- *What advantages do the living have over the dead?*
- *Why does he use the dog and the lion to make his point?*

Ecclesiastes 9:2-6 (ESV)

² It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. ³ This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. ⁴ But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. ⁵ For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. ⁶ Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.

Matthew 25:31-46 (ESV)

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep

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on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' ⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Illustration: Three Wishes

A despondent woman was walking along the beach when she saw a bottle on the sand. She picked it up and pulled out the cork. Whoosh! A big puff of smoke appeared. "You have released me from my prison," the genie told her. "To show my thanks, I grant you three wishes. But take care, for with each wish, your mate will receive double of whatever you request."

"Why?" the woman asked. "That bum left me for another woman."

"That is how it is written," replied the genie.

The woman shrugged and then asked for a million dollars. There was a flash of light, and a million dollars appeared at her feet. At the same instant, in a far-off place, her wayward husband looked down to see twice that amount at his feet.

"And your second wish?"

"Genie, I want the world's most expensive diamond necklace." Another flash of light, and the woman was holding the precious treasure. And, in that distant place, her husband was looking for a gem broker to buy his latest bonanza.

"Genie, is it really true that my husband has two million dollars and more jewels than I do, and that he gets double of whatever I wish for?"

The genie said it was indeed true. "Okay, genie, I'm ready for my last wish," the woman said.

"Scare me half to death."

Tom Nedwek, quoted by Alex Thien in Milwaukee Sentinel

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Romans 12:14-21 (ESV)

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Nothing gets settled if we all die and death is the end of it. But you and I don't believe that death is the end of it. We believe that there is a heaven and there is a hell and God will reward and God will punish. God will right all the injustices of this world. God will make right all the inequalities of this life.

III. The Servant's Release

I am ready for the unexpected and unfair if I understand that my happiness/contentment is not dependent on the events of this life.

3. What does the Koheleth again counsel the living to do?
(vv. 7-10; 2:24; 3:12-13; 5:18-20; 8:15; Matt 6:19-21; Acts 16:22-26)

4. What does the Koheleth say is God's view of our current circumstances? (v. 7)

5. Why is it important for us to follow the Koheleth's instructions right now?
(v. 10; John 9:4)

Ecclesiastes 9:7-10 (ESV)

⁷ Go, eat your bread in joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. ⁸ Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. ⁹ Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. ¹⁰ Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

This is a common theme in Ecclesiastes...

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.

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Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 (ESV)

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.**

Ecclesiastes 3:22 (ESV)

²² So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him?

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.

Ecclesiastes 8:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. ¹⁵ And I commend joy, for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun.

If our...Hopes, Success, Dreams, FAITH...Are placed in the uncertain things of this life, then what happens when things don't work out the way we expect? How can we overcome this?

The release for the man of God is knowing that we do not have to depend on the things of this life to bring us happiness, contentment, etc.

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.

Acts 16:22-26 (ESV)

²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³ And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶ and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.

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IV. The Saint's Reward

I am ready for the unexpected and unfair when I know in my heart that there is nothing wrong with God's memory.

1. *What observations did the Koheleth make about wisdom? (vv. 13-18; James 1:12)*

Ecclesiastes 9:13-18 (ESV)

¹³ I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me. ¹⁴ There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siegeworks against it. ¹⁵ But there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man. ¹⁶ But I say that wisdom is better than might, though the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard. ¹⁷ The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools. ¹⁸ Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

Illustration: Memory seminar when I was in Junior-High School. Seminar attempted to teach the ability to remember names through pneumatic tricks. On the last day, we had 30 minutes to meet as many people as possible. One of the students was asked to move to the front of the room, and everyone who met him was asked to stand up. Then the student was asked to name all of the people standing. I did not stand up, because I did not remember meeting him, but when he came to my row, he looked right at me and said "Tim, why are you not standing up?"

James 1:12 (ESV)

¹² *Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test **he will receive the crown of life**, which God has promised to those who love him.*

Illustration: Gymnast With a Broken Knee

In the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, a Japanese gymnast, Shun Fujimoto, was competing in the team competition. Somehow, during the floor exercises, he broke his right knee. It was obvious to all reasonable observers that he would be forced to withdraw. But they reckoned without the determination of a true competitor. On the following day, Fujimoto competed in his strongest event, the rings. His routine was excellent, but the critical point lay ahead—the dismount. Without hesitation, Fujimoto ended with a twisting, triple somersault. There was a moment of intense quiet as he landed with tremendous impact on his wounded knee. Then came thundering applause as he stood his ground. Later, reporters asked about that moment and he replied, "The pain shot through me like a knife. It brought tears to my eyes. But now I have a gold medal and the pain is gone."

Gary Inrig, *A Call to Excellence*, (Victor Books, a division of SP Publ., Wheaton, Ill, 1985), p. 152

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Romans 8:16-25 (ESV)

¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. ¹⁸ **For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.** ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ **For in this hope we were saved.** Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

My memory may be faulty but there is nothing wrong with God's memory. In our verses of Scripture a poor wise man was able to save his city from a powerful king that attacked it. But Solomon says that over time no one remembered that poor man. But the truth is God remembered him. I can be ready for life's surprises because God has not forgotten me and God has remembered every little surprise that has happen to me in my life. God knows every little bump in my life.