

# Working After the Wind



## SABBATH—FEBRUARY 10

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Ecclesiastes 6.

**MEMORY TEXT:** “Man eats up everything he works to get. But he is never satisfied” (Ecclesiastes 6:7, NIV).

**WE DO NOT HAVE TO BE VERY SMART TO UNDERSTAND THERE IS NO REAL OR LASTING SATISFACTION ON EARTH.** Our pleasures are only vanity.<sup>1</sup> Our evils are unlimited. Death threatens us every moment and will put us all in a position of being forever destroyed or happy.

“There is nothing more real or terrible than this. We may be brave. But death is the end awaiting the bravest person in the world. Let us think about this. We need to admit that there is no good in this life but in the hope of another. We may be as happy as possible as we come closer to death. There is no more sadness for those who have complete faith in eternity.<sup>2</sup> In the same way, there is no more happiness for those who have no understanding of eternity.”—Adapted from Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*.

Writing in the seventeenth century, Pascal had almost the same thoughts Solomon had in Ecclesiastes. This week, we will continue to follow more of Solomon's sad thoughts about the frustrations, unfair deals, and injustices of this life.

<sup>1</sup>vanity—emptiness, uselessness, meaninglessness.

<sup>2</sup>eternity—life without end; forever.

**SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 11****SAFEST PLACE ON EARTH?  
(Jeremiah 6:14)**

In the 1930s, some of the world's best thinkers showed concern about the future. They tried to find a place on earth that would be the least likely to be threatened by war. Using the best methods, the finest data, and the sharpest analysis, these great thinkers found the safest place on the world in the 1930s. It was an island in the Pacific called Okinawa. Sadly, Okinawa became one of the bloodiest battlefields of World War II.



The point? Our world is a sinful world. Sin, death, and suffering are everywhere. The world is not what it

should have been. There is nothing we can depend on, not even the ground under our feet. Anyone who ever suffered through an earthquake could tell that!

In a way, that could be good. Why? Because this world is not our home. It is a place that will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10-13). Everything here will pass away (Luke 21:33; Revelation 21:1). One of the greatest dangers is that we may forget this. We may become so in love with the world that we end up dying with it.

**What message do the following verses have for us today? What danger is God talking about that we need to watch for? Psalm 115:1-7; Isaiah 44:9-17; and Isaiah 45:20-22.**

So much of the Old Testament is the story of God trying to point His people away from the world. He tries to lead His people away from the practices, teachings, and gods of the world. These are the things that, in the end, could not save them. These things could not satisfy them, either.

**What are some things in this world that make life so hard? How can these things be a blessing?**

**MONDAY—FEBRUARY 12****WHEN GOLD RUSTS  
(Ecclesiastes 6:1, 2)**

The Great Depression in the United States began in October 1929. The

stock market dropped rapidly. Thousands of investors lost large sums of money. Many fortunes were wiped out. Many people, both rich and poor, lost everything overnight. One wealthy businessman who owned three homes found himself and his family living under a bridge for almost two years. They survived by selling some of their clothes and many other things. This was a family that two years before had taken a long vacation in Europe.

**What point is Solomon making in Ecclesiastes 6:1, 2? How do you see this principle<sup>3</sup> shown with other things in the world?**

We have all heard stories about people who have lost their great wealth. Solomon knew that money could not buy happiness or peace of mind even when a person gets to keep it. Then there is the great pain that comes when a person loses wealth to others.

It is not just wealth, either. Many people put value in power, honor, or a good name, but lose it all. Again, this should tell us why we need to be careful about how much we love this world. This is because most things in this world will one day be gone forever.

**Read Matthew 6:19, 20. (Also read Luke 12:33.) It is easy to understand about not building up riches on earth. But how does one**

**build up riches in heaven? How can you personally build up riches in heaven?**

## TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 13

### FAMILY MATTERS (Ecclesiastes 6:3)

God created the family to be a blessing. Parents love each other while giving great love to their children. Close family life is one of the greatest joys humans can know.



Of course, sin is real. The result is that sometimes families can cause great pain and sorrow.

**What kind of family trouble do the following verses show?**

Genesis 4:1-8 \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 37:19-36 \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>3</sup>principle—a basic rule of life.

2 Samuel 11:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Samuel 13:1-14 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Matthew 10:35-37 \_\_\_\_\_  
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1 Corinthians 5:1 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Most of those family situations were sad. In Ecclesiastes 6:3, Solomon shows what would be the usual situation: A man lives a long life and has many children. But in the end, this does not satisfy his deepest needs. These “good things” still are not good enough. God has created us with a desire for something that nothing in this world can satisfy.

“A baby feels hunger: Well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: Well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: Well, there is such a thing as sex. What if I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy? Then the best reason probably is that I was made for another world.”—Adapted from C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), p. 121.

**Our hope and safety are with**

**God. But family is still important. What can you do to help strengthen your family ties? Try hard, through prayer, to make some sacrifices so you can give more of yourself to your family.**

### **WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 14**

#### **A LONG LIFE? (Ecclesiastes 6:1-7)**

Imagine this: Two people from another world are talking. One says to the other, “You know, I just do not understand the meaning of life. Here I am, getting old. I have had a good life. But now it is coming to a close. Look at all those who came before me. Look at all those who will come after me. We are here. Then we are gone. It all goes by so fast. I will be five thousand years old on my next birthday. It just seemed like yesterday I turned four thousand. What does it all mean?”

This imaginary conversation captures what Solomon is saying in Ecclesiastes 6:1-7. Solomon is complaining about how unfair life is. He uses another symbol—a stillborn infant (Ecclesiastes 4:1-3). Solomon says that it would be better to die like this rather than see how useless life is. His argument may be negative. But if you see this world as all there is, with no hope for a future life, then it is hard to argue with this thought. What is the sense of living a life that has no meaning?

**What point is Solomon making in Ecclesiastes 6:6?**

Life goes by fast. Maybe that is a blessing for us in this sinful world. Would you like to live for five thousand years in a world full of pain and suffering? No matter how much we hate death, it is a relief for the dead. But death is not a relief for the loved ones still living.

**What do these verses have to say about the problem of death? What hope is found in them for us? John 5:28, 29; 6:54; John 10:28; 2 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 21:4.**

**What are your favorite verses about eternal<sup>4</sup> life? Find as many as you can. Read them and pray about them. Claim their promises for yourself.**

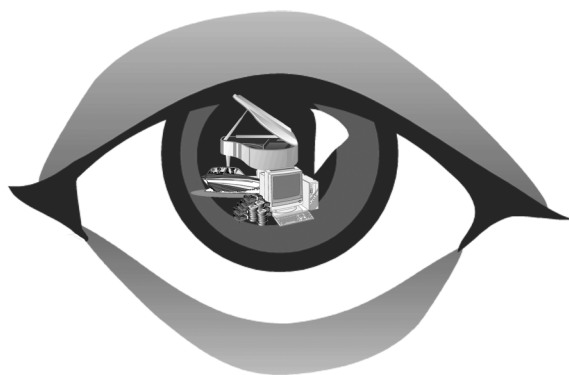
## THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 15

### MORE COMPLAINTS (Ecclesiastes 6:7-12)

In Ecclesiastes 6:7-12, Solomon continues his complaints about the sad condition of humans. He explains in another way that there is no lasting satisfaction in this life (Ecclesiastes 6:7). This is a truth we all know too well.

**Why is there no lasting satisfaction in this life? Also read Genesis 3:19; Psalm 104:29; Isaiah 57:12, 13; John 8:34; Romans 7:5; Ephesians 2:12.**

The British poet Alexander Pope once wrote about how “pleasures are ever in our hands or eyes,” but when we do them, they stop bringing us the pleasure we think we have. It is only “in hope” of doing them that they seem so great. But they really do not give us what we hope they would.



**Pleasures that are in the eye are soon gone.**

Ecclesiastes 6:8-12 is difficult to understand. But it is again talking about the general hopelessness of life. We are not satisfied with what we have. If we are wise or foolish, what does it matter? We cannot fight people who are stronger than us. So often words mean nothing. And finally, who knows how to live our short lives here? But remember that Solomon is talking about a life lived separately from God.

**We do not know exactly what Solomon meant by the question, What advantage does a wise person have over a foolish one? But he answers the question for us**

<sup>4</sup>eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

in Proverbs. See Proverbs 1:5-7; Proverbs 3:35; Proverbs 10:1, 14; Proverbs 12:15; Proverbs 14:1, 3; Proverbs 15:7; Proverbs 17:10-12; Proverbs 21:20.

**How does Jesus show the difference between wise people and foolish people? Matthew 7:24-27; Matthew 25:1-13.**

**Were your actions in the past 24 hours those of a wise person or those of a fool? What changes might you need to make?**

### FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 16

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1026; Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 223, 374, 375; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 258–262.

“The great study and ambition of the world is to gain riches that last a short time. People neglect spiritual good. This is true with some members of the church. When at last they face God’s judgment, they will be both ashamed and surprised that they failed to understand true riches, and did not build up riches in the heavens. They have given their gifts and offerings to the enemies of truth. They expect a time to come in this life when

they would receive the returns for what they have invested.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 134.

“Every family is a church, over which the parents rule. The first duty of the parents should be to work for their children’s salvation. When the father and mother as priest and teacher of the family take their position fully on the side of Christ, they will have a good influence in the home. This holy influence will be seen in the church and will be recognized by every believer. Because there is very little spiritual life in the home, the work of God is greatly slowed down. No man can bring into the church an influence he does not use in his home life and in his business dealings.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 549.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Have some class members share their own experiences with how useless and untrustworthy things are in this world. What can you learn from these experiences?
- ❷ As Christians, we all know that things of this world last only a short time. So why is it so easy for us to be attracted to worldly things, even when our souls are at risk? What is the answer to this problem?