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25th

Anniversary

1988

2013

TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE



He has also set
eternity in the
human heart;
yet no one can
fathom what
God has done
from beginning
to end.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs:
To Know and to Love

TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

The Surpassing Value of Knowing Him



King Solomon was one of the most powerful and wealthy rulers in all of history. From an earthly perspective he had it all. Yet at the end of his life he penned these remarkably honest

and humble words of regret, “When I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun” (Eccl. 2:11).

Can you imagine reflecting on your life only to realize that everything you had accomplished was futile? When Solomon looked back on the sum of his days, he viewed all of his pursuits—even his good, worthwhile pursuits—as meaningless. Why? Because he had ignored the most important pursuit: knowing God. He had followed after earthly pleasures at the expense of the only thing that really matters. The book of Ecclesiastes is Solomon’s candid warning to future generations that a life lived apart from God is pointless and empty.

Solomon’s reflections in Ecclesiastes remind me of the apostle Paul’s statement in Philippians, “I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8). Like Solomon, Paul viewed his accomplishments, reputation, and status as having no value when compared to the exceeding value of knowing Christ. Both Solomon and Paul want us to understand

without a doubt that knowing God is to be our most important goal in life.

Though Solomon wrote about a life he lived for himself and Paul wrote about a life he lived surrendered to Christ, both model for us an important truth: we cannot make knowing God our highest pursuit until we first consider our earthly gain to be meaningless in comparison.

Why should we have to consider our wealth, our prestige, our privileges, our accomplishments to be meaningless? Because as Solomon experienced, these are the things that often keep us from knowing God better—or knowing Him at all. These are the things we cling to tightly for security. These are the things that compete for our worship. These are the things that distract us from eternity.

If you feel stagnant in your relationship with Christ, let me ask you: what are you holding dear in life? What do you consider too valuable to lose? That may be the very thing keeping you from knowing God more intimately. For your good, God is inviting you to count it all loss compared to the value of knowing Him.

The Greek word translated “knowing” in Philippians 3:8 refers to an experiential, dynamic knowledge that is constantly growing and developing. Paul understood that we can spend a lifetime learning about God, growing in our love for Him, and becoming more like Him. We can throw ourselves into this pursuit, and we will never reach a plateau. There will always be more to learn!

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler



God's View of Marriage

The Song of Songs may be the least preached book of the Bible. Solomon's sensual description of love between a shepherd and a shepherdess has puzzled the church for generations. Is Solomon talking about romance, sex, or spirituality? Some would say all three.

Rulers of his day often married multiple wives for political advantage, and the possession of many wives was a sign of great wealth. Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines. The Bible notes that these liaisons eventually turned Solomon's heart away from the Lord (1 Kings 11:4).

Should we turn to Solomon as an expert on love and marriage? His experience may give him something to say to us about the nature of romance. Certainly the Holy Spirit's oversight in the process of inspiration can give us confidence in the words written in the Song of Songs. But when it comes to biblical marriage, Solomon's personal example falls short as a guide.

Solomon is not the only one to fall short. Today our own culture is deeply confused in this area. What constitutes true marriage? Does marriage really have to be between a man and a woman? Or is love between any two adult partners all that is needed? Does marriage have to last a lifetime? The Bible answers these questions with unambiguous simplicity in Genesis 1:27–28, when it explains that God created the

first couple to be male and female. God's Word defines the essence of marriage in similar terms when it says that "a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). Marriage is the union of two people of the opposite sex. Jesus affirmed this teaching of Genesis.

Jesus also noted that the Genesis account indicates God's design for marriage to be a covenant relationship that lasts between two people until death. Jesus warned, "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matt. 19:6). Marriage cannot be redefined by culture without distorting God's original intent. It is far more than a civil contract or a mere social convenience. As the old wedding service declares, "marriage is a holy estate, ordained of God and to be held in honor by all."

Some violate this biblical pattern out of ignorance. Others do so by willful choice. Either way, God's Word holds out the hope of forgiveness and restoration. The Corinthian believers of the apostle Paul's day lived in an immoral and sexually confused city that was much like our own culture. This congregation included those who had formerly practiced sexual immorality, adultery, and homosexuality. Through Jesus Christ they were able to find forgiveness and be made holy (1 Cor. 6:9–11). You can too.

For Further Study

To learn more about the Bible's perspective on modern sexuality, read *Desire and Deceit: The Real Cost of the New Sexual Tolerance* by R. Albert Mohler Jr. (Multnomah).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Paul B. Currie

The Bible Is True!



In the June 11 devotion we were comparing the literary classifications of fiction and nonfiction. We explained that although the Bible is not fiction, much of it is written in the genre of narrative. In communicating this point there was a parenthetical statement that the Bible is “not nonfiction.” We should have said, “not fiction.” Unfortunately, our misstatement led some to believe that we were declaring that the Bible is made-up stories or untrue in any way. We apologize for any confusion this caused. Let me state clearly that we believe the Bible to be true and the inspired Word of God!

In light of this, and in consideration of this being our 25th-anniversary year, I thought I would take this opportunity to reiterate *Today in the Word's* stance on the Bible. The goal of *Today in the Word* is to point people to the Bible, to study it, and to encourage them in their relationship with Jesus Christ. It is produced and published by Moody Bible Institute (MBI). For a comprehensive review of what we believe about the Bible, I encourage you to visit MBI's website

at www.moodyministries.net. (From the home page, simply click on the “About Moody” tab at the top of the page and then on the “Our Beliefs” link in the left column.) In part, it states: *We believe that the Bible is the Word of God. Everything at Moody [Bible Institute] falls under the authority of the Bible, which declares timeless truth that is relevant today. The Word is the foundation for both our understanding of God and our awareness of what He has called us to be in His world.*

We also believe the Bible is a true accounting of what happened in history. We believe the Holy Scriptures are written by people whom God inspired to pen the words they wrote, and the accounts therein are a retelling of true events.

Each day *Today in the Word* focuses on a specific passage of Scripture and then attempts to proclaim the truth within that passage. It is our prayer that you, the reader, then apply the biblical principles to your daily life. And we believe that you can do that with confidence because the Bible is true!

Many of you have expressed your gratitude for the ability to access recently archived issues of *Today in the Word* on our website (www.todayintheword.com). We are in the process of digitizing older issues that were formerly available only in print to also post on our website. Unfortunately, we found that we are missing one issue: May 1988. If you happen to have this issue of *Today in the Word*, we would love to borrow it from you! Simply e-mail us at todayintheword@moody.edu or call us at 1-800-DL MOODY (1-800-356-6639) and let us know. We'll arrange for you to send it to us, we'll scan it, and send it back to you. And in appreciation, **we'll send you a *Today in the Word* resource of your choice!** So hurry and be the first to respond because we only need one copy! (To see resources to choose from, go to www.todayintheword.com and click on the “Resources” tab.)

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TODAY IN THE **Word**

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Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs: To Know and to Love

Our search for the meaning of life sends us in two possible directions. One is the direction of the intellect: We want to understand, to know, and be known. And second is the direction of the emotions: We want to love and be loved.

Thousands of years before us, King Solomon, one of the most famous, rich, and wise kings of Israel, already traveled that road. His quest, as well as his questions and answers, are particularly helpful for us in our modern-day world.

This month in *Today in the Word* we'll go on a meaningful journey with King Solomon. We'll study two books of the Old Testament: Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. They reflect two perspectives on life and its purpose. We'll see that Ecclesiastes follows the direction of the intellect and deals with the matters of the mind. In the Song of Songs, Solomon turns from the mind to the heart, showing the picture of true romance. Through the wisdom of these books, we'll see once again that our eternal need to know and to love can be fully realized only in God and our relationship with Him.

We pray that this month's study will inspire you to take a fresh new look at your life and your relationship with the Lord, or perhaps will just help you glean a few precious nuggets from Solomon's wisdom that will enrich your walk with Christ. We value your prayers and financial support of this ministry, and we are glad we're on this journey together.

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Is This All There Is?

“Is that all there is?” The question was hauntingly sung by Peggy Lee in her 1969 hit. The chorus asks, “Is that all there is? Is that all there is? If that’s all there is, my friends, then let’s keep dancing.”

For as long as people have walked the earth, they have searched for the meaning of life. What is our purpose? Why are we here? Two Old Testament books, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon) pose that question—and provide two very different but complementary answers. Ecclesiastes frames the answer by focusing on the mind. What is our reason for being? How can we understand our existence? When we study the Song of Songs, we will move from the mind to the heart. We are made to reason and think, but also to love and be loved.

Ecclesiastes 1:1 identifies the author as “the Teacher,” who is a son of David and

king in Jerusalem. The book has traditionally been attributed to Solomon. He declares the book’s purpose in verse 2, saying that everything is meaningless, “utterly meaningless.” The Teacher outlines a philosophy of life—that is, life “under the sun” (v. 3). Make a note of this phrase, which will appear throughout the book. He distinguishes the earthly existence from the eternal. He describes life “under the sun” as a cycle, transitory, and impermanent. People are born and then die. Even nature reflects this. Life is like a vapor: it cannot be contained and finally vanishes—almost like it never existed at all.

For those who believe that our earthly existence is all there is, life’s purpose is not easily apparent. Life under the sun can feel exhausting. Many search for fulfillment in experiences or in another person. This book will lead us on a quest to find answers to our existence.

What has been will
be again, what has
been done will be
done again, there is
nothing new
under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 1:9

Apply the Word

Look at the use of imagery in today’s passage, specifically the examples of the cycle of life. Much of our lives are reflected in this kind of repetition. As you go about your daily activities, be mindful of the types of things you do repetitively: brushing teeth, making your bed, etc. Ask God to help you see beyond these repetitive tasks to your divine purpose.

Pray with Us

Please uphold in prayer the ministry of Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of education at Moody. Would you pray for the Holy Spirit’s leading as he and his team serve our students to provide them with solid biblical training?

Knowledge Brings Grief

Many equate wisdom with success. Going to an Ivy-League university and earning the highest academic degree means we are among the intellectual elite of our nation and the world. Solomon himself had wisdom and success.

After Solomon succeeded his father, David, to the throne of Israel, God said to him, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you” (1 Kings 3:5). Recognizing the difficulty of the task before him, Solomon asked for a “discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong” (1 Kings 3:9). This answer pleases God. Rather than asking for power or for wealth, Solomon asks for wisdom.

From the very first pages of Scripture, we know that God’s wisdom is different from human knowledge. The pursuit of knowledge in and of itself does not bring happiness. Satan tempted Eve

with fruit from the tree that would bring knowledge of good and evil (see Genesis 3). Solomon here comments on the lack of contentment that comes from the sphere of the mind.

He compares human knowledge to a “heavy burden” (Eccl. 1:13). Once again, we see the phrase “under the sun” (v. 14). Solomon, with his knowledge and worldly experiences, finds the pursuit of the intellect exhausting. Acquiring knowledge for its own sake is never-ending, tiring, and meaningless. This end goal produces “madness and folly” (v. 17).

For with much
wisdom comes
much sorrow; the
more knowledge,
the more grief.

Ecclesiastes 1:18

A distinction is made between knowledge and happiness. We sometimes describe a miserable person as one who “knows too much.” Knowing more does not necessarily make us content or happy. It can bring sorrow as we grasp the pain and sinfulness of this world.

Apply the Word

What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge? Wisdom emphasizes the discernment of right and wrong, not just acquiring facts. Pray that God will give you His wisdom to process the knowledge of this world that can overwhelm us each day. Ask God to help you see life that extends beyond our earthly limitations.

Pray with Us

It’s a joy to give thanks to God for our students and lift them up in prayer. Please join us as we pray for our undergraduate and seminary students on Moody’s three campuses: Chicago, IL; Spokane, WA; and Plymouth, MI.

The Pursuit of Pleasure

Elvis Aaron Presley, nicknamed the King of Rock and Roll, rose from poverty to fame in the 1950s. He built his Graceland mansion in Memphis, Tennessee. His songs topped the charts, and he starred in Hollywood movies. His fame and riches seemed to know no end, and he became recognized for his extravagant lifestyle, paying cash for Cadillacs and private airplanes. But all of his riches could not buy happiness. Twenty years later, Elvis's life spiraled out of control, and in 1973 he died of a drug overdose, leaving everything he had so carefully acquired.

Centuries earlier, King Solomon discovered the same truth. Earthly riches cannot satisfy. Even the acquisition of all of life's pleasures can leave a person empty and longing for more. The king had acquired everything his heart could possibly desire. Solomon was known for his 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:1–7). He built vast

homes and vineyards. He acquired people and animals. He stockpiled gold, silver, and treasures. Certainly, most would assume, this type of extravagant wealth would result in happiness.

Yet the more he acquired, the more he was dissatisfied. He describes possessions, activities, and entertainment. He wanted his mind and hands to be busy and all of his senses delighted. But it was never enough. "I denied myself nothing," said Solomon (v. 10).

I denied myself
nothing my eyes
desired.

Ecclesiastes 2:10

Throughout Scripture, we see this trait of humankind: the sinful desire to have more. Consider Adam and Eve gazing at the Tree of Knowledge, or Lot, nephew of Abraham, looking at the land forbidden him. This sin is reflected in the Ten Commandments that tell us not to covet our neighbor's house or wife. Solomon learned this lesson well. No matter how much we manage to acquire, it will never seem enough.

Apply the Word

Each of us has a private wish list—things we desire that seem out of our reach. While these things are not necessarily bad, we must realize that even when we acquire them, they will not bring fulfillment and happiness. A life centered on possessions implies that this existence "under the sun" is all there is. Pray that God will help you see life through His eyes.

Pray with Us

For the next three days please pray for faculty and staff of Moody's Spokane campus. Thank the Lord for the lives touched and changed by the ministry of Jack Lewis, Daniel Churchwell, Wendy Liddell, Nathanael Schey, Carolyn Fisher, and R.J. Thompson.

The Wise and the Fool

The book of Proverbs, most of which is also attributed to King Solomon, is referred to as Wisdom Literature in the Old Testament. These books center around wise sayings and advice on how to live one's life. In Proverbs, the advice often takes the form of a couplet called in Hebrew a *mashal*, meaning a comparison. For example, the acts of a wise man can be contrasted with the deeds of a fool. Listeners are encouraged to learn from these comparisons and to choose the wise way of living.

Here, Solomon reflects on the value of wisdom. As we remember, wisdom was the request Solomon made of God, and a "wise" request it was. He wanted to be gifted with intelligence and common sense. He wanted to view the ordinary decisions of life through God's perspective. For that reason, he would long be remembered as a wise king and judge.

I saw that wisdom
is better than folly,
just as light is better
than darkness.

Ecclesiastes 2:13

In this passage, the Bible notes that a life of wisdom has distinct advantages. It is "better than folly" (v. 13). Solomon compared foolishness to walking in the dark—being unable to discern what might trip you or get in your way. Wisdom is able to see ahead and consider the consequences.

But the passage then takes a pessimistic turn. If wisdom is truly the purpose of life—to gain it and to use it—then why do both fools and wise men perish? Both meet the same fate. "Like the fool, the wise too must die!" (v. 16).

Is wisdom bad? No. Wise choices provide a better life on this earth. But even wisdom in and of itself should not be the end goal of our lives. Solomon reminded us that both the wise and the fool will one day be forgotten. Wisdom alone does not promise eternal reward or satisfaction.

Apply the Word

While wisdom cannot guarantee eternal satisfaction, it is definitely helpful in navigating the paths of day-to-day life "under the sun." Many people read one proverb a day as a way of digesting the wealth of advice in Solomon's book of wisdom. Consider adding this to your daily routine. A proverb a day is a good habit to form.

Pray with Us

As we continue to uphold in prayer Moody-Spokane, please add these professors to your prayer list: Jonathan Armstrong, Craig Ferderer, Robert Jenks, John McMath, and Joshua Malone. May God bless their ministry to students.

The Misfortune of Fortune

Warren Buffett caused controversy among his heirs when he pledged \$31 billion, 99 percent of his fortune, to the Bill Gates Foundation. Buffett said the wealthy should not leave their children enormous fortunes. They should have enough money to do anything they want, but not so much that they are doomed to do nothing at all. He wanted his heirs to know the value of work.

In this section, Solomon contemplated the result of work: “What is the purpose?” Some people work to leave behind a fortune.

But, the author challenged, what if the people who inherit that fortune squander it all? The result would seem to prove that hard work is meaningless.

This lack of reward for a life well-lived embittered Solomon. “So I hated life,” he wrote (v. 17). Solomon described all the ways he had tried to make his life fulfilling. He asked God for wisdom.

He acquired power and influence and stature. He earned more money than he could spend. He indulged in every delight: women, wine, and song. He completed industrious projects. He realized that there was no true satisfaction in any of it.

To the person who
pleases Him, God
gives wisdom,
knowledge and
happiness.

Ecclesiastes 2:26

Solomon, whose accomplishments impressed his people, concluded with a few possible answers. He again uses that important phrase: “under the sun.” In this earthly existence, a person can find temporal satisfaction from pleasures

and achievement. Yet we must recognize that each of these is a gift from God. As the Creator of all things in heaven and earth, God is the only true source of “wisdom, knowledge and happiness” (v. 26). While a good work ethic is not viewed as a negative quality, we must remember that God did not intend any of these activities to be an end in themselves. There is more to life than work.

Apply the Word

Have you considered what you will leave to your heirs? While most of us have not acquired great fortunes, we have other valuable things to leave behind: a cherished recipe, a favorite book, or a treasured photo album. Even better is the example of a life well-lived for God. As you serve Him in this life “under the sun,” build up a godly inheritance.

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for Moody-Spokane, please support in prayer professors Jennifer Mills, Michael Orr, Christopher Rappazini, Floyd Schneider, and Gerald Vreeland. Pray that they would exalt Christ in every aspect of their teaching.

Time and Eternity

Many people have a hard time reading the first eight verses of Ecclesiastes 3 without humming the tune to “Turn! Turn! Turn!” popularized by The Byrds. The lyrics, taken almost word for word from Scripture, were rearranged to fit the song. “Turn! Turn! Turn!” appeared in the midst of the national turmoil over the Vietnam War. The United States was deluged by protests and a desperate longing for peace. These words, written several thousand years earlier, still could strike a resonant chord in modern hearts.

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

Fourteen pairs of opposites begin chapter 3. They echo and illustrate the first verse of the chapter: “There is a time for everything and a season for every activity.” The fourteen pairs cover the totality of the human existence. All the moments of our lives are reflected in these contrasting pairs. We are born and die (v. 2). We mourn and dance (v. 4). The verses are not meant to give approval to these activities

but to simply illustrate the great span of our human existence. The experience of humanity includes moments of great satisfaction and other times of tremendous pain and loss. Because of this, the author concluded that life is not easily explained or understood.

Considering this wealth of experiences, what is “gained” from this life? If life “turns” in a cycle, how can we find meaning? Scripture points out that the life we have on this earth or “under the sun” is both beautiful and full of

burden. In our human existence, we feel the real conflict between the earthly seasons of our lives and the eternal nature God has given us.

We are responsible for our activities on this earth, but God has destined us for a greater purpose. The eternal nature gives meaning to our earthly existence.

Apply the Word

Consider each of the pairs in the first eight verses of chapter three, and note the times in your own life that fall under these categories. How has God worked during each of these times? When have you seen His hand of blessing? When have you needed His intervention? Give thanks that God has guided you in each of these moments “under the sun.”

Pray with Us

During your time of prayer, please mention Moody’s media teams under the leadership of senior vice president Greg Thornton. Thank God for leading talented and committed people to Moody’s media ministries: Moody Radio and Moody Publishers.

Walk Like the Animals

An Associated Press poll reported that nearly half of American pet owners consider their pets to be full members of their families. They take pets on family vacations and even include animal photos in the family holiday card. One in five people let their dog sleep in their bed every night, and more than half of women talk to their dogs. While our pets are lovable, are they the same as humans?

This question regarding the worth of humanity is reflected in chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes. The book is divided into what some commentators have labeled “sermons.” The author transitioned with this phrase: “And I saw something else . . .” (v. 16) to begin a new “sermon” on judgment, justice, and the worth and value of the human existence.

Solomon noted that life under the sun is distinguished by man’s enormous capacity for wickedness. Judgment and justice

seem elusive in our earthly existence. People in their wickedness often act like animals, without thought or reasoning. The simile, someone “acts like an animal,” indicates a lack of moral consciousness. Humans have demonstrated often that they have a tremendous capacity for doing evil and feeling little remorse.

Surely the fate
of human beings
is like that of the
animals; the same
fate awaits
them both.

Ecclesiastes 3:19

Both humans and animals will meet the same fate: each will perish. If both animals and humans have the same end, what is the advantage to being human? If our earthly existence is the only reality, would it be safe to conclude that hu-

mans have no superiority over animals? An atheistic view of life questions the value of humanity. It puts people on the same level as animals.

In response, Solomon comforted himself with the reminder that God is the holy judge. He will judge humanity for evil acts and punish the wicked.

Apply the Word

Solomon is not saying we should treat animals poorly. God has shown from the very beginning of His Word that we are charged with caring for His creation. But humans are also given a unique purpose. We have an eternal future and an ability to place our trust and faith in God. Thank Him that He has created you with an eternal destiny.

Pray with Us

Give praise to God for Moody Publishers Operations team—Gregory Miller, Duane Koenig, Sandy Kleinhans, and Elizabeth Ireland—and their contribution to the fulfillment of Moody Publishers’ slogan, “The Name You Can Trust.”

Solitary Existence

“I’ve fallen, and I can’t get up!” is the tag line for television advertisement for a medical alarm and protection company. The commercial pictures an older woman lying on the floor. She is scared that no one will hear her plea for help. Fortunately, with the medical service, she can speak into a device and talk to those who will send help.

Most of us understand this fear of being alone without anyone to help care for us. In this section of Ecclesiastes, Scripture addresses the weaknesses of living in solitude. The passage addresses the problems of oppression and isolation.

As Solomon considered oppression in the world, he declares that it would be better for some to have never been born (v. 3). While this pessimistic view of life might seem shocking, it also forces us to recognize the amount of cruelty and evil in this earthly existence.

But pity anyone
who falls and has
no one to help
them up.

Ecclesiastes 4:10

Solomon noted the futility of living life for one’s self. This is meaningless or “chasing after the wind” (v. 4). This vivid image is repeated throughout the book. Chasing the wind would be an impossible task. The wind can never be contained—and the job would never be done. Likewise, a life lived purely for selfish ambition would include that type of chasing—a task that would never be completely fulfilling.

The meaning of life is not found in solitude. Even the wealthiest loner is ultimately dissatisfied. This portion of Scripture is often read at weddings: “two are better than one” and “a cord of three strands is not quickly broken” (vv. 9, 12). There is strength and power in companionship. Our lives are interconnected and dependent on community. In God’s plan, men and women are not meant to live alone.

Apply the Word

Do you know someone who is lonely or who lives alone? Pay a visit, write a note, or make a phone call to that person today. Lend a helping hand or a listening ear to someone who needs companionship. We are designed by God to live in community with others. You do not know how a smile or warm word can change the direction of someone’s day.

Pray with Us

Today, as we continue to focus our prayers on Moody Publishers’ Operations team, please mention Mattie Hill, Ann Hackler, and Michael Davis during your time with God. May God encourage their hearts with the truth of His Word!

Weight of Words

As children, many of us probably uttered the pledge, “Cross my heart and hope to die.” It was meant as a solemn assurance that we were telling the truth, often accompanied by the motion of crossing our heart with one hand. Some adults remember extending the phrase: “Cross your heart and hope to die, hope the cat will spit in your eye.” Even children know that a promise is serious business.

Chapter 5 of Ecclesiastes explores the seriousness of our words. Solomon cautioned his readers to have the right attitude, in manner and speech, when encountering God. Echoing other famous passages of Scriptures, we are warned of the power and dangers of our speech. We should avoid being in a rush to respond to situations. The chapter contains wise advice about our use of language: “Do not be quick with

your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart” (v. 2). Moving slowly and speaking cautiously is a sign of wisdom; only fools rush to act.

God is described as dwelling in His house (v. 1), our heart (v. 2), and in heaven (v. 2).

Each of these places is to be regarded as holy—and God, no matter where we encounter Him, demands our respect. Making rash pledges to God, demanding His action in response to ours, is not something to be taken lightly. If we do make a promise to God,

we must be quick to fulfill our end of that pledge.

We are reminded that we are on earth, and God, our Creator and Judge, is in heaven. Our view of God must influence our actions and every word that we utter or think, both to God and to those around us.

God is in heaven
and you are on
earth, so let your
words be few.

Ecclesiastes 5:2

Apply the Word

Are you conscious of the words that you speak, think, or even post on Facebook or tweet? How do your statements on social media reflect the mind and heart of Christ? Is God honored by your words? Knowing God should influence our every action and our words. Be mindful of what you write, speak, and think today.

Pray with Us

Steven Mogck, executive vice president and chief operating officer, welcomes your prayers today for wisdom in leading his staff and efficiently serving Moody's departments he oversees.

Mad for Money

The Occupy Movement protest was voiced by activists as a stand against corporate greed and social inequality. “We are the 99 percent,” read T-shirts and posters, as marchers staged sit-in protests in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, New York, and other cities across the country and world. Money and control of wealth were the primary contention issues.

The problem of inequality and oppression, whether real or perceived, is not new. Solomon spoke of oppression thousands of years ago. He said that when we see oppression, we should not be surprised. This is a mark of human nature: at each level of society, there is someone higher who is the oppressor (v. 8). Only the king, who sits at the top of the human pyramid of power, will profit.

How much is enough? No amount! The Teacher gives a type of proverb here, explaining that the love of money is

unsatisfying (v. 10). The word “meaningless,” used frequently in Ecclesiastes, reappears here in conjunction with money and power. There will never be enough money or supplies to satisfy our hunger. The more that is produced, the greater the demand.

Whoever loves
money never
has enough.

Ecclesiastes 5:10

The Bible teaches that satisfaction does not come from owning more. While wealth might bring temporary comfort, it also brings problems. Landowners with abundant possessions also had troubled sleep. With wealth came

complications. While the laborers suffered physically and did without material belongings, they were given peace of mind and “sweet” sleep (v. 12).

The pursuit of wealth and power in this “life under the sun” is meaningless, leading to a life of stress and problems. The meaning of life does not lie in increasing the dollars in our bank accounts.

Apply the Word

Many of us find security in money. We associate worry with few dollars and happiness with more. This passage reminds us that money does not answer life’s problems. As you pay your bills or balance your checkbook, ask God for a heavenly perspective on your finances. Ask Him to help you see the riches you are storing in heaven.

Pray with Us

We value the dedicated work of the Facilities Maintenance team—Paul Heggeland, Vincent Camera, Matthew Morris, Jacob Shumaker, and Carl Bjerga—who take good care of our Chicago campus. They will appreciate your prayers!

Whistle While You Work

In the 1937 Disney animated film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, a beautiful girl finds a cabin in the woods inhabited by seven short laborers. Trying to be useful as she hides from the wicked queen, Snow White tidies their cabin. While she sweeps, she sings a merry tune called “Whistle While You Work”: “When hearts are high, the time will fly, so whistle while you work.”

Up until this point, Ecclesiastes paints a pessimistic view of life’s existence. Solomon described the oppression of the wealthy upon the laborers. At the same time, he observed that the wealthy are not immune to trouble or worry. What is the point of our work? Why labor if it is worth nothing in the end? The author observes that no one can take possessions to the grave. We come into this world with nothing, and we will leave in the same way. Working only to

amass material possessions is like toiling for the wind. Just like the picture of “chasing the wind,” working for the wind would be pointless, lacking direction or completion.

Then the passage contrasts the pointlessness of life with what is good. While our time on this earth is short, God has meant us to find some measure of satisfaction in the things of this world. We are to enjoy the results of hard work, both our money and the things that can be bought. We are also to live with an attitude of contentment, whether

rich or poor. We are to be “happy” in our work (v. 19). This foreshadows Colossians 3:17: whatever we do is to be done with “gratitude in our hearts.” What we do and who we are—these are gifts from God. Ultimately it is God, not our work, who makes our heart glad.

As everyone comes,
so they depart, and
what do they gain,
since they toil
for the wind?

Ecclesiastes 5:16

Apply the Word

What do you do for work? Some of us go to work each day in an office, others as students, still others work in the home. Whatever we are given to do, it is a gift of God. We are to take each day as a gift and to do our work with a cheerful heart. Perhaps today you can whistle while you work and thank God for His graciousness in your life.

Pray with Us

As we pray for the rest of the Facilities Maintenance team today, please add Troy Billow, Edgardo Bartolome, Thomas Addison, and John Addison to your prayer list. Ask that they would receive strength and God’s guidance in their day-to-day responsibilities.

Insatiable Appetite

Heshen was a Chinese ruler in the eighteenth century. He began his career as an imperial bodyguard known for his handsome appearance and charm. After a revolt in 1796, Heshen was put in charge and, at the same time, he began to put money into his own pockets. His wealth was legendary. He reportedly owned 8,000 acres of land and 60 million ounces of silver. There were 600 women in his harem. But his career ended when he was removed from power and forced to commit suicide. Wealth and power do not guarantee a long and happy life.

In verse 2, Solomon made an observation about “another evil” in this life. The first part of his statement, if taken alone, seems overwhelmingly positive. Some people, he notes, are given everything their hearts desire: “wealth, possessions and honor.” They are denied nothing they want. How wonderful to have such a full life! Using

the contrasting word “but,” Solomon mentioned that there is a catch. “But God does not grant them the ability to enjoy them.”

This contrast sets up the chapter. It would be better to have not been born, suggested the Teacher, than to have everything and enjoy nothing. He used the extreme example of a stillborn child (v. 3) to illustrate a life not lived or enjoyed. If you never saw sunlight, never experienced anything, wouldn't it be the same as the wealthy person who is miserable?

Everyone's toil is
for their mouth, yet
their appetite is
never satisfied.

Ecclesiastes 6:7

The problem seems to lie with what he calls our insatiable appetite. In this context, the appetite is linked to both our mouth and our eyes. We always desire what we do not have. We eat and eat, yet we are never full. Satisfying our earthly appetites can be like “chasing after the wind” (v. 9). The meaning of life cannot be purchased or consumed.

Apply the Word

The more we have, the more we desire. Solomon's illustration of the prosperous person who cannot enjoy life should be a warning. Acquiring more wealth or more power will not bring happiness or provide meaning to our lives. Pray that God will grant you contentment for this very moment in your life, no matter what the circumstances.

Pray with Us

Dr. Thomas Shaw, vice president of student services, oversees several departments that deal with various aspects of students' lives on campus. He welcomes your prayer support today for his teams and for students under their care.

Extreme Living

In the 1990s, the term *extreme sports* gained popularity. It described sports with extraordinary risks. Participants engaged in activities that involved attaining great speed or height and took an extraordinary amount of exertion. Wave jumping, wind surfing, snow boarding . . . many extreme sports pitted one person against uncontrollable elements in a sort of survival contest.

Ecclesiastes 7 explores the desirable quality of wisdom, but it also warns against a life lived in the extremes. The extreme contrast to wisdom is foolishness, and the first nine verses contrast the actions of wise individuals with the opposite lives led by fools. Solomon pointed out that, in this life under the sun, wisdom may not always seem very desirable. He claimed that it is better to go into a house of mourning than one of feasting (v. 2). It is better to be

frustrated than to laugh (v. 3). He is urging here not a life of disappointment but a serious, rather than frivolous, attitude toward life. The wise person realizes both the brevity and purpose of life.

Some people manipulate situations and extort others to achieve a desired outcome. If our goals are the most important things—no matter the cost—then evils like extortion would be justified. Solomon urges the harder and slower route of “patience,” with a greater goal in mind than instant satisfaction (v. 8). Wisdom provides a long-term perspective, an ability to consider our life and God’s purposes in it. It must be coupled, however, with “righteousness” (v. 15). Both are needed. We must not be wise merely in our own eyes or those of the world. We must see life through God’s eyes. Only God can keep us balanced to avoid extreme and foolish living.

Do not be
overrighteous,
neither be
overwise—why
destroy yourself?

Ecclesiastes 7:16

Apply the Word

Too often we let our emotions control our actions. We associate God’s blessing with our feelings. Today you may be feeling encouraged by life’s circumstances—or perhaps your current situation is stressful. No matter what you are facing, remember that God is unchanging and in control. Allow Him to give you His long-term perspective today.

Pray with Us

Our Food Service department covers a very important aspect of campus life. We ask that you pray for the Food Service staff on our Chicago campus. Today, please pray for Collin Bockelman, Rachel Campbell, Karen Davis, and Gregory Dickson.

No, Not One

Nominees to the United States Supreme Court undergo rigorous scrutiny during the appointment process. Potential justices are nominated by the president and given thorough background checks. According to Article II of the U.S. Constitution, the Senate is required to provide “advice and consent” on the presidential nominees, which today usually takes the form of extensive Senate judicial committee hearings. Once confirmed, the justice holds his or her position for life.

In today’s passage, Solomon talked about the value, and near impossibility, of finding a truly wise and righteous person. The value of this type of person is immense. As the Teacher stated in verse 19, such a person holds great power. Verse 20, however, reminds, us that no one can live up to God’s perfect standards. The verse is similar to Romans 3:10, often quoted in the

gospel message: “There is no one righteous, not even one.” All of humanity falls short of God’s glory. No one measures up.

A wise person avoids listening to gossip and to dissension. No one can please everyone all of the time—and following God’s calling may not lead to popularity. Solomon, who was granted divine wisdom, put this quality to the test. One of Solomon’s greatest failures involved women. Involvement in illicit relationships is compared to a “snare” and a “trap” (v. 26). The wise man avoids this sin. Solomon loved many foreign women (1 Kings

11:1), and his comments here reflect that experience. “As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods” (1 Kings 11:4). As one commentator wrote, “Who knows how differently he would have stated his feelings if he had been blessed with just one wife who was loyal and wise?”

Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins.

Ecclesiastes 7:20

Apply the Word

What is a snare in your life? For Solomon, it was women. For some, it is gossip, pride, or lack of self-control. Ask God to give you His wisdom and His strength to overcome the traps that so easily distract us. Write this specific request on a slip of paper and keep it as a reminder of your need for God’s control in your life.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayer for the Food Service team, please mention while you pray the service of Vinh Hoang, Hoa Lam, Joseph Lee, and Carlos Perez who provide nutritious meals to our students, staff, and guests.

Question and Answer

By Dr. Winfred Omar Neely, Professor of Pastoral Studies



Is it proper for unbelievers to receive communion?



In 1 Corinthians 11:23–33, we have clear instructions about how we should participate in the Lord's Supper (also called Communion, the Breaking of Bread, and the Eucharist). The Lord Jesus commands us to break the bread (1 Cor. 11:23–24) and to drink the cup in remembrance of Him (1 Cor. 11:25). The verbs “do” in verses 24 and 25 are the present imperative tense in Greek, and they could be translated “keep on doing this” in remembrance of me. The church is commanded to continue the act of the Lord's Supper until Jesus comes again.

The commands themselves are warm and affectionate. When the local church celebrates the Lord's Supper, they collectively proclaim the Lord's death to the world until Christ's return (1 Cor. 11:26). The ongoing proclamation of Christ's death through the public observance of Communion serves as an acted sermon, a witness to the world. The Lord never commands unbelievers to participate in the Lord's Supper. In fact, scriptural evidence supports the following position: communion is only for the reverent and thoughtful participation of believers (1 Cor. 11:27–32).



What should we do about the presence of unbelievers in church meetings when

Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper?



First, we should thank God that unbelievers are present. Second, we need to be sensitive and careful to reflect Christ's heart for the lost. Third, before the distribution of the elements, I suggest that the pastor, or someone who has skill in the public reading of Scripture, read 1 Corinthians 11:23–31. Such a reading will benefit Christians and unbelievers alike.

Finally, as we explain the biblical parameters of participation, why not extend an invitation to unbelievers to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior? If they trust the Lord, then invite them to join us as a part of God's family and participate with us. Still, even if an unbeliever does participate in the Lord's Supper, the Lord may use their very participation to convict them of sin and bring them to Himself. The Puritan preacher and pastor Solomon Stoddard, who was the grandfather and pastoral mentor of Jonathan Edwards, converted to Christ while he was receiving communion. We can trust that God will assess the hearts of all who are present and His Spirit will bring conviction, judgment, and salvation as He wills.



Some of my friends practice what they call being “slain in the spirit.” I cannot find this mentioned anywhere in the Bible. What is your comment on the practice?

Continued on next page

As God's people, we should emulate Moses and desire to see and experience as much of God and His glory as we can humanly take in this life.

Continued from previous page

A The Holy Spirit's ministry is a vital and indispensable factor in our lives as followers of Jesus. For example, the Spirit seals and indwells us at conversion (Eph. 1:13–14; Rom. 8:9–11). He leads us (Rom. 8:14); He bears witness with our spirits that we are God's children (Rom. 8:16). He intercedes for us (Rom. 8:26–27). Yielding ourselves to the Spirit, He fills us with His presence and power (Eph. 5:18–20), enabling us to live out the supernatural demands of the New Testament in the rigors of daily living (Rom. 6:12–14; 8:13). I must say, however, that nothing in Scripture supports the notion of being *slain* in the Spirit. Yes, we desperately need the Spirit's power in our lives, but the notion of being *slain* in the Spirit is not a scriptural idea.

Q **Can you explain Exodus 33:18–23? What does Moses mean when he says to God, "show me your glory?"**

A Being assured of God's presence with stubborn Israel and with himself (Ex. 33:12–16), Moses said to the Lord, "Show me your glory." Moses' request may be one of the boldest requests in the Bible. Before Moses asked this, he already enjoyed significant fellowship with the Lord. The Lord called him at the Burning Bush (Ex. 3:1–5), and He spoke with him face to face as a man speaks to his friend (Ex. 33:11). Moses spent forty days and forty nights in God's presence (Ex. 25:15–18)! But Moses was not satisfied; he wanted more of the Lord!

He wanted to see and experience the awesome splendor, the infinite wonder, and the radiance of God in all of His infinite and unspeakable essence. What a request!

Q **Did the Lord grant Moses' request to see His glory?**

A Yes and no. Yes, in that the Lord caused all of His goodness to pass before Moses and proclaimed His name to Moses (Ex. 34:1–9). But God denied Moses' request to see the fullness of His essential glory, because not even Moses had the capacity to look on the undimmed glory of God and live (Ex. 33:20). The sight would kill him. But God did give Moses a very limited vision of His glory.

Moses did not see God's face, that is, His essential glory, but he saw God's back, a human way of saying that Moses saw the afterglow of God's glory (Ex. 33:23). But even seeing the afterglow of God's glory required that the Lord protect Moses by putting him in the cleft of the rock and covering him with His hand (Ex. 33:21–23).

The core lesson from this story for us today is that Moses serves as a wonderful example of someone thrilled with God. As God's people, we should emulate Moses and desire to see and experience as much of God and His glory as we can humanly take in this life. Have you made such a request of God?

A Wise Leader

Abraham Lincoln's face is among the most well-known of the American presidents. He led the nation during a time of political dissent and civil war. "The Great Emancipator," as he was called, will forever be remembered for both saving the Union and freeing the slaves. He was noted for his self-confidence and ability to listen well. This quote is often attributed to him: "Better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to speak and remove all doubt."

Ecclesiastes 8 describes the limitation of earthly leadership, and it contrasts again the difference between wisdom and foolishness. Wisdom is a desirable quality and can actually alter one's appearance. How do we respond to earthly leaders, wise or foolish? First, we are to respect authority (v. 2). Second, questioning leadership should be done carefully and cautiously. Some commentators think that the passage suggests

it is better for believers to avoid getting too quickly caught up in political causes and protests. Certainly it is better to wait for the "proper time and procedure" (vv. 4, 5). This phrase is repeated for emphasis. There is a proper time and way to influence leadership.

A person's wisdom
brightens their face
and changes its
hard appearance.

Ecclesiastes 8:1

This advice on how to live under the rule of earthly leaders is followed by an explanation. Why should governmental authority be respected, even if it is faulty? Solomon realized that only God knew the future. We must recognize the earthly limitations of any human leader. Life on

this earth will never be completely fair. True justice may seem elusive. The wicked will often go unpunished, and the righteous will suffer. Even the greatest leader has limited ability to comprehend "what goes on under the sun" (v. 17). Note the contrast between human effort and what God has done.

Apply the Word

Today, make a list of your leaders: president, vice president, congressmen, governor, and mayor. Pray for each of them, that God will enable them to lead your city, state, and country in a wise and just manner. When your heart is troubled about a governmental issue, ask God to give you the proper time and way to make your concerns known.

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for the Food Service staff, let's ask that Martin Rios, Josefina Rodriguez, Jonathan True, and Jeffery Williams would be aware of Christ's presence and His love for them every day of their lives.

A Common Destiny

Tucked behind a library, a church, office buildings, and homes in Westwood, California, is a small cemetery. At first glance, Westwood Village Memorial Park may look like an ordinary collection of gravestones, but the names read like the Who's Who of Hollywood. Celebrities buried at the cemetery include Marilyn Monroe, Walter Matthau, Mel Torme, Dean Martin, Natalie Wood, Roy Orbison, Burt Lancaster, and Peggy Lee.

Celebrity graves reflect the tone of this chapter—no matter how rich or famous, we all share a common destiny. It does not matter whether we are rich or poor, righteous or wicked (v. 2), we will eventually meet the same fate. Whatever we achieve during our time on this earth is merely temporal. In the first two verses, the author described various types of people. Here, he concluded that the same destiny awaits them all.

All share a
common destiny—
the righteous and
the wicked, the
good and the bad.

Ecclesiastes 9:2

He mentioned the varied and vibrant emotions of the living. In this life we love, hate, and get consumed by jealousy. Once we die, however, these emotions will vanish. Because human existence is temporal, we are encouraged to take advantage of the time we are given on this earth. Solomon urges, "Go eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart" (v. 7). In biblical times, white garments were symbols of purity and joy, so to always wear white would mean to live life joyfully (v. 8).

Life is unexpected, warned Solomon. The typical winners of a race have no advantage over others in the race of life. Everyone meets the same fate and no one knows when this life will end. Much of what happens in this earthly existence seems to be dependent on time and chance. We must live the life set before us, trusting that God is in control.

Apply the Word

What happens after we die? This question is often used in evangelism because we all share a common destiny. Everyone must eventually face the grave. When you have an opportunity, ask someone what they believe happens to them after death. Be prepared to share your view of your eternal destiny and use the opportunity to tell of God's gift of eternal life!

Pray with Us

Dr. John Jelinek, vice president and dean of Moody Theological Seminary, would appreciate your intercession for the seminary's mission and message in today's changing world. Please pray for God's guidance in every decision.

Sweet Smell of Wisdom

In Old Testament times, perfume was often used in religious ceremonies but was also used for personal enjoyment. Oils were applied to the skin and to garments and pieces of furniture such as beds. The perfumes, created mainly from spices imported from Arabia, were helpful in the hot climate where smells could easily become offensive. Because they could be quite costly, no one wanted flies to destroy this treasure.

As he neared the end of Ecclesiastes, the Teacher began to share wise bits of advice in the style of proverbs. Rich imagery fills this chapter. These images, culturally significant in that time and place, helped show his listeners what wisdom looks and acts like. Verse 1 begins with those dead flies in perfume. The insects turn what should be beautiful into something repulsive. They illustrate the destructive power of foolish words and actions. A dull ax and snake charmers are

examples of mouths and lips illustrating the key point: wisdom is of great value.

As he said earlier in the book, leaders are not always wise and life is not necessarily fair. The world we live in is filled with injustice and risk, and people will experience the results of the fallen nature in this lifetime. Foolish leaders would feast “in the morning” when the day’s work had not yet been done (v. 16). Wisdom, however, has its rewards: when leaders are wise, the entire country benefits.

Words from the
mouth of the wise
are gracious, but
fools are consumed
by their own lips.

Ecclesiastes 10:12

Practical advice for a life well-lived is illustrated in the second half of the chapter. A wise person controls his tongue. It is better to speak carefully than to speak in haste. It is better to be industrious than lazy or idle. When we speak of people behind their backs, our unkind words might be found out. Solomon’s sage advice comes from his experience as king.

Apply the Word

Consider the fragrance of your life and actions. Do the words that you say and the things that you do give off a pleasing aroma? Or do hasty words and thoughtless action leave behind a bad odor? What impression are you making on those you encounter? Do you bear sweet witness for Christ?

Pray with Us

Would you uphold in prayer the ministry of Education Technology Services at Moody? We are grateful for the service of Benjamin Dallmann, Deborah Ellis, Timothy Canfield, Rebekah Campbell, and Kara Bursch.

Life Is a Chance

Motivational speaker Betty Bender once said, “Anything I’ve ever done that ultimately was worthwhile ... initially scared me to death.” Author Leo Buscaglia echoed her thoughts: “The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, is nothing and becomes nothing.” Life, they agree, involves risk.

Chapter 11 of Ecclesiastes examines the unpredictability of “life under the sun.” This is a common theme throughout the book, and explored more fully here. Verse 1 illustrates the point by noting the risk of a maritime trader. Sending your ship out to sea, involves risk—from both nature and enemies—yet it might also bring great financial reward. Verse 4 offers the same practical advice: those who risk nothing will gain nothing. If we continually “watch the wind,” we will not accomplish anything on this earth. Only God knows the outcome of our actions. If we believe that God is the Creator

and Sustainer of life, we must realize that nothing that we do upon this earth is under our complete control.

The response to understanding life’s risks is renewed faithfulness in our daily tasks. We must do the jobs that are set before us without worrying too much about the results. What we do can only accomplish so much. Any success is inevitably up to God.

You cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.

Ecclesiastes 11:5

This analysis of the uncertainty of life is not meant to discourage us, but to encourage us to live each day to the fullest—to seize the day for the Lord. Solomon encouraged young people to enjoy the energy of their youth and to take advantage of the life before them. This foreshadows Paul’s words in Colossians 3:23: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” Take risks and make wise choices, knowing that God controls the outcomes and that He alone is our final judge.

Apply the Word

What are you afraid of doing? What do you worry about in your future? Write down your top three or four answers to those questions. Then, pray over each item. Ask God to remind you that He alone controls your future. Ask Him to give you courage to act wisely without shrinking from difficult tasks. He can help you accomplish great things!

Pray with Us

Keeping the staff of Education Technology Services in our prayers, please ask the Lord to encourage Timothy Gauger, Josue Reyes, Robert Rutherford, and Michael Schulte as they go about their work responsibilities.

Fear God Alone

Many people fear growing older. They may get frustrated when their AARP card arrives in the mail or when they discover gray hairs upon their head. Some people ignore their birthdays, hoping to prolong their youth. The fear of aging, called “gerascophobia,” is an irrational fear of old age or death. While most people may not have a pronounced phobia about growing old, many of us wish we could stay young a bit longer.

Through poetic imagery, the final chapter of Ecclesiastes illustrates the negative feelings associated with growing older. As we age, we realize life is temporal and fragile. We know there is a time limit to our existence upon earth. Solomon compared old age to darkness or clouds returning after rain, a dismal picture (v. 2). He uses the imagery of a home or a village to paint a portrait of aging. Words like “tremble” and “stoop” form pictures of frail aging bodies (v. 3).

The almond tree blossoms are white, like graying hair, and when the end of life is near “people go to their eternal home” (v. 5). The human condition is not renewable—our physical bodies are breakable. We ultimately return to “dust” (v. 7). Solomon concludes that if “life under the sun” is the total sum of our existence, our destructible bodies would imply that it is meaningless.

Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.

Ecclesiastes 12: 13

Following this poetic description of aging, the wise Teacher spoke of truths learned through a life well lived. His age and experience have allowed him to discover the meaning of life. Our main duty, he concluded, is to “fear God and keep his commandments” (vv. 13–14). God will bring every deed—hidden or open—into judgment. In this final verse, Solomon emphasizes that the central purpose of existence is focused not on our earthly bodies or on the limitations of this life, but on the Almighty God.

Apply the Word

Are you young or old? If you are young, look ahead to the days you have left on this earth. Ask God to help you make wise choices and to honor Him in all that you do. If you are old, or approaching senior years, ask God to help you devote your final days to Him and His glory. Ask Him to give you His wisdom and to focus on your eternal destiny.

Pray with Us

In conclusion of our prayers for the Education Technology Services team, thank the Lord for Frederick Schultz, Gregory Skorik, Andrew Thisse, Jason Floyd, and Michael Janchenko whose expertise enhances our students’ education experience.

Finding True Love

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon described his search for the meaning of life. Many of us can relate to that frustration and the desire to understand life's purpose. But there is another side to our search, and it is centered on our hearts. We long to be loved. For the rest of the month we'll turn our attention to the Song of Songs, also attributed to Solomon.

Many have said the key purpose to life is to love and be loved. In Matthew 22:37–39, when asked what was the greatest commandment, Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. . . . And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" His answer featured heart language: Love. We want to experience the satisfaction of loving and of being loved. This is the central subject of the Song of Songs.

Let him kiss me with
the kisses of his
mouth—
for your love is
more delightful
than wine.

Song of Songs 1:2

Chapter 1 sets the scene as a conversation between several parties. Verse 1 identifies Solomon as the author; verse 2 lets us hear the voice of his beloved. The book lets us listen in on the romance between a young woman and the man she adores. The book is filled with deep passion and yearning for physical love: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is more delightful than wine."

Love, at its inception, is intense and overwhelming. She uses sensory details here, like wine and perfume, to describe the heady feeling of be-

ing drawn to another person (vv. 2–4). We also learn a bit more about who this woman is. She works in the fields (v. 5) and her skin is darkened from the sun (v. 6). She feels neglected by family and longs, most of all, to be loved by her suitor.

Apply the Word

Have you ever fallen in love? Remember those first moments of seeing that special person? Remember those first words of conversation? Those first glances? The heart has an ability and a need to feel love—both earthly and eternal. It is a good gift from God to remember the pleasure of loving and being loved and to tell our love stories to one another.

Pray with Us

Please join us in praying for Elizabeth Brown, VP and General Counsel, and her team at the Legal department who provide legal research and counsel to Moody's ministries. We are grateful for their dedicated service.

You Are Beautiful

In the movie *Shrek*, Fiona is a princess who has been the victim of an evil spell that removes her beauty at sunset and turns her into an ogre. When the sun goes down, she loses her slim figure and attractive face and is transformed into a monster. Only when she finds true love is the curse finally broken and she turns into . . . an ogre? Permanently? This twist on a traditional fairy tale suggests that Fiona wanted to be loved not merely for her beautiful exterior but for the beauty she possessed within.

In our text today the man speaks to the woman, this young field worker whose skin is darkened from a life of toil. To him, she is beautiful, and his words must have been thrilling to her heart. Here is someone who adored her, inside and out. He uses vivid metaphors, word pictures, to describe her beauty in detail, “I liken you, my darling, to . . .” (v. 9).

How beautiful you
are, my darling!

Song of Songs 1:15

While modern readers may find it unappealing to be compared to a “mare” (v. 9) or doves (v. 15), these were compliments of beauty for that day. The greater point is that the man takes time and care to describe his beloved in such detail. He sees her completely and loves every part of her: “How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful!” (v. 15). She responds likewise, “How handsome you are, my beloved! Oh, how charming!” (v. 16).

The beginnings of love are filled with words of adoration. While the Song of Songs describes a love affair between two people, for centuries many interpreters have seen reminders of God’s love for His people. He sees us completely and finds us each uniquely beautiful. With God, we are fully known and fully loved.

Apply the Word

Look in a mirror. Do you love what you see? Few of us feel completely enamored with our appearance. Yet what you see is God’s unique creation. Listen today to the way you speak about yourself. Be careful not to mock or put down your own looks. After all, you are wonderfully and beautifully made by God. And you are fully and completely loved.

Pray with Us

Today, please include in your prayers James Hickman, Kyle Sparrow, and Johnny Wu from Campus Network. They would appreciate your prayer support for their day-to-day tasks of maintaining our campus computer network in good order.

You Are My Shelter

The earliest use of the term *picnic* in the English language referred to feasts associated with medieval hunting outings, but today's picnics are often linked to romance. A basket filled with wrapped sandwiches and cheeses . . . a blanket to spread under a tree on a warm summer day. What better way to celebrate love? The description in today's passage uses the image of a picnic in the fields. The couple is drawn together and the presence of the man is a great comfort to the woman who delights in being in his presence.

She compares him to an "apple tree" (v. 3) in the forest. Unlike other trees that simply provide shelter, his love both shelters and nourishes her. Commentators note that in this society that depended on grains for nourishment, fruit was an unexpected and treasured delight. To eat fruit was not just a basic part of the four food groups, but a source of tremendous pleasure. It is interesting, then, to notice

the number of times the lovers compare one another's love to fruits, including apples and raisins. Fruit was a symbol of sensual pleasure. The food here is not limited, but abundant; the banquet mentioned here suggests lavish and unlimited provision.

Let his banner over
me be love.

Song of Songs 2:4

His love provides shelter or comfort in a calm and strong way to the woman. With him, she feels comfortable relaxing and sitting down. She depends on him for sustenance and is sheltered by his "banner" of love (v. 4). In all

these ways and more, her lover offers security and protection.

Verse 4 is often used by believers to describe God's love for His people. Certainly, God speaks of His role in our lives as comforter and a shelter in the storm (Ps. 20:5; 32:7–8). While Song of Songs is not simply an allegory of God's love, it does reflect the perfect and all-consuming love God has for His children.

Apply the Word

What brings you comfort? Is it a good friend, a favorite place, a special meal? As humans, we crave comfort and safety and shelter. God has promised to be this place of shelter for you. He invites you to rest in Him and to allow His peace to pervade your life. Allow the God who loves you better than anyone to be your shelter today.

Pray with Us

Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer at Moody, and his staff invite you to join them in thanking God for His provision of Moody ministries through our donors, asking the Father for wisdom to be good stewards of all the resources.

Love Is a Journey

In their book *The Sacred Romance*, authors John Eldredge and Brent Curtis discuss the love between God and His people. They suggest that each of us has a desire in our heart for something more, a deep and consuming longing for romance and adventure. Our search for earthly love is a reflection of our created desire to love and be loved by God. Eldredge writes, “The true story of every person in this world is not the story you see, the external story. The true story of each person is the journey of his or her heart.”

Much of Song of Songs focuses on the anticipation of love by the man and the woman. Their desire for one another, in this passage, is depicted as a journey. The lovers demonstrate and speak of their longings for one another and their desire to be close to one another. In verses 8 through 13, the woman is sleeping and

dreaming. In her slumber, she hears her lover coming to her over the mountains and calling for her.

The passage depicts details of nature, of spring when the earth comes alive. The ripening fruit and blooming foliage suggest the blossoming of their love for one another. Twice her love beckons her to “Arise ... come with me” (v. 13).

Arise, come,
my darling, my
beautiful one,
come with me.

Song of Songs 2:13

Lovers depend on time together, and a journey allows them rare moments to speak with and be physically close to one another. Like the woman, the man treasures these hidden opportunities to see one another. She compares her lover to a “gazelle” or a “stag” (v. 17), both animals in that part of the world that are able to run and flee from predators. Their love allows both of them to escape from their ordinary duties and to focus their attention on each other. Theirs is a journey of joy, longing, and adventure.

Apply the Word

As we saw in our study of Ecclesiastes, it is easy to get bored with the routine of life. God calls us to a purpose beyond the ordinary. If you feel restless in your soul, consider this a wake-up call. What might God want you to do for Him and His glory? What journey might He be calling you to take? Ask God to reveal His calling on your life.

Pray with Us

Will you remember in prayer Moody Radio engineers Rodney Simon and Mark Williames? They work behind the scenes, but their ministry of technical support is important for the smooth operation of Moody Radio.

Love Is a Chase

Musician Charlie Hall wrote the worship song, “Chasing After You.” The lyrics beautifully reflect the believer’s relationship with God: “And I’m chasing after You / ‘Cause You first chased after me / And You purchased me with blood / I am free I am complete / Now a child of my King / Leaving old I am made new / ‘Cause You first chased after me / I am chasing after You.”

The third chapter of Song of Songs describes a chase. The woman describes two things that seem to have nothing in common: lying on her bed and chasing after the one she loves. Some commentators think that instead of describing an actual activity, she is portraying the state of her mind and heart. Whenever she is separated from her love, she actively longs and searches for the man she loves. Their love, like a journey, now winds through the streets of the city.

True loving relationships never come easily. They require effort on the part of everyone involved. Whether it is in our marital relationships, love between a parent and child, or our love for God, we “run after” the ones we love. Passivity is not an option.

I looked for
the one my
heart loves.

Song of Songs 3:1

The good news of Scripture is that this is not a one-way chase. As we make an effort to love, God promises us that we will be loved in return. The woman is surprised in her search to encounter the grand carriage of the king approaching

her (v. 7). Solomon approached wearing a wedding crown (v. 10). Her love has been immeasurably returned. What a beautiful illustration of the love of God for His children. Although we make an effort in our relationship with God, we know that our love will be rewarded. He has “chased after us” from the very start.

Apply the Word

Many of us spend a good portion of our lives chasing after something. We may chase after wealth or fame. Some of us chase after a particular desirable person. Chasing is not wrong. It implies effort, determination, and action. It is helpful, though, to evaluate the object of the chase. Is it worth it? Can it satisfy?

Pray with Us

Moody Radio Florida, located in St. Petersburg, serves the Tampa Bay area broadcasting Christ’s love and the truth of God’s Word. Its staff—Pierre Chestang, Kate Bruington, John Blok, Andrew Leuthold, Ron Maxwell, and John Stortz—will be grateful for your prayers.

Love Is Delicious

Lloyd and Marian Michael were sweethearts during World War II. Separated after Pearl Harbor, the newlyweds wrote hundreds of love letters to one another. When Lloyd returned from the war, the couple locked the letters in a trunk for safekeeping. In the late 1960s, burglars broke into their shed and took the trunk. “We just accepted they were gone forever,” Marian said. Imagine their surprise when, in their late 80s, a man called to return the letters—241 in all. Reading them brought back many fond memories. In one, Lloyd had written to Marian, “When I got into my foxhole, I could look out and see that old moon. . . . I got a very warm feeling inside of me just sitting there, laying there, and looking at it, and thinking of you.”

Chapter 4 of Song of Songs reads like a love letter. Sections of this book make

some people uncomfortable with their detailed description of sensual, physical love. The man clearly adores the woman and appreciates her physical beauty in great detail. He uses the language of metaphor and objects of that culture to depict her attributes. He sees her completely, and he

loves what he sees. He declares, “You are altogether beautiful, my darling; there is no flaw in you” (v. 7).

Most of us deeply long to be loved like that—completely and utterly adored. The man felt that kind of love for his young bride, a

love that was unabashedly open and true.

Do we also share this kind of love with the people in our lives, choosing to celebrate their most beautiful qualities and express our delight in being in their presence? We can be instruments of God’s love when we care for others.

You have stolen
my heart.

Song of Songs 4:9

Apply the Word

Letters often convey the deep and personal messages of our heart. Some of us save letters to re-read again and again. They remind us of people and time in our lives that may now be gone. Scripture is a letter from God. We treasure this letter from the Almighty God who loves His children in an intensely personal way.

Pray with Us

Today it’s our privilege to pray for the Undergraduate School’s Sports Ministry faculty: Dana Daly, Daniel Dunn, Christopher McHugh, and Jean Penfound. We thank the Lord for their ministry to our students and for all the lives they influenced while serving at Moody.

Love Is Blind?

When someone is in love, we often describe them as having a temporary sort of blindness. They see this person who has stolen their heart with rose-tinted glasses. Everything he or she does is wonderful. She is more beautiful and gentle than any woman who ever walked the earth. He is the most handsome, kind, and wonderful person who ever lived. Professor Stephanie Ortigue reported in her scientific study that falling in love actually affects the intellectual areas of the brain, releasing euphoria-inducing chemicals. This feeling can change the way our brain operates, making us feel better about ourselves and altering our view of the object of our affection.

As the woman responds to the man in chapter 5, she describes in detail the object of her love and her overwhelming feelings

of desire. She waits for her love to appear, and the effects of this longing are physical. She is unable to sleep soundly and her heart is beating with excitement. The chapter begins with her finding and losing her beloved. He disappears into the darkness of the night, leaving her alone. She again describes the physical sensations of love: “Tell him I am faint with love” (v. 8).

He is altogether
lovely.

Song of Songs 5:16

Her friends, who serve as the chorus throughout the book, ask the woman to describe her love. Again, the reader is given a met-

aphor as she compares her lover (the most handsome of all) to cultural objects. What is clear to modern-day readers as well is that she considers her lover far superior to all other men: “outstanding among ten thousand” (v. 10). Not only is he her lover, he is also her friend. He is beautiful to her in every way possible, “altogether lovely” (v. 16).

Apply the Word

Of the 68 times the word *beautiful* appears in Scripture, some 14 are in the Song of Songs. Do you feel “altogether lovely”? You are to God! We are described as His beautiful bride (Rev. 21:2). How incredible to be so loved by the Creator of the universe. Take a moment today to savor God’s all-encompassing love for you.

Pray with Us

We ask that you cover in prayer the ministry of Dr. Paul Nyquist, Moody’s president. Pray for the Holy Spirit’s leading in building up the vision and shaping the future of Moody Bible Institute.

Love Is Belonging

In the 1940s, psychologist Abraham Maslow developed an explanation of the basic needs of the human life. It is depicted as a pyramid, with the most basic needs like food, air, and shelter at the base. The third level of the scale, just above biological and safety needs, is “Belongingness and Love.” Maslow recognized that humans have a deep desire to belong.

The woman and man in this love poem express a strong sense of love and belonging to one another. Our passage today is framed as a question and an answer. Notice the beginning question, posed by the woman’s friends in verse 1: “Where has your beloved gone?” The answer, is given in verse 2, “My beloved has gone down to his garden.” Friends and the people around us can influence the direction of our heart. Job’s friends cast doubt upon his relationship with God and tried to analyze the reasons for his suffering without showing

compassion for his plight or demonstrating much knowledge of God’s character. Here the woman’s friends ask about the whereabouts of her beloved, but then offer to help her find him.

The woman’s answer reflects her complete sense of faith in the object of her affection. Our verse for today expresses a sense of belonging that is possible only in a committed relationship: “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine” (v. 3). They belong to one another with full faith and trust.

Historically, commentators have drawn comparisons between the love between these two people and God’s love for His people. In a very real sense, we gain a sense of belonging as children of God. We know that He is ours and we are His. We can rest in that assurance. We belong as beloved children of the King.

I am my beloved’s
and my beloved
is mine.

Song of Songs 6:3

Apply the Word

Do you understand that you belong to God? In a world that seeks acceptance and love, we have a message to offer. God loves us deeply and desires that we find acceptance in His love. If you have not received the love of God through trusting in His Son Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin, do so today to be in relationship with the God who loves you.

Pray with Us

Please pray for Stewardship department’s Eric Beckman, Crystal Davis-Landrum, Mary Lou Fritz, and Stephen Kott as they develop meaningful and lasting relationship with our ministry partners by presenting opportunities for them to invest in God’s work at Moody.

Beautiful and Loved

In the movie and bestselling novel, *The Help*, an African American woman, Aibileen, tells the little girl in her care, Mae Mobley, that she is valued. Uncomfortable with the harsh way the girl's mother scolds her young daughter, Aibileen constantly whispers encouraging words to the child: "You is beautiful. You is smart. You is important." She hopes that those words will echo in Mae's ears and encourage her heart, even when she is no longer serving there in the home.

Everybody needs to feel loved. Here the young woman enjoys the adoring words of her lover. He describes each detail of her physical being, assigning to it the highest value. Words like "jewels" and "ivory" show that he views her as precious and valuable (7:1, 4). A valuable item should be treasured. By comparing his lover to items that are precious, he is

demonstrating how he esteems her. She is priceless to him. He holds her in highest regard and will treasure her.

He writes this song like a love letter, describing her beauty. To him, she can do no wrong. He finds no fault in her physical appearance. She is captivating to the king (v. 5). To him, she is the source of great pleasure, and he delights in her. How wonderful to be fully loved and adored! It satisfies a deep hunger in our soul and lifts our self-worth.

How beautiful
you are and how
pleasing, my love,
with your delights!

Song of Songs 7:6

To be valued by a king, to be completely desired, is the reality of each believer. God's call to us is even greater than the adoration that the man gave this woman. God thinks we are priceless. To Him, we have immeasurable value. In God, as children of the Almighty, we are fully adored and completely loved (1 John 4:10).

Apply the Word

Words of love can shape our lives. Who has spoken words of encouragement and love to you? What words of hope and love have you spoken to others? Take a moment to tell someone how much they are loved. Consider a simple note or quick phone call to say, "I value you! You are greatly loved." Your words may make a difference in someone's life.

Pray with Us

Continue to pray for the Stewardship department headed by vice president Jim Elliott. Ask the Lord to guide him as he seeks to more effectively use the resources to fund both current and future initiatives at Moody.

Love Is Pleasing

The word *honeymoon* has a fascinating history. It was associated with an ancient European custom where couples would drink a daily cup of honeyed wine called mead for the first month of their marriage. The word suggests that, like honey, the first month of marriage is sweet, without the stresses that follow. The word honeymoon also hinted at the lunar cycle, suggesting that love tends to wane as time goes on.

In the early days of a relationship, love is consuming. The woman speaks to her beloved, urging him to run away with her for time alone. She describes an idyllic vacation, a honeymoon of sorts where the two can be completely alone, entranced with one another. For this couple, so completely in love, they are in the stage of their relationship where they need only one another. Their sense of deep belonging is so pleasing to them, that it makes everything around them more beautiful.

I belong to my
beloved, and his
desire is for me.

Song of Songs 7:10

In this honeymoon world, we see abundant fruit and blooming flowers. The air is filled with delicious scents. The love that the couple feels for one another is described in sensory detail, and it pleases every aspect of their being.

These details are described as she looks ahead to the physical consummation of their love. She sees that their union will be special and overwhelming because they love one another and have waited a long time for this moment (v. 13).

True love is worth waiting for and provides a rich feast of delights. In chapter 8, there is a caution that lovers should wait for the time when they can be united without risk of scandal or unwanted consequences. True love, in the right place and time, provides the deepest type of satisfaction. The honeymoon is worth the wait.

Apply the Word

Some refer to their first days as a believer as their “honeymoon” with Christ. In the first flush of belief, we are overwhelmed by God’s love, and it seems to spill over into every aspect of our lives. Ask God today to renew your sense of overwhelming love, both your love for God and your awareness of how deeply and completely He loves you in return.

Pray with Us

Would you support in prayer the ministry of Dr. James Spencer, VP and dean of Moody Distance Learning? Under his leadership, Moody Distance Learning provides our students with quality Christian education wherever they are.

Love Meets Our Needs

In William Goldman's story *The Princess Bride*, Princess Buttercup falls deeply in love with a poor farm boy named Westley. Wanting to find his fortune before he marries, Westley goes out to sea but is captured by pirates and believed dead. The story tells of the young couple's adventure as they struggle to reunite, fighting tremendous obstacles and near-death experiences before they can finally be together. True love, the story says, cannot be stopped no matter the obstacle.

Love is as strong as death.

Song of Songs 8:6

God's love is also described as a jealous love (Ex. 20:5; Deut. 4:24). Paul mentions that he is jealous for his fellow believers with "godly jealousy" (2 Cor. 11:2). The New Testament word for *jealous* is translated from the Greek word *zelos*. It carries the idea of warmth and heat and is related to our English word *zealous*.

True love is like a flame, producing intense love and caring. This is not a fire that can flicker or burn out but is one that continues to burn. True love is steadfast and righteous, desiring the

Everyone wants to be loved like that, to be pursued at the risk of death and to be desired in an unstoppable, indestructible way. That is the type of love described at the close of Song of Songs, a love "as strong as death" (8:6). Love here is described as jealous in a positive sense. This is not the jealousy that comes from insecurity, but the jealousy that is strong and steadfast and consuming.

one that is loved in a holy and consuming manner. The object of such love will feel deeply treasured. Her needs will be fully met.

For Solomon, who hungered to know the purpose of life and to feel fully loved, this ending is a positive one. To love and to be fully loved, by another and by God, will completely satisfy.

Apply the Word

As we complete this study, having read two different books by Solomon, consider which of his life lessons spoke most specifically to the needs of your heart. Have you struggled with life's purpose? Have you searched to love and be fully loved? The answer to both questions is found in God. To love God and to know Him is to be fully known (1 Corinthians 13).

Pray with Us

As we conclude our study of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs this month, we hope you've been encouraged by God's wisdom and love. We thank the Lord for His Word that changes lives, and we thank all the friends of Moody for studying and praying with us.

VISIT THE TODAY IN THE **Word** WEBSITE!

The screenshot shows the website's header with the MOODY logo and navigation tabs for Home, Education, Broadcasting, Publishing, Conferences, and Today in the Word. Below the header is a secondary navigation bar with links for Today's Devotion, This Month's Issue, Archives, About, Resources, Giving, Manage Subscriptions, and Contact Us.

The main content area features a large 'TODAY IN THE Word' title. Below it is a search bar for 'Search Today in the Word:' with a 'Go' button. To the left, there is a 'Manage Subscription' section with links for 'Subscribe', 'Update My Subscription', and 'Report a Problem'. Below that is a 'SUPPORT' section with the text 'TODAY IN THE WORD WILL YOUR GIFT TODAY.' and a 'SUBSCRIBE' section with 'IN TODAY IN THE WORD DAILY DEVOTIONS'.

The 'View Devotion Archives' section shows a calendar for November 2013. The main content area is titled 'Today's Devotion: A Stewardship of Grace' and includes a quote: 'If him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit Ephesians:22'. Below this is a 'This Month' section with a paragraph about the relationship with the church and a 'Looking For More' section with links for 'This Month's Study at a Glance', 'Today with Paul Hycusist', and 'Theology Matters'.

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