

**The Key to Gratitude**

Hevel

**Ecclesiastes 2:18-26**

**KEY VERSES**

<sup>18</sup> I hated all my toil in which I had toiled under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to my successor, <sup>19</sup> and who knows whether he will be wise or foolish? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. <sup>20</sup> So I turned and gave my heart up to despair concerning all the toil of my labors under the sun, <sup>21</sup> because sometimes one who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by another who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. <sup>22</sup> What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun? <sup>23</sup> For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest. This also is vanity.

<sup>24</sup> There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, <sup>25</sup> for apart from him<sup>[a]</sup> who can eat or who can have enjoyment? <sup>26</sup> For to the one who pleases him God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he gives the work of gathering and heaping, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a chasing after wind.

***In this third week of our “Hevel” series, we explore how to gain wisdom through understanding our lack of control. As the Teacher describes in the first section of this passage, all of our work and money is fleeting, and “even at night our minds do not rest (v.23). The Teacher implores us to sit in the anxiety of realizing we are not in control of anything. What are some situations in your life in which you’ve been reminded of our utter lack of control?***

***The turning point in this passage reveals to us the pathway to wisdom, in spite of our lack of control: “There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink and find enjoyment in their toil (v.24)” But rather than eat, drink and be merry to no end, our perspective changes when we realize that it is ALL from the hand of God, and apart from Him, we would have no enjoyment (v.25)! How does this change your perspective and free you to enjoy the things in your life and work with more of a purpose?***

***When we are able to make the switch from trying to control life to finding deep joy in receiving life as a gift, that gratitude cultivates wisdom within us. God’s goodness should overwhelm us when we really stop and think about it – our families and friends, the timing of our relationships, the providence of work and service opportunities. This week, as we dwell on just how little control we have, may this magnify the presence of God in our lives and fill us with gratitude. How can you enjoy more freely the people and experiences around you this week, not as an end unto themselves, but as gifts from God? How can this gratitude specifically lead to wisdom for you?***