

The Purpose of Life

George Carlin, the famous comedian, in one of his numerous monologues, explained one of humanity's dilemmas. He said: "You know how important that is, that's the whole ... that's the whole meaning of life, isn't it? Trying to find a place for your stuff. That's all your house is ... your house is just a place for your stuff. If you didn't have so much stuff ... you wouldn't need a house. You could just walk around all the time. That's all your house is, it's a pile of stuff ... with a cover on it. You see that when you take off in an airplane and you look down ... and you see everybody's got a pile of stuff. Everybody's got their own pile of stuff. And when you leave your stuff, you gotta lock it up. Wouldn't want somebody to come by and take some of your stuff. They always take the good stuff. They don't bother with that [junk] you're saving. Ain't nobody interested in your fourth grade arithmetic papers. They're looking, they're looking for the good stuff. That's all your house is, it's a place to keep your stuff ... while you go out and get more stuff. Now, sometimes, sometimes you gotta move ... you gotta get a bigger house. Why? Too much stuff. You've gotta move all your stuff ... and maybe put some of your stuff in storage. Imagine that, there's a whole industry based on keeping ... an eye on your stuff."

Today, we began to read Ecclesiastes, written by King Solomon. It can seem to be very pessimistic, depressing. But for what it may lack in optimism and edification, its spiritual lessons may be even more plain and profound. At the very beginning, he opens the book with its main conclusion: "Everything is meaningless". Which, to most people's minds, simply can't be true. But as we delve into the book, we find that in the ways Solomon is framing the world, it really is true. For the main point is: without God, everything truly is utterly and totally worthless! Meaningless. And yet how many people would argue differently? How likely is it that those people are God-fearing, God-honoring, followers of Christ Jesus the Lord? Not likely at all. What about you? Can you agree with Solomon? If not, why?

Today is August 3rd, 2025. It also just happens to be the 9th of Av on the Hebrew calendar. Av 9, 5785. Also known as Tish'a B'Av. It's the saddest day on the Jewish calendar. It's a day of fasting and profound weeping. For on this day Solomon's temple was burned and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., and the people rounded up and sent into exile in Babylon, modern-day Iraq. It was on this same day that the second temple, lavishly enlarged by King Herod, the very temple our Lord Jesus preached at, was burned and destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. If those two tragedies were not enough, there are many more. The very first catastrophe on the 9th of Av was the day the spies returned. They'd been sent out by Moses to survey the Promised Land, and

excepting Joshua and Caleb, the other ten spies faithlessly reported that though it was a wonderful land, it was inhabited by fearsome giants and powerful warriors the Israelites could not possibly defeat. They'd come all this way, spent forty years getting to this juncture, and all for nought! All in vain. Like grasshoppers they were compared to the giants roaming the land. They would certainly be slaughtered if they tried to enter the land. It was no use. Despite Joshua and Caleb's upbeat assessment, that with the Lord's presence, they could well take the land, the people ignored them, and instead wepted greatly all that night—the 9th of Av. And so the wailing and sobbing of the 9th of Av began. It all began with sin. Had not all these people been fed manna from heaven? Had they not witnessed God provide pure, refreshing water for them and their herds to drink in the middle of rocky, barren wildernesses? Had they not seen the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night? Was God nothing for them? Would God have brought them all this way just to abandon them now? What kind of God would do that? The sin-ful faithlessness of the people was breathtaking, and it ultimately led to repeat catastrophes in the future. Over and over again.

It so vividly shows what is important, and what's not; what we need to focus on, and what is truly “meaningless”! Consider Solomon's words. Recall that he was the wisest man who ever lived. For he had prayed for wisdom, and God gave it to him in spades, more than any other person who ever lived, excepting

Lord Jesus of course. And the Lord also gave Solomon what he hadn't asked for—riches galore. He was probably the wealthiest man who has ever lived, Elon Musk notwithstanding! He had multiple, sumptuous palaces, and built the first temple. He was so rich that he had replicas made of 200 battle shields made of solid gold. He may have had stored in just those shields as much gold as to rival Fort Knox! But, what good did it do him? Or even the kingdom itself?

As Solomon grew old, he began to see, just as we do, too, if we but stop to notice, that all our “stuff” that we spend so much time and energy accumulating becomes a burden and literally enslaves us. I came across an advertisement for a Clayton jewelry store on the back cover of the Ladue News from December of 2022. It caught my eye as it graphically depicts the deceitful, “constricting” nature of wealth. Beautiful, but binding. Promising freedom, we end up in fetters. Instead of pleasure we're put in pain. Promised leisure, we're in constant labor to keep safe our wealth. Turns out, as Solomon realized, we die and have to leave it all to others, others who may not deserve it in the slightest, even our own children.

We don't have to have the wisdom of Solomon to understand this. Nevertheless, it becomes plainly obvious if we but open our minds and eyes to humbly recognize the facts around us, reality itself. Just getting old by itself provides us with much wisdom if we but just reach out and take it. I came across a poem written

by a Christian lady on social media platform X, who calls herself “Gr8tefuNurse”. She posted just over a week ago on July 25 this piece of “common sense”: ‘What does it feel like to be old? // Someone asked me that once, and I didn’t really know how to answer. // Not because I was offended, just surprised. I don’t wake up every day thinking, “I’m old”. I just wake up, stretch, and get on with it. // But later, when I sat with the question, I realized something: Getting older isn’t something I fear. It’s something I’m learning to appreciate. // I’m not in a rush anymore. I don’t worry about keeping up with everything and everyone. Some days I get things done. Some days I don’t. Either way, life moves on. // I’ve stopped trying to fix things that don’t matter. I’ve learned that silence is an answer. That peace is more important than being right. And that some people will never understand you, and that’s okay. // There are things I’ve lost along the way ... people, moments, parts of myself. And yes, some of that still hurts. But I also carry more love than I used to. More patience. More softness. More understanding of what really matters. // I no longer pretend to be fine when I’m not. I don’t explain myself as much. And I don’t waste time worrying about what people think of me. // If I want to sit and watch the sky for an hour, I will. If I want to cry over an old memory, I won’t stop myself. If I want to laugh at something silly, I’ll let myself. // Because I’ve learned that time doesn’t slow down. And joy doesn’t wait for permission. // So if you ask me what it feels like to be old ... I’d say it feels like free-

dom. The kind that comes with letting go of things you used to hold too tightly. // I don't know how much time I have left, none of us do. But I'm not wasting what's left of mine chasing perfection. I just want to live quietly, honestly, and in my own way. // And if that's what being old feels like ... I'll take it.'

For what really is the purpose of life? Why are we alive? If it's only about getting more toys than anyone else, more stuff, better stuff, more experiences, then we're most to be pitied. And not just stuff, but more of anything this world offers. More acclaim, more fame, more power. Yes, power. What an intoxicating high power can give. But it's a drug. A poisonous drug. For all authority in heaven and on earth belong solely to King Jesus. And any human, or other being for that matter, who tries to wield power over another creature of God, or creation of God, will all-too-soon discover how powerless they are when they do not follow God and live for His purposes. Living for God, being His servant, is all that matters. It's the most joyful and fulfilling life there is. It's what life was always meant to be. It's for those of us who have given our physical lives to Lord Jesus, to experience both now and forevermore. Though many of us may suffer for Jesus' name, that suffering will gain for us blessings in Heaven beyond our wildest imaginings. Truly, to suffer in this life for Him, is a great purpose for our lives. No we don't purposely put ourselves in harm's way. That's arrogance. That's not following God. If we but follow, "He leadeth". That is the *most* "blessed thought!"

