

Something is missing. "We Americans have more to make life easy than any people who have ever lived. We live in the finest houses, wear the nicest clothes, and eat the best food that any generation has ever known; yet, at the same time, today we have more suicides, more divorces, more people in jail, more mental illnesses than any people of all time. For many people, life is a grim, desperate, unhappy affair" (Charles Allen).

What is missing? God! Life has no purpose without Him. Human beings cannot be fulfilled without God.

A HYPOTHESIS TESTED:

1. King Solomon, using all his unprecedented wisdom and wealth, once did what John Lennon asked us to do in his famous song and imagined there was no God, no heaven, no hell, no religion—just people living for today.
2. But Solomon did more than imagine it, he actually lived just for today, i.e. without thought of God, heaven, hell, or religion, and he did so as fully as anyone ever has or ever will.
3. The result, however, was anything but what John Lennon imagined. Instead of all the people living life in peace, life was "'vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher, 'vanity of vanities! All is vanity'" (Eccl 1:2).
4. The Hebrew word translated "vanity" is *hevel*. It means emptiness, futility, vapor. It describes things that quickly disappear, leave nothing behind, and do not satisfy. It perfectly describes life without God.
5. Imagine waking up, getting ready for the day, walking out the door and immediately being back in bed. Now imagine endlessly repeating this same cycle over and over again. Would that be a fulfilling life? Certainly not. Why not? It would be purposeless effort! We would find no satisfaction in constantly getting ready for a day that never comes.
6. This is why life on earth is meaningless without God. If we are the products of random chance we exist for no purpose at all and where is the satisfaction in that? Eccl 1:3-4, 8.

OBJECTIONS: But some people will say ...

1. **"There is purpose in life without God. We can change the world and make it a better place to live!"**
 - A. So what if we do? In the analogy above, would having the best house, the best bed, the best breakfast, the best toiletries, and the best clothes make all the effort any more worthwhile? Of course not.
 - B. Can we really change the world? Eccl 1:9-11
 - 1) We have obviously developed new ways of doing things, but we have not developed any new things to do.
 - 2) "Because something is recent in form, we think it is new in essence; we mistake novelty for originality" (Wiersbe).
 - 3) Regardless of whether we do it face to face, by smoke signals, drums, letters, telegraphs, telephones, or computers, we are just doing what people have always done and will always do, i.e. we are communicating.
 - 4) What is true of communicating is true of everything we do. No, we might not do everything the same way, but we are doing nothing more than what people have done since the Garden of Eden and nothing less than what they will do until the second coming of Christ. Truly, the more things change, the more they stay the same.
 - 5) And the novelty of new ways of doing old things quickly passes away. In no time at all, we take them for granted and are essentially right back where we started.
 - 6) Sadly, we never learn this lesson. In spite of overwhelming proof of its futility, we keep on pinning our hope for real change on the next "new" thing that will come along.
 - 7) Depressing? Absolutely, but God expects us to consider such things so we will understand that life is purposeless and unfulfilling without Him. Eccl 1:13-14.
 - C. Can we really make the world a better place to live? Eccl 1:15.
 - 1) If new ways of doing old things changed earthly life for the better we would not be debating gun control because people would not be using the latest technology to mass murder innocent people and then kill themselves.
 - 2) Contrary to Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry's vision of the future, new ways of doing old things will not improve life on earth because they do not improve the people who use them. Technology may change, but people do not—as a whole they are the same today as they were in the past and will be in the future. Yes, there are exceptions to this rule in every generation, but not enough to make any generation better than the last.
 - 3) Henry David Thoreau put it well over a century ago when he warned that all we are doing by improving technology is devising "improved means to unimproved ends."
 - 4) Consider the invention of guns. They did not make the people who used them better than the people who used bows and arrows any more than the invention of bows and arrows made the people who used them better than the people who used spears. Each improvement in killing technology was potentially a blessing or a curse—they could be a more efficient and humane way for men to provide for themselves and their families, or they could be a more destructive way for men to demonstrate their inhumanity to man. As we should expect with any new way of doing an old thing, guns were used both ways and overall nothing changed for the better.
 - 5) Technology is not the answer to our problems because we are the problem. Guns do not kill people any more than spoons make people fat. People kill people and people make people fat. Life on earth will not change for the better until people change for the better, and people will not change for the better until they believe in and submit

to God. As long as people live as if they are products of random chance and the survival of the fittest, "might makes right" and "kill or be killed" will rule the day and the world will never become a better place to live.

2. **"People live longer today than ever!"** Yes, but are they better off for it?
 - A. For most, as the opening quotation well proves, the answer is no. Why? People have more time than ever to:
 - 1) Contemplate the emptiness of their life without God. Eccl 1:16-18.
 - 2) Seek fulfillment in ways that will leave them emptier than ever. Eccl 2:1-2, 10-11.
 - B. Time is not a friend to the godless. Eccl 6:3-6.
 - C. No matter how long we live we will never have enough time and resources to do what Solomon did. So instead of trying to disprove him by conducting our own experiment on a far smaller scale, let us quit stubbornly clinging to a hope that he and countless others have utterly discredited. Eccl 2:12.
3. **"There is advantage to earthly wisdom!"** Yes, but not enough to make life meaningful without God! Eccl 2:13-15
4. **"Maybe we cannot change the world, but we can make life better for our descendants!"** Really?
 - A. In just a few generations our descendants will not remember who we were much less what we did, so how much of a positive and lasting difference can we really hope to make? Eccl 2:16-17.
 - B. Any positive influence we had diminishes with each successive generation. Eccl 2:18-21

CONCLUSION: So, if there is no God, what is the conclusion when all has been heard? Eccl 2:22-23

THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER: In Eccl 2:24 Solomon switches gears and for the rest of the book shows us how life on earth is fulfilling if we reject the vain imaginings of people like John Lennon and start believing in and obeying God.

1. **There is a God we cannot be complete without who will fulfill us if we are good in His sight.** Eccl 2:24-26A.
2. **If we refuse to believe in and obey God we serve his purposes but not to our own advantage.** Eccl 2:26B.
3. **The unchanging cycle of earthly life is not the result of random and meaningless chance, but the deliberate choice of God and is purposeful in every respect.** Eccl 3:1-11A.
 - A. As boot camp is a carefully designed means to an end and essentially the same for all because everyone who wants to enter the military needs to complete the same basic training, so earthly life is a carefully designed means to an end and essentially the same for all because everyone who wants to enter heaven needs to successfully complete the same basic training.
 - B. We are not in "a 'closed system' of endless monotonous cycles ... Christians live in this world as pilgrims, not prisoners, and therefore are joyful and confident" (Wiersbe).
4. **God has made us so we can find Him and the true meaning of life.** Eccl 3:11B.
 - A. "The soul has its hunger and thirst; these desires were built into man at creation ... Augustine said it perfectly: 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.' Just as it is normal for the deer to thirst after the water brooks, so it is natural for man to thirst after God. He may not know that his thirst is for God, and he will probably try to satisfy that thirst with a substitute that will leave him with more thirst. But a thirst for God is what it is, just the same. God has put eternity in our hearts, and the temporal cannot satisfy" (Wiersbe).
 - B. "The world has inconsolable longing. It tries to satisfy the longing with scenic vacations, accomplishments of creativity, stunning cinematic productions, sexual exploits, sports extravaganzas, hallucinogenic drugs, ascetic rigors, managerial excellence, etc. But the longing remains. What does this mean? C. S. Lewis answers: 'If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world'" (Piper).
 - C. For "yet so that man" the NASB footnote has "without which man." The point seems to be that God made us so that we should seek Him and by groping for Him find Him because He is not far from each of us and wants to be found.
 - D. If our inconsolable longing does not lead us to God, we are without excuse and utter fools. Rom 1:18-22; Ps 14:1A.
5. **We should rejoice in all circumstances of life.** Eccl 3:12-13.
6. **If we do not rejoice in the Lord always we will answer to Him for our arrogant dissatisfaction.** Eccl 3:14-15
 - A. The NKJV translates the last phrase, "and God requires an account of what is past."
 - B. "Scholars have a difficult time agreeing on the translation of this phrase. It literally says 'God seeks what hurries along.' Solomon seems to say that time goes by swiftly and gets away from us; but God keeps track of it and will, at the end of time, call into account what we have done with time" (Wiersbe).

INVITATION: Eccl 12:13 KJV, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Remove supplied words & have "for this the whole of man." Jer 2:13; Isa 29:8; 55:1-2.