

# THE CORNERSTONE OF OUR FAITH

JESUS CHRIST  
THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE  
EPHESIANS 2:20

A.D.

*Life Without God Is Meaningless  
A Study of Ecclesiastes*

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## about the author

Brother Tommy Brooks is currently the pulpit minister for the church of Christ in Highland Heights, Houston, Texas where he has been since 2007. In addition to his evangelism duties he also conducts a ministerial program for men who are preparing to be ministers, deacons, elders, and teachers in the church of Christ. He also hosts a nationwide radio program encouraging spiritual development.

He has a strong belief in family and has been happily married to Sharon Brooks for 32 years. They have three daughters Yushekia, Tomekia, and Angela, and one son, Thomas. Brother Brooks was also a frequent contributing writer for the *Character Under Construction* series.

## how to use this study

Each lesson in this *The Cornerstone of Our Faith* study has four major parts.

Every lesson begins with an introductory section called **The Foundation**. In this section, the author will give background material to help prepare your mind and heart for God's Word.

The second part of each lesson is called **The Cornerstone**. This section is always the heart of every lesson. The Bible is explored in detail to help us understand the text. Those who are accustomed to hearing African-American preaching can hear this section "preach." God's Word is powerfully presented so that all can understand.

The next section of each study is critical for the Word to fulfill its intended purpose. It is called **The Inscription**. Just as people take note of inscriptions on cornerstones or monuments, each lesson is written so as to drive home a point worth remembering and a principle worth following. It offers the encouragement to change attitudes or behaviors to align better with God's Word. To *know* the Bible is one thing; to *do* it is another.

Every lesson ends with a series of thought-provoking **Discussion Questions** that help you explore God's Word on a personal and a congregational level. These questions provide opportunities for group discussion and participation. Teachers can tell by the responses whether their students have really come to grips with the lesson.

## introduction

King Solomon described his life, in spite of his wealth and achievements, as empty, meaningless and futile. Although God blessed Solomon with everything a human could wish for, he, like many of us today, allowed other influences to cause him to stray from God. It is strange that today, thousands of years later, we find far too many people still experiencing the same syndrome King Solomon went through.

*Life Without God Is Meaningless* is a study of the book of Ecclesiastes. The purpose of this book is to help people who are seeking relief from this feeling of emptiness and despair resolve their problem by bringing biblical insight and the wisdom of King Solomon into issues that need answers from God.

## Life Without God is Meaningless

*I have seen all the works that are done under the sun;  
and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit  
(Ecclesiastes 1:14).*

### FOUNDATION

A popular day-time talk show host was interviewing an entertainer who was trying to make a “comeback.” The host asked what had happened to her? Why had she turned to drugs and damaged her career? The entertainer said that her fame had come fast and easy. She had everything: a family she loved, fame, money, beautiful homes, and cars. Every song she recorded was an automatic hit. And yet, something was missing. She had lost her joy in life and found herself asking, “Now what?” She said she had tried to find her answer in drugs. The problem became larger and larger each day until, in her words, she “hit bottom.”

King Solomon also lived a very rich life. He had it all: wealth, power, fame, and most of all, wisdom. Yet with all this, he found his life was empty and meaningless. He, too, had lost his joy. This is not unlike what many of us are feeling today. We are experiencing a void, an emptiness that we can’t seem to fill, regardless of our accomplishments.

As he grew older, Solomon made a conscious effort to research why human effort appears to be without benefit or purpose. He discovered what was missing in his life and he used the book of Ecclesiastes to share this knowledge with us. Solomon later realized that the amount we accumulate during our lifetime is not all that important. What matters is that we fear God and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13).



*The Emptiness of Life—  
Ecclesiastes 1:1-11*

Many people find no joy in life even though they appear to have it all. We hear of them giving up on life, turning to drugs or alcohol, or even more sadly, some committing suicide. They are experiencing what I refer to as the syndrome of “fame, fortune, emptiness, and despair.” This syndrome happens when our accumulations and accomplishments fail to bring us a sense of satisfaction, and we feel emptiness and despair.

Our lives are full of movements—many ups and downs. We are born, we live, we die, and we do countless things in between these cycles. How we live our lives in between the cycles can cause emptiness and despair or give us peace and happiness. It does not matter what is going on in our lives. The sun will rise and the sun will set; the wind will blow in all directions; and the rivers will flow to the sea (Ecclesiastes 1:5-7). Certain things will always happen; there is no new thing “under the sun” (1:9). In order to remedy the emptiness and bring our lives back into focus on the things that are important, we have to make God and righteous living the center points of our life. We can do this through our love for and obedience to Him.

We serve God by obeying His Word and worshiping Him. God's love, if we allow it to operate within us, can then bring the fullness we desire and eliminate the void and emptiness we are experiencing. It is a matter of priority as Jesus points out in Matthew 6:24-34. If we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, everything else will be added unto us. Solomon used the word "vanity" (KJV) which is defined as "meaningless." He taught that anytime we live life without putting God first, we have taken a step toward the meaningless life.

### *A Sore Travail—Ecclesiastes 1:12-13*

Solomon discovered that God had laid a heavy burden on man, which he called a "sore travail" (1:13). *Travail* is defined as something painfully difficult to bear. It causes you to suffer the pains like that of childbirth or any event that is extremely physical or mentally challenging. Solomon concluded that man has been dealt a tough hand, where life is tough with or without God. No one is exempt because we all have to deal with life. As I say in my choice acronym, **L.I.F.E**, Life Issues Face Everyone. The decision to not include God in our life is the reason many people fall apart when the sore travail comes.

My sore travail happened when I received a call that my twenty-year-old baby brother, Michael, had been killed in a car accident. This was the dreaded call that none of us are prepared to take. I was twenty-four at the time of his death and was living a life without God. It was his death that caused me to seek God and obey the gospel. Have you had a sore travail experience? Did it bring you to God or maybe closer to God? If so, it was a blessing. The Apostle Paul said that "all things work together for good to those that love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). Hence, any sore travail that causes us to obey God and save our souls is good for us. It is difficult to think that the loss

of a loved one can be good for us. However, if it causes us to obey God, at least it served some good purpose.

Perhaps you are reading this book and realize you are experiencing a sore travail. It is my prayer that you will choose to obey God as the beginning of dealing with your travail. Remember, you have a choice to deal with your travail with or without God; but you must deal with it, so be wise.

### ***It Is All About Forgiveness—Ecclesiastes 1:14, 15***

Solomon said that he observed everything going on under the sun and all of it was meaningless—like chasing after the wind that you can't grasp (Ecclesiastes 1:14, 15). King Solomon made that observation thousands of years ago, and today we are still grasping, chasing after the wind, trying to hold on to something that is not there. We fail to realize that there are many mistakes of our past that we cannot solve, questions we cannot answer, wrongs in our lives that we cannot make right, because what's done is done. The only recourse is repenting and obeying God's plan to receive forgiveness (Acts 3:19; Romans 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).

Solomon figured it out. You cannot relive your life to straighten things out or make them better. What is crooked cannot be made straight by you or me (Ecclesiastes 1:15). Until we make God the center of our existence, trying to replay the past will not make it better. Solomon revealed the meaningless life he lived as king, and much sorrow and grief came from his findings. He made many mistakes, even as the wisest man who ever lived, and he recaps his findings by wisdom and shares them with us. He cautions us however, that in much wisdom is much grief (1:18).

### ***Wisdom—Ecclesiastes 1:16-18***

There are two kinds of wisdom. In these verses, Solomon is referring to a wisdom based on human knowledge. The

more you increase your level of awareness with this humanistic type of wisdom, the more you begin to see all the different kinds of evil that surround your world. This often brings forth much grief and sadness; increasing this knowledge also increases your sorrow (1:18). In essence, it is simply adding more fuel to the emptiness and despair syndrome. We will have to deal with this grief and sadness one way or the other.

A second wisdom is the kind that comes from God and is purely spiritual (James 3:17). It teaches that real wisdom begins with the fear of God (Proverbs 9:10). Gaining this wisdom from God can only be accomplished by studying His Word. The learning of God's wisdom enables us to live in today's world and yet manage to avoid a foolish life. Solomon concluded that neither all of his accomplishments nor his wisdom could make him truly happy, because true happiness comes from living a life with God.



God offers a relationship to all those who obey Him (Hebrews 5:8). The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). Only after obeying the gospel can one begin to live a life of meaning with God.

Keep in mind that, without God, our life is merely a futile existence—going from one meaningless interaction to another. But with God, we can relax and enjoy every moment knowing that we are enclosed in a circle of protection. Certainly every day will not be a winner; but we are much better off facing it *with* God than facing it *without* God.

## **Questions for Discussion**

1. Take a minute and look back over your life. Are you pleased with your reflections? What do you need to improve? If you feel comfortable doing so, discuss this with a friend.
2. How do we remedy the emptiness in our life and what steps can we take to bring our lives back into focus with what is important (which is a relationship with God)?
3. Why do many of us simply fall apart when we have to deal with a sore travail?
4. What recourse do we have in dealing with the sins in our lives?
5. What are the two kinds of wisdom? How do they work?
6. Are there any advantages to gaining human wisdom? If so, what are they?