

***Reframing Life: A Faith Perspective***  
**Reframing Purpose**  
**Ecclesiastes 3:1-14, 12:13-14**

**Intro:** Some people have enough money and time to experience it all. Solomon, the son of King David, was one of those people. He was wealthy beyond imagination. He had a thousand wives. He built an enormous library. He was a brilliant thinker. He got a lot of king-work done. He checked all the usual suspects on his halting journey toward meaning and happiness.

He ends up pretty cynical. “Nothing really new happens. There is nothing new to say. We live. We die. Life is meaningless. We are simply chasing the wind.”

Next time you feel that you are going nowhere, and wonder if anyone ever felt like you, take a look at Chapter One of Ecclesiastes.

Thank God there is a Chapter 12 which sums it all up from an eternal perspective that must reframe life’s fundamental struggles for all people of faith. If we can remember and hold to the irreducible duty, perhaps we will keep our eye on the ball while slogging through the muck.

**I. Reframe the Cycle of Life** (Ch 1:7-8: *“To the place the streams come from, there they return again. All things are wearisome...”*)

A. The Teacher noticed the cycle of the seas, the wind, the sun, and the seasons, and concluded that, because everything in nature goes in circles, nothing has meaning—nothing lasts. Humans are caught in this same cycle. We want to hear more and see more, but we all end up in the same place. No one can break out of the cycle that sustains us and brings us to a meaningless end.

B. In reframing the cycle of life, you see it as God’s provision for us in our neediness. We NEED to see, to hear, and to experience life in its various dimensions. We are thirsty for both knowledge and experience. We are by nature CURIOUS creatures. That curiosity is itself an evidence of life.

C. Wisdom itself is part of the cycle of life. People age and grow in life experiences and the accumulation of facts. Then they get old, sometimes lose their memories and mental faculties, and die. Wisdom and madness and folly are together in Eccl. 1:17, and sometimes they end up in the same room in life.

\*\*\*Abraham Lincoln apparently had an era of depression in 1841 when his friend, Joshua Speed, thought he was contemplating suicide and removed all knives and razors from his room. Later Lincoln wrote with same about that period of his life, lamenting that he had lost “the gem of my character” (David Brooks, T-P Editorial, “Look for leaders who know their flaws;” June 9, 2008).

D. Wisdom is reframed, not as a temporary and fleeting condition of all men, but as God’s provision for our sojourn here on earth. It is given to us both to enrich our own experience and to assist those who are traveling with us on life’s journey.

**II. Reframe Your Work in the World:** *So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me* (Eccl. 2:17).

A. The Teacher hated his work for two reasons.

1. His work did not seem to add anything permanent to history or nature. It was simply a recycling of things that had come before and things that would come after.
2. Everything he gained through his hard work he had to leave to someone else when he died. The person who inherits everything into which he had poured his skill, knowledge, and effort could easily be a fool. But he would inherit all of the Teacher's possessions not having worked for any of them (Eccl. 2:17-23).

B. Reframe your work with two movements of your heart:

1. Enjoy the moment of your work, the present time, and stop worrying about the transfer to others. That is not your responsibility or even opportunity. We judge things way too much by some "end result" which we suppose should come to pass. We should rather focus on doing well what God has given us to do.

\*\*\*The construction of this grand house of worship. Many people invested great energy and enormous resources to help this church campus become a reality. We did so while leaving our former campus, which was a similar work by the generation that lived 50 years before us. I cannot worry about the tenure of what I help to build. That will drive me crazy. Instead, I should enjoy the moment God has given me to build for him a house of worship. And I should entrust to him, more so than to people, the future of that house.

2. Receive your work "from the hand of God" (v2:24). Treat it has a divine assignment. Only when you realize and understand and believe that your work is given to you by God will you really be able to enjoy and embrace it.

**III. Reframe the Present Moment:** *He has made everything beautiful in its time* (Eccl. 3:11).

A. The Teacher saw Time as his Enemy for at least three reasons:

1. TIME was a vicious cycle that seemed never to make progress. Time was simply folding back on itself. He could discern no visible progress, no moving toward an established destination. He felt that his life would end up lost in this unending cycle of meaninglessness.

2. Time was the devolution, the degrading of all things. Everything that is built eventually decays. You gather stones; you scatter stones.

\*\*\*You pour concrete for your new house. Then you demolish and remove the concrete someone else poured, and you pour some more for your new house.

The Teacher was trying to get his mind around the concept of Time itself, and the end result of all our struggles.

3. Time would bring him death. The Teacher's personal mortality weighed upon him heavily. Even though he was wealthy and powerful and wise, he could not stave off the inevitable moment of his own demise. He contemplated this as a man who seemed uncertain about Eternity. He gave us that verse that we often use at cemeteries: *All come from dust, and to dust all return* (Eccl. 3:21). The word "dust" is without an article. It is simply the fine powder of total disintegration. It is the truth that we are made from the ground, as Adam was, and to that ground we return in death.

The Teacher worries that people are just like animals. *Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?* (Eccl. 3:21).

\*\*\*Billy was the father of four children. I knew him years ago. He hardly ever slept. He seemed to live on the edge of insanity. He worked like a Trojan. We were talking one day, and he told me that sleep itself was a curse from God, a cruelty for humans to endure. We only had a little time on the planet, and God forces us to be unconscious for a large percentage of that time.

B. Reframing the Time Dimension of your life.

1. Slow down, don't speed up. You are racing past all the beauty in your world.

2. Relax and enjoy your rest. See sleep and rest as a gift from God, not a curse. If you are resenting your need to sleep, then you have developed a warped sense of time. God gives his beloved sleep, the Bible says.

3. See the beauty in every moment. God makes everything beautiful its time. If you take the time to contemplate the hands of your mate or the eyes of your children, the flight of the butterfly or the struggle of a caterpillar, you will find beauty in these things. The world is full of the glory of God. Search for it, and you will find it.

4. Embrace the eternity that is in your heart. *He has also set eternity in the hearts of men* (Eccl. 3:11). People worry about forever. We are pressed by our mortality, unlike the animals. We are the self-conscious subjects of experience. We contemplate the mystery of our own being. As such, we cannot help but look forward and wonder about our own destiny.

View this lifting of your heart toward Eternity as a call from God to walk with him, to love him, and to please him with your life.

**CONCLUSION:** God has set eternity in your heart. This both gives you hope and drives you to despair. The direction you move in this matter of Eternity is not really about your intellectual capacities. It is much more about your moral sense, your understanding of justice and what is right and fair.

God has given you a consciousness of yourself, your place in the world, and a sense of the eternal. You may respond in despair by claiming this is cruel because you have no eternal future—you are just like the animals.

On the other hand, you may respond in faith. You may choose to believe that the God who set eternity in your heart also gives you an eternal future, as Jesus taught us.

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten...should not perish but have eternal life.*