

## Ecclesiastes:

- Looks directly at the problem
- Doesn't accept simplistic answers

The world is **not** the way it is supposed to be

- Some people benefit from doing bad things
- And other people suffer for it
- Then everyone dies

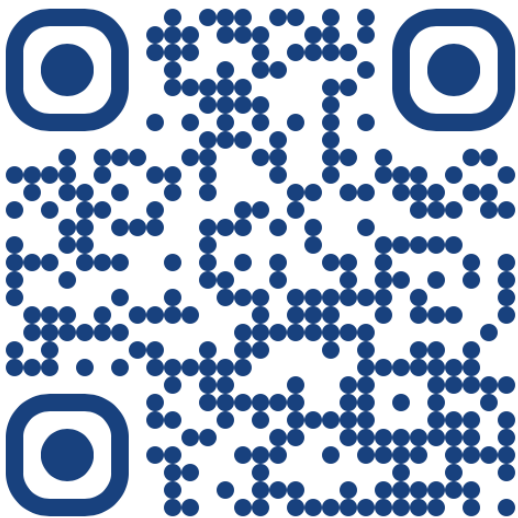
Ask God: help us understand & live well

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## Not the way it's supposed to be

Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26

[bib.ly/Ec1-2.NIV](http://bib.ly/Ec1-2.NIV)



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## **Ecclesiastes**

Author: leader of the people of God

Audience: the people of God

→ not outsiders

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## **Wisdom was a great value**

My son, do not forget my teaching,  
but keep my commands in your heart,  
for **they will prolong** your life many years  
and **bring you peace and prosperity**.

*Proverbs 3:1-2*

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## **Wisdom was a great value**

Blessed are those who find wisdom,  
those who gain understanding,  
for she is **more profitable** than silver  
and yields **better returns** than gold.

*Proverbs 3:13-14*

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## **Wisdom was a great value**

And yet...

Life is not just

Job: an exceptionally good and God-fearing  
man who suffered exceptionally

Ecclesiastes also...

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## **Ecclesiastes 1:12-15**

<sup>12</sup> I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens. What a heavy burden **God has laid on mankind!** <sup>14</sup> I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; **all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.**

<sup>15</sup> What is crooked cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.

**God's world is not good like God**

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## **Ecclesiastes 1:16-18**

<sup>16</sup> I said to myself, "Look, I have increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge." <sup>17</sup> Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.

<sup>18</sup> **For with much wisdom comes much sorrow;** the more knowledge, the more grief.

**Greater understanding sees trouble more clearly**

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## Ecclesiastes 2:1-3

<sup>2:1</sup> I said to myself, “Come now, I will test you with **pleasure** to find out what is good.” But that also proved to be meaningless. <sup>2</sup> “**Laughter**,” I said, “is madness. And what does pleasure accomplish?” <sup>3</sup> I tried cheering myself with **wine**, and embracing **folly**—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives.

**Try #1: pleasure**

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## Ecclesiastes 2:4-7

<sup>4</sup> I undertook **great projects**; I built **houses** for myself and planted **vineyards**. <sup>5</sup> I made **gardens** and **parks** and planted all kinds of fruit **trees** in them. <sup>6</sup> I made **reservoirs** to water groves of flourishing trees. <sup>7</sup> I bought male and female **slaves** and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more **herds** and **flocks** than anyone in Jerusalem before me.

**Try #2: success, productivity**

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## Ecclesiastes 2:8-9

<sup>8</sup> I amassed **silver and gold** for myself, and the treasure of **kings and provinces**. I acquired male and female **singers**, and a **harem** as well—the delights of a man's heart. <sup>9</sup> I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me.

**Try #3: money, power, pleasure**

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## Ecclesiastes 2:10-11

<sup>10</sup> I denied myself nothing my eyes desired;  
I refused my heart no pleasure.  
My heart took delight in all my labor,  
and this was the reward for all my toil.  
<sup>11</sup> Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done  
and what I had toiled to achieve,  
**everything was meaningless,**  
a chasing after the wind;  
**nothing was gained** under the sun.

**Nothing brings lasting meaning in our world**

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## **Ecclesiastes 2:12-14**

<sup>12</sup> Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom,  
and also madness and folly.

What more can the king's successor do  
than what has already been done?

<sup>13</sup> I saw that **wisdom is better than folly**,  
just as light is better than darkness.

<sup>14</sup> The wise have eyes in their heads,  
while the fool walks in the darkness;  
but I came to realize  
that the same fate overtakes them both.

**Try #4: Wisdom over folly**

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## **Ecclesiastes 2:15-16**

<sup>15</sup> Then I said to myself,  
“The fate of the fool will overtake me also.  
What then do I gain by being wise?”

I said to myself,  
“This too is meaningless.”

<sup>16</sup> For the wise, like the fool,  
will not be long remembered;  
the days have already come  
when both have been forgotten.  
Like the fool, the wise too must die!

**Even the wisest die and are forgotten**

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## **Ecclesiastes 2:17-19**

<sup>17</sup> So **I hated life**, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. <sup>18</sup> I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. <sup>19</sup> And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless.

**Even a great legacy can be destroyed after us**

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## **Ecclesiastes 2:20-23**

<sup>20</sup> So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. <sup>21</sup> For a person may labor with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. <sup>22</sup> What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? <sup>23</sup> All their days their work is grief and pain; **even at night their minds do not rest**. This too is meaningless.

**Turmoil ruins rest and living**

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## **Ecclesiastes 2:24-26**

<sup>24</sup> A person can do **nothing better** than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is **from the hand of God**, <sup>25</sup> for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? <sup>26</sup> To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

**Even temporary pleasure is at God's choice**

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## **Claim #1**

Our world is badly broken

**Decay, injustice, and death are not good,  
no matter what name we give them**

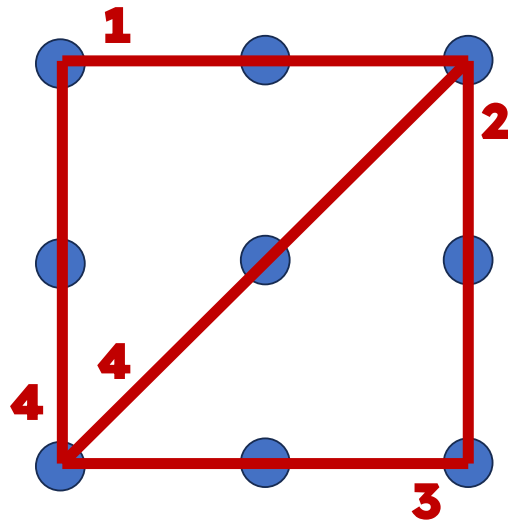
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## Claim #2

**No human effort can fix our broken world**  
*Not wisdom nor pleasure nor money nor power  
nor success nor distraction, nor anything else  
can solve the problem of death*

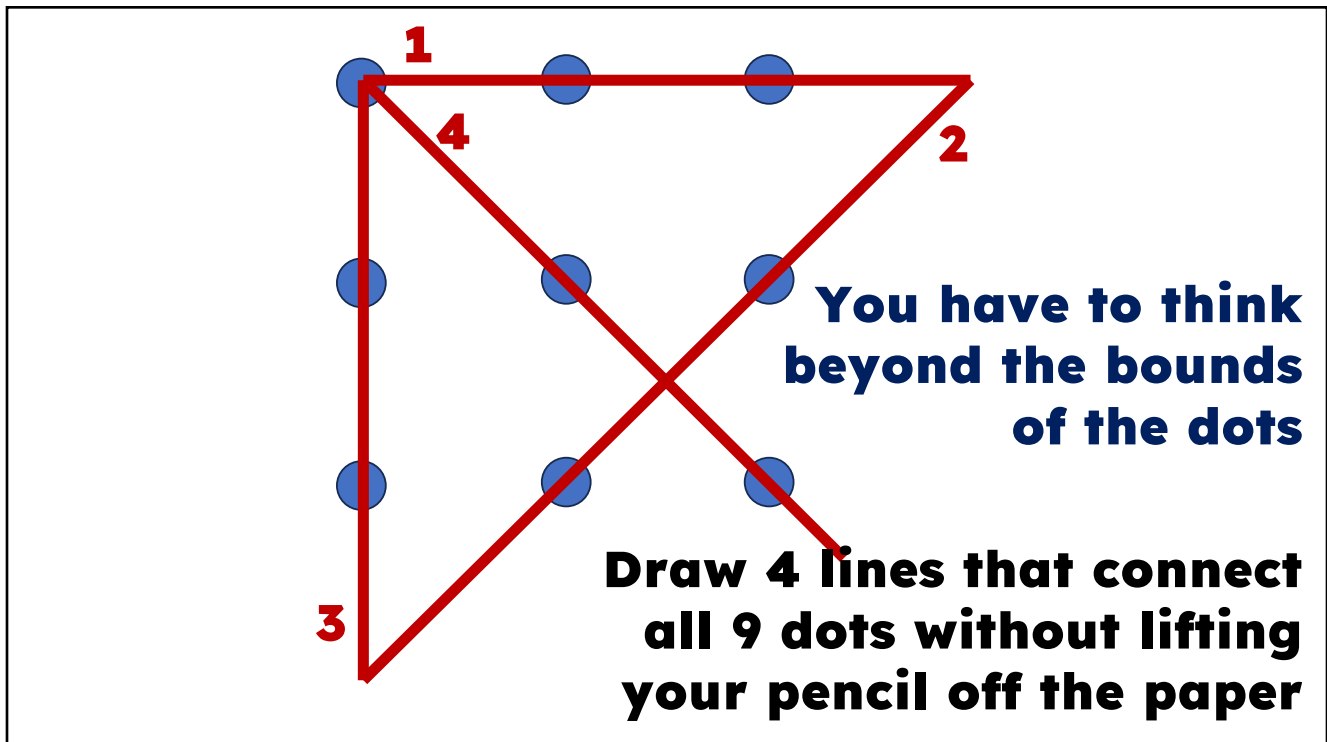
**Yet we keep imagining that a little more \_\_\_\_\_  
will make it significantly better**

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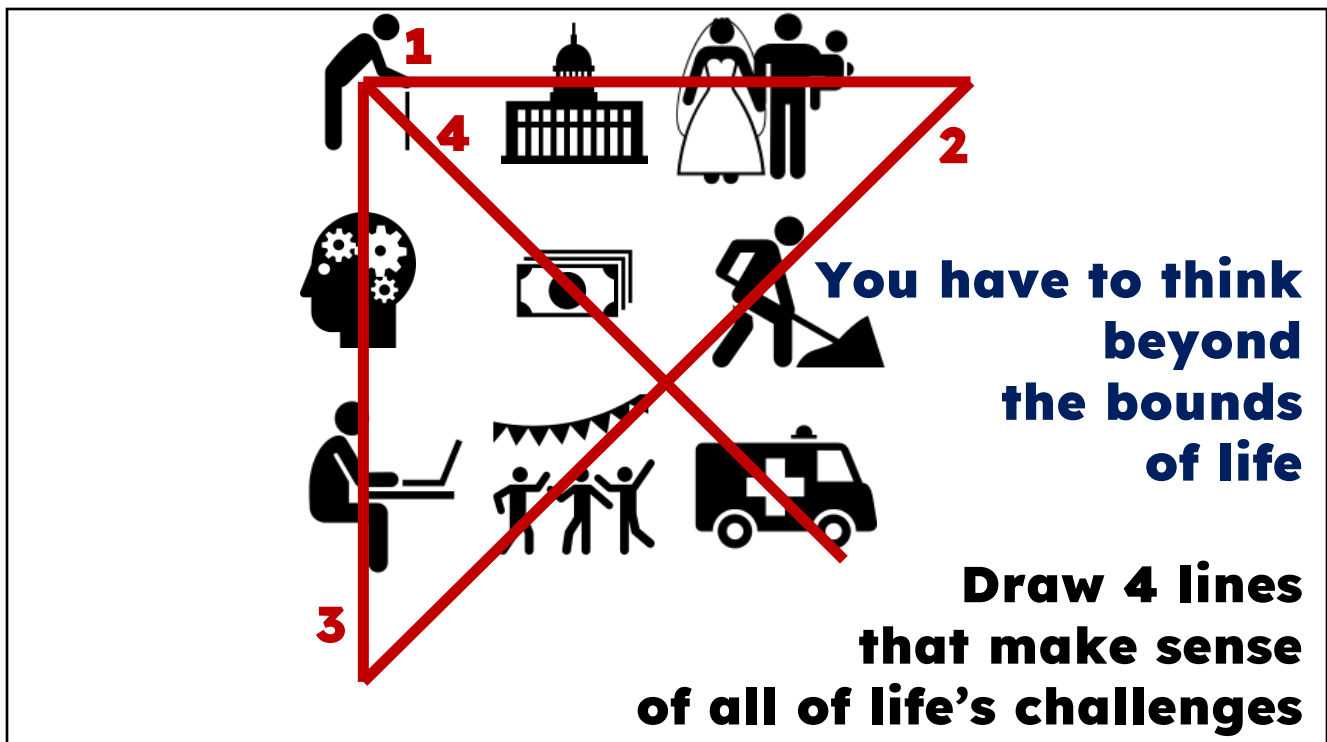


**Draw 4 lines that connect all 9 dots without lifting your pencil off the paper**

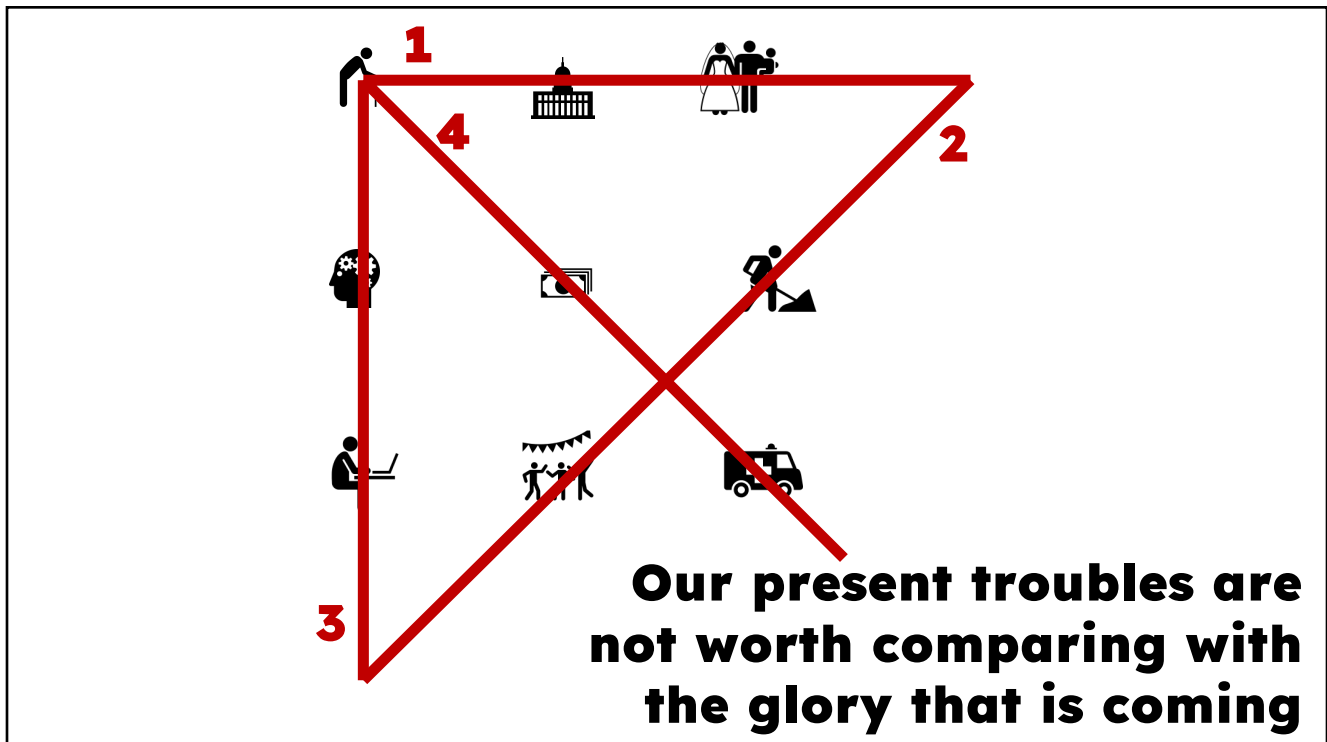
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23

Then I saw “**a new heaven and a new earth,**” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ...  
 ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be **no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.**”

*Revelation 21:1,4*

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## Claim #3

Flourishing life can only be fully experienced  
in God's new world through Christ

Until then: the Holy Spirit is God's promise  
and our initial experience

**"God has given us the Spirit as a deposit,  
guaranteeing what is to come."** *2 Corinthians 5:5*

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## Two Notes

- God's job is not to make our lives good in this broken world
- We can't find the right techniques or enough faith or enough wisdom to make life good in this broken world

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## Claim #3

Flourishing life can only be fully experienced  
in God's new world through Christ

The foretaste of this flourishing life today  
is only found through relationship with God

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## Application #1

Set our full hope on God's new world

- “Anyone who loves their life [in this world] will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life [when Christ returns].” *John 12:25*
- “Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.” *1 Peter 1:13*

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## Application #2

### Pursue a relationship with Christ today

- “What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the **surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ.” *Philippians 3:8*
- **Idolatry**: trying to address the human problem through anything or anyone instead of Christ
  - It always fails
  - It tears down our relationship with Christ

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## Application #3

### Pursue His ways here and now

- “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”  
*Matthew 6:10*
- Remember the limitations
  - The purpose of medicine

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## Big Idea

Flourishing life can only be fully experienced  
in God's new world through Christ

**"I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; ... I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same."** *CS Lewis*

**"We must keep alive in us the desire for our true country"**

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Jesus said: "Anyone who loves their life [in this world] will lose it, while anyone **who hates their life in this world** will keep it **for eternal life [when Christ returns]**." *John 12:25*

**"Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming."** *1 Peter 1:13*

Only by working today with our full hope in God's new world can we work in freedom and glory

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