



LIFE ON THE TREADMILL | ECCLESIASTES 1:1-11
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The book of Ecclesiastes has been called unsettling, pessimistic, puzzling, and misunderstood. But, its message is entirely consistent with God's Word. It's about man's search for the meaning of life.

Authorship (1:1): Widely and historically held to be King Solomon, despite many arguments against his authorship in recent centuries.

Qoheleth – Hebrew for one who assembles. Identified as the teacher or preacher.

Two Major Themes Introduced in Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

1. Hebel (1:2) (הֶבֶל) – a Hebrew word translated as *vanity* or *meaningless*. Translated as *breath* in Isaiah 57:15. Elusive, fleeting, and ultimately unsatisfying.

2. Under the sun (1:3) – appears 27 times in Ecclesiastes.

Four Lesser Themes Introduced in Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

Toil/Labor (1:3)

Life on the treadmill (1:4-9)

Questions (1:3, 10)

Forgetfulness (1:10-11)

Helpful Resources

The Message of Ecclesiastes (The Bible Speaks Today series) by Derek Kidner
Why Everything Matters: The Gospel in Ecclesiastes by Philip G. Ryken

Questions to Consider

1. What were your thoughts or impressions about Ecclesiastes before starting this current study?
2. While there are spirited debates about the authorship of Ecclesiastes, who has historically been thought to be the human author, and why does divine authorship of Scripture matter?
3. Describe the meaning of the Hebrew word *hebel*. How is it translated in Ecclesiastes, and why is it important in this particular book?
4. What phrase in verse 3 is key to understanding Ecclesiastes, and why?
5. What appears to be the significance of toil or labor to the teacher in Ecclesiastes? Have you ever struggled with the idea that work is little more than drudgery?
6. What are some of the images the teacher uses to portray life as being repetitious?
7. What's the significance of forgetfulness to the teacher?
8. How might Ecclesiastes relate to your current season of life?
9. Read Ecclesiastes 12:14. How does that final statement offset some of the themes that we've already seen introduced? How does the New Testament confirm that all of life really does matter?