

1. Let me give my title first, and then I'll explain what it means. I call this lesson "true lies". It has nothing to do with the movie that came out with the same title some years back. It also does not mean that everything Solomon says in these chapters are lies. The point is that the author of this book (Solomon) describes life strictly from a human perspective and ignores the fact that we can ask God to guide our lives for His glory. These two chapters describe things that are true, but are also lies in that they miss out on how God wants to guide our lives for His glory.
 - a) OK, so if these chapters are full of lies, why should I read them? If they are partially true and partially full of lies, why call it true lies? It's kind of like the idea that if one is only partially telling the truth that is not the complete truth and that makes it a lie. It is like if someone is telling a true story in a deceiving way, that does not make it the truth.
 - b) A classic example would be to fly from Alaska to Hawaii and set the controls to be one degree off from one's destination. If one does that, one will miss the runway or even the islands completely when one wants to land in Hawaii.
 - c) My point is as one reads these chapters, keep in mind they are full of statements that are true and do give us wisdom, but they also miss a key point about how God wants us to live out our lives for His sake. Keep in mind that we are still in the middle of this book and we have a few more chapters to go until we reach the end. Therefore, I ask that we put up with Solomon's bad mood in these chapters about what a waste of time this life can be so we can keep these facts in mind as we come to the final chapters of the book.
 - d) Now let me come back to the question of why we should read these chapters if they are not completely true. After all, John, isn't this part of God's word? Of course it is. One has to keep in mind that not every line in the bible is "truth" as it stands alone. The bible has to be read in context of the story in order to understand it's truth. As a simple example of that, consider in the Gospels how Judas hung himself. If we read that line out of context, one could argue that "biblical truth" is to kill oneself. Of course that is not true, and that is why bible verses always have to be understood in context of the surrounding verses.
 - e) With that said, if this lesson is "true lies", what do we get out of it? The most important thing to realize as one reads these chapters is that Solomon does get the idea that having wisdom is a good thing and a good way to live one's life. Solomon gives lots of examples of how and why wisdom is a good thing to get in life. That's the "truth" of this book. The lie is failing to see that this life is not all that there is. Yes Solomon believes in God and he even states that people will be judged one day in this lesson. What Solomon misses is the idea that we can seek God daily in order for us to make the wise decisions that Solomon desires we make as we live out our lives. In summary, we can get wisdom from living a good life and living the right way. The lie is that it is all up to us alone and we can't ask God to help us daily to make wise decisions.
2. I also need to warn you that in this lesson, Solomon gets obsessed with death and he describes a lot of ways that people waste their lives. The point is to realize that time is the most valuable thing that God gives us and He wants us to use our time to bring Him glory. A lot of this lesson does focus on time wasting activities, but other parts do teach us how God wants us to live to make a difference for Him.
 - a) Even though Solomon does miss the key point that life requires a daily trust in God for His guidance in life, it does teach a lot of wonderful truths about how to live out life with wisdom to make the best use of our time. With that said, hopefully we are all ready to be depressed with Solomon as we work our way through these two chapters.

Chapter 8, Verse 1: Who is like the wise man? Who knows the explanation of things? Wisdom brightens a man's face and changes its hard appearance.

- b) The positive aspect of this section is that it focuses on the benefits of having wisdom. It starts by Solomon effectively stating, "It's a good thing to understand how life works and it brings joy to one's life when one takes the time to understand things." The big point we will see is that he mixes in some truth with some lies throughout this section.
 - c) Does this mean we will understand everything there is to know about life? Of course not. However, a lot of things we don't get will make a lot more sense when we have an eternal perspective of life. When we see a tragedy occur, we can say, "I may not understand why this is happening, but I accept that we live in a world dominated by sin". When we get a blessing in our life we didn't expect to receive, we can look at it from God's perspective to say, this will at best last this lifetime, so let me appreciate it while I can. The point is that wisdom helps us to take life in stride and say, "This is God's world and its problems and my problems are His problems." The truth is God's wisdom helps us to understand how to understand this world. The lie is that this life is not all that there is to living.
 - d) Coming back to the verse, the point it is making is that seeing life from God's perspective helps our attitude. It is to see wisdom as a gift from God to discern what is and is not the best way to handle any situation. When difficulties come we should pray, "Father, give me the wisdom how to best handle this situation, and give me a peace about what to do."
3. Verse 2: Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God. ³ Do not be in a hurry to leave the king's presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases. ⁴ Since a king's word is supreme, who can say to him, "What are you doing?"
- a) Because Solomon was a king, he uses this point about having the wisdom to do the right thing to discuss how people should act in the presence of a king here in Verse 2.
 - b) To understand these verses, I need to first focus on the word "oath". What is the oath that they take that says they must obey the king's commands? What if that king says to steal something, does one violate that oath? Let me answer this from a Christian perspective.
 - c) First, let me explain the rule, and then I'll talk about the exception. For the Christian God calls us to be obedient to our government not because it is perfect, but because God wants us to be a good witness for Him. Consider that when Paul went from town to town, Nero was the Emperor of Rome. Nero was not a good emperor to put it mildly, yet one never reads of Paul condemning the Roman government in the New Testament. In effect, Paul had bigger fish to fry as he was focusing on spreading the gospel message.
 - i) In that Roman world, about two-thirds of the people were slaves. Yet Paul says in Romans 13:1-3 the importance of obeying the government. Paul's point again was about being a good witness for Jesus despite whatever a government forces on us.
 - ii) As for the Jewish people living in Solomon's time, they understood the fact that a king was God ordained and that implied one's loyalty to whatever was ordained by the king of that moment.
 - iii) Finally, let me talk a little about the exception. In Acts 4:19, there is an incident in which Peter tells some Israeli officials effectively, "We must obey God rather than men". Yes that statement could have cost Peter his life, but the point is there are cases where governments demand us to do things that specifically violate things that God requires of us. In such cases, one has to pick one's battles well. To use a famous example, some would argue that we shouldn't pay the federal government taxes in the United States because part of that money goes to fund abortions. Yes I disagree with that policy but again, "one has to choose one's battles well". It is not a good witness for Jesus if we are rebelling against all aspects of government just because there are specific things we disagree with about our government.

- d) Getting back to the verse, the point is God calls us to be loyal to our governments with the exception of cases where we get an order that is in direct violation of God's will. I used an example of when the government requires us to say, go kill or go steal something for the personal benefit of those in charge. Since I've now beaten that to death, back to the verses.
 - i) The main point that Solomon is making in these verses is that since we're required to be loyal to our government leaders, be careful what how one reacts when one is in the presence of a king. King's in Solomon's day had absolute power and there was no other branch of government to contradict a king. That way of living is the reminder that one has to be careful as to what one says in a king's presence.
 - e) Let me talk for a little bit about life under a monarchy. There is a classic joke in American Christianity that goes, "I'm not a Democrat or a Republican, I'm a monarchist." The idea of that joke is that one wants to live in a society where Jesus is our king and He alone is in charge of our lives. If one had a king ruling over us who judged fairly and honestly, that would be the most efficient form of government one can imagine. The problem with any form of government has to do with the corruption of power. That is why there is a desire among people for power and why we need a perfect "entity" to be a perfect king.
 - i) Since we don't have a perfect person as a king, I'm glad that I live in a society that always tries to keep a balance of power between different groups.
 - ii) In the meantime, Solomon's rule here of being careful what we say in the presence of our government leaders is a wise thing to learn as they do have power over how we do live out our lives.
 - iii) With that statement completed, Solomon has more to say about power over us.
4. Verse 5: Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure.
- a) Let's be honest, we can't get in trouble with a government leader if we obey what he, she or they require us to do. We may not like it, but that is not the issue here. Solomon does say here that having wisdom to know the right time and way to obey our leaders.
 - b) So are you saying, "Pay your taxes, don't rebel and keep your opinions to yourself?" The point here is that we can be risking our own lives when we rebel against our leaders. That is why one has to be careful and apply Godly wisdom to how we act to the commands we are given by our government. As I stated earlier, there are times in the bible where people did disobey those in authority because they believed it violated God's will for their lives. Just know that we may have to pay a heavy price to take the stand for what we believe is the right thing to do in any given situation.
 - c) Remember Solomon's goal here: Applying wisdom to our lives. He is simply saying that if a king tells us to do something we have to remember who is and who is not in charge. The wisdom here is figuring out how to best apply our leaders commands to our lives.
5. Verse 6: For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a man's misery weighs heavily upon him.
- a) One has to keep in mind what Solomon is thinking about as he writes these verses. His main thought is in effect, "Life is short, full of problems and what is the best way to live out one's life realizing that death is inevitable?" With that depressing thought in mind, Solomon here is saying, there is a right way and a wrong way to handle every situation that one finds one self in. Applying wisdom is the best way to get through one's life.
 - i) In the last set of verses, Solomon was talking about how to apply wisdom to our relationship with those who govern over our lives.
 - ii) Here in this verse, Solomon is saying, there is a right way and a wrong way to deal with whatever we have to deal with, no matter our mood is at the moment.
 - b) To describe this verse another way, "Life is hard enough as it is. Therefore one needs to acquire wisdom in life in order to deal with whatever problems we have to face today."

- c) This leads me back to our relationship with God the Father. There are many mornings in which I have prayed, "Dear God, I don't know what to do next. Make it obvious what it is that You want me to do today and how You want me to use my time." Solomon's solution is to get wisdom and make the best decision possible. My addition to that which I believe Solomon missed is that God wants to guide us to make those decisions.
 - d) In summary, pray for God to guide our lives, make daily bible reading a big part of one's life and then make the best decisions possible. Solomon's point is about getting wisdom to make decisions are right. What He missed is trusting God to help with those decisions.
6. Verse 7: Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come?
- a) Well if you are not convinced yet that Solomon is depressed about his future, this verse is what should convince us that he may be ready to jump off a cliff. Remember Solomon is thinking here about what is the purpose of living out our lives. Here he is saying that we don't know what is our future.
 - b) Like most of this book, Solomon is partially right, but he also misses the eternal picture. We do have no idea what will happen to us tomorrow, but we should still plan our lives with the likely concept that we will be alive here tomorrow. Living the Christian life is all about the assurance that not only we will live forever, but that God has a wonderful and eternal plan for our lives in exchange for serving Him. What we will come to at the end of this book is Solomon's realization that serving God now is the greatest purpose that one can for living out our lives. Before Solomon can get to that conclusion it is important for him to rule out all the other possibilities. At this point, Solomon appears to be depressed as he is thinking, "What is the purpose for living out our lives. Even if we have wisdom, what good is it if we don't know what is to come of our lives?" The good news is that we can know the outcome based on our trust in Jesus as the payment for our sins, then and only then can we use our lives to make that difference for God that He asks us to do.
7. Verse 8: No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death. As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it.
- a) Well, Solomon's obsession with his death continues in this verse. In these verses, he is trying to give us examples to consider how short life is and how we don't know when the time will come when our lives end.
 - i) Just as we can't control which way wind blows, so we don't know the date of our death. Just as in the time of war, there are no weekend passes given during battle times. Just as demonic forces won't let go of that desire to practice sin, so our lives will come to an end before we know it.
 - ii) Now if that doesn't depress us enough right there, nothing else will.
 - b) OK, let me say something positive quickly. Solomon is wrong. He lies here. The problem is Solomon is only focusing on life on this earth without God's eternal plan in mind. I will be the first to admit, that if this life is all that there is, he is right, it is depressing. If there is an eternal destiny, then all of the suffering of this life is worth it. As Paul put it:
 - i) "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied." (1st Corinthians 15:19, NIV). Paul's point is essentially the same as mine. If Jesus never died for my sins and I am serving Him, I am truly wasting my life if there is no life after this one. In fact, by Verse 32 of that chapter, Paul quotes Isaiah 22:13 that says, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." In both set of verses, the point is essentially if this life is all that there is, we are wasting our time serving God, so we might as well enjoy the short time we have to live on this planet.
 - c) This reminded me again of how some atheists view life. They think it is freeing to not be accountable to God and then go enjoy life as much as possible. Personally I'm not willing to "bet on that horse" as I have seen too much evidence that supports God's existence.

8. Verse 9: All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything done under the sun. There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own hurt.¹⁰ Then too, I saw the wicked buried--those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless.
- a) There is good news to counter this depressing section of the book. We win. Solomon is trying to rule out all the alternatives to living for God in this section. As one goes through this section of the book, keep in mind that Solomon is considering the different ways one can live out one's life without God's influence. That is why called this section of the book "true lies". It is about the futility of living a life without God guiding it. If that thought is not depressing enough, these two verses will do the trick.
 - i) It is like reading the middle of a novel and thinking, "this is depressing". The good news is there is a happy ending, but one has to get one's perspective right in order to appreciate that happy ending. That is what Solomon is trying to do here and I'm reminding us of our eternal destiny as we go through this sad part of the book.
 - b) With that not to happy statement completed, let me now focus on these two verses:
 - i) Solomon saw people ruling (or dominating or being in charge of) other people. He saw those in charge waste their lives focusing on hurting the people under them.
 - ii) As a king, I'm sure Solomon had to attend a lot of big funerals of other powerful people who ruled over many others. His point is he saw these powerful people be praised at their funeral. The problem was that while these people enjoyed riches and power and had a big funeral, Solomon also understood what a waste of a life that was.
 - iii) It comes back to the idea that if there is no God, then we too just try to enjoy life as much as possible as tomorrow we die. Solomon saw the meaningless of living to only get as much power or fame or wealth as possible. The problem with any and all of those things is that enough is never enough. That is why his conclusion after going to a lot of royal funerals was probably, "what a waste of time all of that is."
 - iv) Again, there is good news coming, but we are still in the middle of this book and we have to read onwards to discover the positive outcome of this story.
 - v) Speaking of saying something positive, the next three verses help in that regards:
9. Verse 11: When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong.¹² Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God.¹³ Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.
- a) Here is another set of word picture that is fairly easy for us to relate to. Solomon paints a vivid image of a life long criminal. Such a person may live out a long life, but his reaction is in effect, so what? Throughout history there has always been a criminal class of those who's outlook in life is effectively, "It's ok to steal if one can get away with it." They think that working an honest job is for "suckers" and they can live out and enjoy a greater life by stealing what does not rightfully belong to them.
 - b) Solomon's point is effectively, if there is no God, people do get away with a lot of stuff. If there is a God who judges people fairly, then such lifelong criminals have just wasted the most precious gift God has given them, "time" to not use their life for His glory.
 - c) In other words, to use one's life to make less money than a successful thief but to still fear God is a better way to live than one who lives a life as a criminal.
 - d) I am convinced that in order for one to truly change they have to have an encounter with the true God. I know a wonderful man who after spending time in prison did change his life for the better after realizing that God has forgiven him and will judge his life. He now serves God in a mighty way. That new life is what Solomon desires of us in these verses.

- e) Let me now talk about these verses another way. Solomon obviously believes in God and believes in His judgment based on these verses. This book does not deny His existence or the fact that Solomon is convinced God will judge people one day. That is not the issue. The main question of the book is "What is the best use of our time?" Earlier, Solomon was thinking about powerful men and how they are forgotten after they die. Here the focus is on hardened criminals and the fact they will be judged by God for how they have wasted their lives just as powerful men who ruled over others will be judged for not using their lives to make a difference for God.
- i) Remember why I call this section "true lies". The lie is that there is no purpose for living that makes an eternal difference. Solomon is thinking of the lives of lots of people around him and thinking, "What a waste of time their lives are". However, Solomon is failing to consider those who do use their lives to make a difference for God in this world. Solomon will eventually come to the correct conclusion, but as I keep saying we are still in the middle of the book and not at the end of it.
- ii) Meanwhile, I have more verses to go in this chapter as well as Chapter 9.
10. Verse 14: There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: righteous men who get what the wicked deserve, and wicked men who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless.¹⁵ So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun.
- a) So here is Solomon contemplating the meaning of life and he sees bad things happening to good people and good things happen to bad people. His conclusion so far based on Verse 15 is that people should "eat drink and be merry" given the short time we have to live on this planet. Now think about the quote I gave from Paul in 1st Corinthians 15:32 where he says sarcastically, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."
- b) Solomon in his misery in thinking about the futility of life is sort of saying, "Might as well enjoy the time one has to live, because life is not fair. Good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people. Make the best of the life God has given us to live and enjoy it as much as one can."
- i) Again, think about my lesson title of "true lies". If Solomon is just saying that we should live and enjoy life as much as possible, he is seeing the same sort of futility that Paul and Isaiah saw about life without living a God centered life.
- ii) Let me explain this concept another way: Solomon thinks that we should make the best of the life that God has given us. We should enjoy it as much as we can, as we don't get any more time than the time we have. If we only think in terms of doing what is best for us, that is the way to live. However, if we think in terms of what can we do to make a difference for God, then and only then does our life have an eternal purpose. That is what Solomon is missing as he contemplates life here.
- c) Let me end this section with another thought: What if I am already using my life to make a difference for God? Why should I read further? To understand the things that all of us do that are a waste of time. It is to remind each of us that the most valuable asset we own is our time. It's too easy for even the most devout Christian to get one's focus back on our issues of the moment and forget that all too valuable asset we have called our time.
- d) Meanwhile, I have two verses left to cover in this chapter.
11. Verse 16: When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe man's labor on earth--his eyes not seeing sleep day or night--¹⁷ then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it.
- a) Solomon's conclusion at this point in the book that despite the gift of wisdom that God has given him, he figures out that no one can comprehend a true meaning of life.

- b) To state Solomon's words here another way, he looks at all the good things and bad things that occur in the world that he lived in and thought one can spend a lifetime searching for reasons to live and never really understand how this world works.
 - i) Solomon is making the colorful observation in Verse 16 that even if one never ever needed to go to sleep and one lived a long time, one still can't figure out why the world exists as it does. So are you saying that thinking about life is a true waste of one's time? No, he is just saying that no matter how hard one tries one can never fully understand it. If you recall from the last lesson, Solomon was frustrated that he can barely comprehend one man out of a thousand and couldn't figure out any woman whatsoever. (Chapter 7, Verse 27). Now here he is saying not only can't he figure out people, he can't figure out the way the world works.
 - ii) Lets be honest, this is one depressed king.
 - iii) Now let's think about this from our perspective. Can we fully ever comprehend how our world operates? Hardly. Can we fully understand everything that goes on in the mind of another person? No. We can be like Solomon here and complain that no matter how wise we are, we can't figure everything out, or, here's the key, trust in the God who created everything to guide us as to how to live our lives.
 - iv) To say it another way, the reason we should pray daily for God's guidance, and a great reason to study one' bible daily and a great reason to spend time with other believers is to use the most valuable gift God gave us, our time, in order to make a difference for Him in this world. No one cannot fully comprehend how the world works or fully comprehend people. However, we can get through life by putting our trust in a God who not only knows all things but wants to guide our lives for His glory. Does that mean life will never get difficult? Of course not. At the same time, we have this power source at our disposal to guide us as to how He (not us) wants us to live out our lives.
 - v) So if we do those things regularly, then what? We don't have to pray over every little decision we make. We just make the best decisions possible knowing that God desires to guide us. Also, it is a willingness on our part to be open to having the Spirit of God lead us as He wants to lead us to live out our lives.
 - vi) With that happy conclusion stated, it is time to get depressed again and see what Solomon has to say to us in Chapter 9. It's relatively short, falls along the same theme and it is worth combining in one lesson.

12. Chapter 9, Verse 1: So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no man knows whether love or hate awaits him. ² All share a common destiny--the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not. As it is with the good man, so with the sinner; as it is with those who take oaths, so with those who are afraid to take them.
- a) OK, if Chapter 8 didn't depress us enough, Chapter 9 may require us to get far away from say, sharp objects until we discuss it a little more. Solomon's main point in these verses is simply that no matter how one lives out their lives, they still have to deal with the reality that all people die one day.
 - b) To say these verses another way, everybody's time is in God's hands. Solomon believes in a God who knows everything and that God knows the exact hour when all people will die be they good or bad people. What if one say, commits suicide? The point isn't that we all know the hour we die, the point is that God does.
 - c) So God knows how long I have to live. What is the point of having these verses here? The point is Solomon uses this chapter to remind all of us that our time on this earth is limited and we have to make a good use of the most valuable thing God gives us our time. It is to trust in His guidance to make the best use of that time.

- d) But what about the common destiny of all people issue? Let me explain that better.
 - i) I am convinced that Solomon did believe in a heaven and a hell. He did believe that people get a different destiny after they die and it does matter how does one live out their lives here. That's not his point. His point is that we don't know what the future holds for us, either in the rest of this lifetime or in the next lifetime.
 - ii) To put this concept another way, we know God will judge us, but Solomon is not sure how God will judge people. Let me put this in context. Solomon was saying at the end of the last chapter he didn't get how the world worked. By the end of Chapter 7 he was saying he didn't know how people think. Now he's making the point that He doesn't get how God will deal with us after we die. In other words, no matter how smart or wise we are, we are not capable of judging people the way that God can.
 - iii) OK, John, one more time, so what? His point is since we don't know what is our eternal destiny Solomon isn't sure how to live out the rest of his life. Again, he is making the mistake of trying to live life without God's guidance. Solomon realizes that God exists and it is better to live a moral life and a God-serving life than a life just living for our own pleasure. What Solomon didn't get is one's trust in Him in order to live the type of life He desires of us. Let's move on and then I can explain better what Solomon misses in this section.
13. Verse 3: This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of men, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead. ⁴ Anyone who is among the living has hope--even a live dog is better off than a dead lion!
- a) I can summarize these two verses with one simple thought: "No matter how hard you try, all life leads to death." People and animals that are living are better off than dead ones as once one dies, there is no more hope for that human as their eternal fate is now set.
 - b) The "evil" that Solomon is talking about in this verse, is not just evil deeds or evil people. It is the idea that no matter how hard one tries, death comes to us all. Solomon is being so fatalistic here it is depressing to even read. Solomon is also describing how some people are obsessed with discovering what causes evil and truthfully it can't be fully understood.
 - i) The best way to think about evil is simply to accept that it exists and we can't do anything to stop the fact it exists. Yes it can be fought and defeated, but the point is we can't wipe out it's existence or ever fully comprehend the evil acts that exist in our world. Just as Solomon can't figure out all the things that God does and just as he can't figure people out, Solomon can't figure out why evil exists.
 - c) It may help to step back a bit and see the bigger picture here. Solomon knew that he had a gift from God to make wise decisions. The problem Solomon had is that he is figuring out that no matter how much wisdom he had, there are things about life that are beyond his ability to fully comprehend. OK, that is life. What do we do about that? That is why it is so necessary for us to trust in God's guidance to live out the type of life that He wants us to live. That does not mean we will be all wise or understand all things. It just means that we need to depend upon His guidance to live the type of life He wants us to live.
 - d) I keep thinking about the famous "love" Chapter in 1st Corinthians 13. Paul's main point in Verse 2 of that that chapter is in effect, "Even if I was all wise and I can figure out all things about life, if I don't have the love of God working in my life, all of that knowledge is a big waste of time." Now here is Solomon with lots of wisdom, admitting that he can't figure out all things in life. My response is, "well, who asked you to in the first place?" That is why we are dependant upon God for our guidance and not even try to understand all that happens to our lives in the first place. That is the point here. Meanwhile, let's get back to Solomon in his depressive state of mind:

14. Verse 5: For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. ⁶ Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.
- a) Solomon is strictly thinking here from a human perspective. It is the tough realization of the fact that once we die, sooner or later even the memory of us is gone. Solomon is not saying that we can't think in heaven. Jesus tells a true story of a man named Lazarus and an unnamed poor man living in hell. In that story Lazarus could think and reason after he died. (Luke 16:19-31). With that said, Solomon is strictly focusing on life here on earth.
 - b) OK John, I'm tired of being depressed thinking about dying and my limited time here on earth. Can you cheer me up a little here? Happy to help. If we realize that our time here is limited, it is actually freeing. It is the reminder that if time is precious, how should we be using it that truly makes a difference? If as Solomon correctly says, sooner or later no person will care that we are dead, then let's use our lives for things that eternally matter.
 - c) So how do we use our time for things that matter to God? Great question. It begins by asking God to forgive us our sins and trust in Jesus complete payment for our sins. Then it is a matter of saying, "OK, God, my time is yours. What do you want me to do with it?" It is amazing to hear people's answers when asking what one wants to do with their lives if say money was not an issue. I always encourage people to work towards what they do believe God is calling them to do even if they can't accomplish that goal right now. Also consider what one is naturally good at. It is a matter of using the gifts God has given us to make that difference for Him in this lifetime. In summary, pray one's way through that issue, it will amaze us how God can use our lives if we are willing to commit our time into His hands.
 - d) Speaking of getting cheered up, Solomon mood improves a little in the next few verses.
15. Verse 7: Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favors what you do. ⁸ Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. ⁹ Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun-- all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. ¹⁰ Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.
- a) Solomon gets fatalistic in these verses. To paraphrase him, "Look I am willing to admit this life is ultimately meaningless. Therefore, enjoy it as much as possible as this is the only life you will ever get. We can't escape death, so enjoy what blessings that one has in life and make the best of it".
 - b) This leads me back to my title of "true lies". The lie is that this life is not all that there is. The true lie is that one does not have to just accept the fate of one's life and make the best of it. The true lie is that we can have a greater purpose in life than just accepting the fate that we have in this life. The true lie is that after we die, there is still going to be concepts that we can relate to. I don't believe after we die, we sit around in heaven in a big house all day and do nothing. That would bore all of us well to death. I'm convinced that God has us thinking, planning and working in heaven, but that's getting off the point. The key point is that Solomon's fatalist view of life is a lie. If we get nothing else out of this study, just remember that Solomon's view of life is well, partially true and partially a lie.
 - c) It is true that based on this life alone, we can be that fatalistic and think, we might as well make the best of this life as we will die before we know it so let's enjoy life while we can. If we realize that God wants to use our lives for His glory, then we can and should live a life far greater than the fatalistic view that Solomon lays out in these verses. By living a life for God, we don't have to accept "this is all that there is" and make the best of it. We can use our time to make a difference for God in this world by asking Him how to use it.

- d) Before I move on, let me make some specific points about these verses. Verse 7 says that we should eat our food and drink wine with a joyful heart as that is what God desires we do with our lives.
- i) The truth in that verse is that God wants us to have joy in our lives. The lie is that this life is all that we should care about as live it out.
 - ii) Verse 8 says "always be clothed in white and always put oil on our heads". No that is not a fashion statement that we only need to wear white garments. Again he is just making a point about how to enjoy this life. To wear dark clothing in a place like Israel that is hot all the time will just make us, well hotter. A custom in that hot climate is to pour oil on one's head, as that is a way of getting relief from the heat. The truth is these methods would keep us cooler. The lie is about only caring about this life, and ignores the one to come.
 - iii) In Verse 9, Solomon recommends to enjoy life with the wife we have. To state the obvious, he is addressing this to men. Remember that Solomon had 1,000 women in his life, so he is not writing this based on personal experience. I don't even think Solomon is saying that everyone has to be married. Again the truth here is about having joy in the life that we have. I do believe that one should enjoy as much as one can about this life as it is the only one we get. The lie is to think that the only way to enjoy life is based on having that fatalistic attitude. I have learned that the greatest moments in my life are those where I am positive I am being used by God to make a difference in the world. That brings far more joy than any of the things that Solomon lists here in these verses.
 - iv) In Verse 10, Solomon mentions work. The truth is that working brings a purpose to our lives that are not to be denied. To state the obvious, if one is sick or one has lost one's job, some time is needed to deal with that. His point here is that work is to be appreciated as a gift from God. The lie is that work is all that there is that we have been called to do in this lifetime. To state it another way, if we dedicate our entire life to just say earning as much as we can, we have wasted our lives.
 - v) Now that I've separated the truth from the lies of these verses, let's move on.
16. Verse 11: I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.
- a) Well, if Solomon wasn't fatalistic enough so far in this chapter, he gets worse here. His point is essentially that he has seen "losers" win sometimes. Solomon is not saying that we should not try to achieve our goals. He is saying that no matter how hard we try, we have to accept the fact there is some luck involved in the outcomes. For example, there are times when the long shot wins the race. There are times when someone who does not have a formal education outsmarts those who do. Most of us who have lived a while, do know this to be true at times. Of course, most of the time hard work and learning do pay off in life. His point is we have to accept the fact that chance also occurs in life.
 - b) Ok John so what? Where's the "true lie" here to steal your lesson title? The lie is that this life is not all that there is. The truth is that God will judge us fairly even if this life doesn't always treat us fairly or give us the rewards we have worked so hard to achieve. It's still worth the trouble to try to achieve our goals even if we don't make to the finish line or if by luck or chance, we don't get the prize we desire in this lifetime. In other words, to live a God centered life means we will always win even if we don't get the outcome to what it is we are trying to achieve at the moment.
 - c) While that may seem like good common sense advice, we all make the mistake of getting our focus off of God and onto our issues. That is why Solomon (and I) are reminding us of the importance of keeping our focus on Him and not just the goal we want to achieve.

17. Verse 12: Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.
- a) In other words, we don't know when our time is up. That is what Solomon is saying here. No matter how long we may live this life, it will seem too short and it will come to an end.
 - b) Again the lie is to think that this is all there is to life. Solomon is making the mistake to think just living a good moral life is good enough. The truth is about how we need to live out a God centered life in order to make the best use of the time we have. With that reality stated, let me move on and finish the chapter.
18. Verse 13: I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me: ¹⁴ There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siegeworks against it. ¹⁵ Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. ¹⁶ So I said, "Wisdom is better than strength." But the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.
- a) Solomon gives one more example here of how hard work does not always pay off. Here he is describing an army attacking a city. The way an army attacked a walled city is to first surround it with troops so no one could escape and then build things to tear down the walls or the gates of that city. In this example, it is describing a single poor man who somehow had the wisdom to save the city despite this powerful army coming against it. The story does not explain how the poor but wise man did this, but just the fact that after the city was saved and assumedly everyone thanked this man, the rest of the residents of that city went back to their lives and ignored that man because he was poor.
 - b) Solomon's point is not whether or not this story is true or even possible. The point is that people will ignore a hero once that deed is done. Consider someone who has done a great deed, he or she may be a hero for a while, but that praise is short lived.
 - c) So is Solomon saying it is better to be wealthy than to be poor with wisdom? No, as it was that wisdom of the poor man that saved the city. Solomon's point is that having wisdom only does so much good in life. One has to balance acquiring wisdom with other factors in order to live a life that is pleasing to God as well as one can enjoy. In other words, if we just spend our whole life just acquiring wisdom, that is not a complete way to live life.
19. Verse 17: The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools.
- a) Solomon balances the fact that one cannot live by human wisdom alone with the fact that having wisdom with no power is better than having power but no wisdom. OK John, that is a nice little proverb and a good truth about life, where is the lie in that proverb? I don't see a lie here, it is just a balance to see the value of wisdom in context with other desires and needs we have in life. The lie is that human wisdom is not all that there is to gather in order to live the life that God desires of us. With that said, we're ready for the last verse of this chapter.
20. Verse 18: Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.
- a) Remember Solomon's illustration about how a poor but wise man provided the way that a powerful army was stopped from defeating a city? Solomon is coming back to that point by saying having the wisdom to make the right decisions is better than accumulating lots of power. This verse is not saying that warfare is always a bad thing or that warfare can be overcome by wisdom. Solomon is just making a comparison being spending one's time learning how to make wise decisions as opposed to using one's time to acquire power in order to defeat others.
 - b) The related point is the second half of this verse that states another obvious fact that one who is sinning can destroy a lot of good things. OK, what is wrong with that statement? Nothing. Remember that in this section, Solomon states a lot of truths about the way that life works, but misses the need for our daily dependence upon God for that wisdom.

21. As I wrap up this lesson, the point is not that Solomon is wrong about how to acquire wisdom. What Solomon misses is that he focuses on wisdom strictly on what we can gather by living out our lives without bothering God. The truth is we can learn a lot by living the way that Solomon asks us to live. What we miss by living Solomon's way is the greatest source in the universe that wants to guide our lives to make a difference for Him. Speaking of living that way, why don't we pray that way in our closing prayer:
22. Father, first of all thank you that we can't earn our salvation or be more loved in your eyes based on how we live. You want us to live to glorify You not to earn Your love but just because that is the best way for us to live, by glorying You with our life. With that said, we each ask for specific guidance in what it is You desire of us, so that we can use our time to make a difference for you in the world around us. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.