



## Ecclesiastes 1:8-11

(8) All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. (9) The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. (10) Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. (11) There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

*King James Version*

Solomon continues with a similar theme of profitlessness except that he draws his illustrations from human examples. None of this means that mankind is not moving about. Earth is witness to a great deal of activity, but it is essentially purposeless, a great deal of sound and fury but with no advancement in quality of life or purposeful direction. Solomon's word-pictures show mankind striving to see and hear new things, but the reality is more repetition of the same old things. He pictures mankind as little more than a milling mass.

A partial reason for this is that mankind seems to be cursed with a short memory while at the same time having an insatiable thirst for novelty. In [Acts 17:19-21](#), Luke describes the apostle Paul's experience in Athens:

And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean." For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

Understanding this desire, entrepreneurs take advantage of it to make money. So, there must be new, better, bigger, redesigned, more serviceable, more attractive, faster, safer, and more economical models each year. The entertainment industry thrives on this desire by trying to fill people's need for emotional satisfaction by devising new angles to tell the same old stories.

However, what this need really exposes is that our present life, combined with what we are looking forward to in the future, is not fulfilling enough to satisfy us. A vital element is missing from life: the overall perspective regarding life itself combined with the lack of a relationship with [God](#).

Solomon does not mean that there are no new technologies or inventions. By saying "there is nothing new under the sun," he is attempting to stimulate the reader to consider what might effectively improve the quality of his life. The bulk of mankind lives by the same basic patterns as Adam and Eve did after God kicked them out of the Garden. Solomon is searching for a hopeful way of life, one that will fill a person with [joy](#) and his mind with pure, godly inspiration and character.

He then states, "All things are wearisome" ([Ecclesiastes 1:8](#), margin). Do we agree with his assessment to this point? Is he right in his litany of mankind's purposeless, hamster-like, monotonous life that leads nowhere? If so, Solomon has achieved his purpose of making us understand that he is making sense—that "vanity of vanities" is the only honest assessment of life on earth as long as people are doggedly, but without a large measure of truth, seeking purpose and profit only "under the sun."

What Solomon has shown to this point is not the full story. In fact, he has just begun! Using generalities, he has exposed only the broad extent of the problem. Specifics will be added later.

Nevertheless, he has already revealed the key to changing our approach to life: It lies in taking on a different perspective. "Under the sun" is equivalent to drawing a horizontal line between earthly and heavenly realities but focusing entirely or almost entirely on the earthly ones. If a person does this, then we must accept the fruit, as described by Solomon, to be inevitable

because that is all that carnality can produce. However, a higher reality exists, and it is what Solomon urges his readers to change to. It is the spiritual reality we have been created to participate in.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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