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## Daily Devotional - Monday, September 2, 2024 - IS EVERYTHING MEANINGLESS?

SEPTEMBER 02ND 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

### Daily Devotional - Monday, September 2, 2024 - IS EVERYTHING MEANINGLESS?

At first glance, the book of Ecclesiastes may seem to have a pessimistic outlook on life. Why would a whole book in the Bible say that everything is meaningless? But certainly, many of us can identify with the feeling. When life is hard, we may ask ourselves: “What is the point?” or “What am I here for?” But the message of Ecclesiastes is this: Life with God is *not* meaningless.

The word translated “meaningless” is *hebel* in Hebrew; it appears nearly 40 times in Ecclesiastes. It’s been translated negatively since Jerome used *vanitas* (“vanity”) in his Latin Vulgate. But in Hebrew it means “breath” or “vapor” and is used metaphorically to refer to

things that do not produce their intended results. Interestingly, the name “Abel” is also derived from the word *hebel*. In Genesis 4, we see an early example of the “upside-down world” in which we now live. Righteous Abel received the curse of wickedness—a short life, no family, no land, no wealth. While his brother Cain, acting with wickedness, received the blessing of righteousness—a long life, a large family, land, and wealth.

This upside-down world is what the Teacher refers to when he calls something *hebel*. Life has been turned upside down by sin. We’ve all experienced this. Sometimes the fastest runner doesn’t win the race (Eccl. 9:11). Sometimes there is wickedness where there should be righteousness (Eccl. 3:16). And physical death is coming for all of us, sinner or not (Eccl. 9:2).

*“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.*

*“Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless!”*

**ECCLESIASTES 1:2**

Every time you see the word “meaningless” in Ecclesiastes, try inserting the phrase “like Abel.” Ecclesiastes is an honest assessment of life “under the sun.” It is also a robust theological reflection on how to navigate this world—through living in right relationship with God and enjoying His gifts.

Go Deeper

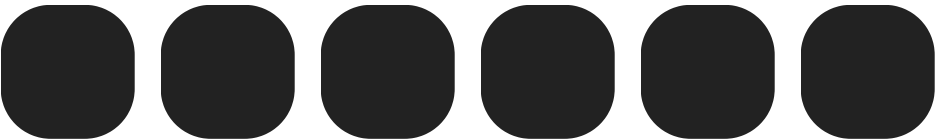
Read Abel’s story in Genesis 4. What has been “like Abel” in your own life?

**Pray with Us:** Is everything meaningless? In this world marred by sin, it may seem so. But Your Word, Lord God, gives us encouragement and great joy—that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us and gave us life, peace, and freedom. Hallelujah!

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, August 27, 2024 - ELIHU: HOW GREAT IS GOD

AUGUST 27TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

How accurately can we predict the weather? Most researchers agree that forecasting accuracy has dramatically improved (now at around 97 percent), but it only applies to short-term calculations. “Research has repeatedly reached the same conclusions: We can predict the weather up to 14 days in advance at best,” said meteorologist Dr. Michael Riemer.

In the book of Job, Elihu continues to speak, now turning His focus to God. Elihu poses questions humans have puzzled over for centuries. Among them are: “Who can understand how he spreads out the clouds, how he thunders from his pavilion?” (36:29), “Do you know how God controls the clouds and makes his lightning flash?” (37:15).

*God's voice thunders in marvelous ways; he does great things beyond our understanding.*

**JOB 37:5**

The Bible points us to the One who created and controls the wind and the rain, the lightning and thunder. The Almighty God knows the future and has complete power over all creation. Elihu is correct when he says that God is “beyond our understanding” (Job 36:26).

In chapters 35 to 37, Elihu celebrates God’s work as Creator: “God is exalted in his power. Who is a teacher like him?” (36:22). “He says to the snow, ‘Fall on the earth,’ and to the rain shower, ‘Be a mighty downpour.’” (37:6). “The breath of God produces ice, and the broad waters become frozen. He loads the clouds with moisture; he scatters his lightning through them” (37:10).

Our natural curiosity about the created world directs us to the One who designed, created, and maintains the extremely complex systems of nature. “For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:16–17).

## Go Deeper

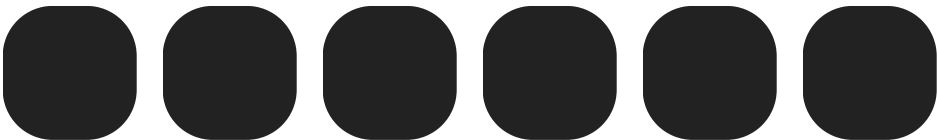
What does Elihu get right about God? How does creation help us better understand the Creator?

**Pray with Us:** Dear God, thank You for Your creation! We can look at the world around us and praise You: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Ps. 19:1).

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# Daily Devotional - Monday, August 26, 2024 - ELIHU: RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION

AUGUST 26TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, August 26, 2024 - ELIHU: RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION

When I was young, my dad and I watched the movie *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. In the story Jefferson Smith stood up against corruption by holding a 24-hour, one-man filibuster on the

Senate floor. In his speech, he wasn't just speaking to the Senate chair, but to the entire Senate and any onlookers.

Elihu has been giving Job his opinion on the man's desperate situation. Now, he moves from talking to Job to addressing the crowd that had gathered. He begins, "Hear my words, you wise

men; listen to me, you men of learning" (v. 2). He speaks to them as if they were a jury in a court case that would give a verdict after his final argument. He ends with the appeal, "Men of understanding declare, wise men who hear me say to me, 'Job speaks without knowledge; his words lack insight'" (vv. 34–35).

*Be kind and compassionate to one another.*

**EPHESIANS 4:32**

What is Elihu's verdict? He not only views Job as a person covering up sin, but he also said Job was in a state of rebellion. "To his sin he adds rebellion; scornfully he claps his hands among us and multiplies his words against God" (v. 37). The clapping of the hands is an expression of contempt. Lamentations 2 states, "All who pass your way clap their hands at you; they scoff and shake their heads at the Daughter of Jerusalem" (Lam. 2:15).

Elihu is anything but kind toward Job. He publicly scolded him and actively recruited others to join in his "righteous" indignation toward this dear man of God. Do we do the same? With the advent of social media, it can be easy to publicly attack a fellow Christian without knowing the whole story. In Job 34, Elihu shows us how it's done.

## Go Deeper

What can we learn from Elihu when we comment on social media? Do you think twice before criticizing a fellow Christian? Do you try to get others to side with you?

**Pray with Us:** We give You thanks, almighty God, for nourishing us in Christ. By Your Spirit, You assure us that we belong to Your family and are heirs to Your everlasting kingdom. Help us to be encouragers to others, and not critics.

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## Daily Devotional - Friday, August 23, 2024 - Living with Integrity

AUGUST 23RD 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, August 23, 2024 - Living with Integrity

Do you remember report card day in elementary school? Your teacher would send home a report card that evaluated how well you performed at math, science, and the rest of your subjects. If you got good grades, you were happy to bring your report card home. But if your report was less than stellar, you hid it at the bottom of your backpack.

In chapter 31, we get Job's report card. In a self-evaluation, Job expresses the integrity of his life. He had fulfilled the requirements of God's Law, and more. He did not follow the longings of his flesh but lived a blameless life (v. 6). Job lists a series of challenges that begin with "if." In essence, "if" he did these things, then his punishment would be justified. However, implied in these challenges is the truth that he hadn't done them.

*Does he not see my ways and count my every step?*

**JOB 31:4**

He lists example after example: "If I have walked with falsehood" (v. 5); "if my steps have turned from the path, if my heart has been led by my eyes, or if my hands have been

defiled” (v. 7); “if my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor's door” (v. 9); “if I have denied justice to any of my servants” (v. 13); “if I have denied the desires of the poor” (v. 16). Job concludes: “If I have concealed my sin as people do, by hiding my guilt in the crowd,” then God’s punishment would have been justified (v. 33).

Clearly, Job lived a remarkable life. In both Job 1:1 and 1:8, he is described as “blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.” Job is not hiding his report card. His life was an open book, clearly demonstrating His obedience and respect for God.

## Go Deeper

If you were to look back at your faith journey, what do you think your own report card would look like? Consider how you can aspire to fear God and live a life that is blameless and upright.

**Pray with Us:** God of light and truth, before the brightness of Your presence even the angels veil their faces. Yet You came to dwell with us in Christ. You’ve shown us the path of righteousness. Keep us, we pray, from straying from this path!

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# Daily Devotional - Wednesday, August 21, 2024 - Longing for God

AUGUST 21ST 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

## Daily Devotional - Wednesday, August 21, 2024 - Longing for God

Is there a time in your life that you would love to revisit? For me, it would be the summers during my elementary school years. They were filled with bike riding, popsicles, ice cream, picnics, and playing with friends. My biggest concern was: “Is it going to rain today?”

Job reminisced about days that were much more consequential than just childhood memories. Job longed for the days when he was in intimate fellowship with God. He began in chapter 29 with the words: “How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me” (v. 2). “Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God’s intimate friendship blessed my house” (v. 4).

*How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me.*

**JOB 29:2**

Job recalled God’s goodness in his life. Poetically Job states, “My path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil” (v. 6). What a beautiful picture of God’s generous love and guidance! God had elevated Job to a place of influence. “When I went to the gate of the city and took my seat in the public square, the young men saw me and stepped aside and old men rose to their feet” (vv. 7–8).

We are given insight into the type of man Job was, a man of kindness and justice. “I rescued the poor who cried for help and the fatherless who had none to assist him. The man who was dying blessed me and I made the widow’s heart sing. I put on righteousness as my clothing and justice was my robe and my turban” (vv. 12–14).

Job’s walk with God was as intimate as a person’s walk could be. His service to God was a model for others to follow. Job provides a model for us in our own walk with God.

[Go Deeper](#)



As you reflect on your life, how has God blessed you? What can you resolve to do today to pursue God and a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ?

**Pray with Us:** Lord, our hearts are full of gratitude for the faithful believers we encounter in Your Word, men and women of God, Job among them. May we learn from them with open hearts, modeling our own walk with You on their example.

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