



# REFLECTIONS

October 6, 2019

**"Meaningless! Meaningless!"  
says the Teacher.  
"Utterly meaningless!  
Everything is meaningless."**

*Ecclesiastes 1:2*

## Search for Meaning

What a teacher believes is generally what students are taught. The "Teacher" recounting his life experiences in *Ecclesiastes* clearly had power and means to possess whatever he wanted. Meaningless, he described the pursuit of all those things to be. Nothing satisfied. Possessions are never enough; pleasures are fleeting; and wisdom and power carry heavy burdens. When the chase of human desires proved meaningless, he implicitly asks, "What is the meaning of life?"

The question is as old as time. Aristotle, the great philosopher, held that mankind's ultimate purpose in life is the pursuit of happiness. Happiness, he defined, meant neither pleasure nor virtue. Nor is it a permanent state of being. Rather happiness is found when looking back at life's end to sense joy from a virtuous life lived by controlling human instincts. The Teacher's conclusion of the matter sounds much the same: *Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man.* (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

God's commands Jesus recalled from Deuteronomy reads: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself,'"* (Matthew 22:37-39)

Love God. Love our neighbor. Happiness (joy and gladness) surely follow. That's what the Teacher tries to teach once he found the pursuit of human desires unsatisfying. Aristotle reasoned that perfection of human nature (becoming the perfect person through virtuous living) would gain happiness. Both arguments line up with God's commands. Love God. Love your neighbor. Life's meaning will surely follow.

Human instincts lead most of us on a chase after the personal desires the Teacher describes. But it seems we must discover for ourselves that selfish pursuits offer no meaning for life. Yet, it's just as the Teacher taught. Possessions are never enough; pleasures are fleeting; and wisdom and power come with heavy burdens.

Love God. Love your neighbor. Jesus lived this answer. *"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."* (John 15:13)

With the sacrifice of our lives for God's glory and the well-being of others the search for meaning ends. Joy fills the soul at the sound of the Master's precious words,

*"Well done, good and faithful servant!"* (Matthew 25:21)

*You are the light of the world,*

*Richard +*

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