

# Ecclesiastes reader's theater and choral reading

## Everything is Futile

CHARACTERS: A, B (Leaders 1 & 2), All

SETTING: bare stage

RUN TIME: 2 minutes/page

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: Ecclesiastes 1-12 (HCSB)

A: The words of the Teacher,

ALL: son of David,

B: king in Jerusalem.

TEACHER: Absolute futility. Everything is futile. What does a man gain for all his efforts that he labors at under the sun?

A: A generation goes and a generation comes,

ALL: but the earth remains forever.

B: The sun rises and the sun sets;

ALL: panting, it returns to its place where it rises.

A: Gusting to the south, turning to the north,

ALL: turning, turning, goes the wind,

B: and the wind returns in its cycles.

A: All the streams flow to the sea.

ALL: Yet the sea is never full.

B: The streams are flowing to the place,

ALL: and they flow there again.

TEACHER: All things are wearisome; man is unable to speak.

A: The eye is not satisfied by seeing

ALL: or the ear filled with hearing.

B: What has been is what will be,

ALL: and what has been done is what will be done;

TEACHER: there is nothing new under the sun.

ALL: Can one say about anything,

A: (excited) Look, this is new!

ALL: It has already existed in the ages before us.

TEACHER: There is no remembrance of those who came before; and of those who will come after there will also be no remembrance by those who follow them.

# The Limitations of Wisdom

CHARACTERS: NEWS 1, NEWS 2, Teacher

SETTING: news interview

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 1

NEWS 1: You call yourself “the teacher”. Who are you?

TEACHER: I, the Teacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

NEWS 2: Tell us about this investigation you did.

TEACHER: I applied my mind to seek and explore through wisdom all that is done under heaven.

NEWS 1: Why?

TEACHER: God has given people this miserable task to keep them occupied.

NEWS 2: What was the conclusion of your investigation?

TEACHER: I have seen all the things that are done under the sun and have found everything to be futile, a pursuit of the wind.

NEWS 1: Can you tell us something specific?

TEACHER: What is crooked cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.

NEWS 2: Aren’t you one of the wisest men in the world?

TEACHER: I have amassed wisdom far beyond all those who were over Jerusalem before me, and my mind has thoroughly grasped wisdom and knowledge.

NEWS 1: What did you discover when you applied your mind to know wisdom, knowledge, madness and folly?

TEACHER: I learned that this too is a pursuit of the wind. For with much wisdom is much sorrow; as knowledge increases, grief increases.

# The Emptiness of Pleasure and Possessions

CHARACTERS: NEWS 1, NEWS 2, Teacher

SETTING: news interview

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 2, 3

NEWS 1: What about the philosophy that says live for pleasure?

NEWS 2: Enjoying life with wine and grasping foolishness?

TEACHER: I said to myself, “Go ahead, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy what is good so I could see what is good for people to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.

NEWS 1: What does pleasure accomplish?

TEACHER: Nothing. It turned out to be futile.

NEWS 2: What do you have to say about laughter?

TEACHER: Laughter is madness.

NEWS 1: How about achievements? Is it fulfilling to rack those up?

TEACHER: No. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made gardens and parks for myself and planted every kind of fruit tree in them.

NEWS 1: Didn't you construct irrigation reservoirs of water?

TEACHER: Yes. They watered a grove of flourishing trees. But there was still nothing to be gained under the sun.

NEWS 2: But you owned so much?

TEACHER: True. I acquired male and female servants and had slaves who were born in my house. I also owned many herds of cattle and flocks, more than all who were before me in Jerusalem.

NEWS 1: And you amassed silver, gold, and the treasure of kings and provinces.

TEACHER: I gathered male and female singers for myself, and many concubines, the delights of men.

NEWS 2: You became the greatest and surpassed all who were before you in Jerusalem.

TEACHER: All that my eyes desired, I did not deny them. I did not refuse myself any pleasure, for I took pleasure in all my struggles.

NEWS 1: What was your reward for all your struggles?

TEACHER: (deeply depressed) When I considered all that I had accomplished and what I had labored to achieve, I found everything to be futile and a pursuit of the wind.

NEWS 2: What does the worker gain from his struggles?

TEACHER: I have seen the task that God has given people to keep them occupied. He has made everything appropriate in its time.

NEWS 1: Can you elaborate on that?

TEACHER: He has also put eternity in their hearts, but man cannot discover the work God has done from beginning to end.

NEWS 2: What is better for people than to rejoice and enjoy the good life?

TEACHER: Nothing. It is the gift of God whenever anyone eats, drinks, and enjoys all his efforts.

NEWS 1: Is it true that all God does will last forever; there is no adding to it or taking from it?

TEACHER: Yes, that is true. God works so that people will be in awe of Him. Whatever is, has already been, and whatever will be, already is. God repeats what has passed.

#### *OPTIONAL*

NEWS 1: Do you mean things like the rock and water cycle that God created?

TEACHER: Yes.

# The Relative Value of Wisdom and Emptiness of Work

CHARACTERS: NEWS 1, NEWS 2, Teacher, A, B, All

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 2

TEACHER: Then I turned to consider wisdom, madness, and folly, for what will the man be like who comes after the king?

ALL: He will do what has already been done.

TEACHER: And I realized that there is an advantage to wisdom over folly, like the advantage of light over darkness.

A: The wise man has eyes in his head,

ALL: but the fool walks in darkness.

TEACHER: Yet I also knew that one fate comes to them both. So I said to myself, "What happens to the fool will also happen to me. Why then have I been overly wise?" This is also futile.

B: For, just like the fool, there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man,

ALL: since in the days to come both will be forgotten.

A: How is it that the wise man dies just like the fool?

TEACHER: Therefore, I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me.

ALL: For everything is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

TEACHER: I hated all my work that I labored at under the sun because I must leave it to the man who comes after me.

B: And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool?

TEACHER: Yet he will take over all my work that I labored at skillfully under the sun.

ALL: This too is futile.

TEACHER: So I began to give myself over] to despair concerning all my work that I had labored at under the sun.

A: When there is a man whose work was done with wisdom, knowledge, and skill,

ALL: he must give his portion to a man who has not worked for it,

TEACHER: this too is futile and a great wrong.

B: For what does a man get with all his work and all his efforts that he labors at under the sun?

ALL: All his days are filled with grief, and his occupation is sorrowful.

TEACHER: Even at night, his mind does not rest. This too is futile.

A: Is there nothing better for man than to eat, drink, and enjoy his work?

TEACHER: I have seen that even this is from God's hand, because who can eat and who can enjoy life apart from God?

B: To the man who is pleasing in His sight,

ALL: He gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy,

A: But to the sinner He gives the task of gathering and accumulating

ALL: in order to give to the one who is pleasing in God's sight.

TEACHER: This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

## The Mystery of Time

CHARACTERS: A, B, All

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 3

A: There is an occasion for everything,

ALL: and a time for every activity under heaven:

B: a time to give birth and a time to die;

ALL: a time to plant and a time to uproot

A: a time to kill and a time to heal;

ALL: a time to tear down and a time to build;

B: a time to weep and a time to laugh;

ALL: a time to mourn and a time to dance;

A: a time to throw stones and a time to gather stones;

ALL: a time to embrace and a time to avoid embracing;

B: a time to search and a time to count as lost;

ALL: a time to keep and a time to throw away;

A: a time to tear and a time to sew;

ALL: a time to be silent and a time to speak;

B: a time to love and a time to hate;

ALL: a time for war and a time for peace.

## Injustice and Death

CHARACTERS: NEWS 1, NEWS 2, Teacher

SETTING news interview

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 3, 4

NEWS 1: What are some other observations you have made?

TEACHER: There is wickedness at the place of judgment and there is wickedness at the place of righteousness.

NEWS 2: Do you mean God will judge the righteous and the wicked, since there is a time for every activity and every work?

TEACHER: Yes. This happens so that God may test them and they may see for themselves that they are like animals.

NEWS 1: Are you saying the fate of people and animals is the same?

TEACHER: As one dies, so dies the other; they all have the same breath. People have no advantage over animals since everything is futile. All are going to the same place; all come from dust, and all return to dust. Who knows if the spirit of people rises upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth?

NEWS 2: So what do you suggest?

TEACHER: I have seen that there is nothing better than for a person to enjoy his activities because that is his reward. For who can enable him to see what will happen after he dies?

NEWS 1: Can you comment on all the acts of oppression being done under the sun?

NEWS 2: Look at the tears of those who are oppressed; they have no one to comfort them.

TEACHER: True. Power is with those who oppress them; they have no one to comfort them.

NEWS 1: Is that why you admire the dead, who have already died, more than the living?

TEACHER: Better than either of them is the one who has not yet existed, who has not seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.

## The Loneliness of Wealth Alone

CHARACTERS: Teacher, A, B, All

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 4

TEACHER: I saw that all labor and all skillful work is due to a man's jealousy of his friend.

ALL: This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

A: The fool folds his arms and consumes his own flesh.

B: Better one handful with rest

ALL: than two handfuls with effort and a pursuit of the wind.

TEACHER: Again, I saw futility under the sun:

A: There is a person without a companion,

ALL: without even a son or brother,

A: and though there is no end to all his struggles,

ALL: his eyes are still not content with riches.

B: So who am I struggling for and depriving myself from good?

TEACHER: This too is futile and a miserable task.

B: Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts.

ALL: For if either falls, his companion can lift him up;

TEACHER: but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up.

A: Also, if two lie down together, they can keep warm;

ALL: but how can one person alone keep warm?

A: And if someone overpowers one person, two can resist him.

ALL: A cord of three strands is not easily broken.

TEACHER: Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer pays attention to warnings.

A: For he came from prison to be king, even though he was born poor in his kingdom.

TEACHER: I saw all the living, who move about under the sun, follow a second youth who succeeds him.

ALL: There is no limit to all the people who were before them,

B: yet those who come later will not rejoice in him.

TEACHER: This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

## Caution in God's Presence

CHARACTERS: Teacher, A, B, All

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 4

TEACHER: Guard your steps when you go to the house of God.

ALL: Better to draw near in obedience than to offer the sacrifice as fools do,

TEACHER: for they ignorantly do wrong.

ALL: Do not be hasty to speak,

A: and do not be impulsive to make a speech before God.

ALL: God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.

B: For dreams result from much work and a fool's voice from many words.

ALL: When you make a vow to God, don't delay fulfilling it,

TEACHER: because He does not delight in fools.

ALL: Fulfill what you vow.

A: Better that you do not vow than that you vow and not fulfill it.

ALL: Do not let your mouth bring guilt on you,

B: and do not say in the presence of the messenger that it was a mistake.

TEACHER: Why should God be angry with your words and destroy the work of your hands?

ALL: For many dreams bring futility.

TEACHER: So do many words. Therefore, fear God.

## The Realities of Wealth

CHARACTERS: Teacher, A, B, All

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 5 & 6

TEACHER: If you see oppression of the poor and perversion of justice and righteousness in the province, don't be astonished at the situation, because one official protects another official, and higher officials protect them.

A: The profit from the land is taken by all;

B: the king is served by the field.

TEACHER: The one who loves money is never satisfied with money,

ALL: and whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with income.

TEACHER: This too is futile.

A: When good things increase, the ones who consume them multiply.

B: What, then, is the profit to the owner?

ALL: except to gaze at them with his eyes?

A: The sleep of the worker is sweet,

ALL: whether he eats little or much,

TEACHER: but the abundance of the rich permits him no sleep.

B: There is a sickening tragedy I have seen under the sun:

ALL: wealth kept by its owner to his harm.

A: That wealth was lost in a bad venture, so when he fathered a son, he was empty-handed.

ALL: As he came from his mother's womb, so he will go again,

B: naked as he came; he will take nothing for his efforts that he can carry in his hands.

TEACHER: This too is a sickening tragedy:

ALL: exactly as he comes, so he will go.

TEACHER: What does the one gain who struggles for the wind?

A: What is more, he eats in darkness all his days,

ALL: with much sorrow, sickness, and anger.

TEACHER: Here is what I have seen to be good: it is appropriate to eat, drink, and experience good in all the labor one does under the sun during the few days of his life God has given him, because that is his reward.

ALL: God has also given riches and wealth to every man,

B: and He has allowed him to enjoy them, take his reward, and rejoice in his labor.

ALL: This is a gift of God,

A: for he does not often consider the days of his life

ALL: because God keeps him occupied with the joy of his heart.

TEACHER: Here is a tragedy I have observed under the sun, and it weighs heavily on humanity

B: God gives a man riches, wealth, and honor so that he lacks nothing of all he desires for himself

TEACHER: but God does not allow him to enjoy them.

ALL: Instead, a stranger will enjoy them.

TEACHER: This is futile and a sickening tragedy.

ALL: A man may father a hundred children and live many years.

TEACHER: No matter how long he lives, if he is not satisfied by good things and does not even have a proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he is.

ALL: For he comes in futility and he goes in darkness, and his name is shrouded in darkness.

A: Though a stillborn child does not see the sun and is not conscious,

ALL: it has more rest than he does.

B: And if he lives a thousand years twice, but does not experience happiness,

ALL: do not both go to the same place?

A: All man's labor is for his stomach, yet the appetite is never satisfied.

ALL: What advantage then does the wise man have over the fool?

B: What advantage is there for the poor person who knows how to conduct himself before others?

AL: Better what the eyes see than wandering desire.

TEACHER: This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

A: Whatever exists was given its name long ago,] and it is known what man is.

ALL: But he is not able to contend with the One stronger than he is.

B: When there are many words, they increase futility.

ALL: What is the advantage for man?

A: Who knows what is good for man in life,

TEACHER: in the few days of his futile life that he spends like a shadow?

ALL: Who can tell man what will happen after him under the sun?

## Wise Sayings

CHARACTERS: Teacher, A, B, All

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 7

A: A good name is better than fine perfume,

TEACHER: and the day of one's death than the day of one's birth.

B: It is better to go to a house of mourning

ALL: than to go to a house of feasting,

TEACHER: since that is the end of all mankind, and the living should take it to heart.

ALL: Grief is better than laughter,

A: for when a face is sad, a heart may be glad.

ALL: The heart of the wise is in a house of mourning,

B: but the heart of fools is in a house of pleasure.

TEACHER: It is better to listen to rebuke from a wise person than to listen to the song of fools,

A: for like the crackling of burning thorns under the pot,

ALL: so is the laughter of the fool.

TEACHER: This too is futile.

B: Surely, the practice of extortion turns a wise person into a fool,

ALL: and a bribe destroys the mind.

A: The end of a matter is better than its beginning;

ALL: a patient spirit is better than a proud spirit.

B: Don't let your spirit rush to be angry,

ALL: for anger abides in the heart of fools. Don't say,

TEACHER: Why were the former days better than these?

ALL: since it is not wise of you to ask this.

A: Wisdom is as good as an inheritance

ALL: and an advantage to those who see the sun,

B: because wisdom is protection as money is protection,

ALL: and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of its owner.

TEACHER: Consider the work of God,

ALL: for who can straighten out what He has made crooked?

A: In the day of prosperity be joyful,

ALL: but in the day of adversity, consider:

TEACHER: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man cannot discover anything that will come after him.

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## Avoiding Extremes

CHARACTERS: Teacher, A, B, All

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 7

TEACHER: In my futile life, I have seen everything: there is a righteous man who perishes in spite of his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who lives long in spite of his evil.

NEWS 1: What advice do you have in light of that?

YY: Don't be excessively righteous, and don't be overly wise. Why should you destroy yourself?

NEWS 2: Are you suggesting we be excessively wicked and foolish?

TEACHER: No. Why should you die before your time? It is good that you grasp the one and do not let the other slip from your hand.

NEWS 1: Why?

TEACHER: For the one who fears God will end up with both of them.

NEWS 2: Does wisdom make the wise man stronger?

TEACHER: Yes. He is more powerful than ten rulers of a city are.

NEWS 1: Is there any righteous man on the earth who does good and never sins?

TEACHER: No. In addition, don't pay attention to everything people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you, for you know that many times you yourself have cursed others.

NEWS 2: When you resolved to be wise, did you succeed?

TEACHER: It was beyond me. What exists is beyond reach and very deep. Who can discover it?

NEWS 1: But still you turned your thoughts to know, explore, and seek wisdom and an explanation for things.

TEACHER: I discovered that wickedness is stupidity and folly is madness. In addition, I find bitterer than death the woman who is a trap, her heart a net, and her hands chains.

NEWS 2: How do you avoid women like that?

TEACHER: The one who pleases God will escape her, but the sinner will be captured by her. Among a thousand people, I have found one true man, but among all these, I have not found a true woman.

NEWS 1: Anything else you would like to add?

TEACHER: Only see this: I have discovered that God made people upright, but they pursued many schemes.

# Wisdom, Authorities, and Inequities

CHARACTERS: Teacher, A, B, All

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 8

Who is like the wise person, and who knows the interpretation of a matter?

A man's wisdom brightens his face, and the sternness of his face is changed.

TEACHER: Keep the king's command because of your oath made before God.

A: Do not be in a hurry; leave his presence,

B: and don't persist in a bad cause, since he will do whatever he wants.

TEACHER: The king's word is authoritative, and who can say to him,

A: (*incredulous*) What are you doing?

B: The one who keeps a command will not experience anything harmful,

A: and a wise heart knows the right time and procedure.

TEACHER: For every activity, there is a right time and procedure, even though man's troubles are heavy on him.

B: Yet no one knows what will happen because who can tell him what will happen?

TEACHER: No one has authority over the wind to restrain it,

ALL: and there is no authority over the day of death;

A: there is no furlough in battle,

B: and wickedness will not allow those who practice it to escape.

TEACHER: All this I have seen, applying my mind to all the work that is done under the sun,

ALL: at a time when one man has authority over another to his harm.

TEACHER: In such circumstances, I saw the wicked buried.

A: They came and went from the holy place,

ALL: and they were praised in the city where they did so.

TEACHER: This too is futile.

B: Because the sentence against a criminal act is not carried out quickly, the heart of people is filled with the desire to commit crime.

A: Although a sinner commits crime a hundred times and prolongs his life,

TEACHER: yet I also know that it will go well with God-fearing people,

ALL: for they are reverent before Him.

B: However, it will not go well with the wicked,

TEACHER: and they will not lengthen their days like a shadow,

ALL: for they are not reverent before God.

TEACHER: There is a futility that is done on the earth.

A: There are righteous people who get what the actions of the wicked deserve,

ALL: and there are wicked people who get what the actions of the righteous deserve.

TEACHER: I say that this too is futile. So I commended enjoyment because there is nothing better for man under the sun than to eat, drink, and enjoy himself,

ALL: for this will accompany him in his labor during the days of his life that God gives him under the sun.

TEACHER: When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the activity that is done on the earth

ALL: (even though one's eyes do not close in sleep day or night),

TEACHER: I observed all the work of God and concluded that man is unable to discover the work that is done under the sun.

A: Even though a man labors hard to explore it,

ALL: he cannot find it;

B: even if the wise man claims to know it,

ALL: he is unable to discover it.

## Enjoy Life despite Death

CHARACTERS: Teacher, A, B, All

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 9

TEACHER: I took all my experiences and studies to heart and explained it all: the righteous, the wise, and their works are in God's hands.

A: People don't know whether to expect love or hate.

ALL: Everything lies ahead of them.

B: Everything is the same for everyone:

TEACHER: there is one fate for the righteous and the wicked,

ALL: for the good and the bad,

A: for the clean and the unclean,

ALL: for the one who sacrifices and the one who does not sacrifice.

TEACHER: As it is for the good, so it is for the sinner;

B: as for the one who takes an oath, so for the one who fears an oath.

TEACHER: This is an evil in all that is done under the sun.

ALL: There is one fate for everyone.

TEACHER: In addition, the hearts of people are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live

ALL: After that, they go to the dead.

A: But there is hope for whoever is joined with all the living,

ALL: since a live dog is better than a dead lion.

B: For the living know that they will die,

ALL: but the dead don't know anything.

TEACHER: There is no longer a reward for them because the memory of them is forgotten.

A: Their love, their hate, and their envy have already disappeared,

ALL: and there is no longer a portion for them in all that is done under the sun.

TEACHER: Go, eat your bread with pleasure, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart,

ALL: for God has already accepted your works.

TEACHER: Let your clothes be white all the time,

ALL: (the color of celebration)

TEACHER: and never let oil be lacking on your head.

A: Think of the oil of joy and gladness mentioned in Psalms 45:7

ALL: Or Isaiah 63:1

TEACHER: Enjoy life with the wife you love all the days of your fleeting life, which has been given to you under the sun, all your fleeting days.

ALL: For that is your portion in life and in your struggle under the sun.

B: Whatever your hands find to do,

ALL: do with all your strength,

TEACHER: because there is no work, planning, knowledge, or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.

## The Limitations of Wisdom

CHARACTERS: Teacher, A, B, All

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 9

TEACHER: Again, I saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift,

ALL: or the battle to the strong,

A: or bread to the wise,

ALL: or riches to the discerning,

B: or favor to the skillful.

TEACHER: Rather, time and chance happen to all of them.

ALL: For man certainly does not know his time.

A: Like fish caught in a cruel net

ALL: or like birds caught in a trap,

B: so people are trapped in an evil time as it suddenly falls on them.

TEACHER: I have observed that this also is wisdom under the sun, and it is significant to me: There was a small city with few men in it.

ALL: A great king came against it, surrounded it, and built large siege works against it.

TEACHER: Now a poor wise man was found in the city,

ALL: and he delivered the city by his wisdom.

TEACHER: (*discouraged*) Yet no one remembered that poor man.

ALL: And the Teacher said

TEACHER: Wisdom is better than strength, but the wisdom of the poor man is despised, and his words are not heeded.

A: The calm words of the wise are heeded more than the shouts of a ruler over fools.

B: Wisdom is better than weapons of war,

ALL: but one sinner can destroy much good.

# The Burden of Folly

CHARACTERS: Teacher, A, B, All

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 10

A: Dead flies make a perfumer's oil ferment and stink;

ALL: so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

B A wise man's heart goes to the right,

ALL: but a fool's heart to the left.

A: Even when the fool walks along the road, his heart lacks sense,

ALL: and he shows everyone he is a fool.

B: If the ruler's anger rises against you, don't leave your place,

ALL: for calmness puts great offenses to rest.

TEACHER: There is an evil I have seen under the sun, an error proceeding from the presence of the ruler:

A: The fool is appointed to great heights,

ALL: but the rich remain in lowly positions.

B I have seen slaves on horses,

ALL: but princes walking on the ground like slaves.

TEACHER: The one who digs a pit may fall into it,

ALL: and the one who breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake.

A: The one who quarries stones may be hurt by them;

ALL: the one who splits trees may be endangered by them.

B: If the ax is dull, and one does not sharpen its edge,

ALL: then one must exert more strength;

TEACHER: however, the advantage of wisdom is that it brings success.

A: If the snake bites before it is charmed,

ALL: then there is no advantage for the charmer.

B: The words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious,

ALL: but the lips of a fool consume him.

A: The beginning of the words of his mouth is folly,

ALL: but the end of his speaking is evil madness.

TEACHER: Yet the fool multiplies words.

B: No one knows what will happen,

ALL: and who can tell anyone what will happen after him?

A: The struggles of fools weary them,

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ALL: for they don't know how to go to the city.

TEACHER: Woe to you, land, when your king is a youth and your princes feast in the morning.

B: Blessed are you, land, when your king is a son of nobles

ALL: and your princes feast at the proper time—

TEACHER: for strength and not for drunkenness.

A: Because of laziness the roof caves in,

ALL: and because of negligent hands the house leaks.

B: A feast is prepared for laughter,

ALL: and wine makes life happy,

A: and money is the answer for everything.

TEACHER: Do not curse the king even in your thoughts,

A: and do not curse a rich person even in your bedroom,

ALL: for a bird of the sky may carry the message,

B: and a winged creature may report the matter.

## Invest in Life

CHARACTERS: Teacher, A, B, All

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 11

A: Send your bread on the surface of the waters,

ALL: for after many days you may find it.

B: Give a portion to seven or even to eight,

ALL: for you don't know what disaster may happen on earth.

TEACHER: If the clouds are full, they will pour out rain on the earth;

A: whether a tree falls to the south or the north,

B: the place where the tree falls,

ALL: there it will lie.

A: One who watches the wind will not sow,

ALL: and the one who looks at the clouds will not reap.

B: Just as you don't know the path of the wind,

A: or how bones develop in the womb of a pregnant woman,

ALL: so you don't know the work of God who makes everything.

A: In the morning sow your seed,

ALL: and at evening do not let your hand rest,

B: because you don't know which will succeed,

ALL: whether one or the other,

TEACHER: or if both of them will be equally good.

A: Light is sweet, and it is pleasing for the eyes to see the sun.

B: Indeed, if a man lives many years,

ALL: let him rejoice in them all,

A: and let him remember the days of darkness, since they will be many.

TEACHER: (*discouraged*) All that comes is futile.

B: Rejoice, young man, while you are young,

ALL: and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth.

TEACHER: Walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all of these things God will bring you to judgment.

A: Remove sorrow from your heart,

B: and put away pain from your flesh,

ALL: because youth and the prime of life are fleeting.

# The Twilight of Life and Conclusion of Ecclesiastes

CHARACTERS: Doctor, Teacher, A, B, All

SETTING: Split stage. Interviewer and Doctor are center stage, stage right are the pantomimes and stage left the leaders and choral reading group. The pantomime group acts out whatever the choral group is reading while the interviewer and doctor are frozen in tableau. When interviewer and doctor speak, the others are frozen in tableau.

RUN TIME: 1 minute

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON Ecclesiastes 12

INTERVIEWER: Welcome to our show Dr. Physio. Tell us a little about yourself.

DOCTOR: I am a doctor and biblical scholar.

INTERVIEWER: What is Ecclesiastes 12 about?

DOCTOR: Growing older.

*Cut to stage left*

TEACHER: Remember your Creator in the days of your youth:

ALL: Before the days of adversity come,

A: and the years approach when you will say,

ALL: I have no delight in them

TEACHER: before the sun and the light are darkened,

B: and the moon and the stars,

ALL: and the clouds return after the rain;

INTERVIEWER: What did Solomon mean by this?

DOCTOR: Eyesight. Older people often have cataracts that make everything dim.

TEACHER: On the day when the guardians of the house tremble,

ALL: and the strong men stoop,

A: the women who grind cease because they are few,

ALL: and the ones who watch through the windows see dimly.

INTERVIEWER: What is Solomon talking about?

DOCTOR: The body weakens. Even standing up may cause some older people trouble.

INTERVIEWER: What are the grinders?

DOCTOR: Teeth. During biblical times, dental care was less advanced and many older people lost teeth.

TEACHER: the doors at the street are shut

ALL: while the sound of the mill fades;

A: when one rises at the sound of a bird,

ALL: and all the daughters of song grow faint. What about this?

DOCTOR: Hearing fades. Sometimes older people wake early and cannot go back to sleep.

INTERVIEWER: What are daughters of song?

DOCTOR: Possibly the voice.

INTERVIEWER: Are there other places in the Bible that talk about these things happening in old age?

DOCTOR: Yes. In 2 Samuel 19, King David wants to bring 80 year old Barzillai back to Jerusalem as a reward for supporting him during Absalom's rebellion. Here is what Barzillai says.

B: How many years of my life are left that I should go up to Jerusalem with the king? Can I discern what is pleasant and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats or drinks? Can I still hear the voice of male and female singers?

INTERVIEWER: But Moses and Aaron were in their 80's when they began the Exodus and continue to serve past their century mark.

DOCTOR: They are the exceptions, not the rules. You won't find many 80 year olds climbing the 7,000+ feet plus high Mt. Sinai.

TEACHER: They are afraid of heights and dangers on the road;

ALL: the almond tree blossoms,

A: the grasshopper loses its spring,

ALL: and the caper berry has no effect;

B: for man is headed to his eternal home,

ALL: and mourners will walk around in the street.

INTERVIEWER: Almond trees bloom white like the hair on an elderly person.

DOCTOR: Not too many older people jump around like grasshoppers either

TEACHER: before the silver cord is snapped.

ALL: and the gold bowl is broken

A: and the jar is shattered at the spring,

ALL: and the wheel is broken into the well;

B: and the dust returns to the earth as it once was,

ALL: and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

TEACHER: Absolute futility; everything is futile.

INTERVIEWER: Golden bowl? Silver cord? What is Solomon talking about?

DOCTOR: Good question. Here are some of the theories. The silver cord is either the tongue or the force that binds soul to body.

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INTERVIEWER: Wheels at a well brought the water up, correct?

DOCTOR: Yes. Just like the left ventricle of the heart, which by its "diastole" receives the blood brought to it through the lungs, and pumps it out to the rest of the body.

INTERVIEWER: So if the wheel or heart stops, you die or return to dust?

DOCTOR: Yes. Whatever these symbols mean, the end result is the same. We all will die someday.

A: In addition to the Teacher being a wise man, he constantly taught the people knowledge.

B: He weighed, explored, and arranged many proverbs.

A: The Teacher sought to find delightful sayings and write words of truth accurately.

ALL: The sayings of the wise are like goads,

B: Wise sayings from masters of collections are like firmly embedded nails.

ALL: These are the sayings are given by one Shepherd.

TEACHER: But beyond these, my son, be warned: there is no end to the making of many books, and much study wearies the body. 1

A: When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is:

ALL: Fear God and keep His commands, because this is for all humanity.

TEACHER: For God will bring every act to judgment,

B: including every hidden thing,

ALL: whether good or evil.