



EXPOSITION

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From My Window

By definition, “culture” is a set of values held by a population group, which establishes fixed beliefs and patterns within that group. Yet, what anthropologists have discovered is not everyone within a homogeneous people group may approve of that culture’s fixed values and behavior patterns. This, of course, will cause tension within that particular society of people. In fact, those who may hold varying beliefs from their culture will usually receive some kind of disciplinary action (or worse) by the leaders of that group. Since, therefore, American culture is fixated on open sexuality and theological pluralism, all who reject this for the exclusivity of Jesus’ commands will face persecution. This means, Paul got it right in 2 Timothy 3:12!



Matt Campbell (M.Div., 2007)
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Alumni in Ministry Spotlight

Matt came to VBTS 10 years ago, and not only distinguished himself as an outstanding young scholar, but one who had a deep passion for missions. After his graduation in 2007, he and his wife Kristin joined the pastoral staff of Colonial Baptist Church for the purpose of shepherding the mission efforts of the church. He proved to be a leader of great worth to the entire fellowship of CBC. On June 1, 2014 Matt began his new duties as the Associate Pastor under Steve Hafler in Colorado. In Matt’s own words: *“It’s been a joy to teach and explain the gospel of grace with its implications for all of life in this local church. We are thankful for how God’s grace is transforming individual lives.”* May God bless Matt and Kristin as they continue to model grace and mission before the Body of Christ.

First Chapel
Service of
2016 Spring
Semester





Truth for the Agora: “Chasing the Wind” Ecclesiastes 1:14

The NET Bible translates Ecclesiastes 1:14 in striking but despairing words:

“I reflected on everything that is accomplished by man on earth, and I concluded: Everything he has accomplished is futile – like chasing the wind!”

The phrase “*chasing the wind*” is a masterful metaphorical idiom from the pen of King Solomon. He uses this expression to create a sense of futility and hopelessness in the mind of his reader. One author reviews the entire verse and quantifies Solomon’s thoughts as “a graphic picture of effort expended with no results gained since no one can catch wind by running after it” (Glenn). What could possibly be more depressing?

To appreciate Solomon’s *Ecclesiastes*, let me attempt to put his work on display for you. His wisdom-book was probably written in the latter half of his life (12:1), at a time when a biblical writer records, “He did not follow the Lord completely” (1 Kings 11:6). His work, which includes two main sections, has four parts. The opening words of 1:1-2 provide the startling entrance into the book with the well-known statement, “*All is vanity*,” or as Walt Kaiser translates, “*Everything is temporary*.” Then, the first major section (1:3 – 6:9) develops around Solomon’s initial question: “*What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?*” We will return to this question; but for now, we must move on. The second major section (6:10 – 12:7) revolves around his significant question: “*Who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?*” This question highlights two looming concerns in every man’s heart: the certainty of death and the uncertainty of the afterlife. Finally, the book closes (12:8-14) by bringing both questions to their ultimate and satisfying resolution.

It is within the first major section of Ecclesiastes (1:3 – 6:9) that Solomon employs his striking expression “*chasing the wind*” – not once, but nine times! Let me give you a sampling:

- ✦ 2:11 – *I observe that my own hard work is like chasing the wind.*
- ✦ 2:17 – *I have observed that everything I do in this life is like chasing the wind.*
- ✦ 4:16 – *I observe that sovereign power over people is like chasing the wind.*

Solomon’s question, which launched his first major section, was consumed with an uneasy concern: Will hard work, financial stability, and a house full of material pleasures mean anything for me, or are all of these “*chasing the wind*”? Solomon repeated his question in a slightly different way, “*What does man really get for all his hard work?*” If, on the one hand, diligent work has no meaning, then surely life is merely “*chasing the wind*.” Yet, on the other hand, if diligent work has meaning, what is it that gives purpose and lasting value to what man does?

Here is where Solomon’s pen shines. In 2:25 he speaks from his own experience: “*For apart from God, who can eat and who can find enjoyment?*” Here is an evocative reality of life: both the good gifts and the enjoyment of those gifts are from God. In Chapter 5, Solomon puts it this way: man’s dreams of greater things are empty (5:7), money does not satisfy (5:10), bad investments are a part of life (5:14), and death lurks around the corner for us all (5:16); but, it is God who gives riches and wealth *and* empowers man to rejoice in all his labor (5:19-20).



The last words of the chapter are words of triumph: “[It is] God who keeps man occupied with gladness of heart.”

Let me conclude this short essay with two foundational pillars from Solomon’s first section of Ecclesiastes (1:3 – 6:9) that should mark our routine of life. *First*, human life is more than what one can see or touch at the moment. There is a supernatural element to all that man is and does. If man does not acknowledge this fact, then life is dull and will be viewed as “*chasing the wind*.” *Second*, because life is more than a horizontal expression, man should live and act with the joy that God is using his life and accomplishments far beyond what the present moment may reveal. What a great way to live! Solomon expressed it this way (3:11): “*God has made everything beautiful for its own time and people cannot see the whole scope of all that God is doing*.” So, when man views his life and all his experiences from a Godward perspective, then a futile-life-outlook will be reversed (cf. 1:14) – instead of *chasing the wind* there will be *gladness of heart*.