

Embrace Life Under the Sun

Study Questions

Chapter 3

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1. What is so weak and worthless that the Old Testament often uses the Hebrew word *hēbēl* (vanity) to describe it?
2. Why do you suppose Adam and Eve chose to name their second-born son Abel, which is a form of *hēbēl*?
3. What can you conclude from the variety of nouns modern Bible versions use to translate the word *hēbēl*?

4. Ecclesiastes uses *hēbēl* as a metaphor, but which kind—full or abbreviated, live or dead? What difference does this make for the reader?

5. Do you think it would be a good idea for Bible versions to just transliterate *hēbēl* as is sometimes done with the Greek word *agapē*? Why or why not?

6. What is one reason God allow humans to experience so much frustration in this fallen world?

7. How could Solomon, a man who knew and feared God, say that he “hated life” (2:17)?

8. Was Solomon just a cynical old man to say that envy is what drives all human achievement (Eccl 4:4)? Why would he take such a negative view of human nature?

9. What does the “crackling of nettles under a kettle” (Eccl 7:6, TNK) illustrate?

10. What are some of the ways Solomon tested his heart (i.e., experimented with various pleasures to see if they would bring true satisfaction to the human heart)?

11. What did Solomon learn from his experiments?

12. How is Solomon's conclusion about all his experiences relevant to us today?

13. As Christians, how should we respond to the reality that life in this fallen world is continually frustrating, transitory, and empty?