

Eternal PERSPECTIVE Proverbs

BIBLE TEXT | ECCLESIASTES 6:1-12

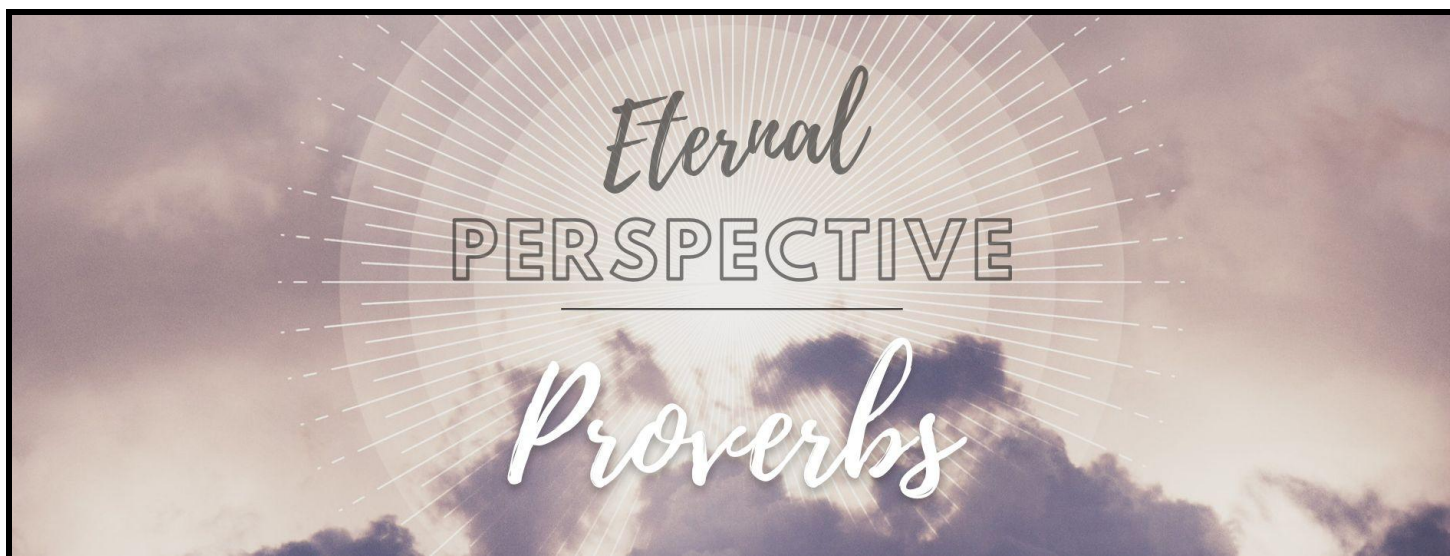
1 There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind: **2** a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them. This is vanity: it is a grievous evil. **3** If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things, and he also has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. **4** For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered. **5** Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he. **6** Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good—do not all go to the one place?

7 All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied. **8** For what advantage has the wise man over the fool? And what does the poor man have who knows how to conduct himself before the living? **9** Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite: this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

10 Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he. **11** The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man? **12** For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?

DEVOTIONAL FOR ECCLESIASTES 6:1-12

AUTHOR: ARCHIE ENGLEADOW



Ecclesiastes 6:1-12 gives us a picture of chasing after the horizontal things of this life, and what the end result looks like for all of us. These things include wealth, possessions, honor, success, children, and an appetite for more. The word "vanity" is used 33 times in the Book of Ecclesiastes.

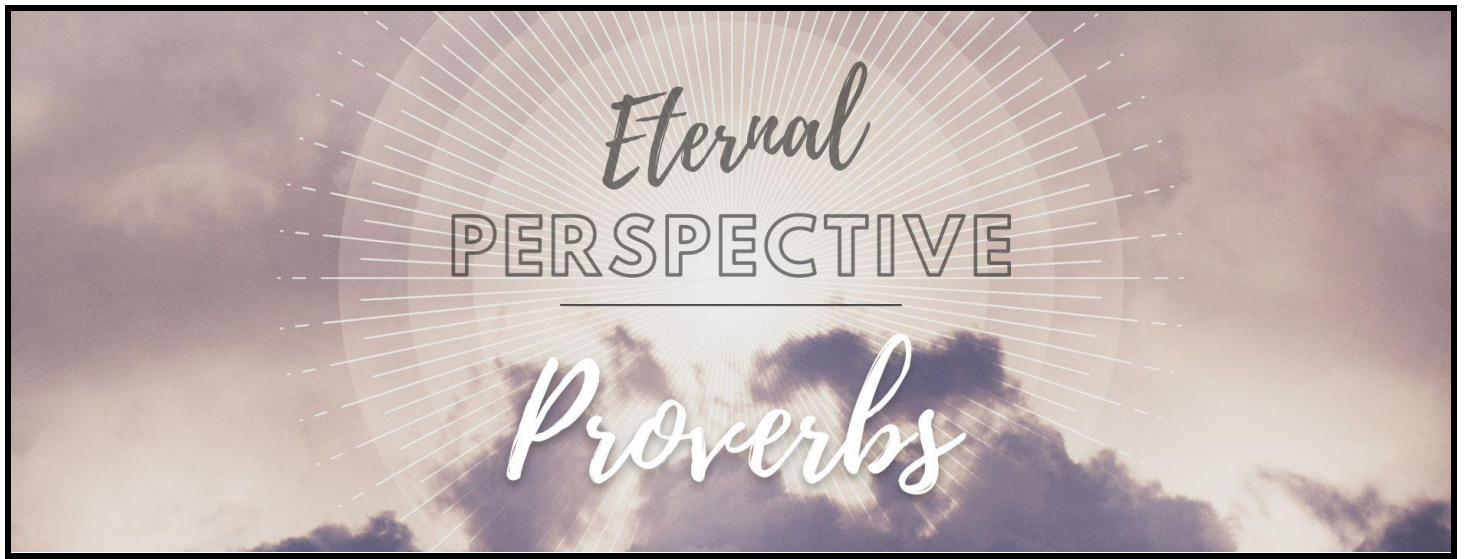
For 27 years, I chased after horizontal things, like relationships, and vanity gripped my heart and mind in many different ways. I can remember working three jobs at one time and not having much to show for it, being unhappy, exhausted, and feeling empty. I was working through my own strength and pride, not honoring the Lord with any of it. I can reflect back to when my children were young and was so excited about being a father and the responsibility that came with that. But in my heart, I wasn't truly satisfied with life's pleasures because my hope and joy were rooted in my "horizontal life" with no vertical support. My appetite hungered for more from this life but it was never enough.

The vanity of life, or "chasing after the wind" sounds very foolish, but that is what I did. Have you ever found yourself chasing after the wind before? If you don't know what that looks like or how these verses can be applied to your own life, all you have to do is look around you. Our culture conditions us and drives our consumer-driven society to buy bigger and more, trying to convince us that we deserve it. This mentality of living has really pushed us over the edge in our culture to live very sad and vain lives if we are not careful.

I'm not saying that having nice things is necessarily vanity. What I'm saying is, that if we are chasing after more stuff and not being satisfied in this life, then our priorities are off. What it means is that our focus is on the horizontal things in this life, and not on the vertical or eternal, and that is the dilemma. We are left feeling empty and valueless, which is the product of vanity. If having more of the things of the world is what gives us our identity, then our focus is off.

Let's look at it this way. Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love God, and then to love others (Matthew 22:37-40). Let's compare this with the cross of Christ. We see the horizontal board that positioned Jesus' arms, and the vertical board that supported his body. The horizontal board does not support the vertical; it can do nothing without being attached to the vertical board for support. This gives us a beautiful picture of how nothing that we can have "horizontally" on this earth will ever be used correctly or viewed correctly if we are not eternally or "vertically" aligned with Christ and supported by Him. We will just have horizontal chaos.

Jesus did not say to love your neighbor as yourself and then love God. The relationship with God through Jesus allows us to love others. The understanding of love, sacrifice, humility, and undeserving grace from God through Jesus allows us to love others. Then we can strive to live on this earth with an eternal mindset as we temporarily steward our horizontal relationships and lives.



Questions:

1. How have you chased after meaningless things?
2. Do the things that you are pursuing in life leave you feeling empty or valueless?
3. Being vertically aligned with Jesus, and being supported by Christ is the only thing that will allow this life to have any purpose or meaning. Please read John 15:5. I pray our life bears fruit due to us being connected to the vine of Christ.