

WISDOM LITERATURE # 8

'HOW TO BE REALLY SUCCESSFUL'

Read Ecclesiastes 1: 2-11 and 12: 13-14



Many of us have, I'm sure, had times in our lives when we can identify with how Ecclesiastes opens; nothing makes any sense, all is 'meaningless, meaningless.' What is the meaning of life? What am I here for, and how do I prioritise what options and opportunities I have, however limited they may be? **Can you remember such a time? Who or what helped you into a better place mentally?**

King Solomon (most likely author of Ecclesiastes), having detailed his observations on the meaning of life, concludes that the fullest respect for God and following His commands delivers the sort-after meaning and satisfaction. To be really

successful, this is to be our purpose and goal, which stand in sharp contrast to the view of life promoted all around us. "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things (life essential things) will be given to you as well", says Jesus (Matthew 6: 25-34). To paraphrase, 'the key to getting what you want out of life is to focus on what I (Jesus) want for your life'. **Are you able to share some past instances when taking the more costly (Christian) path rather than the socially easy path has subsequently brought benefits beyond your expectations?** Our overriding purpose is to serve God in Christ, and all our hopes, dreams, and our objectives, should be focused on this. Through this filter of serving Christ, we are to decide how we spend our time, our energies, build our relationships, manage our finances, everything. This is the way of life that builds joy, peace and gratitude, and that builds His Kingdom, a truly successful life.

In order to prioritise building the Kingdom, we must first have a relationship with the King. We won't know what the Kingdom looks like until we know Him. To build and maintain a beautiful relationship requires dedication, time, effort and love. **The challenge to us all, perhaps particularly during Lent, is how are we building our relationship with Jesus? What efforts can we identify that have grown our relationship in comparison to how it was last year?**

Jesus has told us how the Kingdom works. **Read John 15: 5-8 and 16** As followers of Christ, we are to produce fruit which demonstrates the workings of the Kingdom, and thereby brings glory to the King, and gives witness to why the world should be building His Kingdom on earth. There is a lot packed into these five verses; a loving opportunity, a warning, a command, promise of blessing, and guidance about prayer. **What do we learn from verses 7 and 16 about the relationship of fruit with prayer? Also how does 'remaining in Him' affect prayer?**

We are surrounded by a society which, in the main, see a successful life in very different terms. The media place self-satisfaction as paramount, and advertisements promote self-consumption. **Do you have examples of how, following these life paths, proves unsatisfactory?**

Prayer: *God of every blessing, as I come to You eager to listen and respond, would You prune my priorities, refine my character, and realign my desires? Shape my life, my work, and my service so that I more clearly resemble my King and more sincerely live for your kingdom priorities. Amen*

(adapted prayer from Lectio 365)