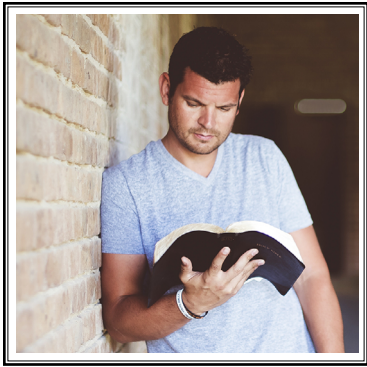




Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. — Psalm 119.105

Timothy Ministries

Mini-Seminary

BIBLICAL PHILOSOPHY 1

THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF ECCLESIASTES

What Is “Vanity”?

Hebrew **הֶבֶל** (*hevel*), vanity, breath (Isa. 57.13), worthless (2 Ki. 17.15), short-lived, transitory. Also, proper name *Abel*, probably based on Akkadian *aplu* = son.

What Kinds of Things Are Vain?

- Things that are _____ (Jesus vs. walls)
- Everything that is _____ (“under the sun,” “under heaven”)
- Things that are _____ (vs. shalom)

Vanity is trying to find purpose in the _____ rather than in _____.

Eternity In The Heart VS The “Under The Sun” Worldview

A “worldview” is a set of beliefs about the big questions in life, such as: What is ultimate reality? Who are we? What’s the meaning of life? How should we live? What’s our destiny? etc. — *Stealing from God* by Frank Turek

What do I mean by worldview? It is how you see yourself, others, the cosmos, and God. It is your religion, whether you call it that or not. It is your own personal Svengali, the all-powerful puppeteer deep within your subconscious that pulls your strings, that controls not only how you see everything but how you react to everything ... Your worldview ... is based on faith. — *Believing Is Seeing*, by Michael Guillen

In accord with Michael Guillen, we observe that our worldviews are based *ultimately* on faith. Hopefully that faith is evidence-based. However, at some point we must opt for either subjective feelings and preferences *or* divine revelation as the source for our answers to the ultimate questions. The fictional world of the movie, *The Matrix*, illustrates one very important truth: To know what’s really going on, we must have revelation from a source outside the matrix of our own existence.

The Key Worldview Questions

- 1. Teleology: What is the purpose and meaning of life?**
- 2. Happiness: What is the most direct path to true fulfillment?**
- 3. Ethics: What is right and what is wrong?**
- 4. Theology: What is God's nature and character?**
- 5. History**
 - A. Why has history unfolded as it has? Why is evil in the world?**
 - B. What are the ultimate origins of competing religious myths?**
- 6. Epistemology**
 - A. What forms of knowledge are reliable?**
 - B. Can the observable universe be rationally understood?**
- 7. Ontology**
 - A. What is the nature of existence?**
 - B. Is there a supernatural realm?**
 - C. What was the origin of life?**
 - D. What does it mean to be human?**

FOUR THINGS That Are Never Satisfied

Agur's Introduction To Ecclesiastes

Pro 30.15 The leech has two daughters,
“Give,” “Give.”
There are three things that will not be satisfied,
Four that will not say, “Enough”:
16 Sheol, and the barren womb,
Earth that is never satisfied with water,
And fire that never says, “Enough.”

The Practical Message Of Ecclesiastes



... live *now* in the light of that fact!

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before ... the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. — Ecclesiastes 12.1,7

The Three Things That Remain

But now remain faith, hope love; these *are* the three things, but the greatest of them *is* love. — 1 Corinthians 13.13, instructor's translation

Why did the apostle Paul close his great chapter about love with an emphatic statement about the three things that **remain**? How do these three Greek terms translate in our current American vernacular?

Faith: _____

Hope: _____

Love: _____

In other words, faith, hope and love are the:

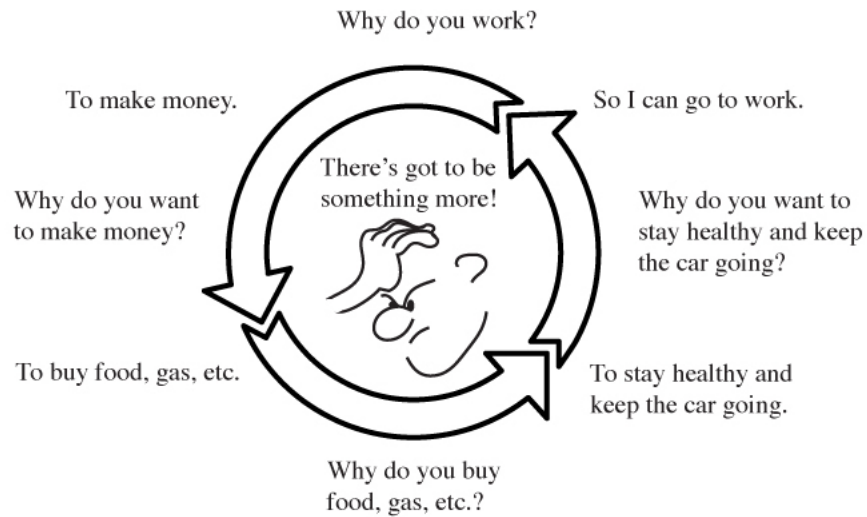


Some Practical Definitions:

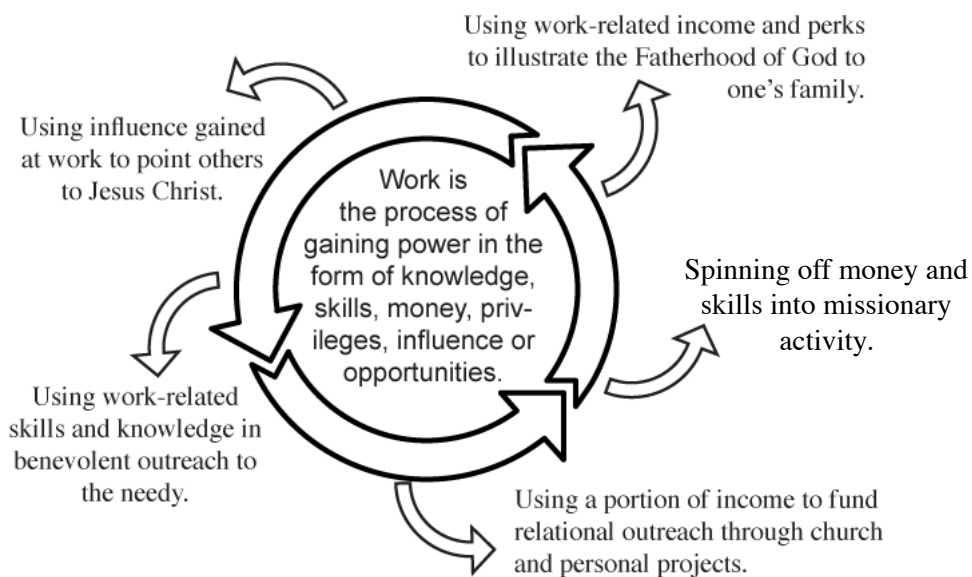
Work:

Money:

The Vain Work Circle



The Fruitful Work Circle



The Something More

The “something more” that we seek is *everything that isn’t vain*, in other words, those things that are neither contingent, temporal nor partial. Is there anything that fits this description besides God Himself? Yes, there are the three things that remain: faith, hope and love (1Co 13.13; cf. “the enduring things,” τὰ διαφέροντα, of Ro 2.18). These things are not God Himself, but they are solid, real and enduring because they are aspects of God’s eternal character. They are relevant to us because they are the three essentials of *relationship*. Relationship is the one thing we can take with us beyond the grave, assuming it is relationship that includes Jesus. Any relationship pursued by God’s grace and for Christ’s sake has ultimate value because we will be able to enjoy it and deepen it forever.

The Teacher of Ecclesiastes sums up his message in Ecclesiastes 12.13 (NKJ): “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all.” Many Bible versions translate this last phrase of Ecclesiastes 12.13 differently, but the underlying Hebrew text simply says, “**for this is all-of the-man.**” The New King James Version seems to have captured the sense well, as have Arnold and Beyer in their Old Testament survey where they write, “To obey [God] is to be truly human and to reach our greatest potential as part of his creation.” And how does God intend that we obey Him and reach our greatest potential? By loving Him and loving our neighbor, i.e., by investing in eternal relationships. **This is the Teacher’s philosophy and the Christian’s worldview: The Triune God is the most real entity, and relationship with Him is our *summum bonum*, i.e., our highest good from which all other good proceeds.** Prioritizing relationship with God allows Him to integrate all the parts of our lives — parts which would be vanity by themselves — into a *meaningful, fruitful whole*. It’s this integration that gives us true fulfillment and puts the unpleasant issue of death in its proper perspective. This is the Teacher’s secret to a life of real meaning, and to a life of lasting value.

Want To Continue Learning About This Topic?

Here are some recommended resources:

Books & Articles

Philosophy For Dummies by Tom Morris.

“The Teacher of Ecclesiastes and The Meaning of Life,” a 5-page summary of the teaching by Roderick Graciano: <https://www.tmin.org/pdfs/meaning2.pdf>

E-mail The Instructor

You may e-mail your questions about this and other biblical topics to Rod Graciano at any time. Write to: roderick@tmin.org.

