

# Five Knocks On The Noggin For Your New Year

## ECCLESIASTES 1:1-12, 16-18

*The words of the Teacher, son of David, King in Jerusalem.*

*“Nothing! Nothing!” says the teacher. “Utterly Nothing. Everything is Nothing!”  
“What do we gain from all our work at which we slave under the sun? Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains. The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. The wind blows to the south and turns to the north, round and round it goes, ever returning to its course. All rivers flow to the sea yet the sea is never full. To the place where they started, the rivers return again! All things are wearisome, more than I can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, The ear never has enough hearing. “What has been will be again, What has been done will be done again; There is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, “Look! This is something new”? No – it was here already long ago, It was here before our time!” “There is no memory of people of old, and even those who are yet to be born will not be remembered by those who follow!” . . . “I, the Teacher, was king of Israel in Jerusalem. I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven... I thought to myself, “Look I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge. Then I applied myself to understanding wisdom, madness and foolishness. But I learned that this, too, is like chasing after the wind. For with much wisdom comes much sorrow, the more knowledge, the more grief.”*

The book of Ecclesiastes, traditionally named *Qoheleth* means ‘teacher/preacher. King Solomon, shares a lifetime of accumulating knowledge, experiences, and wisdom. His preaching is very cynical and possibly even sarcastic - perfect for the 21<sup>st</sup> century!

True friends sometimes knock us over the head (not physically). Don’t surround yourself with people who only say nice things about you. They’re not true friends. They may even be what the Bible calls ‘false prophets’. Ecclesiastes is a ‘true friend’.

## NOGGIN-KNOCK 1: EVERYTHING IS NOTHING

*Hebel: mist, fog, vanity, ephemeral, nothing.*

*It is still a fairly astounding to consider that atoms are mostly empty space, and that the solidity we experience all around us is an illusion... [Atoms are mostly empty space*

*and we are mostly made of nothing]... When you sit in a chair, you are not actually sitting there, but levitating above it at a height of one angstrom (a hundred millionth of a centimetre), your electrons and its electrons implacably opposed to any closer intimacy. - Bill Bryson, A Short History Of Nearly Everything, Pg 184.*

John Wesley had a favourite saying “It’s all gonna burn!”

## NOGGIN-KNOCK 2: NOTHING “UNDER THE SUN” CAN TRULY SATISFY YOU

Notice the words "under the sun". Read the first part of Ecclesiastes and count them! These are words that the preacher is going to repeat many times in this book. The words "under the sun" refer to this physical universe - what we can see, taste, touch, hear. And this "nothing" which is "under the sun" will truly satisfy.

## NOGGIN-KNOCK 3: NOTHING YOU DO IS AS ORIGINAL AS YOU THINK

We human beings think we are so smart, with our new tech. But every time we invent something supposedly new another old problem comes back to bite us. No matter how brilliant we are, we will never be wise unless we face that fact that even our most original ideas are building on others thinking. Humility leads to wisdom.

## NOGGIN-KNOCK 4: NOTHING YOU DO WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR LONG

Who remembers your Grandma's maiden name?  
Who remembers you Great-Grandma's maiden name?  
Who can name the third Prime Minister of Australia?  
Who can name the cast of the TV show Survivor from last year?

## NOGGIN-KNOCK 5: NO WISDOM CAN BRING COMPLETE JOY

Get me a bucket. Self-help gurus like Anthony Robbins make me want to throw up. Because most often they are manipulating you... for money, or power, or whatever it is that they get off on. But the great King Solomon was a lot smarter than all the self help gurus. He said that no wisdom can bring complete joy. Particularly, simple answers just don’t work.

## GOD ISN'T INTO EASY ANSWERS. GOD IS GRACE IN CHRIST.

As we start a new year, what we need is not more clever ideas, new inventions, more great teaching, trying harder, or simple answers. We need grace. Lost, broken, stumbling, imperfect people get the free gift of GRACE. God is with those who just don’t understand life!

Grace frees us from trying to wore everything out, or trying to work our way up to wisdom, knowledge or God. It frees us to relax and let God come DOWN to us!