

Grace. A free gift,  
undeserved,  
unearned,  
just a gift.  
I need not win the race  
nor emerge victorious in battle.  
I don't have to strike it rich  
or rival Einstein.  
I stretch out my hands  
and gratefully accept  
that which I could never merit.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound  
that saved a wretch like me.  
Thank you,  
God of Peace  
God of Love  
God of Grace.

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## Wisdom Better Than Folly

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9.13-16

I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me: <sup>14</sup>There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siegeworks against it. <sup>15</sup>Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. <sup>16</sup>So I said, “Wisdom is better than strength.” But the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.

9.17    The quiet words of the wise are more to be  
              heeded  
              than the shouts of a ruler of fools.

9.18    Wisdom is better than weapons of war,  
              but one sinner destroys much good.<sup>(NIV)</sup>

Poor.

Wise for fifteen minutes of fame,  
but poor before and afterwards.

Victorious  
but forgotten.

Except by the Teacher.

Except by the Teacher, and you and me.

The powerful king, the small city,  
maybe rich, maybe poor, but forgotten.

The wise man poor, forgotten, but  
remembered.

God, give me wisdom, please.

If fame comes, too, okay.

But if it's a choice, give me wisdom.

Please.

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## Chapter Ten

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- 10.1 As dead flies give perfume a bad smell,  
so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.
- 10.2 The heart of the wise inclines to the right,  
but the heart of the fool to the left.
- 10.3 Even as he walks along the road,  
the fool lacks sense  
and shows everyone how stupid he is.<sup>(NIV)</sup>

Dead flies give perfume a bad smell.

More than I want to know.

Dead flies – do they equate to  
a little folly?

How many flies, how many lies,  
add to up a greater mass  
than wisdom and honor?

What is the measure?

The fool walking down the road  
demonstrates his nature.

How? To whom?

Can everybody see  
or only the wise, the honorable?

Dead flies, bad smell,  
and lies.

We cannot long hide our essence.

Examine my heart.

You know who I am.

Let me be who we both want me to be.

- 10.4 If a ruler's anger rises against you,  
do not leave your post;  
calmness can lay great errors to rest.
- 10.5 There is an evil I have seen under the sun,  
the sort of error that arises from a ruler:
- 10.6 Fools are put in many high positions,  
while the rich occupy the low ones.
- 10.7 I have seen slaves on horseback,  
while princes go on foot like slaves.<sup>(NIV)</sup>

Fools equal the poor?

Rich means wise?

Rulers are fools?

Sometimes.

Certainly not always.

We generalize by the person on our mind,  
assuming the example typifies the class.

We have names for that.

Blindness.

Intolerance.

Bigotry.

We have cures for that.

Tolerance.

Perception.

Love.

God, remove my prejudices.

Free me to see people as your children,  
my siblings,  
even when I'd prefer to be an only child.

- 10.8    Whoever digs a pit may fall into it;  
          whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten  
          by a snake.
- 10.9    Whoever quarries stones may be injured by  
          them;  
          whoever splits logs may be endangered by  
          them.
- 10.10   If the ax is dull  
          and its edge unsharpened,  
          more strength is needed  
          but skill will bring success.<sup>(NIV)</sup>



It's safer to stay home than to get in a car.  
Trusting only in myself  
refusing to make  
friends  
prevents friends from hurting me.  
I can work decades at a tedious job  
or dare to try my dream profession.  
The first provides a living;  
the second, life.

God, give me the skill to sharpen my ax  
and the courage to use it.

- 10.11 If a snake bites before it is charmed,  
there is no profit for the charmer.
- 10.12 Words from a wise man's mouth are gracious,  
but a fool is consumed by his own lips.
- 10.13 At the beginning his words are folly;  
at the end they are wicked madness —
- 10.14 and the fool multiplies words.  
No one knows what is coming —  
who can tell him what will happen after him?
- 10.15 A fool's work wearies him;  
he does not know the way to town.<sup>(NIV)</sup>

Words bite.  
Give me sticks and stones.  
They may break my bones,  
but words after words after words  
extinguish my anima,  
crush my soul.  
Why besiege those who matter most  
with vile hatred?  
Why treat the ones you love as you would  
never treat a stranger?

Lord, let the words of my  
mouth  
and the meditations of my  
heart  
be  
love.

- 10.16 Woe to you, O land whose king was a servant  
and whose princes feast in the morning.
- 10.17 Blessed are you, O land whose king is of noble  
birth  
and whose princes eat at a proper time —  
for strength and not for drunkenness.<sup>(NIV)</sup>

“Eat at a proper time. For strength.”  
I’ve often eaten for weakness —  
    stuffing my face —  
    to bury pain, anger, humiliation.  
I’ve eaten for strength, under God’s strength,  
    ignoring the compulsion to eat  
    but nourishing my body.  
Like an alcoholic, I yield to my compulsion  
    unless God sets it aside  
    by mending the feelings,  
    by giving me joy beyond what  
    compulsion  
    could ever yield.

God, move us beyond patches to  
real cures, to comfort that really comforts.  
Thank you for this gift.

- 10.18 If a man is lazy, the rafters sag;  
if his hands are idle, the house leaks.
- 10.19 A feast is made for laughter,  
and wine makes life merry,  
but money is the answer for everything.
- 10.20 Do not revile the king even in your thoughts,  
or curse the rich in your bedroom,  
because a bird of the air may carry your  
words,  
and a bird on the wing may report what you  
say.<sup>(NIV)</sup>

Electronic surveillance.  
Microphones snatching words from great  
distances.  
Little birds on the wing.  
Gossip.  
Tell someone a secret, and soon  
five hundred will not repeat it.  
Words bite.  
Our own words bite us.  
But only when we're so  
careless as to say something  
we shouldn't.

God, make me as virtuous in private  
as I want the world to believe me to be.

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## Chapter Eleven

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### Bread Upon the Waters

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- 11.1 Cast your bread upon the waters,  
for after many days you will find it again.
- 11.2 Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do  
not  
know what disaster may come upon the land.
- 11.3 If clouds are full of water,  
they pour rain upon the earth.  
Whether a tree falls to the south or to the  
north,  
in the place where it falls, there will it lie.<sup>(NIV)</sup>



Give and you'll get.  
Share, and you'll receive.  
Teach somebody to learn the subject.  
Cut out the "what if's."  
Trust in God's goodness,  
in his bounty.  
But know it's better to give  
than to receive, and giving  
enhances the bounty received.

God, I'm centered in me unless  
with your help  
I have the joy of really participating  
in your creation. Help me.

11.4

Whoever watches the wind will not plant;  
whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.

11.5

As you do not know the path of the wind,  
or how the body is formed in a mother's  
womb,  
so you cannot understand the work of God,  
the Maker of all things.

11.6

Sow your seed in the morning,  
and at evening let not your hands be idle,  
for you do not know which will succeed,  
whether this or that,  
or whether both will do equally well.<sup>(NIV)</sup>

What if?  
Contingency plans  
in case  
by chance  
the worst should happen,  
the end of time,  
the big one,  
global conflagration,  
in the eventuality of  
the unlikely,  
the worrier is likely  
not to lose  
for, taking no action,  
making no plans,  
nothing's there,  
come hell,  
high water —  
or good fortune ignored.

I have now, and now only,  
but I can trust, work, prepare  
for the bounty available,  
the promises received.

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## Remember Your Creator While Young

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- 11.7 Light is sweet,  
and it pleases the eyes to see the sun.
- 11.8 However many years a man may live,  
let him enjoy them all.  
But let him remember the days of darkness,  
for they will be many.  
Everything to come is meaningless.
- 11.9 Be happy, young man, while you are young,  
and let your heart give you joy in the days of  
your youth.  
Follow the ways of your heart  
and whatever your eyes see,  
but know that for all these things  
God will bring you to judgment.
- 11.10 So then, banish anxiety from your heart  
and cast off the troubles of your body,  
for youth and vigor are meaningless.<sup>(NIV)</sup>

Shadow makes the painting.  
Sorrow colors life, gives it depth.  
A child draws with bright colors,  
    side by side  
and we see it with loving eyes  
    so it touches us.  
Youth and vigor offer great joy and fun  
    perhaps,  
but who would go back  
    and live it again  
    without change?  
Life is good. Live it.  
    Rejoice in life,  
    no matter what.

God, we can't see the full tapestry of our lives  
but we trust you, the master weaver.  
    I believe.  
Heal my unbelief.

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## Chapter Twelve

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- 12.1 Remember your Creator  
in the days of your youth,  
before the days of trouble come  
and the years approach when you will say,  
“I find no pleasure in them” —
- 12.2 before the sun and the light  
and the moon and the stars grow dark,  
and the clouds return after the rain;
- 12.3 when the keepers of the house tremble,  
and the strong men stoop,  
when the grinders cease because they are  
few,  
and those looking through the windows grow  
dim;
- 12.4 when the doors to the street are closed  
and the sound of grinding fades;  
when men rise up at the sound of birds,  
but all their songs grow faint;
- 12.5 when men are afraid of heights  
and of dangers in the streets;  
when the almond tree blossoms  
and the grasshopper drags himself along  
and desire no longer is stirred.  
Then man goes to his eternal home  
and mourners go about the streets.<sup>(NIV)</sup>

Hurdler,  
colonel, engineer,  
captain of the band.  
Baritone, tinner,  
mayor, leader —  
you could do everything  
but hula-hoop and fix my Timex.  
Now muddled of mind,  
breathless, a stranger  
in your own head,  
you plan the ordinary,  
relearn the routine.  
The chasm gapes.  
Daddy, can I be the child again?

Thank you God for an eternal home  
where mourners know the pain is gone.

- 12.6 Remember him – before the silver cord is  
severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before  
the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the  
wheel broken at the well,
- 12.7 and the dust returns to the ground it came from,  
and the spirit returns to God who gave it.
- 12.8 “Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.  
“Everything is meaningless!”<sup>(NIV)</sup>



Death comes suddenly,  
like a lamp suspended by a cord  
falls, shattering.

Like a pitcher oozing water  
through cracks  
or a well wheel refusing  
to continue its gift of life.

Ashes to ashes,  
dust to dust.

God continues.

Meaningless?

How did meaningless  
become meaningful?

It has, you know.

God who was and is and is to be,  
I trust you.

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## The Conclusion of the Matter

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12.9-10

Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. 10The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

12.11-12

The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails – given by one Shepherd. <sup>12</sup>Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them.

Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.

12.13 Now all has been heard;  
here is the conclusion of the matter:  
Fear God and keep his commandments,  
for this is the whole duty of man.

12.14

For God will bring every deed into judgment,  
including every hidden thing,  
whether it is good or evil.<sup>(NIV)</sup>

Of making many books, no end.  
I've added to the pile.  
Much study wearies the body,  
makes the eyes burn,  
but sometimes, just occasionally,  
an idea springs forward,  
a light,  
a beacon.  
Fear God.  
Keep his commandments.  
This is your whole duty.  
What a glorious duty it is.

Praise God for life as it comes.  
Praise him in sorrow, in joy, in loneliness,  
from the masses,  
hidden in my closet.  
Praise God for giving life  
meaning  
even when it all seems meaningless.

## About the Author

David had one son who became king, Solomon, and only Solomon was king over Israel, the only king other than David over all Israel, not merely the northern kingdom or southern kingdom, but this writer speaks of all the kings before him when David and Saul only ruled in Jerusalem over the Jews. He calls himself the “qohéleth” which translated into Greek as *ekklésiastes* and meant teacher/preacher/speaker. Scholars who discount Solomon as the author, among other reasons because he doesn’t use the most common Hebrew word for God, place him in the post-exilic period, perhaps 250 to 200 years before the Christian era. Whatever the time of writing, the prose and poetry is timeless, acknowledging the longing in the human soul and, ultimately, the deity and nature of God, that he reveals himself and conceals himself, but ultimately is transcendent and sovereign. God is in charge. So says The Teacher.

## About the Author

Barbara B. Rollins like The Teacher, looks back on life after decades, after pursuing happiness and meaning through various courses – teacher, Christian educator, scribe, lawyer, judge, and writer. Married for decades, mother of grown sons, Sunday school teacher, Rotarian, Toastmaster, genealogist, historian, editor, and publisher, she's experienced the ups and downs of life. A student of this history of Twelve-Step programs, she draws understanding from eclectic literature and correspondents around the world. Her previously published works include a forensic series for children, the young adult novel *Syncopaed Summer*, and the anthologies of Silver Boomer Books: *Silver Boomers*, *Freckles to Wrinkles*, and *This Path*.

I'll add more so thse appear the same  
length....dfmasdfm,.cfdj,cvasdfasc,adfja;kle,c  
kfasjklc klsfj; dsfjakl;j ckjkl; ckajdsf;l kj;df ljadfs  
kc jldsf kck

I've not been consistent in the use of "the Teacher"  
and "The Teacher." I need to settle on one or  
the other and make them consistent.  
These last two pages will be about the other books.



