

Oh, but I could try, couldn't I?  
No. He's right. Even straightened,  
    bends make weak spots.  
And you can't count what's not there  
though it's never stopped me from trying.  
When this book is finished, I can sell it.  
    With the money I'll...  
I'll count it when it's done and sold.  
    Now I've 207 verses to go.  
Here and now is what I've got.  
Yesterday's saved as joys or regrets.  
    Tomorrow's beyond my reach.  
So right now, today, I might affect —  
    might make joys – for tomorrow.  
    Or regrets.

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the  
    things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
    and wisdom to know the difference.”

- 1.16 I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.
- 1.17 And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.
- 1.18 For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.<sup>(KJV)</sup>

Wisdom resembles madness and folly.  
Chasing folly's more fun, catching's less.

He's being vain again.

Ever want to be a simpleton?

Ever envy a dog's life? Chasing folly.

Hiding bones.

Scratching. Sleeping.

Romping.

Ever envy a dog's life?

The faith of a little child,

simple faith,

no complications, great rewards.

Heaven.

Like riches, wisdom hinders the quest.

Bones stay hidden

for we're too smart to dig

for the fun of it.

God, when you made me smart were you mad  
at me? Didn't you know I needed peace?

Let there be peace on earth. And please

count me in on it.

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# Chapter Two

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## Pleasures Are Meaningless

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<sup>2.1-3</sup> I thought in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good.” But that also proved to be meaningless. <sup>2</sup>“Laughter,” I said, “is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?” <sup>3</sup>I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly – my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.<sup>(NIV)</sup>

Spoil sport.  
Norman Cousins said laughter could cure you  
physically. Mentally, too.  
Could it be you confuse cheer with beer?  
Is foolish so bad?  
We already discounted the opposite,  
the wisdom.  
Isn't childish the same as foolish?  
Surrender's the key. And the key  
doesn't work with wisdom's  
manipulation.

God, help me discard my sanctimonious  
wisdom  
and joyfully embrace laying down control  
again, as that soldier lays down his weapon in  
surrender.  
I sit, awaiting your instructions.

2.4-8 I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards. <sup>5</sup>I made gardens and parks, filling them with all kinds of fruit trees. <sup>6</sup>I built reservoirs to collect the water to irrigate my many flourishing groves. <sup>7</sup>I bought slaves, both men and women, and others were born into my household. I also owned large herds and flocks, more than any of the kings who had lived in Jerusalem before me. <sup>8</sup>I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both men and women, and had many beautiful concubines. I had everything a man could desire!

1.9 So I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom never failed me.<sup>(NLT)</sup>

I, I, I, I, I.

Aye-yiyi-yi-yi.

I acquired. I conquered. I amassed  
all the delights of the heart of man.

I had it all, even wisdom.

And still he writes that all is vanity, all is  
meaningless.

Yep. Been there. Done that. Felt the same.

God, deliver me from what I want.

Please give me what I need.

- 2.10 I denied myself nothing my eyes desired;  
I refused my heart no pleasure.  
My heart took delight in all my work,  
and this was the reward for all my labor.
- 2.11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done  
and what I had toiled to achieve,  
everything was meaningless, a chasing after  
the wind;  
nothing was gained under the sun.<sup>(NIV)</sup>



You like my poetry?  
These silly baubles? They're nothing.  
Don't look at me. Don't see what I've done.  
I know you'll see I'm a fraud.  
Your kind words can't be meant,  
just platitudes,  
white lies playing nice.  
How can my work have merit?  
A wise woman said  
I should love myself  
as I am.  
She claimed  
I'd never like the new  
improved  
me  
otherwise.

God, teach me to love myself  
as I love my neighbor,  
as I love you.

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## Wisdom and Folly Are Meaningless

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- 2:12 Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom,  
and also madness and folly.  
What more can the king's successor do  
than what has already been done?<sup>(NIV)</sup>

Wisdom, madness and folly —  
a cornucopia of possibilities.  
Like a president worried about his legacy.  
And my legacy? Yours?  
What more can a body do  
than what has already been done?  
Must each generation top their parents?  
Can each generation forge ahead?  
In what area?  
Madness?  
Folly?  
Wisdom?  
Faithfulness?

God, keep my eyes on the prize, on what  
matters.  
Set aside pettiness, competition, rivalry.  
Let me excel in faith.  
And peace.

2.13-16 I thought, “Wisdom is better than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness. <sup>14</sup>For the wise can see where they are going, but fools walk in the dark.” Yet I saw that the wise and the foolish share the same fate. <sup>15</sup>Both will die. So I said to myself, “Since I will end up the same as the fool, what’s the value of all my wisdom? This is all so meaningless!” <sup>16</sup>For the wise and the foolish both die. The wise will not be remembered any longer than the fool. In the days to come, both will be forgotten.<sup>(NLT)</sup>

“Are we there yet?”

What of the joy of the trip?

Why obsess with the end result?

Can we not see the beauty as we pass?

Can we not build experiences and experience  
joys?

Why do we focus only on the end?

If the reward is all it's about,

why do we try so hard

to postpone it?

God, don't let me wish my life away.

Show me the sights I would miss if I don't pay  
attention

to

today.

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## Toil Is Meaningless

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2.17-23

So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. <sup>18</sup>I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. <sup>19</sup>And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. <sup>20</sup>So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. <sup>21</sup>For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. <sup>22</sup>What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? <sup>23</sup>All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.<sup>(NIV)</sup>

Giving away things seems easier  
for the old.

What I treasured at twenty —  
would fight to keep —  
sixty years later  
can easily go to a youngster  
who will treasure it.

What if I'd passed it by for fear  
of having to  
give it up?

Both would be robbed — I of the joy of  
holding and passing the joy,  
the youth of treasuring it for it was mine.  
Meaningless? Worry is meaningless.

God, help me see those people miserable  
as The Teacher. Help me to help them love.

2.24-26

A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, <sup>25</sup>for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? <sup>26</sup>To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.<sup>(NIV)</sup>



God's grinning, I bet.  
He treats us all alike,  
those who please him – all of us —  
and the sinners – all of us.  
The difference is our own outlook,  
our perception of fairness.  
A person in sync with God  
gains wisdom, knowledge,  
happiness,  
by gathering, storing, passing on.  
God, help me grin, work, and enjoy.

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# Chapter Three

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## A Time for Everything

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- 3.1 There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven —
- 3.2 A time to give birth and a time to die;  
A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted.
- 3.3 A time to kill and a time to heal;  
A time to tear down and a time to build up.
- 3.4 A time to weep and a time to laugh;  
A time to mourn and a time to dance.
- 3.5 A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones;  
A time to embrace and a time to shun embracing.<sup>(NASB)</sup>

Turn around and turn again.  
There was a time before the Byrds.  
Turn the page, turn again.  
There were the words before the Byrds.  
Centuries before. Millennia before.  
There was the truth of the words before.  
We see our lives through a microscope.  
God's huge view telescopes  
the microscopic picture —  
the whole mural as well as our square inch.  
He knows times we need to hate, to uproot, to  
throw away.  
He loves us through those and  
the times to love, to keep, to dance, and to  
have peace.

God, thank you for all the times of our lives.  
May we remember dancing while we mourn.  
May we have peace in times of war.

- 3.6 A time to search and a time to give up as lost;  
A time to keep and a time to throw away.
- 3.7 A time to tear apart and a time to sew together;  
A time to be silent and a time to speak.
- 3.8 A time to love and a time to hate;  
A time for war and a time for peace.<sup>(NASB)</sup>