

KESWICK CONVENTION - WEEK 1 - JULY 2022

Life in Light of Eternity



Ecclesiastes

OUTLINE

FOUR LENSES FOR READING ECCLESIASTES

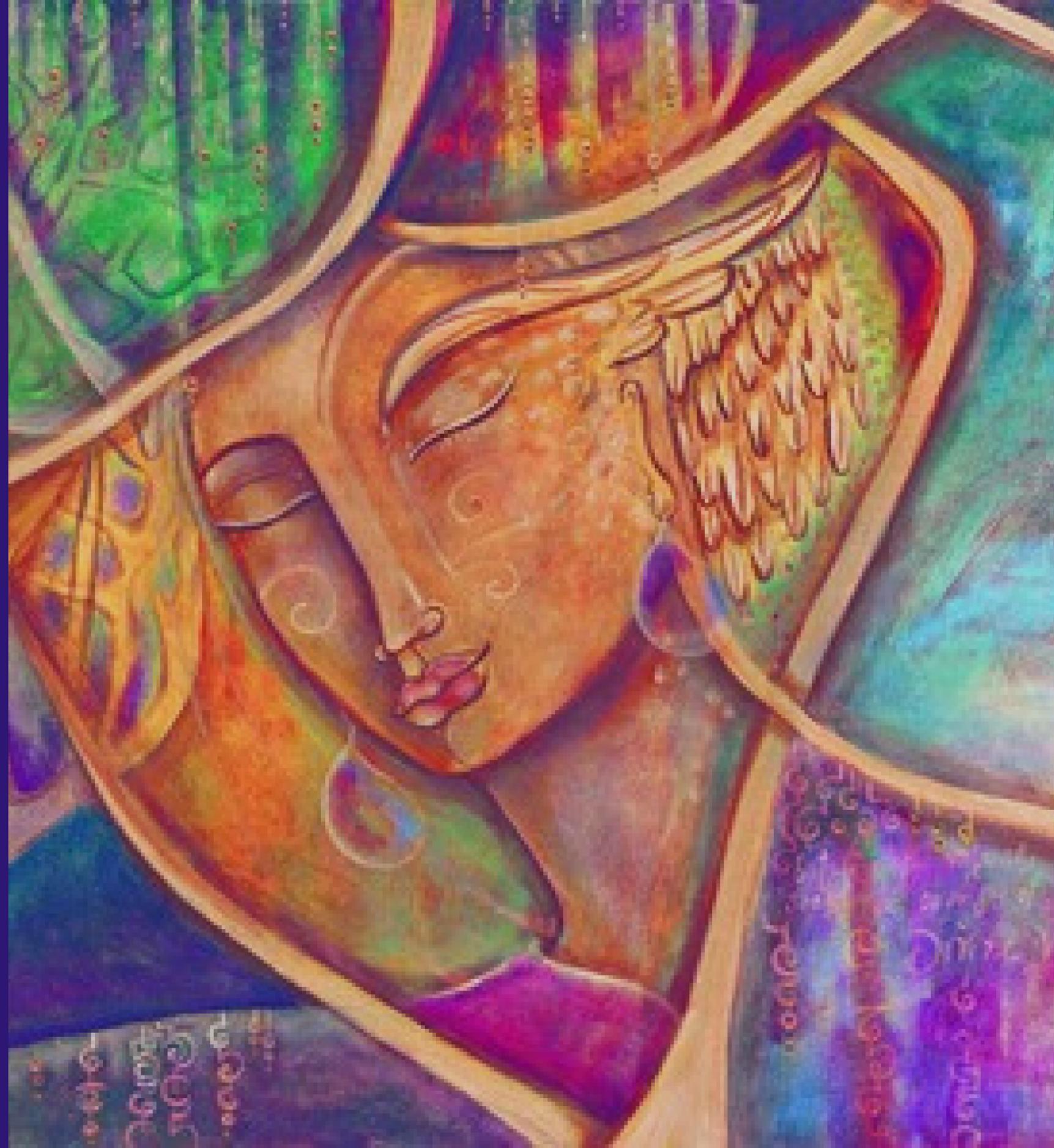
1. **Perspective**
2. *Time*
3. *Death*
4. *Life*

The beginning of wisdom is this:
Get wisdom,
and whatever you get, get
insight.

Prize her highly, and she will
exalt you; she will honour you if
you embrace her.

She will place on your head
a graceful garland;
she will bestow on you a
beautiful crown.

Proverbs 4:7-9



"There are details of character small enough to escape the mesh of the law and the broadsides of the prophets, yet decisive in personal dealings ...

... what is a person like to live with, to employ, how does he manage his affairs, his time, himself?"

Derek Kidner, *Proverbs*

'Wisdom literature wounds from behind'

Anthony C. Thiselton



Some people see a glass half-empty.

Others see it half-full.



I see a glass twice as big as it needs to be.

George Carlin

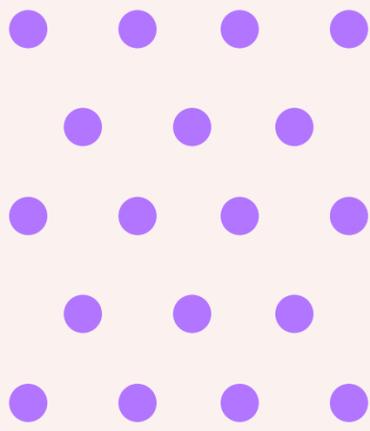
God the protector of all that trust in Thee,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy;
increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy;
that Thou being our ruler and guide,
we may so pass through things temporal,
that we finally lose not the things eternal:
Grant this heavenly Father,
for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord.
Amen.

The Collect, Fourth Sunday after Trinity



If learning in wartime may be compared to Nero fiddling while Rome burned, then "to a Christian the true tragedy of Nero must be not that he fiddled while the city was on fire but that he fiddled on the brink of hell."

C. S. Lewis, 'Learning in War-Time'



PERSPECTIVE

4 *Keys* to Ecclesiastes

4 *P's* in Ecclesiastes

PERSPECTIVE: 4 KEYS TO THE BOOK

A unified book

1:1-11 (prologue) and
12:9-14 (epilogue) are
not contradictory
perspectives within the
same book.

A stark question

'What does man gain by
all the toil at which he
toils under the sun?' (1:3)

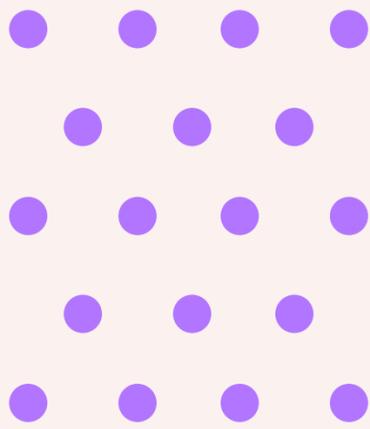
A key phrase

'Under the sun' (1:3)

A vital word

What does 'meaningless' or
'vanity' (*hebel*) mean?

PERSPECTIVE: 4 P'S IN THE BOOK



Pleasure

'The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth' (12:10)

Pain

'The words of the wise are like goads, and the like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd' (12:11)

Perspective

'The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man' (12:13)

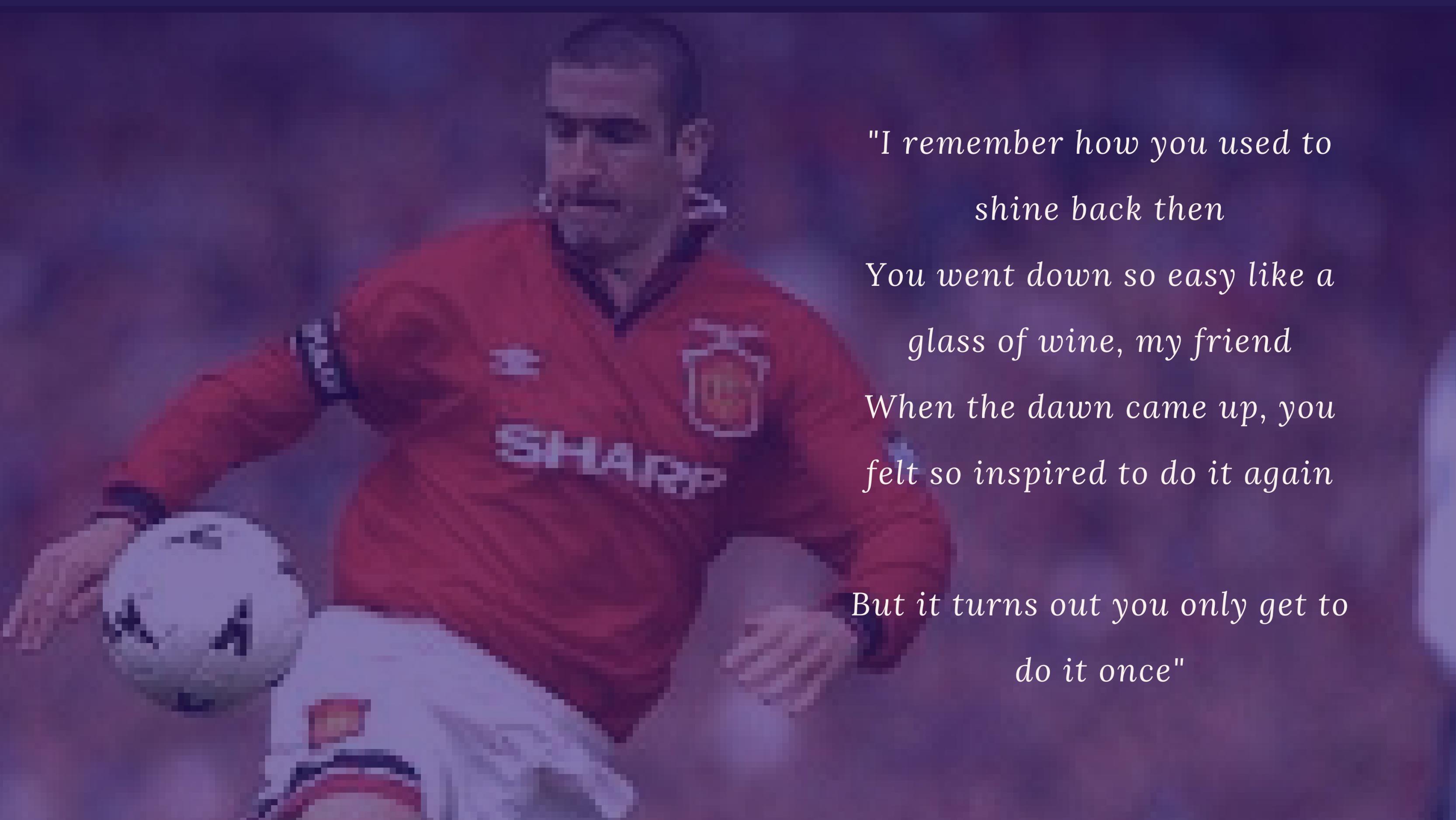
Preparation

'For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil' (12:14)

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*"I remember how you used to
shine back then*

*You went down so easy like a
glass of wine, my friend*

*When the dawn came up, you
felt so inspired to do it again*

*But it turns out you only get to
do it once"*

Of old you laid the foundation of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.
They will perish, but you will remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.
You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away,
but you are the same, and your years have no end.

Psalm 102:25-27

True eternity has been defined ... to be 'the interminable possession of life - complete, perfect, and at once.'

Thus, it excludes succession no less than end and ought to be conceived as a standing, not a flowing, now. The reason is because nothing flows away with time from the life of God as from ours. **God has every moment at once whatever we have dividedly by succession of time.** Hence philosophers have well said that neither the future nor the past (he will be or was), but only the present (he is) can properly be applied to him. For the eternal duration of God embraces indeed all time - the past, the present, and future; but nothing in him can be past or future because his life remains always the same and unchangeable.

Francis Turretin

There is a principle which runs through the Christian understanding of all human affairs.

It is this:

When we try to be God we make ourselves less than human; but when we are willing to admit we are not, and worship God alone, then we discover what humanity is all about.

We were made to be images of God, not gods ourselves ...
In trying to be God, we are making ourselves less and less human.

Matthew Roberts

TIME

6 THINGS TIME TEACHES

1. *Life is short*
2. *Life is elusive*
3. *Life is repetitive*
4. *Life is rhythmical*
5. *Life is relational*
6. *Life is ordered*



"She was changing at such a rapid pace, that I felt the need to document the way she looked, to keep my memories intact"

Dad

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'We need to be alienated from what we think we know in order to genuinely grow'

Brian Brock



“ I want to do something with this life of mine. I want to take my life as a great opportunity that I can't waste. ”

DEATH

ITS THREE STRANGE FACES:

1. *Death is a Surgeon*
2. *Death is a Preacher*
3. *Death is an Artist*

This was the nerve the serpent
had touched in Eden, to make
even Paradise appear an insult.

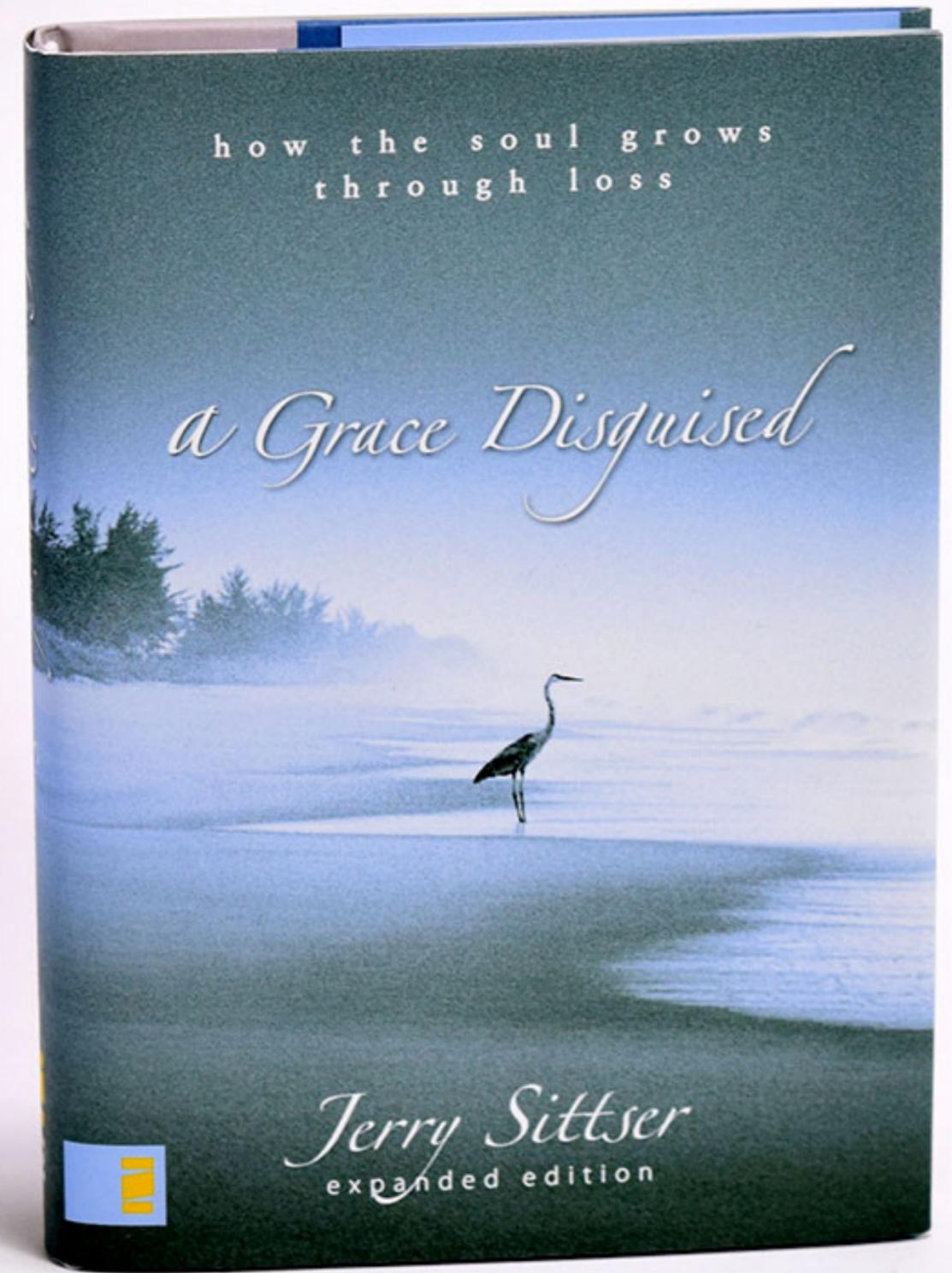
Derek Kidner

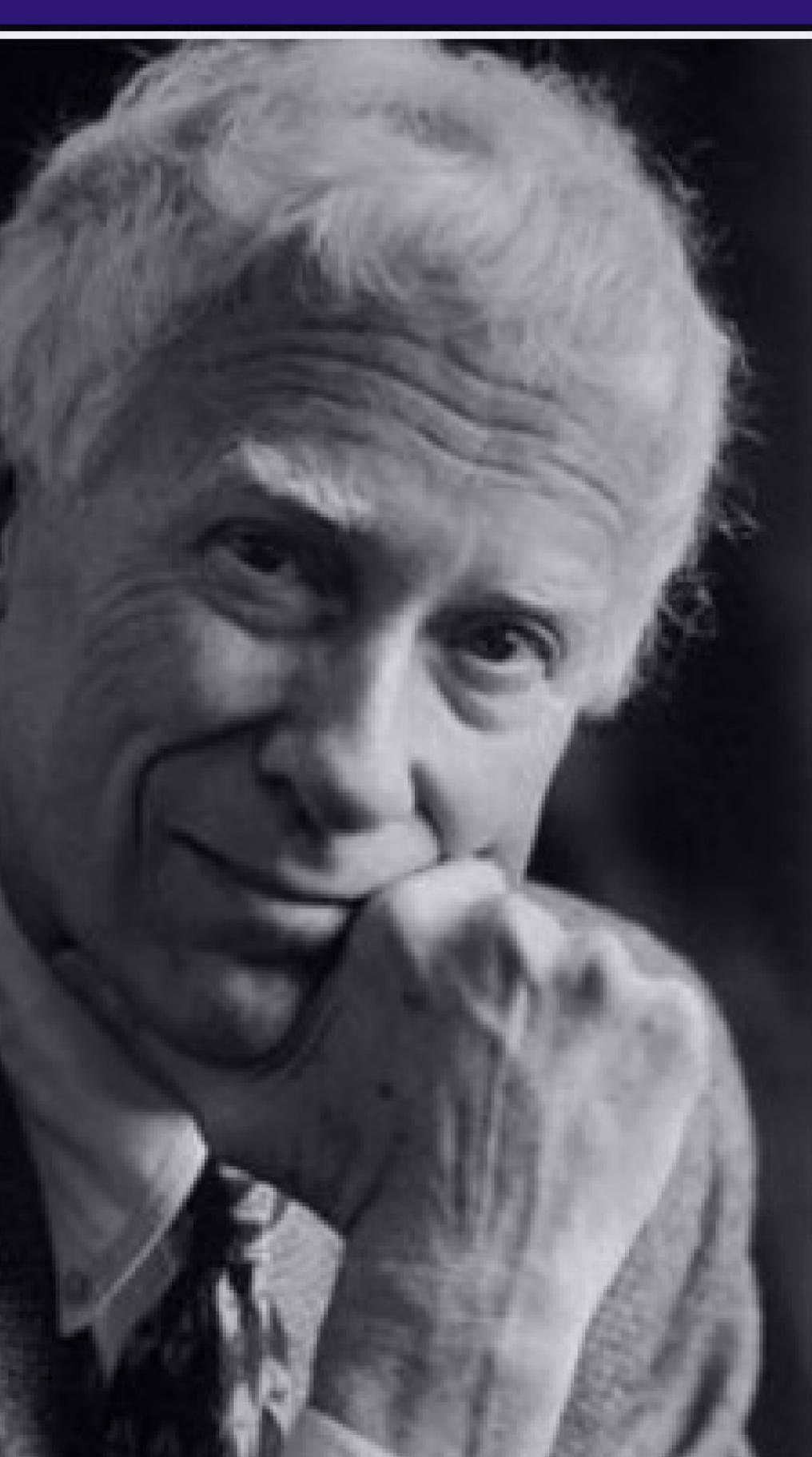
You are a creature ... our problems do not stem from our failure to stay in our garden ... all the evils, and I choose my words carefully, *all the evils of the world* stem from our taking ourselves to be the Creator.

Jacques Ellul

All this will come at a stage when there is no longer the resilience of youth or the prospect of recovery to offset it. In one's early years, and the greater part of life, troubles and illnesses are chiefly set-backs, not disasters. One expects the sky to clear eventually. It is hard to adjust to the closing of that long chapter: to know that now, in the final stretch, there will be no improvement: the clouds will always gather again, and time will no longer heal, but kill.

Derek Kidner, on Ecclesiastes 12





I Shall Look At The World Through
Tears. Perhaps I Shall See Things
That, Dry-Eyed, I Could Not See

— *Nicholas Watterstorff* —

AZ QUOTES

OUTLINE

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4. ***Life***

Death is an Artist - it paints life full

- 1. Pursue life in relationship (9:1-12)*
- 2. Pursue joy in gratitude (11:1-10)*

Ride a bike, see the Grand Canyon, go to the theatre, learn to make music, visit the sick, care for the dying, cook a meal, feed the hungry, watch a film, read a book, laugh with some friends until it makes you cry, play football, run a marathon, snorkel in the ocean, listen to Mozart, ring your parents, write a letter, play with your kids, spend your money, learn a language, plant a church, start a school, speak about Christ, travel to somewhere you've never been, adopt a child, give away your fortune and then some, shape someone else's life by laying down your own.

Destiny, p.107

Human beings are supposed to enjoy life to the full because that is their divinely assigned portion, and God calls one into account for failure to enjoy ... enjoyment is not only permitted it is commanded; it is not only an opportunity, it is a divine imperative.

C. L. Seow, *Ecclesiastes*

45 "All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you till you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that he commanded you. 46 They shall be a sign and a wonder against you and your offspring for ever. 47 Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, because of the abundance of all things, 48 therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness, and lacking everything. And he will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you.

Deuteronomy 28:45-48

The broad Christian community has many, many books on joy, but few of them appear to grasp the weight of joy. They tend to talk rather stoically about how to feel pleasure in the midst of dysfunctional relationships. Joy is just a marginal psychological trait, not the center of the universe. How is it that, for centuries, Christendom can write creeds and theological tomes that don't tell us this simple point from Deuteronomy? Why haven't we had giant church councils on the nature of joy? Or different schools of thought that wrestle over the intricacies of joy? Why don't our creeds dedicate long sections to expositing the nature of joy for the people of God?

Douglas Jones

“What is the meaning of all this gluttony, this waste, this self-indulgence? Where did you get all these things?”

The White Witch, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

He's a hedonist at heart. All those fasts and vigils and stakes and crosses are only a façade ... Out at sea, out in his Sea, there is pleasure, and more pleasure ... He has a bourgeois mind. He has filled his world full of pleasures. There are things for humans to do all day long without him minding in the least.

CS. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

