

Coming to Grips with Grief: Encouragement in Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes 1.1,2
September 6, 2009 pm

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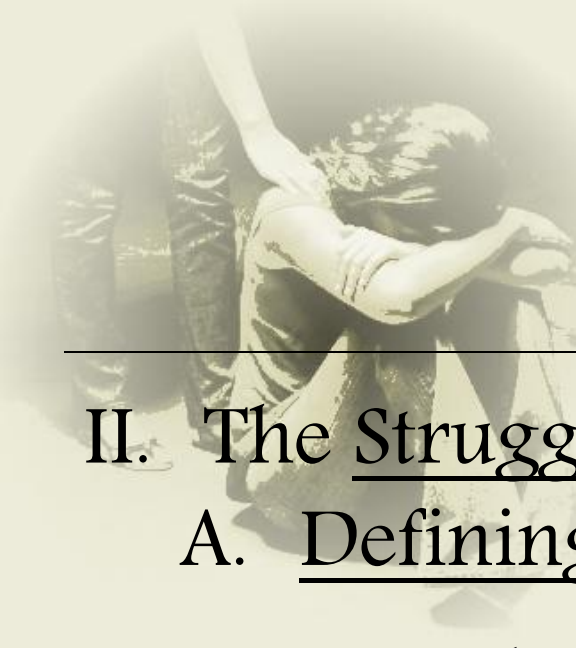




Why this difficult combination?

First, grief is an acute and abiding reality that affects us all.

Second, the Book of Ecclesiastes brings unique perspective and encouragement.



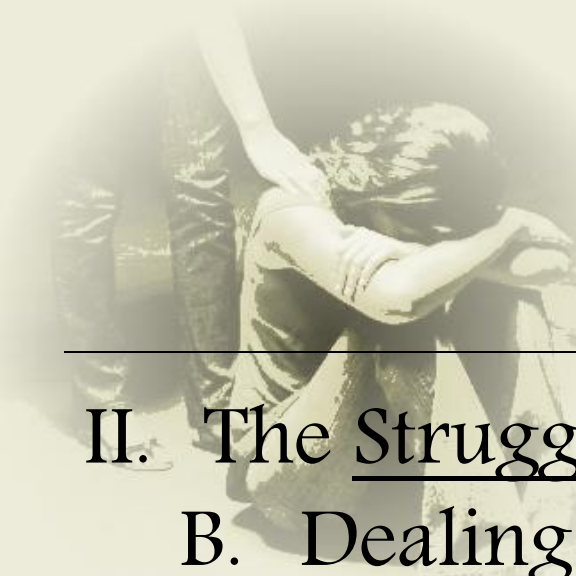
Three Parts of the Book of Ecclesiastes
And Their Contributions
to Coming to Grips with Grief

I. The Setting 1.1,2

A. The Author 1.1

One who addresses an assembly.

This title conveys a call for people everywhere to gather and hear what he has to say.



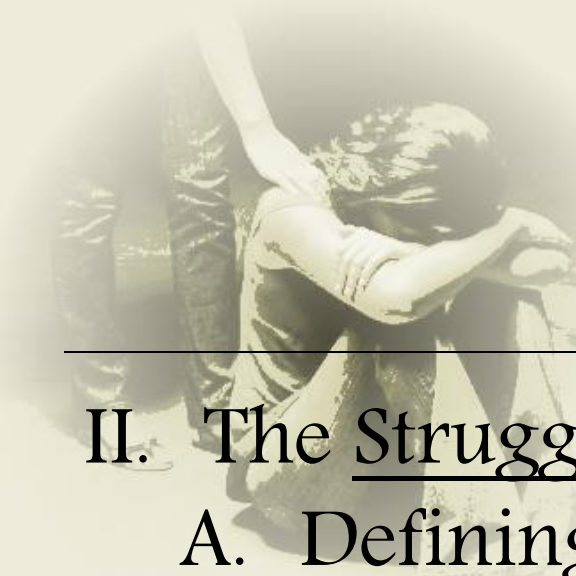
Three Parts of the Book of Ecclesiastes
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I. The Setting 1.1,2

B. The Assertion 1.2

The key word here and throughout the book is “vanity”.

It is important we consider what he meant by it for our understanding will affect our interpretation of the rest of the book.



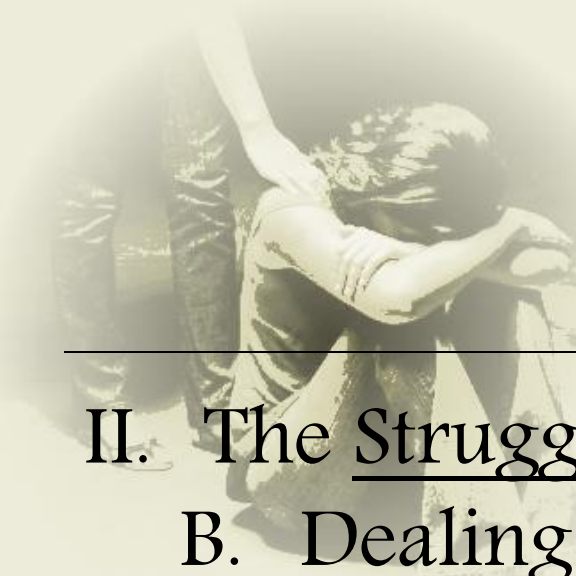
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The Hebrew word translated *vanity* means *breath* or *vapor*.

Traditionally it has been primarily understood to describe the sense that life “under the sun” is futile, without purpose or meaning.

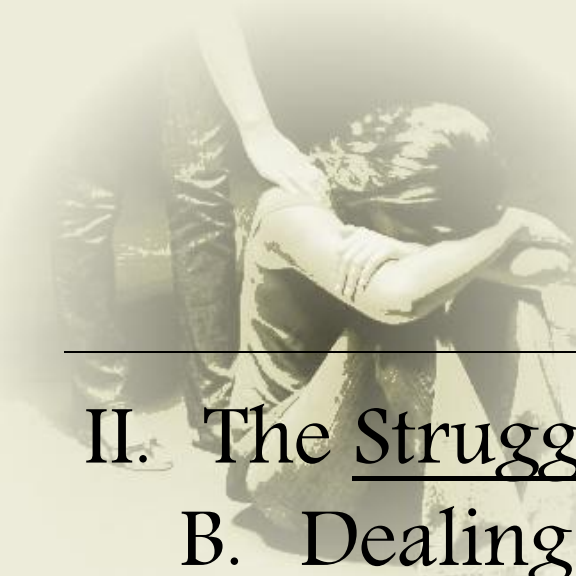


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Some scholars understand the Hebrew word to refer primarily to the “transitory impermanence of life” (NLT, p 1073).

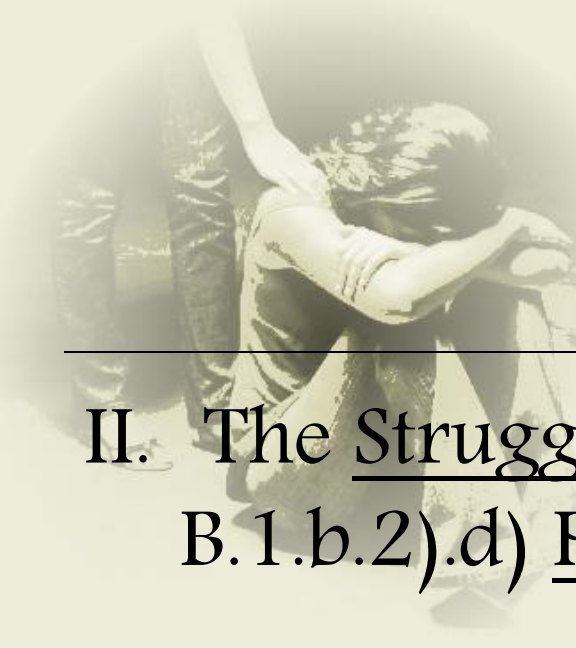


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B. The Assertion 1.2

Instead of life being meaningless and futile, it is impermanent and fleeting. Like a vapor, there is brevity, and therefore, frustration, grief.




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I. The Setting 1.1,2

B. The Assertion 1.2

Ecclesiastes helps us to acknowledge, to face, and hopefully begin to address the pervasive and inescapable sorrow in our lives, a groaning of heart, due to the transitory nature of our present existence.




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B. The Assertion 1.2

This confrontation with the vanity of life, the transitory impermanence, does not necessarily lead me to gloom.

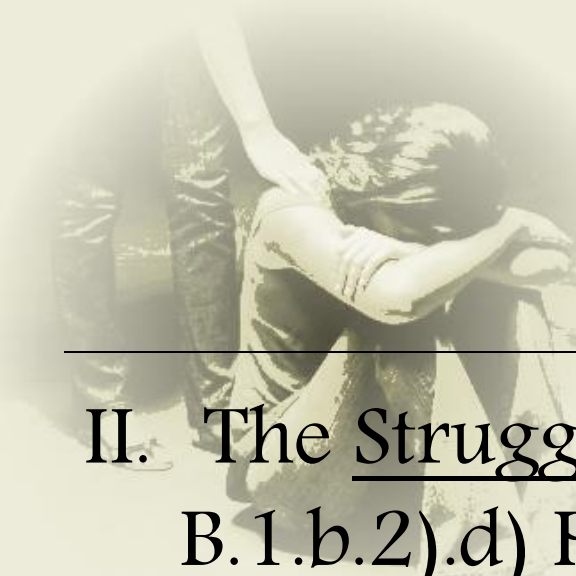


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Acknowledging the reality of our grief is a critical step towards living healthy and productive lives.



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B. The Assertion 1.2

I find here a priceless perspective, a poignant expression, an outlet for what my mind and heart are already coming to know by experience—grief, abiding grief and that there is opportunity for healing.
