



Making Sense

of the Mess

The Study of Ecclesiastes



Making **SENSE**

of the **MESS**

IT'S WORSE THAN MESSY

Ecclesiastes 8

What do you do when the problems seem to stem from those in the highest levels of leadership? How do you respond in a world that appears headed in the wrong direction?

Ecclesiastes 8

¹ Who is like the wise? Who knows the explanation of things? A person's wisdom brightens their face and changes its hard appearance.

Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God. Do not be in a hurry to leave the king's presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases.

Since a king's word is supreme, who can say to him, "What are you doing?"

Ecclesiastes 8

⁵ Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a person may be weighed down by misery. Since no one knows the future, who can tell someone else what is to come? As no one has power over the wind to contain it, so no one has power over the time of their death.

As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it.

Ecclesiastes 8

⁹ All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything done under the sun. There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own hurt. Then too, I saw the wicked buried—those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless. When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people's hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong.

Ecclesiastes 8

¹² Although a wicked person who commits a hundred crimes may live a long time, I know that it will go better with those who fear God, who are reverent before Him. Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.

There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: the righteous who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless.

Ecclesiastes 8

¹⁵ So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun.

When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labor that is done on earth — people getting no sleep day or night — then I saw all that God has done.

Ecclesiastes 8

¹⁷ No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning. Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it.

**“At every turn this chapter
confronts us with our inability to
call the tune and master our affairs.
On one level after another we
find ourselves pinned down,
hunted down and disoriented.”**

Anonymous

**We're swimming in a world
that feels completely out of
whack and off the rails.**

1. We don't know what God is up to—and anyone who claims that they do is lying.

vv. 16-17

¹⁶When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labor that is done on earth — people getting no sleep day or night —

¹⁷then I saw all that God has done.

No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning.

Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it.

There are just things that we
can't see—and are incapable
of understanding.

**There are just things that we
can't see—and are incapable
of understanding.**

**As we work through the Bible, week after
week here at King Street, I find myself
saying this in dozens of different ways...**

As we work through the Bible, week after week here at King Street, I find myself saying this in dozens of different ways...

Upper Story

Lower Story

As we work through the Bible, week after week here at King Street, I find myself saying this in dozens of different ways...

We have a
"3 pound
brain problem"



As we work through the Bible, week after week here at King Street, I find myself saying this in dozens of different ways...

The
universe
next door.



**1. We don't know what God is up to —
and anyone who claims that they do is lying.**

**2. Human rulers & earthly kingdoms
can get really messed up.**

vv. 3-4

**[This is true throughout the Bible,
and throughout history.]**

**1. We don't know what God is up to —
and anyone who claims that they do is lying.**

**2. Human rulers & earthly kingdoms
can get really messed up.**

vv. 3-4

Solomon is viewing this from the inside.

“The broader Biblical context in which Ecclesiastes 8 must be understood is illustrated by the many examples of foolish and wicked rulers—under whose power God’s people must live for a time. These circumstances offer models of and advice about what righteous living should look like.

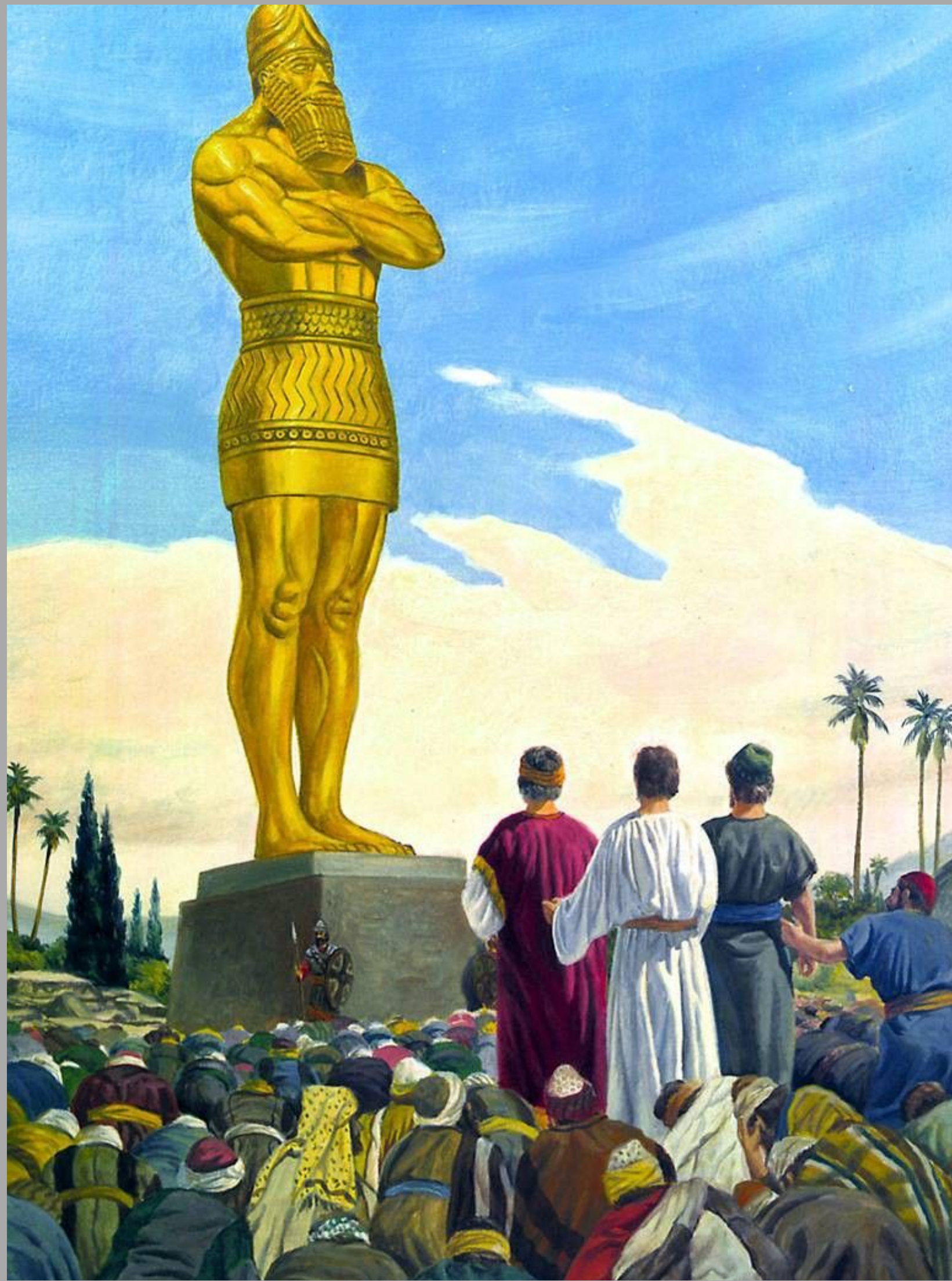
The fact that much human government is wicked is simply taken for granted by the Bible. Kings, made in God’s image, come to worship themselves as gods in opposition to the living God.”

Iain Provan

Pharaoh was considered
within his culture and
religious context to BE
the son of the sun-god Re



—and becoming the god
Osiris after his death.



Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the the music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

Daniel 3:13-15



“And now at the commands of the great gods, my sovereignty, my dominion, and my power, are manifesting themselves: I am regal, I am lordly, I am exalted, I am mighty, I am honored, I am glorified, I am preeminent, I am powerful, I am valiant, I am lion-brave, and I am heroic. I, Assur-Nasir-Pal, the mighty king, the king of Assyria, chosen of Sin, favorite of Anu, beloved of Adad, mighty one among the gods.”

**King Assur-Nasir-Pal
Assyrian King; 875 BC**

**Nero;
37-68AD**



**Ghengis Khan
"Universal Ruler"
1162-1227AD**

"The greatest joy is to conquer one's enemies, to pursue them, to seize their property, to see their family in tears, to ride their horses and to possess their daughters and wives."

**And these few examples are
just the tip of the iceberg!
Human rulers and earthly kingdoms
can get really messed up.**

Ecclesiastes 8:12-13

“Although a wicked person who commits a hundred crimes may live a long time, I know that it will go better with those who fear God, who are reverent before Him. Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.”

**1. We don't know what God is up to —
and anyone who claims that they do is lying.**

**2. Human rulers & earthly kingdoms
can get really messed up.**

**3. God calls us to be wise in how
we respond.**

vv. 5-6; 7:19

**3. God calls us to be wise in how
we respond.**

vv. 5-6; 7:19

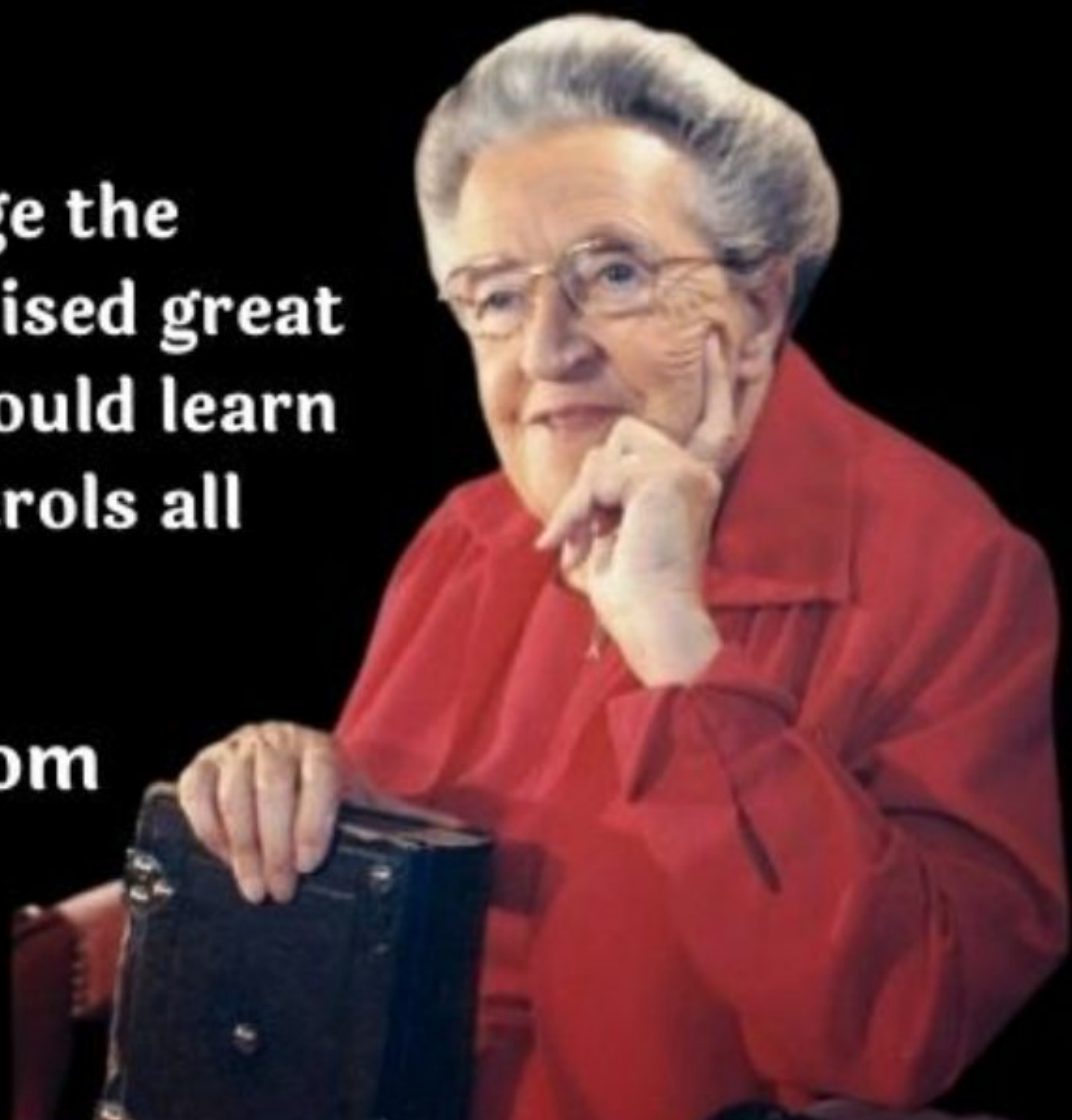
Be cautious. Be patient.

Be people of integrity.

**Heroism is found in small,
daily acts of kindness.**

Jesus did not promise to change the circumstances around us. He promised great peace and pure joy to those who would learn to believe that God actually controls all things.

~ Corrie Ten Boom



“The wise person who understands the nature of things will not struggle foolishly against reality as it is presently found. There must be a steady and patient waiting for God’s judgment and redemption, knowing that ‘with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.’”

Iain Provan

We are not home yet.

**1. We don't know what God is up to —
and anyone who claims that they do is lying.**

**2. Human rulers & earthly kingdoms
can get really messed up.**

3. God calls us to be wise in how we respond.

4. Live today well.

v. 15

verse 15

**“So I commend the enjoyment of life,
because there is nothing better for a
person under the sun than to eat and
drink and be glad. Then joy will
accompany them in their toil all the
days of the life God has given them
under the sun.”**

Ecclesiastes 2:24-26

“A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without Him, who can eat or find enjoyment? To the person who pleases Him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness.”

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20

“This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot. Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart.”

**Stop worrying.
Do the right thing.
Take life a day at a time.
Trust that God will work
things out in His timing.
Know that He has a plan
that you can't yet see.**

Luke 12:25-31

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?

You of little faith! Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek His kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

