

I said to myself, “I know more and I’m wiser than anyone before me in Jerusalem. I’ve stockpiled wisdom and knowledge.” What I’ve finally concluded is that so-called wisdom and knowledge are mindless and witless—nothing but **SPITTING INTO THE WIND**. Much learning earns you much trouble. The more you know, the more you hurt.

I said to myself, “Let’s go for it—experiment with pleasure, have a good time!” But there was nothing to it, nothing but **SMOKE**. What do I think of the fun-filled life? Insane! Inane! My verdict on the pursuit of happiness? Who needs it?

With the help of a bottle of wine and all the wisdom I could muster, I tried my level best to penetrate the absurdity of life.

I wanted to get a handle on anything useful we mortals might do during the years we spend on this earth. Oh, I did great things: built houses, planted vineyards, designed gardens and parks and planted a variety of fruit trees in them, made pools of water to irrigate the groves of trees.

I bought slaves, male and female, who had children, giving me even more slaves; then I acquired large herds and flocks, larger than any before me in Jerusalem. I piled up silver and gold, loot from kings and kingdoms.

I gathered a chorus of singers to entertain me with song, and—most exquisite of all pleasures—voluptuous maidens for my bed.

Oh, how I prospered! I left all my predecessors in Jerusalem far behind, left them behind in the dust. What’s more, I kept a clear head through it all.

Everything I wanted I took—I never said no to myself. I gave in to every impulse, held back nothing. I sucked the marrow of pleasure out of every task—my reward to myself for a hard day’s work! Then I took a good look at everything I’d done, looked at all the sweat and hard work. But when I looked, I saw nothing but smoke.

SMOKE AND SPITTING INTO THE WIND. There was nothing to any of it. Nothing.

Ecclesiastes 1:16-2:11 (The Message)