

ECCLESIASTES 1:1-11 - DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LIFE UNDER THE SUN - ([SERMON MP3](#))

Ecclesiastes asks several very direct and probing questions about the meaning of life. How much thought have you given to questions like: “What is the purpose of life?” and “Why have faith in God when so much in life seems empty and futile?” What conclusions have you come to?

- ✿ *Apart from the personal benefit that might come from gaining a deeper understanding of God and the world in which we live, how might grappling with this issue help us engage with others? Who has God brought into your life so that you can share a biblical philosophy of life and satisfaction?*

The author points out twice in the opening chapter that he is the king of Jerusalem, sitting on David’s throne (1:1, 12). Look up the following passages and note the promise God makes to Solomon, the first son of David to succeed his father. To what extent was the promise fulfilled?

- ✿ *1 Kings 3:7-14 and 1 Kings 4:29-34. Note the response of people to Solomon in 1 Kings 4:34. What should be our attitude to the writings of such a king?*

Solomon begins Ecclesiastes with the statement “All is _____.” Or, in other words, all we can experience under the sun is empty and futile. Life as viewed and experienced on this earth will not fill up what is empty in us.

- ✿ *In what ways do you agree Solomon’s assessment in 1:2-3? What is an area in your life that has recently seemed empty or disappointing? What “under the sun” are you most attracted to and most tempted to believe that in it true life is found?*

- ✿ *In what ways do you sense that people around you live with a sense of despair and hopelessness? How can you minister to them and provide hope?*

- ✿ *David Augsburger says, “Emptiness is at the center of our humanness. To flee it is to miss the creative openness toward creation and Creator. To stuff it full of things is to block our ability to receive others in listening love. To anesthetize it with addictive experiences is to deaden the creative springs of the true self. Emptiness is to be embraced as a gift.” Do you agree or disagree? How have you seen that to be true in your life? What do you think he means by embracing this kind of emptiness, and what would it look like in your life if you did?*

Name	Prayer Need

Solomon points to the endurance of the earth in 1:4 to humble us with the fleeting nature of our lives. Read Psalm 39:4-6; 90:9-12; and James 4:13-17.

☀ *Why do people become proud? What evidence can you offer to prove that this attitude is foolish?*

☀ *Why does the Bible emphasize the brevity of life? How does God want you to maximize your life and the allotted days that God has given you?*

Ecclesiastes asks the questions that the rest of the Bible answers. Read this quote from commentator Tremper Longman and note how Jesus answers the question, “How can we live under the sun if all is emptiness and futility?” “As we turn to the NT, we see that Jesus Christ is the one who redeems us from the vanity under the sun, the meaninglessness under which Solomon suffered. Jesus redeemed us from Solomon’s empty world by subjecting himself to it in His death. He conquers and mends what is broken and crooked.”

☀ *Read Romans 8:18-21, 1 Corinthians 15:58 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. According to these verses what is the purpose of life in this world? The word translated “futility” in Romans 8:20 is the same word used in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) to translate the motto word of Ecclesiastes “vanity.” What is God’s solution for the emptiness and futility of our world?*

☀ *Read the story of the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21. How does Jesus save us from the emptiness at the end of this story and the vanity of Ecc. 1? Use John 10:10 and Matt. 16:24-26 in your answer.*

WRAPUP: Herman Melville (the author of the classic book, Moby Dick) called Ecclesiastes “the truest of all books.” More than any other book in the Bible, Ecclesiastes captures the futility and frustration of life in our world. It’s a difficult book to wrestle with and understand. But, we must always consider the possibility that when we encounter a difficult biblical book, perhaps the problem does not lie with the book, but with ourselves. Our “difficulty” may be that the book speaks truly about reality while we are devoted to illusions. The “difficulty” may be that we are not too keen to embrace the truth, but prefer to embrace half-truths or lies.

☀ *How do you see yourself ignoring the problems of this life? What illusions or distractions keep us from considering the questions of the purpose and goal of life?*

☀ *The things under the sun allure us away from ultimate questions of life into temporary satisfaction in things that are ultimately meaningless. Look back at John 10:10 and attach the truth of Jesus’ full and abundant life to the things “under the sun” that you are most tempted to believe offer true life.*