

FINDING IT: #3

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION TALKSHEET FOR MAY 30, 2010

Overview

Throughout the entire book of Ecclesiastes Solomon main point is that life is meaningless. Everything we work so hard to achieve and become is pointless and empty, "like chasing after the wind."

But Solomon ends the book with what does have eternal meaning: "to fear God and obey His commandments." That is the meaning of life.

Outline

Two reasons to live your life for God:

- You might be young at heart, but your body is getting old. (Ecc. 12:1-5)
- The real meaning in life is not about duration, it's about donation. (Ecc. 12:13-14)

Don't miss out on what God created you to do. You were made to fear Him and obey Him, you were made to make Him first in your life. Everything else is meaningless. That's the "it" in life.



Announcements to share

🕒 The **Haiti missions report** is this Tuesday at church. It starts at 7:00 PM. The team will share stories, show pictures and videos of the trip, as well as introduce the next trip. Contact Tim for more info.

🕒 **VBS needs supplies!** Ask your small group to consider

coordinating an effort to collect glue, stickers, candy, tape and yarn. Contact Julie for more info.

🕒 Our **next baptismal service** is August 22 on Lake Burgen. Anyone who's interested in participating should contact Steve. Encourage your group to come out!



CHILDREN UPDATE: Praise the Lord for four children who made first-time decisions to trust Christ last week in John LeVahn's AWANA small group!



ADULT UPDATE: The financial class at church blessed many people last week. Through the advice that was given, several families are changing their future forever.



TEEN UPDATE: Eighth graders were so excited to jump into C-Groups last week. The Giroux's C-Group welcomed them with open arms.

For Adults

Open: Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to come and teach your group tonight as you go through His Word.

Share: Tell of a time when you felt that something you invested a lot of time into just ended up being pretty meaningless. Have others share, too.

Ask: What are you currently investing time and energy into that feels pretty meaningless? Why does it feel that way?

Activity: Skim through the book of Ecclesiastes together and count how many times Solomon says, "Everything is meaningless." Do you agree or disagree with his conclusion? Why?

Read: Ecclesiastes 12:1-8

Ask: Solomon points out that our bodies are getting old. What are some signs of age in yourself that you've laughed at recently?

Ask: According to Sunday's message, why is Solomon pointing out the physical detriment of our bodies?

FOR KIDS

Why do you think God created people?

Why do you think God created you?

You know the song, "Santa Claus is coming to town?" It says, "He knows if you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake!" Do you think Santa really watches you all year long?

Someone else is watching you, too, someone much more important than Santa.

Read Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 together.

What do you think it means when the Bible says that to fear God and obey His commands is the "duty of man?" (Fear in this context means "respect," not being afraid.)

Explain that God is watching how we live for Him and that nothing else we do matters in life except pursuing God with all our heart. That means obeying because we love Him because of what He did for us on the cross.



Read: Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

Ask: What stands out to you the most about "the conclusion of the matter?"

Read: Ecclesiastes 12:14 and Revelation 20:12

Ask: Everything we do is being written down. Does it freak you out that God is keeping track of

everything you do? Why is He keeping track?

Ask: How we live our life here on earth obviously matters to God.

Reflect: If the purpose of life is to fear and obey God, evaluate your life using that scale. How are you doing? What areas are a struggle for you? How can the rest of the group help you fear God and obey Him?

FOR TEENS



When using the adult talk outline with teens be intentional to focus on the relational aspect of obeying and following God. It could be easy to feel that God just requires obedience to

whatever He commands because He's a dictator. Emphasize how He's earned that right in our lives because He loves us and because He bought us with His life.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

Ask: If we belong to Christ, how does that impact how we should live? Do you live more like He owns you or like you own yourself? Why?

If you asked your friends, "What is the meaning of life," what do you think they'd say?

What do you think the meaning of life is?

How much of what we do here on earth affects our life after death?

Read Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 and Revelation 20:12

How can I help you live a life that reflects the meaning of life: to obey God and His commandments?

Manuscript of Sunday's Message

by John LeVahn

Senior Pastor

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USE THIS IF YOU MISSED LAST SUNDAY'S MESSAGE OR IF YOU WANT THE NITTY-GRITTY OF WHAT WAS TAUGHT.

Now as we said last week, life is one big search. And most people spend their whole lives searching in all the wrong places for that thing they believe will give them significance and meaning in life. Only to come to the conclusion that what they've been chasing after doesn't give them the sense of meaning that they hoped it would.

And that's why in the book of Eccl., Solomon says that all the things that he pursued in life to bring meaning to his life, all of them were like chasing after the wind. It was pointless, it was empty and it was meaningless.

In fact, that word pops up more than any other word in the book of Eccl. As Solomon chronicles his journey for meaning in the things that are found under the sun, every pursuit leads him to a feeling of futility.

And that's why in the last chapter he pens the very same thing that he penned in the first chapter, "Meaningless. Meaningless." Says the teacher. "Everything is meaningless." Eccl. 12:8.

And the word is literally vapor. In order words, Solomon wants us to know and understand that life without God is nothing. It doesn't matter how far we go, how much we get, how high we climb, if it's all without God, it's not going to amount to anything.

In fact, that's the purpose of this book. To chronicle where Solomon's search for earthly pleasures brought him. And Solomon says, "It brought me nowhere. It left me unfulfilled. It never delivered what I hoped that it would. All the women that I married, all the money that I spent, all the books that I read, all the fame that I gained, all the buildings that I constructed, all the power that I enjoyed, it all meant nothing, because it had nothing to do with God."

And it lead him to this conclusion, verses 13-14, "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing whether it is good or evil."

Now that's it. That is his synopsis of what life should be all about. "Fear God and keep his commandments."

And so the basic lesson is don't live life without God. Don't live life without making God the center of your life.

And for those of us who are Christians, that's a pretty elementary lesson, isn't it? God is to be the focus of our lives. God is to be the center of our lives. We hear that all the time here in church. Put God first in your life.

And if this morning you're thinking, "I'm not ready to do that yet."

Solomon has 2 reasons why you might want to reconsider your decision.

Here's the first. You might be young at heart, but you're body is getting old. You might be young at heart, but your body is getting old. And because

of that, we're to give God our best sooner than later.

Look how he puts it in 12:1, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth."

In other words, Solomon is saying, Don't wait until your too old to give God your best, give God the best when you're at your best. Don't wait to until you're too old to give God your finest, give God your finest when you're at your finest.

And the reason that Solomon says it like that is because he's learned that as we age, life goes downhill. The older we get the more troubles we face. The older we get the more infirmities we have to endure. How many of you believe that? You see, it's all the old people.

And that's what Solomon says, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them."

That's a description of growing old. That's his picturesque way of portraying what happens as we age. Life becomes more and more difficult because our bodies develop more and more aches and pains, and we think, "Man, getting old is not that great. Getting old is not that fun." And we lose some of the pleasures of life that we used to have. And Solomon is saying, when you're in that season of life when you can really enjoy life, enjoy it with God. Remember your Creator.

And then he goes on to say, "Let me describe some of the troubles that you're going to face as you age."

Remember your Creator, Verse 3, "Before the sun and the light and the

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moon and the stars grow dark, and clouds return after the rain."

Now he's not talking about the heavenly bodies in the sky above, he's talking about our memory. He's talking about how the older we get, the duller our minds become.

Kind of like what happen to these two older women who knew each other very well. They had been lifelong friends. And as they were sitting in the park on a park bench, enjoying each other's conversation, the younger one turns to the older one and says, "This is really embarrassing, and I hope you don't get angry at me. But I just can't remember your name. Can you please tell me your name again."

And the older friend stared ahead, didn't say a word for a couple minutes. The younger friend got a little concerned that she had offended her. But then the older friend looked at her and said, "How soon do you have to know?"

Solomon says that's what happens as we age. Our minds aren't as alert and our memories aren't as good.

And then look what he says happens, "the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop."

What's that a reference to? It's a reference to our physical strength. Our arms—the keepers of the house—can't lift as much; our backs can't straighten as much. Our physical strength wanes.

And then he says, "the grinders cease because they are few," Now thank God for modern dentistry, but that talking about our teeth. Older we get the worse our teeth get. They wear down and they wear out and they can

fall out. It's like the old guy who came to church on Thanksgiving and he was giving thanks and said, "I've only got two teeth, thank God they meet."

And then he says at the end of verse 3, "those looking through the windows grow dim." That's a reference to our eyes. Our teeth wear out and our eyes grows dim. I know what that's like. I never minded driving at night, now I don't really like it. It's more difficult to see.

And then he says in verse 4, "when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fade." Now he's talking about our hearing. We lose our hearing. We lose our teeth, we lose our sight, and we lose our hearing.

And then when all of that is gone, we lose our ability to sleep in. "men rise up at the sound of birds," That saying that the older we get the harder it is to sleep late. We get up with the birds.

And the birds might be able to sing, but do you know what we have trouble doing, singing. Go to a nursing home and listen to the residence sing, and it will be just like Solomon says at the end of verse 4, "but all their songs grow faint." We can't sing like we used to.

He's not done yet. Verse 5, "men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets." Aging brings added fears. We're afraid of falling. We're afraid of crowds. We're afraid of what can happen to us because we're not as good at taking care of ourselves.

And then he says in verse 5, "the almond tree blossoms," Do you know the color of the blossoms on an

almond tree? It's not black, brown, red, or blonde. It's white. If we live old enough our hair is going to turn white.

And then he ends with this, "the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred."

I hate to say this, but that word desire has to do with sexual passion. It's no longer stirred.

And now after all of that he says this at the end of verse 5, When all of that happens, "then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the street."

And so what's he saying in all this? "If you know you're growing old, and if you know you're going to die, and you know that you're going to meet God, then the wisest thing you can do is give the best of your life to the God that made you." Give it to God.

And so the first reason that we're to make God the focus of our lives is because we might be young at heart but our body is getting old.

Let me give you another reason that we're to make God the focus of our lives. Because meaning in life is not found in the duration of life, it's found in the donation of life. The real meaning in life is not about duration, it's about donation. God is not concerned with how long we live; God is concerned about how we live. God is concerned that you and I make our lives count for something. And the only way that we can make our lives count for something is to fear him and keep his commandments.

Look again at verse 13, "Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this

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this is the whole duty of man.”

In other words, the reason you were born, the reason I was born, was to fear God and keep his commandments. That's the duty of every person on the face of this earth. That's the purpose that every person is to fulfill in every generation. To fear God in reverence; obey God in submission.

And when we talk about the fear of God we're talking about the idea of respecting God for who he is. It's a sense of awe. It's a sense of wonder. It's a sense of reverence.

It's the kind of fear that an electrician has when he's working on a high voltage transformer. It's the kind of fear that a defendant has when he's standing before a judge. It's the kind of fear a student has when he's being sent to the principal's office. It's a fear that has to do with wonder and awe and respect of the power that that object contains or that person holds. That's the fear of God.

And it's that kind of fear that causes a person to listen and obey. We don't fear God because we obey his commandments. We obey his commandments because we fear God. And Solomon is saying that fearing God and obeying his commandments is what life is all about. It's the duty and purpose of every person who has ever lived and will ever live.

And so you and I can be completely different, but every one of us has the same purpose. And that purpose is for every one of us to develop a personal relationship with God that will result for a life that counts for something of eternal value. And one of these days God is going to judge everything that we've done.

Look at what Solomon says in verse 14, “For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”

Now think about that. That means every thought that went through my mind. Every word that came out of my mouth. Every deed that was done by my hands. God is going to judge. I'm going to give an account to him of why I did what I did, said what I said, thought what I thought. And if that really is the case, than that should color everything that I do.

On that day God is not going to ask what kind of car that I drove, but he is going to ask me how many people I helped to get to where they needed to go with the car I drove.

God is not going to ask me about the square footage of my house, but he is going to ask me if I welcomed people into my home.

God is not going to ask me about the clothes I had in my closet, but he is going to ask me if I clothe those who didn't have clothes in their closet.

God is not going to ask me about the size of my salary, but he going to ask me if I made any compromises of me character to get it.

God is not going to ask me if I had a title in front of my name, but he is going to ask me if I did my works as unto the Lord.

God is not going to ask me how many friends I made, but he is going to ask me how many people I befriended.

God is not going to ask me what neighborhood I lived in, but he is going to ask me how I treated my neighbors.

God is not going to ask me about the color of my skin, but he is going to ask me about the content of my character.

What I know is this, what God will ask me on judgment day, will have nothing to do with what I got for myself from God, but will have everything to do with what I gave of myself to God. And what I hear Solomon telling me is this, “John, don't miss out on what God created you to do. You were made to fear him and obey him, you we're made to make him first in your life, and if you do that, when you meet him, you will enjoy the meeting.”

That's finding the it of life.