



Ecclesiastes 1:1-18

SESSION ONE **THE QUESTION OF THE AGES**

I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind.

Crisis cause questions don't they?

When life is good our grandest questions revolve around how we will spend the paycheck, where will our vacation be this year, and the toughest of all, what will we eat tonight?

But when a crisis hits, life's classroom is in session and we are students. When we encounter the tough tests of terminal illness, death, divorce, bankruptcy or mid-life malaise, our hands shoot skyward. Why is this happening to me? What did I do to deserve this? What is the meaning of life? We demand an experienced teacher. But our search falls short when we turn to day-time talking heads, religious gurus, our parents, our even ourselves.

For some of us, we've been in the classroom of crisis too many times. For others, we have yet to take the first test. Don't worry, as one old codger said, "If you haven't experienced real pain in your life, just live a little longer."

What teacher can we turn to with life's deepest questions?

Meet Mr. Qoheleth. His class has been in session for over three thousand years.

His name in Hebrew means, "The Preacher." For a long time he was banned by the church. Outside of his third lesson, most pulpits never address his answers. Yet, buried in the middle of our Bible he waits for able and inquisitive students. We know him as Mr. Ecclesiastes.

He already knows our questions. The question is . . . do we want his answers?

ECCLESIASTES 1:1-10

1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

2 “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.”

3 What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?

4 A generation goes and a generation comes, But the earth remains forever.

5 Also, the sun rises and the sun sets; And hastening to its place it rises there again.

6 Blowing toward the south, Then turning toward the north, The wind continues swirling along; And on its circular courses the wind returns.

7 All the rivers flow into the sea, Yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they flow again.

8 All things are wearisome; Man is not able to tell it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing.

9 That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun.

10 Is there anything of which one might say, “See this, it is new?” Already it has existed for ages which were before us.

ECCLESIASTES 1:11-18

11 There is no remembrance of earlier things; And also of the later things which will occur, there will be for them no remembrance among those who will come later still.

12 I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

13 And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven. It is a grievous task which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with.

14 I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind.

15 What is crooked cannot be straightened and what is lacking cannot be counted.

16 I said to myself, "Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge."

17 And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I realized that this also is striving after wind.

18 Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Have you ever felt like “God stopped working for you?” Has there been a time when you wondered how God, being a “good God,” could have allowed such pain in your life?*

2. *How would you define the phrase, “Vanity of vanities?” What are some concrete, tangible examples of that truth, whether in your own life or in the world around you?*

The world laments you for an hour then forgets you forever.

~ Mark Twain



UNPACKING THE TEXT

In Hebrew, the word for Ecclesiastes means, “The Preacher.”

3. *How does nature resemble a machine? When people realize this truth, what questions bubble to the surface?*

4. *Is it possible for people to find meaning inside themselves or inside the machine of nature? How have you sought to discover meaning in the finite only to come up short?*

5. *What does Solomon mean in Ecclesiastes 1:11 when he states, "There is no remembrance of early things, and also of later things which will occur there will be for them no remembrance of those who will come later still?"*

6. *In Proverbs, Solomon espouses the virtues of wisdom, but in the last few verses in Ecclesiastes 1, he seems to demean wisdom. Are there any limitations to wisdom and if so, what are they?*

Being old and wise and knowing the best way to live can make you happy while you are here, but it can't fix life. It's still painful. ~ TN

MEMORY **VERSE**

Ecclesiastes 1:14

I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind.

A CHALLENGE TO LIVE WELL...

People all around us are desperately searching for meaning “under the sun.” Write down the name of a friend, family member, or neighbor who is searching for meaning apart from God. Pray for them specifically in your group. Pray that God may open a time this week that you can speak to them about the futility of finding meaning in themselves or in the world. Be ready for the opportunity.

Name: _____

PRAYER **REQUESTS**
