**1. Motivate**

What is something you get tired of doing over and over again?

* washing dishes, mowing the lawn

A video introduction is available for the Bible Study. View it at <https://tinyurl.com/nadm38km> . If you don’t have wi-fi where you teach, it is best to download the video file to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/3c2d2m87>

* paying bills
* washing the car
* taking out the trash
* answering email/texts
* hanging up the phone to a robo-caller
* daily commute to/from work, grocery shopping
* throwing away stacks of junk mail
* laundry, ironing clothes
* all the morning/evening care of hair, face, clothes

**2. Transition**

All those things take up a big chunk of our lives.

* Apart from God, life is meaningless

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 There Is No Purpose

Listen for dissatisfaction.

Ecclesiastes 1:2-7 (NIV) "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." 3 What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun? 4 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. 5 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. 6 The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. 7 All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again.

The author of Ecclesiastes

* Refers to himself as “The Teacher”
* Note in further verses that he is king over Israel in Jerusalem
* Generally believed to be Solomon

What evidence did the Preacher cite for the validity of his thesis that life is vanity or “meaningless”?

* you work and work, but it doesn’t amount to much
* history is just a long sequence of generations – they come and go
* days become repetitive, weather is the same thing over and over
* think of rivers that run to the ocean … it is never filled, they never run out … again, same thing over and over and over

“Vanity” or “meaningless” portrays the concept of something that exists for a moment, then vanishes – like a vapor or a soap bubble. What are things people pursue that can disappear like a vapor or soap bubble?

* money
* fame
* popularity
* notoriety
* pleasure
* happiness

To what sort of meaningless activities do people often commit their lives?

* gaining more money
* some charities that sound nice, but accomplish little for people’s real needs (spiritual needs)
* their collections
* their hobbies – sports, cars, crafts
* their gardens, their lawns, their pets
* personal appearance
* health and exercise – body building, running, cycling, etc.
* health food – carbs vs. protein – keto – antioxidants

Why would he imply that we gain little or nothing for all our labor “under the sun”? How is it still true in the 21st century?

* if we produce some commodity, it gets consumed, and we have to produce more
* if we write reports, they get read and prompt more issues to be reported
* if we teach, the subjects repeat each year – always another group to be taught
* if we clean, things just get dirty again
* if we make sales, we have to find new customers to make more sales

What are the pitfalls of pursuing what we’re most passionate about?

* takes a lot of money, uses up much time
* once we acquire/accomplish those things … then what?
* seems like the process is what occupies us … then when finished … now what
* the pursuit becomes an obsession … an idol

How can you cope when you start to think that your life is meaningless?

* read the psalms … David (and others) talk about their feelings
* then they declare their worship and praise of God for His power, authority, and love
* talk to God … tell Him you feelings
* then, like the psalmists, consider and voice your awe of God’s work in your life
* pursue your opportunities for spiritual ministries …
* Know that God will direct, empower, and use your efforts to accomplish things for the Kingdom of God – for the Church, the Body of Christ

3.2 No Meaning, No Satisfaction

Listen for lack of purpose.

Ecclesiastes 1:8-10 (NIV) All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing. 9 What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. 10 Is there anything of which one can say, "Look! This is something new"? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time.

What three efforts did the Preacher identify that humankind may depend on to develop an understanding of the meaning of life?

* what you see, what you hear, something new

How did the Preacher connect the past with the future? What did he conclude about the “new”?

* we have the same problems that society has always had
* even things we consider “new” (phones, internet, etc.) just enable us to do all the same things faster or with increased quantity
* history seems too often repeat itself with minor twists

Where do you see evidence that people are experiencing weariness in our culture?

* the proliferation of TV channels – 100’s of channels, but so much junk
* we must *wait* for many things – traffic lights, queues in drive through lanes, appointments, Amazon orders, queues in check out lines (even the ones where you check yourself out)
* stress wears us down – physically as well as emotionally
* long days of work
* unhealthy lifestyles
* trials, tests, losses – with families, friends, neighbors
* recurring disagreements, unhealthy relationships

What are some experiences in life that have caused you to say, “there is nothing new under the sun.”?

* the doctor really wasn’t able to fix that problem permanently
* the repair shop couldn’t find the problem with the car … again
* much too often, what I order online comes broken or not working
* the news programs always harp on the same things
* politicians keep making the same questionable claims or promises
* my kids always wait until the night before a project is due to start and need my help

When have you found the pursuit of knowledge to be burdensome?

* taking an online college course
* preparing for a presentation or Bible study lesson
* answering a three year old’s “Why?”
* trying (again) to figure out how to do something on my phone
* doing income tax every spring

3.3 Looking for Purpose, Finding Futility

Listen for a search.

Ecclesiastes 1:11-14 (NIV) There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow. 12 I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13 I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid on men! 14 I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

What does the Preacher say is the eventual reality about the things and people in our past?

* we forget about what happened in the past
* makes you realize that a couple of generations from now, your descendants will either not know or will forget about you
* stories emerge in your family’s history that cause you to wonder, “how/why did that ever happen?”
* and there’s no one still alive that can answer your wonderings
* you find out there was someone in your community that did something really significant, but so little is now known about him/her

Why did the Preacher describe the search for significance as sore travail?

* he realized how hard it was to realize the significance
* or if he found out something important from the past, there was no one to explain how/why
* the significance was forgotten, and we had to learn that lesson all over again
* this is a recuring cycle in many contexts

In your opinion, what are some key ingredients of a *meaningful* life? How can you keep from becoming discouraged or disillusioned by life.

* submitting your life to God … initially for salvation, then keeping Jesus as Lord
* daily reading and meditating on God’s Word – seek *God’s* wisdom
* communicating with God by talking to Him … prayer
* training up children to follow and serve the Lord
* involvement in ministries of the church
* serving the Lord faithfully
* might not receive notoriety from others, but God blesses your faithfulness

How does it change our perspective when we “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”?

* then you’re *not* running that hamster wheel for personal gain or fame
* you live your life with eternity’s values in view
* make a positive spiritual influence on people around you

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Read further.

* Block out some time to carefully read the rest of Ecclesiastes.
* As you meditate on Solomon’s words, consider what the Lord is teaching you.

Search your heart.

* Take some quiet time away from the rush of life.
* Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart with the question: What am I looking to apart from God for meaning in my life?

Share the gospel.

* We are surrounded by people with no purpose.
* Point them to Christ, the One who gives purpose to our lives.



Double Puzzle

So sad I am … my friend from church sent me this message. But my English, it is not so good. I cannot unscramble the key words. They are from the Bible study passage, and I do not have a Bible. Can you help me? He says once you get the clue words right, you use the numbers to complete the message. You can find help at <https://tinyurl.com/3c2d2m87> (The Crossword is also there.)