

Message #3**Ecclesiastes 1:3-11**

That is the big question of life, isn't it? That is what every human wants and is looking for. From the housewife to the boardroom executive, from the teenager to the man on the job, from the married to the unmarried, every person is on a quest to find meaning and fulfillment in life.

This question not only plagues lost humanity, but it, at times, haunts the believer. In fact, about 3000 years ago this very question haunted the most successful Jew to ever live; his name was Solomon. He went on an extensive and intense search to find the answer to that question and he takes us with him in Ecclesiastes.

WITHOUT GOD AT THE CENTER OF LIFE, NOTHING IS LASTING AND EVERYTHING IS EMPTY AND FLEETING.

Solomon says you can chase whatever you want in this life, but leave God out and there will be no meaning, fulfillment or satisfaction. No matter what your pursuit, it will come up short. For awhile it may seem new and exciting, but the cyclical reality will soon set in, your pursuit won't leave you happy or fulfilled, it will always fall short.

PART #1 – The first question asked. 1:3

The Hebrew word “advantage” is critical to understanding this first point. The word is a commercial and business term which has to do with monetary gain due to work. William Gesenius points out that this term not only has to do with a gain or a profit from work, but also with that which is at an over and above level of profit (*Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 377). This is not just a minimal level of profit because of work; this is a high level of profit because of one's work.

Now the prepositional phrase “under the sun” which we discussed last week is peculiar to Ecclesiastes. Michael Eaton says, “In the Old Testament under the sun occurs only in Ecclesiastes (1:3, 9, 14; 2:11, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22; 3:16; 4:1, 3, 7, 15; 5:13, 18; 6:1, 5, 12; 8:9, 15 (twice), 17; 9:3, 6, 9 (twice), 11, 13; 10:5)” (pg. 57). The basic idea here is living life under the sun with an earthly focus, not a heavenly focus. We could say it means to live life one's own way, leaving God out of the picture. It means to live life not looking above the sun to God.

Without God, “all” your work has no advantage—it won't be fulfilling.

PART #2 – The illustrations from nature. 1:4-7

Illustration #1 – The illustration of the earth. 1:4

Solomon's point here is simple and clear: chase whatever you want in life on earth and what you will discover is you will eventually die and leave, but the earth will continue and stay.

Illustration #2 – The illustration of the sun. **1:5**

Solomon is saying life without God at the center of it is like that. It shines for awhile. Some lives seem to shine more than others, but then every life sets and goes away. Whatever you did with your life finally ends and even the most shining of personalities are gone like the sun.

Illustration #3 – The illustration of the wind. **1:6**

Life is so much like the wind. Some lives really cause quite a stir for a short while. There seems to be a lot of activity and a lot of movement, but then it's over and life is "Gone like the wind."

Illustration #4 – The illustration of the rivers. **1:7**

Life without God is like that. It is a dreary, mundane existence. A person will be in the same rut day in and day out. Some lives have all kinds of impressive movement and activity. Some lives seem to stand out with tremendous achievement and accomplishment. But when all is said and done, it really won't have accomplished much of anything.

PART #3 – The statements about life. **1:8-11****Observation #1** – All things are wearisome. **1:8a**

The word "weary" means that everything you do without God at the center of life, will leave you fatigued, tired and exhausted (Gesenius, p. 329). In fact, man cannot even put into words how empty life is apart from God. There is a loneliness and an emptiness that is beyond description when men and women try to live life without God at the center.

Observation #2 – Nothing can satisfy. **1:8b**

There is nothing you can see or hear that will ever bring you satisfaction. Apart from God being at the center of life, nothing is ever enough to fulfill the longing in the soul.

Observation #3 – Nothing is new. **1:9-10**

Solomon does not mean there aren't new inventions, what he contextually means is there is nothing new man can try under the sun that will give meaning and fulfillment to life. It has all been tried before.

Observation #4 – Nothing is remembered. **1:11**

What a depressing verse. No matter what we pursue in life, we will be forgotten and someone else will come and take our place and then they will be forgotten and there is no memory. As one person said, fame is really nothing more than oblivion.

Leave God out of the center of life and life will come up short. It will play a dirty trick on you— it will leave you empty and you will feel like you are worth nothing. Truth is, you'll wind up a loser. Nothing will last, nothing will fulfill and you'll die for someone else to try to find what you couldn't.

Oh, for awhile, you may shine in your world like the sun. For awhile, you may cause quite a stir like the wind or have a lot of movement like a river. But always remember, the sun goes down, the wind stops blowing and the river didn't really accomplish much of anything. Life with out God is an empty, fleeting moment of vapor that will leave you lonely and unfulfilled. That is the lesson Solomon learned and taught to his own son.