**"Introducing Life Under the Sun"**

**Ecclesiastes 1:1-11**

***Overview***

It can be a scary thought but there is no denying it – what is here today may very well be gone tomorrow. This world is temporary – nothing in it will last forever – and that includes each one of us.



We are pretty skilled at avoiding this unsettling idea. In fact, many of us live our lives in total denial of this reality – choosing to spend our lives accumulating more and more of the things we know will not last.

So what is the point of it all? Is there an alternative to what can appear to be a meaningless existence? It turns out there is – but to find it we must first appreciate just how finite and pointless the things of this world are by themselves.

***Getting Started*** *This Fleeting World*



1. What material thing do you miss from your childhood or youth – a type of

food, a favorite activity, a place you loved to visit, something else?

2. Is there anything you worked really hard to get which ended up disappointing

you once you finally obtained it? Explain.

3. There are doubtless things we would love to get back from our past - but can

you think of anything you are actually glad is no longer here?

***The Text***

The words of the Teacher, a son of David, king in Jerusalem:



2“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.

“Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”

3What do people gain from all their labors

at which they toil under the sun?

4Generations come and generations go,

but the earth remains forever.

5The sun rises and the sun sets,

and hurries back to where it rises.

6The wind blows to the south

and turns to the north;

round and round it goes,

ever returning on its course.

7All streams flow into the sea,

yet the sea is never full.

To the place the streams come from,

there they return again.

8All things are wearisome,

more than one can say.

The eye never has enough of seeing,

nor the ear its fill of hearing.

9What has been will be again,

what has been done will be done again;

there is nothing new under the sun.

10Is there anything of which one can say,

“Look! This is something new”?

It was here already, long ago;

it was here before our time.

11No one remembers the former generations,

and even those yet to come

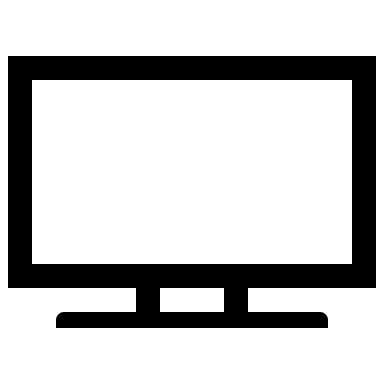
will not be remembered

by those who follow them.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11 (NIV)

***The Video (optional)*** “Introducing Life Under the Sun” – Eccl. 1:1-11 - by Kyle Corbin, April 19/20

(view at www.immanuelonline.ca)



NOTES:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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***Understanding***

1. The Hebrew word translated “meaningless” (vs. 2) literally means a “breath” or a “vapor”. What is the author trying to say about the nature of life by describing It in this way?



2. The phrase “labours” (vs. 3) can refer to physical toil or mental effort/anguish. “Under the sun” refers to the horizontal dimension of life, namely our existence on earth apart from a perspective on God. How do these various meanings emphasize or illustrate the author’s theme in verse 1?

3. How does the author use examples from human history (verse 4) and nature (vs. 5-7) to support his contention that life is “meaningless”?

4. There is a lot of activity described in verses 4-7. But what, if anything, is the impact of all of this on man’s sense of satisfaction and fulfilment (vs. 8)?

5. What is the author’s view of history (vs. 9)? What would he say about things that appear to be new (vs. 10)?

6. In verse 11, the author seems to be arguing that history will be forgotten and not remembered. How is memory important in our lives? What difference does it make whether or not we remember the past?

***Applying***

1. Are the teachings of Ecclesiastes 1:1-11 true for non-believers, believers, or both? Explain your answer.



2. Where have you seen the “meaningless” nature of life (as the author describes it)? How have you seen people living and/or struggling with a “meaningless” existence? In what way have you experienced this? How did you deal with it?

3. These verses sound depressing in their expression of reality. And yet – it would seem there are plenty of people happily pursuing the things of this earth. They do not appear depressed at all. How do you account for this?

4. Do you agree with the author’s assessment that there is “nothing new under the sun” (vs. 9)? How can that be true in this age of constant change and innovation?

5. How does the perspective put forth in these verses contrast with that of the believer (remembering Eccl. 12:13-14) when it comes to:

* Meaningless reality: Romans 8:28-30
* Inconsequential life: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58
* The futility of nature: Psalm 113:3
* The weariness of existence: Isaiah 55:1-3
* Repetitive history: 2 Corinthians 5:17

6. Given the teaching of this passage, what would you say to the eternal optimist who sees nothing wrong with the world? What would you say to the eternal pessimist who sees no hope in the world?

7. Does this passage encourage you, depress you, or leave you feeling something else? Why?

***Memory Verse(s)***

2“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.



“Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”

3What do people gain from all their labors

at which they toil under the sun?

Ecclesiastes 1:2-3 (NIV)

***Extra Resources***



* *“Introducing Life Under the Sun – Eccl. 1:1-11”* – by Pastor Kyle Corbin (“Immanuel Church” website, April 19, 2020). In this introductory sermon, Pastor Kyle addresses the interpretive framework for the content of Ecclesiastes.
* *"The Book of Ecclesiastes”* – by the Bible Project (a YouTube video to be found at  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeUiuSK81-0>.) This is a great video that quickly gives an overview of Ecclesiastes and a framework for understanding its often puzzling and challenging teachings.
* *"Themes of Ecclesiastes – the Futility of Life” –* a video sermon by Dr. R. C. Sproul (found in the sermon section of [www.ligonier.org](http://www.ligonier.org)). Dr. Sproul painstakingly details the opening sentiment of Ecclesiastes. Prepare to be depressed – but hang in there – he ends on more of a hopeful note.