



Session 1

BIG IDEA

Ecclesiastes argues that living that way ultimately leads to meaninglessness and despair. Believing in the Christian God not only makes sense of the very existence of our material world, but it also offers an identity stable enough to handle the mountains and valleys of life, a moral compass wise enough to parse right from wrong, a hope beautiful enough to withstand great suffering, and a purpose significant enough to give meaning.

GROUP OPENER

What kinds of events, activities, or opportunities cause you to reflect on life's big questions?

GROUP DISCUSSION

- Read this longer passage Ecclesiastes 1:1-2:11. Twice out loud, in different versions of the Bible – everyone listens.
- What are some significant observations you have about this text? What stood out? What didn't you like? What was confusing?
- What does this passage teach us about God? How does it change how I see God?
- What does this passage teach us about humanity/ourselves? How would it change how I treat others?
- What does this passage teach us about obedience? How should it affect the way I live?

January 19
WEEKEND

ACTION STEPS

I will statement...

- Based on what God is teaching in this passage, what should I do? Reflect for a minute or two and develop an action statement. Put it in the form, "I Will _____". Make it concrete, simple, and achievable.
- Share your "I Will" statement with the group.

As a Group

Questions:

What do people today turn to for sources of wisdom?

What stands out about what the teacher had to say about pleasure?

Ecclesiastes talks about an "under the sun" worldview. That is what we see under the sun is all there is to reality. The "under the sun" perspective is a lot like atheism (*What if the material universe is all there is?*) or agnosticism (*What if the spirit world doesn't really matter?*).

Why is it easy to believe an "under the sun" worldview?

Ecclesiastes continually points out the insubstantial nature of the "under the sun" worldview. It also suggests an "over the sun" worldview that gives hope in the following areas.

- Purpose: Every human life is here by God's design.
- Value: Every human life has special value.
- Morality: There are objective universal standards of right and wrong.
- Love: We are made to love by a God who is love.
- Hope: There will be a final reckoning by God and then life after death.

Where does this "over the sun" worldview challenge you?

Perhaps you are quick to dismiss and devalue someone you disagree with. Perhaps there are parts of your life where your morality doesn't align or change based on circumstance. Perhaps you do not dare to hope for the future. Spend some time praying that God will show you where you are living under the sun...