



Session 3

BIG IDEA

Life is hard. It doesn't play by our rules or respect our wishes. If all there is under the sun is what there is under the sun, then there really isn't much you can do about it ... and then you die. But if there is a God over the sun who promises justice and judgment in the end, we can face even the most unfair sufferings in life with resilience and trust.

GROUP OPENER

Today in our culture what causes people to fall into despair?

GROUP DISCUSSION

- Read this longer passage Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:3. 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?

February 2
WEEKEND

As a Group Discussion:

In today's reading, we see the teacher bring up despair in the following areas.

- In the places, there should be justice, there is corruption. (3:16)
- There is rarely a happy ending for the oppressed. (4:1)
- In the end, we die and become dirt just like any other animal. (3:18)
- Is it possible that it's better to never be born than to ever be born? (4:2)

What has been helpful for you when you or others near you face this kind of despair?
Why is it important to bring a realistic viewpoint to these truths?

So far in Ecclesiastes, we have discussed principles of meaning for life.

1. Without a God above the sun, all the good things under the sun are like vapor.
2. Learn to enjoy the simple good things of life as gifts of God.
3. Life is hard. Then you die. Deal with it.

How do you see the principles of meaning for life help our understanding of despair?

The teacher in Ecclesiastes did not have Jesus to look to help him understand God. Now on this side of the cross, we have a fuller perspective. Because of Jesus, we know...

- We have a God who suffers with us this side of heaven.
- God didn't cause evil, but He is actively working against it for you.
- One day there will be divine judgment, final justice, and eternal heaven.

Read: Romans 5:3-5

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.