

LifeGroup Questions
Based On: Ecclesiastes 1:1-11
June 12, 2016

Overview:

Benjamin Franklin once said that “in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” Although this is a depressing quote the philosophy behind it warrants discussion. From the beginning of time mankind has been asking the question, “What is the meaning of life?” Is meaning found in accomplishments? Is it found in gaining wisdom? Is it found in accumulating wealth? Are we just here to pay taxes and die? Where is the meaning of life found?

This is an age old question that the wisest person to live on our planet tried to answer. His name was Solomon and he wrote about the pursuit for meaning in the book of Ecclesiastes. What was his answer? Ecclesiastes 1:2 reads: “Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.” Other translations read: “vanities of vanities, or absolute futility, everything is futile.” No matter what translation you choose the meaning is the same. A life lived without God is void of meaning.

This doesn’t mean that once you know God that your life will be perfect. There are still the daily struggles of life you will have to deal with. The Apostle Paul in Philippians 1:21 states that to “live is Christ, to die is gain.” “Paul was writing from Rome, his tribulations included mob violence, imprisonment, shipwreck, personal stress, and long detention under the palace guards.”^[1] Paul’s meaning for life came from Christ, but it didn’t erase the troubles of this world.

Confusion is bound to happen when you start thinking that a meaningful life is trouble free. Every tombstone ever created has a beginning date and an ending date with a dash connecting them. In this dash everyone is going to experience heartache, pain, loss, and suffering. When the troubles of this world hit it is easy to start thinking that life is void of meaning or that God has somehow failed. Both Solomon and Paul point to God for meaning, but also acknowledge we live in a broken world.

Bible Study: Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

1. Discuss as a group some ways you see people looking for meaning in their lives.
2. Read Ecclesiastes 1:1-7. This verse explains how nothing ever really changes. What is the main driving force behind people trying to seek meaning in life? Is it the ever present truth of death? Is it trying to live a religious life?
3. In what ways does dealing with pain, loss, and the hurts of life cause people to lose sight of living a meaningful life?
4. How would you explain to someone who is struggling that there is purpose beyond their hurt? How would you convince them that God does care even in the midst of their pain?

5. Discuss as a group what a lasting legacy looks like? How does someone go about leaving a lasting legacy?
6. Mark Twain once said: "A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat and struggle for bread; they squabble and scold and fight; they scramble for little mean advantages over each other. Age creeps upon them; infirmities follow; shames and humiliations bring down their prides and their vanities. Those they love are taken from them and the joy of life is turned to aching grief. The burden of pain, care, misery, grows heavier year by year. At length ambition is dead; pride is dead; vanity is dead; longing for release is in their place. It comes at last - the only un-poisoned gift ever had for them - and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence; where they achieved nothing; where they were a mistake and a failure and a foolishness; where they have left no sign that have existed - a world which will lament them a day and forget them forever. Then another myriad takes their place and copies all they did and goes along the same profitless road and vanishes as they vanished - to make room for another and another and a million other myriads to follow the same arid path through the same desert and accomplish what the first myriad and all the myriads that came after it accomplished - nothing!"

What does a life with meaning look like? How would you define a meaningful life?

7. Read Ecclesiastes 1:8-11. What do you want to be remembered for?