

ORCHARD GROUPS

COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

ECCLESIASTES | CHASING THE WIND

THE BIG IDEA We spend a lot of life believing that a little more - money, success, recognition, pleasure, security - will finally satisfy us. Solomon had the opportunity to test that theory and called the result "meaningless," like vapor or "chasing after the wind."

What happens when we ask something in this world to give us what only God can provide?

LEADER NOTE

You don't need to get through every question. Follow the conversation. Keep bringing the group back to real life: work, money, accomplishments, relationships, comfort, identity, and the things we're tempted to believe will finally satisfy us.

The goal is not to call these things bad. When God is in His rightful place, the things of this world can be received as gifts rather than treated as gods.

START HERE

The sermon began with thousands of people traveling upvalley each morning to work on homes and projects belonging to incredibly wealthy people - and the temptation to think, "If I had what they have, I'd have it made."

- What is something you once thought, "When I finally have/get/accomplish _____, I'll be happy"?
- Did getting it actually deliver what you expected?
- Why are we so prone to believe the next thing will finally satisfy us?

READ TOGETHER

Ecclesiastes 1:1-4 & 2:10-11

"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

The word translated "meaningless" carries the idea of vapor - something you can see but cannot hold onto.

- What does that image add to your understanding of what Solomon is saying?
- Where do you see people today "chasing the wind"?

1. PLEASURE - "IF I FEEL GOOD, I'LL BE HAPPY"

Solomon tested pleasure and denied himself very little, but pleasure still could not provide lasting meaning.

- How does our culture encourage us to build life around feeling good?
- What is the difference between enjoying something good and depending on it for happiness or identity?
- What good thing in your life would be easiest to turn into an ultimate thing?

2. ACHIEVEMENT - "IF I ACCOMPLISH ENOUGH, I'LL MATTER"

Solomon built houses, vineyards, gardens, parks and reservoirs. He accumulated possessions and became greater than anyone before him - yet still described it as chasing the wind.

- Why can achievement become so powerful in determining how we see ourselves?
- How much of your sense of worth comes from what you accomplish, produce or provide?
- Can ambition be healthy? What changes when achievement becomes the source of our identity?

3. WORK - "IF I BUILD ENOUGH, IT WILL LAST"

Solomon eventually became discouraged even with his work. Everything he had spent his life building would someday belong to someone else.

- How does knowing that everything we build is temporary change the way we should think about work?
- Where are you tempted to find your identity in your job, career, possessions or accomplishments?
- What would it look like to work hard without asking your work to tell you who you are?

4. “UNDER THE SUN”

One of the repeated phrases throughout Ecclesiastes is “under the sun” - viewing human life only from the perspective of this world, without God in the picture.

If this life is all there is, Solomon’s question becomes incredibly important: What ultimately lasts?

- How does your view of God change the way you think about work, money, family, suffering and success?
- Where are you currently living as though everything depends entirely on you?
- Where might God be missing from the way you are thinking about a situation in your life right now?

5. THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

Read Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

After all the searching, Ecclesiastes ends: “Fear God and keep his commandments.” The sermon then looks beyond Solomon to what God ultimately did through Jesus: we can be redeemed, adopted, and know God personally as Father.

We are not alone under the sun.

That changes the question from “What can I get out of this life?” to “How can I faithfully live the life God has given me?”

- How does a relationship with God change where we look for meaning?
- What is the difference between knowing about God and actually living your everyday life with God?
- How can possessions, work and pleasure become gifts rather than inadequate gods?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Consider these four areas:

PLEASURE • ACHIEVEMENT • WISDOM • WORK

- Which one are you most tempted to look toward for meaning, security or identity?

Finish this sentence:

“I’ll finally be okay when _____.”

Look honestly at your answer: Am I asking something temporary to give me something eternal?

THIS WEEK’S STEP

Don’t necessarily remove the good thing. Put it back in its proper place.

Choose one area where you have been looking for meaning apart from God. Each morning this week, intentionally surrender it:

“God, this is a gift, but it isn’t my god. My identity and meaning are found in You. Help me receive this gift without asking it to give me what only You can.”

Then pay attention to how that changes the way you approach your work, relationships, money, accomplishments or pleasures.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Thank God for the good gifts He has placed in your life. Confess the places where those gifts have begun taking His place.

Ask the Holy Spirit to produce in you what achievement and possessions never can: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Pray that this week you would stop chasing the wind and learn instead to live faithfully with God in the life He has already given you.