

## **The Search for a Meaningful Life (God's Message from Ecclesiastes)**

**Intro: Brother David asked me to talk with you about the search for a meaningful life from the book of Ecclesiastes.**

**I read the other day that Rick Warren's book, "The Purpose Driven Life" has now sold nearly 25 million copies. What is there about this book that has drawn so many people to it? The incredibly good marketing techniques of the publisher? Is there something more fundamental?**

**It speaks to a question that everyone needs to know the answer to: Where did I come from and why am I here? Or more specifically, what is the path to a meaningful life? I submit that virtually everyone lives each day with that as their ultimate goal. They are looking for satisfaction, for meaning, for happiness.**

**Regrettably most people don't find it because they are led to look in the wrong places. There is a place to find the answers; could I recommend a book on the purpose driven life? God has already given us a book on the purpose driven life—Ecclesiastes!**

**This a sermon about a sermon. The sermon is from the book the Hebrews called "Koheleth" (the preacher) or, the Greek title is "Ecclesiastes" (one who calls an assembly; remember our word ecclesia, assembly or church?) The preacher's topic was "life under the sun" (a phrase used 29 times in the book.) or more specifically, how can we live a meaningful life? Solomon found the answer through his own experiences; and in this book, he (or someone who wrote in his name about his experiences) steps from the throne to the pulpit to say, "I've applied the wisdom God gave me to the ultimate question—the question of the meaning of life and I've found the answer." What he tells us in this book can change our lives forever!**

### **WHY LIFE IS SO MEANINGLESS FOR SO MANY PEOPLE**

#### ***A wrong headed view of the world***

For the past century people have constantly been bombarded with the notion that God is dead and the thought of him is irrelevant to a meaningful life. The creed of secularism has three key tenets:

*The earth and our place in it is all there is.*

God does not exist; but is an invention of man's ignorance.

The world came into being by accident and proceeds by the principle of "survival of the fittest".

*Man has the power to govern himself without the need for external guidance.*

Autonomous man, making his own discoveries, seeking his own answers to life's problems.

*Pursuit of earthly attainment, earthly position and earthly power are the most meaningful goals of life*

A person who embraces these tenets is headed for a meaningless life because, the person driven by the secularist world view will adopt the corollary approach to living.

***A wrong headed approach to living***

Every day we can hear the secularist message. Here's how the world would answer the question, "What are the keys to a meaningful life?"

*A life without external controls—maximum personal liberty, answer to no one, "do your own thing"*

*A life of luxury--the quest for pleasure, accumulation of status symbols, materialism*

*A life of lust, a playboy philosophy of love--no responsibility, no commitment, no rules manifests in "free love" or casual sex*

*A life of minimal effort & maximum relaxation--no work, everyone serving you*

*A life of worldly achievement and recognition--get the world's attention, be powerful, be influential, be remembered*

Our world is constantly being shaped by these values. The media constantly promotes them and the vast population of the world accepts them. Many people believe that they will never find satisfaction until this is the way they live! Even Christians are often lured by this lifestyle. But, is this the answer?

**SOLOMON'S EXPERIMENT**

*Solomon had the opportunity to do what most people will never be able to do. He had everything with which to test this worldly concept of meaning and happiness. He had the wealth, the power, and the time to test it.*

*And when he did he reported the results: Eccl. 2:1-11*

*Again and again he would see how the worldly approach could not make one truly happy or satisfied with life. It all led to "vanity" and even helps us understand the reasons why.*

*But in the process he found the real "secrets" to meaningful living and presented them in the wise sayings scattered throughout this book.*

*Solomon's observations stand every worldly concept we considered on its head!*

**SOLOMON'S "SECRETS" TO A MEANINGFUL LIFE**

*It all begins with a proper "worldview"—It all starts with God!*

Instead of saying the world is all there is Solomon urges to realize that God is the Creator and Sovereign Ruler of all there is!

*The world is not an accident; it is the creation of a powerful and sovereign God who has arranged everything to work to the fulfillment of His purposes.*

*Solomon says, "He has made everything appropriate in its time" (Eccl. 3:11).*

*I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him. (Ecclesiastes 3:14)*

Instead of saying man can do it on his own Solomon urges us to see that God gives man the guidance needed to live well.

*Solomon affirmed that man is not capable of taking it all in and developing on his own a philosophy that will result in meaningful living; instead he needs to respect the Creator and do what He says!*

*The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)*

Instead of saying our ultimate satisfaction is in this world Solomon urges us to see that ultimate meaning is in God and the blessings He grants to us.

*For I have taken all this to my heart and explain it that righteous men, wise men, and their deeds are in the hand of God. (Ecclesiastes 9:1)*

***If secularism results in wrong headed living, a proper world view results in wise and meaningful living! Solomon gives us the keys to meaningful living:***

Surrender control of your life to God!

*The first of these is implicit in the passages that we've already read: Fear Him and obey Him, trust Him to bless you! How "free" is the self-willed person? Not very. He is often addicted and enslaved to the objects of his lust! But the servant of God knows true freedom, not to do as he pleases but to do as he ought! He finds abundant life by choosing to follow the instructions of the Creator.*

Learn to enjoy what He has given you!

*There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God. (Ecclesiastes 2:24)*

*I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime; moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor—it is the gift of God. (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13)*

*When do you have enough? What good is a millionaire who has ulcers, missed the best moments in his children's lives, and goes home to strangers every night?*

*Think about the blessings of contentment. Contentment allows us to enjoy what God has given us rather than fret about what we don't have! It frees us to enjoy the people around us and to build relationships rather than merely collect stuff!*

Love the wife God has given you!

*Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life, and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 9:9)*

*Playboys and playgirls are often just love-starved people starved looking for a way out of pain. But the truth is, sexual “freedom” leads to more pain—disease, broken relationships, and personal emptiness.*

*But think how beautiful it is when two people really love each other and commit to live together and meet each other’s needs. Every day they know better how to please each other and their love deepens more and more with time!*

Use productively the time God has given you.

*Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going. (Ecclesiastes 9:10)*

*So most of the world longs for retirement; but for what? Is anyone really happy with absolutely nothing to do? Solomon found the opposite was true. Real satisfaction comes when we busy ourselves with meaningful occupation.*

*Think how satisfying it is to think back upon a day spent in productive pursuits and to enjoy a genuine tired and a good night’s sleep. Think about what it’s like to realize that you are not some working “has been” but someone who still has something worthwhile to do with your life!*

Come to terms with the reality of death!

*Realize that God has placed limits on your life; there is no earthly “immortality”. Solomon stressed two important facts about life:*

*For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten. (Ecclesiastes 9:5)*

*All of us will die and our earthly pursuits will come to an end.*

*It is futile to imagine that we will be remembered very long past our deaths.*

*An interesting exercise would be to see if you can make a list of a hundred people who lived before 1900 whose names are not found in the Scriptures themselves. Out of the billions who have lived on earth, very few have been remembered very long past their own generation!*

*How many of you could name your great, great grandfather? But think of the blessing of confronting the reality of death.*

*Yes, you never know what tomorrow will bring; but you know that every day is a gift from God and that it is important to live it to the full! Living in this faith can change our lives immeasurably for good!*

**Conclusion: You see, the worldly standard of happiness is wrong on every point! Ecclesiastes teaches us as godly people not to think that happiness is "out there" in sin; but rather to know that the true meaning of life and the way to happiness is found in knowing God and doing His will.**

**Often those who profess to live the worldly life to the fullest put on the greatest face and pretend that everything is wonderful. It becomes a way to mask deep sadness and unfulfillment. Each of knows what is within and what is there will tell us a lot about where we are with God. That void inside will never be filled by anything earthly. That restless feeling that you seek to find relief from will not go away until we die inside or until we give our life back to the God who gave life to us! Will you do this?**