

Suburban Legends

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11 - August 26, 2007

Overview of Our Study Together

SUBURBAN LEGENDS: A 14-Week Study of the Book of Ecclesiastes		
Date	Title	Text
Aug 26	Suburban Legends	Eccl 1:1-11
Sept 2	SL #1: My Kid Must Graduate in the Top Ten Percent	Eccl 1:12-18; 2:12-17
Sept 9	SL #2: More Sex Will Make Me Happier	Eccl 2:1-11
Sept 16	SL #3: A Better Job Will Make Me Happier	Eccl 2:17-26; 4:1-6,13-16
Sept 23	SL #4: More Time Will Make Me Happier	Eccl 3:1-15
Sept 30	Excursion: What the Bible Says About War	Eccl 3:1-11
Oct 7	SL #5: A Better Body Will Make Me Happier	Eccl 3:16-22; 11:9-12:8
Oct 14	Excursion: What the Bible Says About Loneliness	Eccl 4:7-12
Oct 21	SL #6: More Money Will Make Me Happier	Eccl 5:8-6:12
Oct 28	SL #7: More Control Will Make Me Happier	Eccl 8:2-13; 5:1-7
Nov 4	SL #8: Less Suffering Will Make Me Happier	Eccl 8:14-9:12
Nov 11	Suburban Truth: What Will Make Me Happier?	Eccl 12:9-14
Nov 18	Proverbs from Ecclesiastes – Part 1	Eccl 7:1-8:1
Nov 25	Proverbs from Ecclesiastes – Part 2	Eccl 9:13-11:8

The Author of Ecclesiastes (v.1)

- The divine author of Ecclesiastes is God's spirit (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21)
- The human author of Ecclesiastes was Solomon.
 - Son of David, King in Jerusalem (1 Chron. 29:26-28; 2 Chron 1:1)
 - Charles Ryrie: "References in the book to the author's unrivaled wisdom (1:16), unequalled wealth (2:7), opportunities for pleasure (2:3), and extensive building activities (2:4-6) all point to Solomon, since no other descendant of David measured up to such specifications. Jewish tradition explicitly stated that Solomon was the author."
 - "Teacher" = *Qoheleth* (Hebrew) which literally means "one who convenes and speaks at an assembly; an ecclesiastic (Greek), preacher, or teacher."
- If anyone has experimented with all the suburban legends, it is Solomon!
 - Solomon was the wisest man on the earth (1 Kings 3:5-14; 4:29-34)
 - Solomon was the richest man on the earth (1 Kings 3:13; 4:20-28; 10:14-29)
 - Solomon was famous – people sought him out (1 Kings 10:23-24)
 - Solomon was "in control" – he was the CEO of an incredibly organized political structure (1 Kings 4:1-21; 10:1-13)
 - Solomon was an accomplished author, poet, and song writer (1 Kings 4:29-34) and one of his songs is described in the Bible as the greatest love song ever written (Song of Songs)
 - Solomon had sex a whole, whole, whole bunch (1 Kings 11:1-3)
- So, what was Solomon's satisfaction level with all of that?

The Theme of Ecclesiastes (vv.2-3)

- The whole book of Ecclesiastes can be summarized in one sentence:

Everything under the sun is meaningless.

- "meaningless" = *hebel* = emptiness; vanity; a wisp of vapor; a puff of wind; a mere breath; nothing you can get your hands on; zero; zilch; futility; that which vanishes quickly and leaves nothing behind; a wild goose chase where there is no goose (this term is the major theme of the book occurring 38 times)
- Warren Wiersbe: "Whatever disappears quickly, leaves nothing behind and does not satisfy is *hevel*, vanity. One of my language professors in seminary defined *hevel* as 'whatever is left after you break a soap bubble.'" (Abel)
- Jewish writer Sholom Aleichem: "Life is a blister on top of a tumor, and a boil on top of that."
- "under the sun" = another key phrase in this book occurring 29 times
- Question (v.3) Implied answer = Nothing! It's all meaningless!
- Peter Kreeft: "The Book of Ecclesiastes seems to ramble, to go nowhere, to have no tightly argued deductions, only bits of wisdom sprinkled over a desert landscape like a few raindrops, quickly absorbed by the dry soil, or like a collage of photos taken through the porthole of a sinking ship. Yet, the book's rambling is deliberate, for this form perfectly expresses its content, its message: that life rambles to nowhere. Ecclesiastes practices what it preaches. Its form is one with its content."

The Theme Illustrated (vv.4-7)

- Four illustrations of the theme:
 - (1) The succession of generations (v.4)
 - (2) The sun (v.5)
 - (3) The wind (v.6)
 - (4) The waters (v.7)
- Application #1 – When are some times that you have felt like this?
 - My marriage – We repeatedly have the same problems. We work at it. It gets better for a while. Then we fall back into the same patterns.
 - My body – I diet. I exercise. I do better for a while, but eventually I go back to my same weight and shape (or worse!)
 - My parenting – The problems and worries never fully go away. As my children get older, I just graduate from changing physical diapers to emotional diapers to financial diapers to....
 - My work –
 - My sin habits –
 - My singleness –
 - Other: _____

My Prayer of Frustration

Solomon's Initial Conclusions (vv.8-11)

1. All things are wearisome (v.8)
2. There is nothing new under the sun (vv.9-10)
3. No one will be remembered (v.11)

Solomon's Final Conclusion (12:13-14)

Everything under the sun is meaningless but...
We don't have to live "under the sun."
We can live "beyond the sun" in a
growing, obedient relationship with God

- Solomon's conclusion (12:13-14): Fear God and obey His commands
- **Application #2** – Why should I keep going in my marriage/situation?
 - Because God commands me to, and He will hold me accountable (Matthew 19:1-9)
 - Because God wants to show a watching world what committed love looks like (Ephesians 5:21-33)
 - Because God wants me to depend on Him more and more and more (Jeremiah 17:5-8)
 - Because God wants to make me more like Him – more holy (1 Peter 1:15-16)
 - Out of reverence (fear) for God (Isaiah 33:6; Psalm 34)
- Peter Kreeft: "Ecclesiastes is the one book in the Bible that modern man needs most to read, for it is Lesson One, and the rest of the Bible is Lesson Two, and modernity does not heed Lesson Two because it does not heed Lesson One. Whenever I teach the Bible as a whole, I always begin with Ecclesiastes.... Ecclesiastes is the question to which the rest of the Bible is the answer. There is nothing more meaningless than an answer without its

question. That is why we need Ecclesiastes.... Ecclesiastes is the question to which Christ is the answer."

- If Ecclesiastes is Lesson One, then Lesson Two (the rest of the Bible) is clear that God **does** break into the monotony of this world and do new things:
 - He stops the sun! (Joshua 10:6-14; Isaiah 38:1-8)
 - He calms the wind! (Mark 4:35-41)
 - He turns the rain on and off (1 Kings 17; James 5:17-18)
 - He parts seas and rivers (Exodus 14; Joshua 3-4)
 - He makes sinners into "new creations" (2 Corinthians 5:17) so that we can walk in "newness of life" (Romans 6:4) and sing a "new song" (Psalm 40:3) and enter God's Presence in a "new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20).
 - One day believers will enjoy a "new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1) on a day when God says "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5)
- G. Campbell Morgan: "It is only as a man takes account of that which is over the sun as well as that which is under the sun that things under the sun are seen in their true light."
- Augustine: "He who has God has everything. He who does not have God has nothing. He who has God and everything has no more than he who has God and nothing."
- Jesus: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)
- **Application #3** – Am I living my life "under the sun" or "beyond the sun"? _____
The step that I want to take to live my life "beyond the sun" is...
 - Receive Jesus Christ into my life
 - Start walking with Christ again
 - Begin reverencing God and obeying His commands in the following area:

 - Join with others who can help me walk with Christ (SuperGroup, Sept. 23, 8:45 a.m. in the Vista, contact mpylant@whatisgrace.org)
 - Other: _____

Questions to Discuss with My Family, Friends, and Small Group

1. Of the suburban legends listed in the overview of this series, which one or two do you tend to struggle with the most? Which message in the series are you most looking forward to?
2. Read Ecclesiastes 1:1 aloud. Discuss the background information on Solomon being the author. Why is he uniquely positioned to address the issues of suburban legends?
3. Read Ecclesiastes 1:2-11 aloud. What is the theme of this book? What does it mean? Have you ever felt that way? Share your thoughts on Application #1.
4. Read Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 aloud. What is Solomon's conclusion at the end of this book? What does it mean? What are its applications to our life?
5. What is your Application #3? Pray for each other's Application #3.