



Introduction

“Meaningless! Meaningless!”
says the Teacher.
“Utterly meaningless!
Everything is meaningless.”

So, begins and ends the book of Ecclesiastes. And on 28 occasions in between, the author exclaims that particular things are vanity; things which are greatly valued by most people—like work, education, relationships, even life itself. A very bleak picture of life! Is the teacher correct in his assessment on the meaning of life. Why is this book in the bible? What does it teach us? What are the warnings and encouragements from this book? Well let’s start to have a look together.

Reflect: Was there anything from the talk you found helpful, interesting or maybe even confronting?

Read Ecclesiastes 1:1-12

How much thought have you given to questions like, “why have faith in God when so much in life seems pointless or even unjust?”, what conclusions have you come to?

Apart from the personal benefit that might come from gaining a deeper understanding of god and the world in which we live, how might grappling with this issue of meaning help us engage with others?

V1. Introduces us to the Teacher. If the author is not King Solomon at least he has king Solomon's life in mind. Read 1 Kings 3:7-14 & 1 Kings 4:29-34. Why is Solomon so well placed to write a thesis on the meaning of life?

Read verse 3. What does the teacher mean by "life under the Sun". How does this help us to understand this book?

Why do you think this book is a part of the Hebrew Scriptures? What warning is it seeking to give us?

In what areas of life does the preacher conclude there is only vanity (or meaninglessness)? Make a list of the areas of life the preacher looks at in these first 12 verses. What is his conclusion in each stance.

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In a world of opulence, wealth, power and pleasure the teacher become frustrated even bored with life. How is this a warning for us as with think about our own lives and the way we pursue meaning?

Thinking about your life in general, to what extent would you say it has been:

- satisfying and fulfilling?
- frustrating?
- incomprehensible?
- boring?
- possessing a sense of purpose and direction?

If ultimately there is no meaning "under the sun"? Where should we look to find a way forward?

Read John 8:60-69. How does Peter's statement help us to know where and who we should be turning to for ultimate meaning and ultimate purpose?