

Meaningless! An Introduction to Ecclesiastes
Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

Getting Started:

1. What was helpful to you in this week's sermon? What didn't you understand?
2. When was the last time you sighed deeply (i.e. you said, "*hevel!*")? Share a recent time you experienced the futility, absurdity, brevity or mystery of life.

For Further Thought and Discussion:

3. What is Solomon's big idea? What point is he trying to make (see 1:2; 12:8)? Solomon contends that everything is "*hevel*" (i.e. meaningless, futile, inscrutable, fleeting) "*under the sun.*" Why is the phrase "*under the sun*" significant? What does it reveal about Solomon's perspective?

4. There are two voices in the book of Ecclesiastes; the narrator's voice (1:1-11; 12:9-14) and Solomon's (i.e. "the Preacher"; see 1:12-12:8). Why is this significant? Why is it important to read the entire book in light of the ending (12:9-14)? How does the narrator both affirm and correct Solomon's perspective?
5. 1:1-11 summarizes Solomon's quest for joy and meaning? What's the point of this passage? Why is there "*no gain*" to human toil (see vv. 4-11)?

Application:

6. In what ways are you looking to work/toil for lasting joy, meaning or significance? How might this passage serve to correct your thinking?
7. Compare and contrast the teacher's view of toil with that of Jesus/Paul (Matthew 6:19-21; John 6:27; 1 Cor 15:58). What's the difference? According to the New Testament, what kind of work endures? How might this shape/change the way you currently work?
8. What's one thing you can do this week to apply this message?