

# The Purpose of Life (Icebreaker lesson)

In high school I had Mr. Harb for Humanities. One day in class he asked us an important question, "What is the purpose of life?" He then went around the room and let each student answer the question. I don't remember what everyone said but I remember a few. Murry Prohaska, a bright, blond headed young man, said, "I want to succeed in business." Barbara Bartowski, who was the valedictorian and just accepted into Harvard, said, "I want to acquire knowledge." Patty Giger, a pom pom girl, said, "I want to have a good time."

What do you think the purpose of life is? It is an important question to answer because: This purpose will govern the decisions we make in life. We are basically asking, "What makes us happy, fulfilled?"

The book of Ecclesiastes tells us of Solomon's search for answers.

## I. Ecclesiastes 1

### A. 1:1 – who is Solomon?

1. (tell story) 1 Kings 3 – God gives him wisdom 4:29-32 – more than anyone on earth, 10:21 – only drank from vessels of gold.

### B. 1:2-3 – theme of the book. To discover the purpose of life "under the sun". **key idea** - Looking from a materialistic view.

1. Our world is dominated by this world view: evolution, agnostics,
2. States conclusion at the beginning - all is "vanity"

### C. 1:4-11 – cycles of life – Series of illustrations

1. **key idea** - 1:8b – never physically satisfied for long
2. 1:9 - "been there, done that"
3. 1:10 – "new" even computers, internet are the same physical elements reorganized. They do the same things always done with other instruments: organize information, aid in communication.
4. 1:11 – do you remember your great, great, great grandfather's name?

### D. 1:12-18 – theme restated and conclusion

1. 1:15 – always are poor people, injustice, natural disasters, life is not fair.
2. 1:18 – the more news we hear – the more bad things we know about. The more we understand, the more problems we know about. The more we know the more we know we don't know.

## II. Ecclesiastes 2

### A. 2:1-11 – sought for satisfaction in pleasure

1. 2:1 – the party. There is fun in these things but not real satisfaction.

2. 2:4-8 – Solomon was the richest king in Israel’s history.
  3. 2:9 - He had the resources to totally immerse himself in whatever he wanted.
  4. 2:10 – can you see some problems with this philosophy? If pleasure is your purpose in life – what would you get into?
    - a) Do you know people who are all about getting more things?
    - b) Fill in blank, “If I just had \_\_\_\_\_ I would be satisfied.”
    - c) Is this what life is all about?
  5. 2:11 – conclusion – “vanity.
    - a) 1:8 – no lasting satisfaction in things
- B. 2:12-17 – Advantages and vanity of knowledge/wisdom
1. 2:14 – generally - the wise man has a more enjoyable life than a fool
    - a) But – they both die
  2. 2:17 – conclusion – “hated life”
- C. 2:18-23 – vanity of hard labor/success
1. 2:21 – must leave company, riches, success to heir like Paris Hilton, Lindsey Lohan, some of Kennedys,
- D. 2:24-26 – climax/conclusion of section –
1. **key idea** – 2:24 – perspective. Enjoy life in the perspective of God and eternity.

### III. Ecclesiastes 12

- A. 12:1 – remember when young because the young is setting a pattern for life. All decisions will be made with this mindset.
- B. 12:2-8 – the aging process
- C. 12:9-14 – conclusion
1. **key idea** – 12:13 – perspective. We are spiritual beings not just physical. Our physical will decay but our spirit lives on. God created us and knows what is best for us.
  2. 12:14 – there is a judgment day – God has given us this life – we are responsible for how we use it.
    - a) God does not want us to fail – He has given us this Bible. He has given us His Son Jesus who died for the times we mess up.

### IV. It would be fascinating to see where Murry, Barbara and Patty are today.

- A. I have found this perspective has helped me tremendously. Serving God helps me avoid disastrous decisions and helps me make decisions that will bring long term success. This life is bigger than just what happens on this earth.

B. Please read Gen. 1-3 before next class

C. Illustration - The Devil's beans. A man watched in amazement as a farmer led his pigs to the slaughter. He asked the man, "How did you get your pigs to follow you so eagerly?" He said, "I put a sack of beans under my arm. As I walk, I drop a few along the way. They are so interested in the beans, they don't see where we are going."

1. The Devil leads us along with a little pleasure, or money or success. If he gave us the whole bag we would see where we are going – dissatisfaction in this life and Hell in the next.

2. Solomon had the whole bag. He was rich, powerful with a pleasure filled life. He could pursue these purposes to their extreme. He found himself empty. He found them leading to Hell.