



“Been There, Done That, Now What?”

FUEL

Small Group Plan

The late Norvel Young liked to say, *“No one knows enough to be a cynic. To be a cynic they have to be able to predict the future.”* Do you agree? Do you usually move through your day-to-day with an optimistic or pessimistic spirit? Why? Where did your viewpoint come from? Who shaped it? Why do you accept it? Has it changed or remained the same over the years?

What’s it all for? What is the meaning of life? And which viewpoint will I follow as I live my life? Will I be optimistic or pessimistic? These are my choices, and they usually come from one of two sources; from an under the sun viewpoint, earthly, only here and now, meaningless; or from an above the sun viewpoint, eternal, purposeful, meaningful, permanent.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- Why are some people cynical about life while others are positive?
- Which of the two viewpoints encourage risk and growth? Explain.

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

Ecclesiastes 3

⁹ *What does the worker gain from his toil?* ¹⁰ *I have seen the burden God has laid on men.*

- Why do some people feel fulfilled while others feel dissatisfied?
- How can one person work hard, end the day exhausted, and yet come home happy, while another person hardly works, is bored all day, and ends the day “burdened” (v. 10)?

WHAT GOD MAKES

Verse 11

¹¹ ***He has made*** everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

- What is the key to finding the “beauty” God places in everything?
- What does it mean for something to become beautiful “in its time”?
- What is the “eternity” DNA that God builds into every person heart?

WHAT GOD GIVES Verses 12-13

¹² *I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live.* ¹³ *That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is **the gift of God**.*

- What is Solomon assuming about humanity when he says, “be happy and do good” (v. 12)?
- How does Solomon define “satisfaction” (v. 13)?
- How would you define “satisfaction”?
- How does it change our viewpoint to see “toil,” even tedious, difficult toil, as a “gift of God” (v. 13)?

WHAT GOD DOES Verses 14-15

¹⁴ *I know that **everything God does** will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. **God does it** so that men will revere him.* ¹⁵ *Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and **God will call** the past to account.*

- What difference does it make to understand how much God is involved in our day-to-day lives?
- What does God do that will last forever? As a group make a list.

HOW GOD WORKS Verses 16-22

¹⁶ *And I saw something else under the sun: In the place of judgment—wickedness was there, in the place of justice—wickedness was there.* ¹⁷ *I thought in my heart, “**God will bring to judgment** both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed.”* ¹⁸ *I also thought, “As for men, **God tests** them so that they may see that they are like the animals.* ¹⁹ *Man’s fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless.* ²⁰ *All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return.* ²¹ *Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?”* ²² *So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?*

- Why do some find it easier than others to trust God’s purpose, even when it’s difficult to see?
- In this text, is Solomon describing life from an “eternal” viewpoint or an “under the sun” viewpoint? Why? What message does he want us to understand?
- Does it seem like he is offering no hope in death? Explain.

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- Do most people look for their answers above or “under” the sun?
- Why is it difficult to wait for God to work (v. 11 –“in its time”)?
- How can we either nurture or diminish the eternity factor (v. 11)?
- What gives you the greatest amount of satisfaction? Explain.
- How does it make you feel to know that, in the end, everything will be put into God’s hands (v. 15)?
- Is it discouraging or encouraging knowing that God will be the judge in the end (v. 17)?
- Spend some time in prayer asking God for a clearer view to see His will and for greater faith when His will is difficult to understand.