



**“God Interrupts”**  
**FUEL**

**Small Group Plan**

**By Robert Stolte**

The purpose of Ecclesiastes is to humiliate our pride, expose our unanswered questions, and describe the emptiness of life without God. And so, for several weeks we have looked at life "under the sun" and so far Solomon has described:

- The wealthy person possessed by possessions.
- The busy person tyrannized by schedules.
- The curious person bored with experiments.
- The passionate person enslaved by appetites.
- The productive person tired of working.
- The successful person who finds that the top is not high enough.
- The religious person who reduces faith to going through the motions.

But quite honestly, life is not always wealthy, productive, and successful. Often it is filled with pain and failure. And so, what about suffering and injustice? What about evil?

I have 8 books in my library that specifically address the problem of evil. And it is interesting that it is not unbelief that causes the problem. Faith creates the problem. If we believe in a good and loving God then we must face the question, "Why there is evil in the world?" Does God know about it and not care? Or, does he know and care, but lack the power to do anything? Some struggle with this question and pretend evil does not exist. Others go to the opposite extreme and deny that God exists.

Dr. John Hulton Has Written:

*“A Man Who Give Up His Christianity  
Only Surrenders A Life Of Faith Troubled By Doubt,  
For A Life Of Doubt Troubled By Faith.”*

**OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...**

- What has been your personal experience with pain and suffering?
- How do you reconcile a God of love and a world of evil?

## LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

### **LIVING UNDER AUTHORITY** **Ecclesiastes 8:1-9**

<sup>1</sup> Who is like the wise man? Who knows the explanation of things? Wisdom brightens a man's face and changes its hard appearance. <sup>2</sup> Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God. <sup>3</sup> Do not be in a hurry to leave the king's presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases. <sup>4</sup> Since a king's word is supreme, who can say to him, "What are you doing?" <sup>5</sup> Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. <sup>6</sup> For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a man's misery weighs heavily upon him. <sup>7</sup> Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come? <sup>8</sup> No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death. As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it. <sup>9</sup> All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything done under the sun. There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own hurt.

- Why does Solomon encourage obedience to authority?
- How does submission to authority help to shape a person's character for good?
- Why is it important to remember that all human authority is limited (v. 8)?

### **EXPERIENCING INJUSTICE** **Ecclesiastes 8:10-14**

<sup>10</sup> Then too, I saw the wicked buried—those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless. <sup>11</sup> When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong. <sup>12</sup> Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God. <sup>13</sup> Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow. <sup>14</sup> There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: righteous men who get what the wicked deserve, and wicked men who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless.

- Why do some misuse their authority and take advantage of those they lead?
- How have you observed this?
- What is the difference between "lording it over" (v. 9) and "power over" (v. 8)?

- How do things “go better” for “God-fearing men”?
- Why does Solomon call the injustice described in verse 14 “meaningless”?

***FACING MYSTERY***  
***Ecclesiastes 8:15-17***

<sup>15</sup> *So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun.* <sup>16</sup> *When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe man’s labor on earth—his eyes not seeing sleep day or night—* <sup>17</sup> *then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it.*

- In view of life’s uncertainties, Solomon encourages “enjoyment of life” (v. 15) Why?
- How does it help us to remember that human wisdom is limited (vs. 16-17)?

**USE IT / APPLY IT ...**

- Which authority structure (community, church, family) is the most difficult for you to submit to? Explain.
- What kind of injustices is most likely to move you to action? Explain.
- How easy is it for you to trust God when your own wisdom runs low? Explain.
- Close in prayer asking God for an understanding of unprejudiced authority and true wisdom.