



**“Real Life”
FUEL**

Small Group Plan

I've heard that there is a sign along the Alaskan highway that says, "Choose your rut carefully, you'll be in it for the next 200 miles." I can't verify the story, but I did talk to a friend from Alaska. He has not seen the sign, but he has seen the Alcan (Alaskan/Canadian highway) and he agrees, "Choose your rut carefully."

Think about this motto: choose your rut carefully. Sadly, this is not just a travel joke. It's also an approach to life that says — Life is a rut. Get use to it. Give up. Concede.

And while some would call this realism, it is really, "Under the sun thinking." You hate your rut. It's uncomfortable. It's miserable. But it's also familiar. So, you get adjusted to your rut. And you stay in it for the whole journey. How's that for a life plan? Accept the rut. Exist. But never really live.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- How do people find themselves in a “rut” – how did they get there?
- Name some of the ruts that you have seen grab and trap people?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

DON'T HOARD — RELEASE!
Ecclesiastes 11:1-2

¹ *Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again.* ² *Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land.*

- What is the difference between hoarding and sharing?
- What is the difference between hoarding and saving?
- How do these verses have the feel of Jesus blowing through them (cf. Jn 12:25, Mt 7:2)?

DON'T WORRY — STEP OUT!
Ecclesiastes 11:3-4

³ *If clouds are full of water, they pour rain upon the earth. Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there will it lie.* ⁴ *Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.*

- Solomon is describing people who spend their lives observing the obvious, focusing on things they can't change — the weather, nature.
- Why do some worry about what might be, while others live in view of what is?
- How does worry keep us from “planting” or “reaping” (v.4)?
- Stepping out risks failure. But how does worry guarantee failure?

DON'T STOP — TRUST!
Ecclesiastes 11:5-6

⁵ *As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.* ⁶ *Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.*

- Four times in this chapter Solomon highlights what we don't know (Vs. 2,5,6).
- Why do some people respond to their ignorance and limitations with fear and doubt?
- How do others refuse to worry? How are they able to trust God and keep on moving forward?

DON'T WAIT — ENJOY!
Ecclesiastes 11:7-10

⁷ *Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun.* ⁸ *However many years a man may live, let him enjoy them all. But let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. Everything to come is meaningless.* ⁹ *Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment.* ¹⁰ *So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigor are meaningless.*

- Several times through this book Solomon has said to “enjoy life” (2:24-25 / 3:12-13 / 5:18-19 / 8:15).

- Is Solomon saying to gratify every passion? Explain.
- How can our “heart” and our “eyes” become good guides (v. 9)?
- Why is it important to enjoy life when you’re young (v. 9)?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- How have you escaped from a “rut?”
- How can the spirit of generosity fight against the spirit of hoarding?
- How can a person build the spirit of generosity?
- What advice would you give to a person who wants to build a spirit of courage and healthy risk-taking?
- When someone faces ignorance or limitation, what are his or her best options?
- When someone is just starting out in life, in marriage, in their career, what advice would you give them to help them move forward?
- Close in prayer asking God for eyes to see what “real life” really is.