

- ii. Jesus didn't give up on meaningfulness of life even in the midst of dying. Nothing was meaningless to Jesus—not even His suffering.
- iii. The NT makes clear that even your suffering is not meaningless! It may seem rather absurd, but its absurdity is transformed by your being joined to the sufferings of Christ.

When Life Gets Twisted: *Finding Meaning in the Absurdity of Life*

Jerry Cisar — April 19, 2020

Text: Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

Introduction

Don't be fully invested in this life; its absurdity is evident. Enjoy the gift of life and be fully prepared for the day of judgment.

Life under the sun leads one to experience its absurdity; life beyond the sun leads one to meaningful living.

LIVE THE STORY

The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community. The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- In what way is Ecclesiastes structured like Job? How does this help us read it?
- How might this book help us in evangelism?
- How might Abel's name help us understand Ecclesiastes?
- How do Romans 8:20-21 help us understand why the world is so frustrating?
- Discuss the two quotes from Calvin in the outline (pgs. 2, 3).
- How is the cross the ultimate demonstration of the futility of which Ecclesiastes speaks?
- How did the fear of God lead Jesus to experience His sufferings in a meaningful way? How can it help us to do the same? (Try to think of specific examples.)

I. Meaningless and Absurd (1:2)

This phrase, here translated, "Meaningless, meaningless everything is meaningless," is repeated in 12:8.

- A. "Meaningless, meaningless everything is meaningless."
 - i. Cain and Hebel
 - a) fleeting
 - b) meaningless
 - c) absurdity

Michael V. Fox: "*Hebel* is a quality worse than nothingness, worse, even that pointlessness, for the existence of the man who loses his wealth is no more pointless than the stillbirth's. But his existence is more *absurd*, for he has seen and born life's irrationality" (42).

ii. *Absurdity* that leads to *frustration*.

a) Romans 8:20-21

b) The author of Ecclesiastes leads us to confront the absurdities of life that might frustrate our pursuit of meaningful existence.

B. Examples of the absurdity of human existence:

i. Ecclesiastes 2:14-15

ii. Ecclesiastes 9:11

II. Under the Sun (1:3)

A. Under the Sun

B. Beyond the Sun (12:13-14)

i. 2 Corinthians 4:17

John Calvin: "This life, though abounding in all kinds of wretchedness, is justly classed among divine blessings which are not to be despised" (3.9.3).

"Poverty, indeed considered in itself, is misery; so are exile, contempt, imprisonment, ignominy: in the end, death itself is the last of all calamities. But when the favour of God breathes upon us, there is none of these things which may not turn out to our happiness" (3.8.7).

III. Nothing Changes Yet the Striving Never Ceases (4-11)

A. Groundhog Day

Only a goal beyond the sun can ultimately be meaningful, and Christ gives us that blessed hope!

B. Jesus faced the absurdity of life head-on!

i. The cross is the ultimate absurdity when viewed *under the sun!*