

ECCLESIASTES SERIES FOUR
COTTON CANDY
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ECCLESIASTES 1:1-18
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SLIDE: I have lost over 50 pounds three times in my life—I just can't seem to keep it off! Julie has me on my fourth-life-time diet. I don't like diets any more than you do. I don't really like the taste of the food my mother made me eat and told me that I had to finish it before I could have any dessert. The problem with a diet today is that after I eat the stuff Julie won't even let me have the dessert. Rice cakes are packing material. I know they put flavors on them, but they can't fool me, I know Styrofoam when I taste it. My pillow stuffing tastes better than Kashi cereal. My garden hose has more flavor than celery. So I camouflage it with peanut butter and pimento cheese. And Julie says, "Those aren't on the list, spit it out."

SLIDE Diet food never satisfies.

But making my goal doesn't really satisfy wither. If it did, I would not gain back all my weight.

I grew up eating meat and potatoes. The problem with meat, bread and potatoes is that I always want more. Meat, blueberry pie and ice cream taste so good it is hard to stop eating. Sometimes I eat until my stomach is full and there is nothing satisfactory about pushing back from the table and having to loosen my belt to give my diaphragm room to breathe.

Eating all I want is really no more satisfying than a diet—I eat until past full and now I have more weight to lose. Then I am really frustrated. That doesn't satisfy!

I know the brain has eating modules that monitor our blood sugar levels and caloric intake. Handling food is not so easy. Genetically, Scandinavians store more fat for the winter. Nyanjui Muygouy had not an ounce of fat on him 25 years later.

Handling food for me is a lot like handling Cotton Candy—you know—the kind you get at the Pima County Fair. Fluffy, pink and delicious. Have you ever seen the guy who whips it up in frenzy before he blows it around, it's just a spoonful of sugar.

So you bite into that big-sticky-sugar glazed upside down cone—and there is nothing there—it is less filling—it is not filling at all!

The Book of Ecclesiastes is about eating cotton candy. No matter how much or how little you eat—it doesn't satisfy.

No matter where you turn, no matter what you try—from food to sex, from money to cars, from power to houses—from a lot to a little—Solomon declares that it is simply cotton candy.

By the way, I have not given up on controlling my eating. I am still trying. After this service I am going down to Petsmart and buy a muzzle.

•SLIDE #: Ecclesiastes 1:1: The words of the teacher, son of David, King in Jerusalem:

King Solomon was one of the wisest, wealthiest, best looking men who ever lived. But!!!
There came a time when he grew tired of running the country, building that temple and hearing all the people complain.

It is like one day he walked into the office and said, “I am sick of giving and giving and giving. I want to experience life and run wild and let myself go. I want to find what it is that really satisfies! I am out of here!”

And so he left. And when he finished his fling and returned home, he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes to tell us what he learned.

Some think it is a depressing book—that is not its purpose. It is designed to tell us how to live.

DAD and STOVE

We don’t need to try drugs to know they are harmful. We see the devastating results.

We don’t need to leave our family, or try to buy everything we can’t afford, or go off on a wild spree to see the empty results. Solomon has been there.

•**SLIDE #: Ecclesiastes 1:2: “Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”**

“Meaningless” is the key to this book.

It does not mean worthless and empty. It does not mean vain!

The word is the Hebrew word for morning mist. By 9:00 it is all gone.

Life is like mist. It is like cotton candy.

•**SLIDE #:** It is easier to grab and hold onto a handful of mist than to hang onto the things of this life.

•**SLIDE #:** Like Arnold Schwarzenegger – Julie put larger underwear on him. Didn’t look very good there either.

•**SLIDE #: Ecclesiastes 1:3: What does a man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?**

Brie’s Joke about genie and bottle, used, only one wish left. Newspaper one year from today with next year’s stock quotes. Poof! Paper was in his hands. Then planned his investments based on next year’s winners.

Turned the page and saw his picture in the obituary column!

Work all your life and what do you have to show for it?

•**SLIDE #:** SOLOMON OBSERVED IN NATURE THAT WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND. MAN IS A TINY-TRANSITORY PART OF THE LIFE CYCLE.

Solomon was a careful student of science. He knew a great deal about the laws of nature and what he knew is still basic to our understanding of the workings of nature today.

•**SLIDE #: Ecclesiastes 1:4: Generations come and generations go but the earth remains forever.**

No one knows how long the world has been here—only it was here a long time before we got her and it will be here a long time after we are gone.

Most of us were not here 100 years ago and we won't be here 100 years from now.

•**SLIDE #: Ecclesiastes 1:5: The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.**

•**SLIDE #: Ecclesiastes 1:6: The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course.**

Fascinating that Solomon uses language and terms that are consistent with scientific discoveries.

Low pressure and high pressure areas as wind circles around.

•**SLIDE #: Ecclesiastes 1:7: All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place where streams come from, there they return again.**

He explains the water cycle where water molecules are evaporated into the air later to condense and fall to earth as rain.

•**SLIDE #: Ecclesiastes 12:6 is a remarkable, poetic description of death.**

Ecclesiastes 12:6-8: Remember him before the silver cord (spinal cord) is severed, or the golden bowl is broken (the golden bowl is the basin which holds the brain); before the pitcher is shattered at the spring (the pitcher is the lungs), or the wheel broken at the well (and the wheel is the heart), and as dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Everything is Meaningless!"

He is describing the circulation of the blood—with the heart as a wheel pumping through one pipe to discharge into another—26 centuries before William Harvey described the circulation system of the human body.

Quite a contrast with 300 years ago when the best men had to offer in understanding the human body was that everything was explained in the moving and rearranging of organs around inside.

If the spleen moved too low, it affected the digestive system and the best way to be cured was with enemas. The pressure put the spleen back in its place.

SLIDE: SOLOMON OBSERVED THAT NOTHING BRINGS ULTIMATE SATISFACTION. NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE HAVE, WE ALWAYS WANT MORE.

•**SLIDE #: Ecclesiastes 1:8: All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.**

Have you noticed? A man never earns enough. A woman is never beautiful enough. Clothes are never fashionable enough. Cars are never nice enough. Gadgets are never modern enough. Houses are never furnished enough. Food is never fancy enough. Relationships are never romantic enough. Life is never full enough.

•**SLIDE : Have you looked for an audio system for your car lately. You go to one place and they'll say, "This is fine, it will cost you a thousand bucks."**

Then they'll say, "But you know, there is something much better." You ask, "What is it?"

“Well, if you want to go twenty-five hundred dollars, we’ll include two huge speakers and you’ll have stereophonic sound.

But if you really want the big-time tingles, you’ll need to get quadraphonic.” Four speakers... plus soundproofing for the walls so your neighbor’s ears won’t bleed!

I can hear some salesperson say, “You think this sounds good in a VW Bug? Man, you put this in a Mercedes and double the size of the speakers and it’ll blow you away!”

SLIDE: Satisfaction only comes when we step off the escalator of desire and say, “This is enough.”

Cameron the fire fighter: “I am going to level off my career so I can spend more time in my work at church.”

SLIDE: SOLOMON OBSERVED THAT NOTHING IS NEW. IT HAS ALL BEEN SAID OR DONE BEFORE.

•**SLIDE #: Ecclesiastes 1:9: What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.**

•**SLIDE #: Ecclesiastes 1:10: Is there anything of which one can say, “Look! This is something new”? If it was here already, long ago; it was here before our time.**

My great grandfather courted my great grand mother in a horse-driven carriage driving from Minnesota to Wichita, Kansas.

My grandfather courted my grandmother on an old horse hair sofa in a living room in Oklahoma city.

My father courted my mother on the street car riding to work from Oak Cliff to north Dallas five days per week.

I courted Julie on the vinyl leather front seat of a 1967 Olds cutlass supreme night after night by the curb in front of her house.

Today, you may propose on an airplane or perhaps a space capsule.

You say, “Aren’t these things new?”

No, not really. The feeling my great-grand dad had as his proposal was accepted was the same feeling my grand dad, dad, and I had the night Julie said “yes”.

The environment may change and there may be new gadgets around; but there is really nothing new under the sun.

Man stays the same, only the environment has changed.

Speak in other cultures—tell the same stories—talking about basic human nature—when people get cut they bleed. They worry about how their teenagers will turn out.

There is one exception. There is one thing that is new—the New Birth. This is something that comes when you receive Jesus Christ as savior.

This is about the only thing new that will ever come your way.

SLIDE: SOLOMON OBSERVED THAT EVERY ONE IS SOON FORGOTTEN!

•**SLIDE #: Ecclesiastes 1:11: There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow.**

•**SLIDE #**: Note I wrote in my Bible: 8-14-96: “As I think about legacies and building for the future, I

must forget any sense of pride or honor. I will be quickly forgotten. So, I must unselfishly work to build for the best of others and not to make a name for myself.”

Any one here remember Dr. Lott? Skipper Taylor? Ruby Mateka? Paul Gavitt?
Life is a mist. It is not meaningless. It is cotton candy. It is just passing and can't be held.

Who was president 50 years ago? 1957? Dwight Eisenhower. Before became president.

8th grade basketball records.

SLIDE: Casas Ministers who grew up at Casas Adobes Baptist Church

•SLIDE: •SOLOMON OBSERVED FROM HUMAN WISDOM AND PHILOSOPHY THAT LIFE WITHOUT CHRIST LOOKS BLEAK.

READ ECCLESIASTES 1:12-18.

SLIDE: Human philosophy is a search for truth which is based on what man can reason and figure out on his own. It is always searching. By definition, it can't arrive anywhere because there is always more to learn.

“Study” is rationalism. “Explore” is experience

In other words, Solomon is saying, “Not only did I seek to study the gardens and the lakes and the rivers and reservoirs and streams, I did experiments with them. I got wet in the streams. I participated in the sex orgies. I investigated the whole world of pleasure. I got into it and I felt the burn of booze as it went down my throat, and I felt the heavy feeling in my head when I gave myself to it. I experienced everything.”

--And it was all cotton candy!

SLIDE Part of Ecclesiastes is an “under-the-sun” perspective. Because he seldom looks “above the sun” to find the real essence of life, life seems drab and depressing, because he left God out of the picture, nothing satisfied. It never will.

Let me make this really simple:

What is the difference between an oral thermometer and a rectal thermometer? Taste

WHAT WE MIGHT LEARN FROM SOLOMON

•SLIDE: 1. HOLD ALL THINGS LOOSELY. THEY WILL NOT LAST.

•SLIDE: 2. STOP LIVING “UNDER THE SUN.” BRING GOD INTO THE PICTURE.

Remember the Story of the two men in the hospital.

One bed was by the window and the other was not. Every morning the man by the window looked out and described the scene to his fellow patient who could not see what was outside. He described the beauties of the morning and the birds singing and the sun rising and the clouds changing colors.

The other man was envious and resented that his neighbor had the window and he did not. One night his neighbor choked. Instead of calling for help the man who wanted the bed by the window let him choke to death. Late in the night they removed the body and moved his bed by the window. He

could hardly wait for dawn to actually see outside for himself. Finally, dawn arrived. He stretched himself up to the window and looked outside to discover there was nothing there but the brick wall of the next building. He could not see a thing!

•SLIDE: 3. ENJOY LIFE EVERY DAY. IT IS ALL PASSING QUICKLY AWAY.

•SLIDE #26: THE STATION, By Robert J. Hastings

In our subconscious minds is an idyllic vision. We see ourselves on a long, long trip that almost spans the continent. We're traveling by passenger train, and out the windows we observe the passing scene of cars on highways, of children waving, of cattle grazing, people living.

But uppermost in our minds is the final destination. On a certain day at a certain hour we will pull into the station. There will be bands playing and flags waving, and so many wonderful dreams will come true.

"When we reach the station, that will be it!" we cry. "When I'm 18, that will be it!" "When I buy a new house, that will be it!" "When I put the last kid through college, that will be it!" When I reach the age of retirement, that will be it?" "...I shall live happily ever after!"

Unfortunately, have you noticed, once we get "it," the "it" disappears. The station somehow hides itself at the end of an endless track.

Sooner or later we must realize there is no one station, no one place to arrive at once and for all. The station is only a dream. It constantly outdistances us. The true joy of life is the trip.

So, stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles. *Life must be lived as we go along.* The final station will come soon enough!

•SLIDE #: Hugh Prather writes in his book *Notes to Myself*:

"If I had only forgotten future greatness and looked at the green things and reached out to those around me and smelled the air and ignored the forms and the self-styled obligations and heard the rain on my roof and put my arms around my wife... Perhaps it's not too late."

•SLIDE: 4. EVERYONE HAS A SMALL PART TO PLAY IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH. PLAY YOURS WELL.

VIDEO: ROCKY TRIUMPHANT.

Girl got her 15 minutes of fame. She played her part.

In the range of eternity, each of us plays for just a short little while.

Abraham shouted, "Jesus the lamb who died in our place." And then he was gone.

Moses shouted, "Jesus, He is the Passover lamb. He had his little time and then he was gone."

Joshua shouted, "Jesus! The savior of the world—and he died.

David shouted, "Jesus! Kiss the Son lest he be angry and you perish in the way. Blessed are all who take refuge in him." And He was gone.

John the Baptist: "Jesus, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." And his part was finished.

Here we come—we shout Jesus and we have done our part.

In fact, that shout for Jesus is one of the few things we will do on this earth that ultimately satisfies.