

Reflection Questions: Ecclesiastes 1:1-2

For the message, "East of Eden Under the Sun" given by Pastor John Ferguson at Mercy Hill Church in Bryan/College Station, Texas, on June 14, 2020

These reflection questions are designed to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life. You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion. To review the message, go to MercyHillBCS.org/resources/messages.

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read the Scripture text: Ecclesiastes 1:1-2

- 1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
- 2 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

A summary of the message: This life as we experience it east of Eden under the sun is not the way things are supposed to be. We we're meant to live in a world-wide paradise (Eden- Genesis 1-2), but with humanity's rebellion against its Creator (Genesis 3ff), we now find ourselves exiled from Eden trying to find happiness and fulfillment in things that were never designed to produce it. Life often seems frustrating, meaningless, pointless, and beyond our grasp.

Key Points:

- Ecclesiastes is going **to ask us to be honest about life.**
- Ecclesiastes is going **to goad us to be intentional about becoming wise.**
- Ecclesiastes is going **to lead us to Jesus.**

Key Quotes:

- **Augustine**, "You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You."
- **Abraham Kuyper**, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'"

QUESTIONS

1. Let's think about how this text applies to our lives as individuals.

- The preacher says that all is vanity—vanity of vanities. As we discussed in our study, the Hebrew word used for *vanity* is *hevel* which means smoke, vapor, mist, or even breath. It's used metaphorically to describe something that is an enigma and/ or fleeting (like trying to grasp smoke or chase the wind); something that eludes us. Do you find that this descriptions resonates with your experience in life? How so?
- How might *hevel* be a perfect description for life "east of Eden," that is, for life outside and apart from God's presence?

- How does this text help us to understand the Good News of Jesus? That is, how does it help us to understand the scope of what Christ did in entering our human experience with the aim to redeem it and bring us back into a relationship with God in his eternal kingdom?

2. Let's think about how this text applies to us as a community of Jesus' followers.

- How do you think Christians in the West have sometimes fallen into the trap of trying to pursue fulfillment and satisfaction in the things of this world (some might call it "the American dream")?
- What comes to your mind when you think of a community of Jesus followers who are both in touch with the *hevel* of life (that is, it's fleeting and enigmatic nature) as well as the solid hope of the gospel of Jesus that gives us meaning and hope?

3. Let's think about how this text applies to our city.

- What questions do you think people in our city would ask of this text? Do you think it would resonate with people? Why or why not?
- How does sage's words challenge the thinking of our city and/ or critique its pursuit of happiness in acquiring things, status, etc?
- How does this text serve as Good News for those outside the faith? Or to put it another way, how does it set one up to hear the Good News of Jesus?

CONCLUSION QUESTION

What is the one thing you want to take away from this study to remember or to make a change in your life?

PRAYER

What are some ways you can turn what you are learning into prayer? List them as bullet points....

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- _____
- _____