

Does Life Have To Be Boring?

Series on Ecclesiastes

Charles Sykes wrote a book with the title "*Dumbing Down Our Kids: Why American Children Feel Good About Themselves But Can't Read, Write, Or Add*". Sykes also wrote some wisdom for teenagers, which has been widely attributed to Bill Gates of Microsoft. Bill Gates isn't the author, but the wisdom of this advice to teenagers is still pretty good. It's entitled "Rules About Life That You Won't Learn At School."

1. Life is not fair. Get used to it.
2. The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something before you feel good about yourself.
3. You will not make \$40,000 a year right out of high school and you will not be a vice president with a car phone until you earn them both.
4. If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you have a boss.
5. Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your grandparents had a different word for burger flipping. They called it 'opportunity'.
6. If you mess up, it's not your parents fault. Don't whine about your mistakes, learn from them.
7. Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying your bills, cleaning your clothes and listening to you talk about how cool you are. So before you save the rainforest from the parasites of your parent's generation, try delousing the closet in your own room.
8. Your school may have done away with winners and losers, but life has not. In some schools they have abolished failing grades -- they'll give you as many times as you want to get the right answer. This does not bear the slightest resemblance to anything in real life.
9. Life is not divided into semesters. You don't get summers off, and very few employers are interested in helping you find yourself. You do that in your own time.
10. Television is not real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.
11. Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.
12. Smoking does not make you look cool. It makes you look moronic. Next time you're out cruising, watch an 11-year-old with a butt in his mouth. That's what you look like to anyone over 20. Ditto for "expressing yourself" with purple hair and/or pierced body parts.
13. You are not immortal. If you are under the impression that living fast, dying young and leaving a beautiful corpse is romantic, you obviously haven't seen one of your peers at room temperature lately.
14. Enjoy this while you can. Sure parents are a pain, school's a bother, and life is depressing. But someday you'll realize how wonderful it was to be a kid. Maybe you should start now.

Listening To Wisdom.

Over the next few weeks, we are going to take a close look at some advice from a man who has "been there, done that" in so many areas of life. He's a man who spent most of his life pursuing happiness and lived life trying to answer the question "what's life all about?" He was a king who had so much money that he used to eat out of golden bowls. A king who owned a fleet of ships that used to bring into his kingdom 25 tonnes of gold every year. We will hear from a man who could buy anything he wanted, build anything he wanted and could have anything he wanted. A man with the finest brains of this day who studied architecture, politics, religion, learning, landscaping, horticulture and comedy. You name it, this man had done it. This was a man who had tried pleasure to the full. Eating, drinking, and sexual adventures to the point where he collected 700 wives and 300 concubines. This man, called Solomon, who was a King, left us a journal or a diary where he recorded his findings about the pursuit of happiness. If we follow the writings of this man, called the teacher or the preacher, as he is called in some translations, I want you to notice one key phrase. It is the phrase "under the sun".

After I've read this, I'll explain what "under the sun" means. I want to read some of this journal [this morning](#).

"The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem: "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." What does man gain from all his labour at which he toils under the sun? Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again. All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing. What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, "Look! This is something new"? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time. There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow." (Ecclesiastes 1:1 -11)

Life "Under The Sun".

This is God's word about what happens when we pursue happiness, but we leave God out of the equation. It's about a view of life without God. Everything is viewed from an earthly point of view. It's the view of the natural mind. It's the view from a human perspective. That phrase "under the sun", is a reference to a life lived on the human level, that has no spiritual reference point.

This journal was written by a man who had been there, done that, in every area of life. He had more money than he knew what to do with. He was so bright intellectually there was no one his equal. He was an author, songwriter, poet, architect, King, diplomat, politician and philosopher. In his time he was the richest man who had ever lived. By comparison with Solomon, Bill Gates would be relatively poor.

These observations on life were so accurate that God has preserved the journal of this man for the whole world to read. God is saying to us, "If you will believe this man's assessment of life, then it will save you a lot of heartache."

Solomon's 21st Century Conclusions.

So what is this man is saying? He says "Life under the sun is boring, boring, boring. Life isn't a bowl of cherries -- it's the pits! You want it in a few words? Meaningless, utterly meaningless. Everything is meaningless". Sounds very much like the way people see life in the 21st Century.

If you think people don't see life this way, then why is it that respectable lawyers rip off with millions of dollars of clients funds? It's because they say to themselves "What the heck. Who cares. Let's do it". Why do so many people have this secret longing to walk out on their marriages? It's because they can't see any purpose in where their marriage relationship is going. Why do people want to sell up their businesses and go fishing? Why do people want to buy a yacht and travel the world? Why do businessmen want to take off to Australia with the office secretary? Why do teenagers drop out of school and smoke dope? Why? Because life under the sun is so boring.

Living The "Straight Life".

Listen to James John Dobson's description of what he calls the "straight life". "The straight life for a homemaker is washing dishes three hours a day. It's cleaning sinks and scouring toilets and waxing floors. It's chasing toddlers and mediating fights between preschool children. The straight life is driving your station wagon to school and back 23 times a week. It's grocery shopping and baking for the class party. The straight life eventually means becoming the parent of an ungrateful teenager, which I assure you is no job for sissies!

It's difficult to let your adolescent find himself, especially when you know that he isn't even looking! Certainly the straight life of a homemaker can be an exhausting experience at times.

The straight life for a working man is not much simpler. It's pulling your tired frame out of bed five days a week, 50 weeks out of the year. It's earning a two-week vacation in August and choosing a trip that will please the kids. The straight life is spending your money wisely when you'd rather indulge in a new whatever. It's taking your son bike riding on Saturday when you so badly want to watch the football game. It's cleaning out the garage on your day off after working 60 hours the previous week. The straight life is coping with head colds, engine tune ups, crab grass and income-tax forms. It's taking your family to church on Sunday when you've heard every idea the Minister has to offer. It's giving a portion of your income to God's work when you already wonder how you will make ends meet. The straight life of the ordinary, garden variety husband and father is everything I have listed and more -- much more." And of course if you're a single parent, all the responsibilities for men and women that I have just mentioned all fall on you.

Living For What?

Solomon says to us, when you add it all up at the end of life, what has it come to? A big fat zero. Those in business who have worked so hard all their life so that they can die early of a heart attack and leave it all to their kids who won't appreciate it anyway! Students who work hard studying to get two or three degrees only to find that they are overqualified and can't get a job. Or if they do get a job, they find there are no end of questions they want answered, and nothing satisfies.

Some years ago there was an item on TV about a woman who had spent nine years of her life campaigning and petitioning the United States Postal Service to get Elvis Presley's face on a postage stamp. When I saw that program, I imagined her facing the Lord in heaven at the end of her life, and him asking her "What did you do with your life?" She says to him, "I got Elvis Presley's face on a postage stamp". He says "Wow, come on in!" Some people are preoccupied with meaninglessness. Think of sportsmen and women who spend years of their lives and tens of thousands of dollars training for an event, only to suffer some injury just before they are ready to compete. Or what about something that is going to preoccupies my nation year in and year out – the Americas Cup. We are a small country with a limited economy that spent hundreds of millions of dollars on a yacht race, trying to take a trophy off a Geneva based syndicate called Alinghi. It's obscene. It's futile. It's vanity. It's meaninglessness.

The Hebrew Word For "Meaninglessness".

Do you know what the Hebrew word for meaninglessness literally means? It means "chasing after the wind". Isn't that an exact description of what they do with the America's Cup? Isn't that a description of so many people's lives? When you live life under the sun, without God, it's simply chasing after the wind. We've got things so back to front, we worship our work and we play at our worship.

Solomon even comments on the sunrise and sunset. He says it's boring and monotonous. The sun comes up. The sun goes down. The sun comes up. The sun goes down. Jeremiah, who was a man in the Bible who was very godly, saw the sun coming up as a sign of God's faithfulness. For Jeremiah, it was "good morning God!" For Solomon it was "good God, morning!" There is no meaningful life on this earth if you only live life beneath the perspective of the sun. Nothing satisfies.

When Are We Ever Satisfied?

Solomon says the eye never has enough of seeing nor the ear its fill of hearing. We're just not satisfied. If you don't believe me, try buying a new stereo system. You go into the shop and listen to a CHF 1000 system and it sounds okay. Then the salesman says, "Wait!, we've got something more. We've got it in stereo with double bass and triple overhead woofers at CHF 2000."

That sounds so much better and you're satisfied until he says "Listen to in quadraphonic super bass with twin 3 inch tweeters, 24 inch bottom end and 45 degree horns with 1000 watts continuous power at 40 Megahertz per second." Now you really are impressed, and it's only CHF 4000. You see, we are just not satisfied. We are always longing for something more. A person working in the computer industry once told me that the distribution life of a new computer is now less than 12 weeks before it superseded by the next model which has more whistles and bells than the last.

The latest deal is space tourism. Richard Branson's Virgin group is planning to begin passenger services into space. The initial seat price is \$200,000, with a required down-payment of \$20,000. To date, over 410 people have made down payments on bookings. Adventure based tourism has been a huge growth industry. Bungee jumping. Bungee rockets. Base jumping. Paragliding. Abseiling off the tops of high buildings. Jet boat rides. White-water rafting. There's a whole generation seeking the next adrenaline rush. But if it's under the sun, it won't satisfy. That's the way most people in this world live. They live life under the sun. A life without God. And they wonder why they are never satisfied.

Are You Living Life With God, Or Without Him?

How do you live life? Under the sun? Without meaning and purpose? Or do you have a larger broader perspective? A relationship with God through Jesus Christ makes all the difference. There is no meaning in life without God. Over the next few weeks we are going to take a detailed look at a whole lot of areas of life under the sun that Solomon explored, and see why they don't satisfy. And we are going to look at a life that does.

2000 years ago Jesus Christ made a statement that I and many others have found to be absolutely true. He said **"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)** Everyone can know that life if they want it. I can assure you, if you choose to follow Jesus, the one thing you will never be able to say about life is that it's boring.

David McChesney, Westlake Church in Nyon, Switzerland