Ecclesiastes 1

*Life is not a Bowl of Cherry’s...it’s the Pits!*

I. Slide1 Announce:
   A. Slide2 City Serve: We are partnering with local churches in our 1st annual community service projects in the Temecula/Murrieta/Menifee/Wildomar/Elsinore.
      1. So get signed up NOW at cityserve16.com. Only 17 days away!

II. Intro:
   A. Title: I titled my message what Solomon wanted to call this book, Slide3 *Life is not a bowl of cherry’s...it’s the pits!*
   B. Slide4-7 Solomon devoted his life to answering life questions like, What is the meaning of life? What is existence all about? Is life worth living?
      1. *Maybe you’ve asked the same questions?* Solomon yielded some pretty depressing results. So depressing that you’ll be able to slide under the back doors when you leave. And many a sage, philosopher, guru have come to similar conclusions.
      2. But before you start singing, All we are is Dust in the Wind...know that this is not just another man’s journal, but the Word of God. As if God was saying, *this is good for all man to read, know, understand.*
         a) This is the answer if you hold to a worldview of Humanism.
         b) This is a negative argument to demonstrate a profound truth.
         c) This is not a pessimistic book but a realistic book.
         d) To learn the true meaning of life you must...1st view life apart from God in all its futility. Then, fold in God-connectedness & then life will mean something.

III. Slide8 SOLOMON LOOKS AROUND (3-8) CIRCLES & CYCLES
   A. First, Solomon looks around & sees nature functioning as it has since creation.
   B. (3) The highest reward for man's toil is not what he gets for it, but what he becomes by it.
   C. (4) Gives the basic premise: people come & go but nature remains unchanged.
1. Nature keeps going & going like the Ever-Ready-Bunny, but man can’t find a fixed point of reference for his own meaning.
   a) Story: (explain in Jr.H. showing Dobie’s) Luther, a doberman, that every time he barked he spun once chasing his tail. Solomon, seemed to be doing this same dance.

2. Instead of asking, what is man that you are mindful of him, he’s been made a little lower than the angels...he seems to be asking, what is man...he doesn’t seem like much?

D. Slide9a Just look at Nature & see how monotonous life is.
   1. The Earth’s Longevity (4). 1st, Solomon looks to the world he stands on.
      a) Man seems so temporary while the earth seems so permanent.
   2. Slide9b The Sun’s Course (5). 2nd, Solomon looks to the heavens around him, looking East to West.
      a) Look at Ps.19:1-6 for a description of the sun rising.
         (1) The sun is seen panting/hastens eager to get to the other side of the horizon
      b) As far as the heavens are concerned, one day is just like another. The heavens remain the same.
   3. Slide9c The Wind Patterns (6). Now Solomon looks North to South.
      a) He’s thinking about its constant motion. It follows its circuits that man can’t fully understand or chart (simply watch the Weather Report on the 11pm News, they sure can’t!)
         (1) Jn.3:8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes.
      b) Solomon’s Point? Man comes & goes, but the wind cycles/circuits do not change.

   a) Scientist tell us that, at any given time, 99% of all water on earth is in the ocean; & only .0001% is in the atmosphere, available for rain. (enough for about 10 days of rain)
   b) The sun & wind cooperating, makes the evaporation & movement of moisture circulating…but the sea never changes.

E. Slide9e (8) And so, mans laborious works move in a changeless cycle.
   1. The eye & ear being 2 taskmasters for which man toils, yet are never satisfied.
      a) Prov.27:20 Hell & Destruction are never full; So the eyes of man are never satisfied
b) Our ears & eyes constantly look for the nicer house in our neighborhood, the greener lawn on our street, & for the faster lane on the freeway.

c) We need not grumble because Roses have thorns, but rejoice that thorns have Roses

F. All that Solomon says here is true...IF you leave God out of the equation. If your only perspective is under the sun, then yes, Life is not a bowl of cherry’s...it’s the pits!

1. This viewpoint sees our world as a closed uniform system, predictable & unchangeable.

2. But this leaves no room for prayer, supernatural occurrences, nor providence.
   a) If there is a God, He is imprisoned under the Laws of Nature.

3. Yet I can think of many places where God has interrupted the routine of nature:
   a) Slide10 Earth – opened up & swallowed people. Earthquakes.
   b) Sun – stood still for Joshua & king Hez.
   e) Remember, we believers live in this world as PILGRIMS not PRISONERS.

   (1) Slide11a The Confession of Faith put it best: God the creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose, & govern all creatures, actions & things, from the greatest to the least, by His most wise, & holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, & the free & immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, & mercy. Providence, pg.91. [drawn up at Westminster in 1646 by over 100 Puritan divines/theologian, presenting one of the most concise statements of the Christian faith]

G. Slide11b Man wants something New. Why? Because this world ultimately brings weariness. For some tragedy, for others boredom.

1. People look for something to distract them or deliver them.

2. The Athenians of Paul’s day spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. Acts 17:21

3. The entertainment industry plays off this very human hunger for novelty.
4. The Eye cannot be satisfied until it sees the hand of God, and
   The Ear cannot be satisfied until it hears the voice of God.

IV. Slide12 **SOLOMON LOOKS BACK** (9-11)

A. Next, Solomon *looks back* & sees *history* only repeating itself.

B. Slide13 H.A.Ironside (pastor Chicago’s Moody church) *If it’s new it’s not true; & if it’s true it’s not new.*

C. Slide14 Edison said that his inventions were only *bringing out the secrets of nature & applying them for the happiness of mankind.*

   1. Man cannot *create*...He simply puts together elements that have always existed, into different forms & contraptions.

D. It’s been well said that the *ancients* have stolen all of our *best ideas.*

   1. Slide15a/b Like their ability to move huge stones to the Temple sight making up its retaining wall (largest is 43’ long, 570 tons). Or what about the Pyramids?

E. As the familiar phrase says, *Methods are many, principles are few – Methods always change, principles never do.*

   1. Make sure you don’t mistake *novelty* for *originality.*

V. Slide16 **SOLOMON LOOKS WITHIN** (12-18)

A. Next, Solomon *looks within* & realizes your *wisdom & experience* cannot explain the mysteries of life or solve life’s problems.

B. Now Solomon gets *philosophical* on us.

C. Solomon is going to give us a detailed map to *all the dead end streets* in life.

   1. He’s writing about *how to live in a world of contradictions & seeming futility.*

D. Remember he had *all* the resources for *experimenting* to see if life was worth living.

   1. Before all of his experiments in ch.2 he thinks them through 1st.

E. His conclusions:

F. (13,14) It’s a heavy burden…*alone.*

   1. Slide17a Life can be a heavy burden…Alone. *That’s why we need to take our cares & concerns to Jesus who makes burdens light.*
G. (15) Not everything can be changed.

1. NLT What is wrong cannot be made right. What is missing cannot be recovered. MSG Life's a corkscrew that can't be straightened, A minus that won't add up.

2. The past can't always be changed & it's foolish to fret over what you might have done.

3. Slide17b Remember however God can straighten the twisted & supply what’s lacking.
   a) He won’t change the past, but He can change the way the past affects us.
   b) Slide18 Is your past an iceberg that sinks you, or an anchor that hinders you, or a rudder that guides you forward?

H. Slide19 (16-18) If you go through life looking for explanations on everything you’ll have 2 frustrations:

1. Explanations do not exist for everything. [And even if God did show you why, you probably still wouldn’t understand]

2. God has ordained people to live by promises not explanations, by faith & not by sight.
   a) Jn. 20:9 Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

I. Not only did this wisest of men not find all the answers he was seeking…they only added to his difficulties (grief & sorrow).

1. Knowledge can increase sorrow, IF you leave out the God of Wisdom & the Wisdom of God.