

1. Get Acquainted: Icebreaker -

- What is something you wanted with all your heart believing that if you got it, owned it, made a friend with it, spent time with it, knew it, had it, won it, married it, then you would be “somebody”?

2. Worship: Worship in Silence. We are desperate for silence.

Start with 45 seconds of silence encouraging each person to ask Holy Spirit to help them worship Father, Holy Spirit and Jesus in a special way during this time of silence. Then read these Psalms stopping for 20 to 30 seconds at each break to just be silent and listen to Holy Spirit. Each Psalm is broken into 3 sections so ask someone in your group to read the section wait 20 to 30 seconds and read the next and so on.

Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.¹

³ He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,³

I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely⁴ goodness and mercy⁵ shall follow me

all the days of my life, and I shall dwell⁶ in the house of the LORD forever.⁷

My Help Comes from the Lord

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

² My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

³ He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ Behold, he who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade on your right
hand.

⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.

⁷ The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.

⁸ The LORD will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and forevermore.

3. Kingdom Centered Prayer:

YOU CAN PRAY WITH US...

1. Worship the LORD as the Judge of all – all things, all people, and all of our actions. Praise Him, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for His sole authority, the Holy Sovereign over all
2. How have you lived as if you are not accountable, as if you'll never have to settle accounts with your Maker? Confess your pride and unbelief to Jesus, asking Him to forgive you *and* bring you back to reality.
3. Give thanks to Jesus for how He is the opposite of all vanity, and for His work to save us from being lost. Thank Him for being solid (vs. vanity) *and dispelling the obscurity of death and hell by His death and resurrection.*
4. Who do you know that lives pretty much as if they are lost in the fog? Pray for them, asking the Lord to help them, to penetrate their blindness and help them find their meaning in Christ.
5. Ask the Holy Spirit to grow in you His humility and wisdom. Pray that He would help you shed the vanity of the things of this life that don't matter, *and that you would grow in your pursuit of the LORD and His wisdom.*

4. Sermon Reflection:

Proclamation of God's Word

Text: Ecclesiastes 1:1-11; 12:8, 13-14 (ESV)

Title: Wisdom of Ecclesiastes: Living Life Backwards **Teacher:** Tim Rice

1:1 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. ³ What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? ⁴ A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. ⁵ The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises. ⁶ The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. ⁷ All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. ⁸ All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. ⁹ What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. ¹⁰ Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us. ¹¹ There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after. ... 12:8 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity. ... ¹³ The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Introduction: Give an example of how you start with the end in mind.

Example:

Plans for a new home – Picture of the end

Desire to be a Dr or Lawyer – grades in Middle School matter

Desire to have a family – marry a woman who wants to have kids

Start at the End –

- How difficult is it for you to keep the end in mind and not get lost in the dailies?
- Creation, Fall, Redemption –
 - Do you tend to be naïve act like we are in the garden of goodness?
 - Do you tend to be morose and are possessed by the darkness in the world and in you?
 - Or do you live in light of the joy in Jesus' work that our eternity is in heaven with Father, Holy Spirit and Jesus?
- How has your life proved to you that we need "OUR MAKER" more than what he made?

Eugene Peterson, 5 Smooth Stones: "Unlike the animals, who seem quite content to simply be themselves, we humans are always looking for ways to be more than or other than what we find ourselves to be. We explore the countryside for excitement, search our souls for meaning, shop the world for pleasure. We try this. Then we try that. The usual fields of endeavor are money, sex, power, adventure, and knowledge. *[God's] task is to expose our total incapacity to find the meaning and completion of our lives on our own.* And Ecclesiastes functions not as a meal but as a bath. It is not nourishment; it is cleansing. It is repentance. It is purging. We read Ecclesiastes to get scrubbed clean from illusion and sentiment, from ideas that are idolatrous and feelings that cloy. It is an exposé and rejection of every arrogant and ignorant expectation that we can live our lives by ourselves on our own terms."

Vanity of Vanities – All is made by God. All point to God. All is NOT GOD.

- Vanity means Vapor
 - Fleeting: How have you found "stuff" to have a fleeting return?
 - Illusive: How have you found "joy in the stuff of God" illusive?
 - Obscure: How is your pursuit of happiness obscured by the offer of "stuff"?
- Vanity of Vanities: How does pursuing affect:
 - Your Identity
 - Your relationships
 - Your Calling and Mission

Holy of Holies – Glory and Grace

- Why can only Jesus give us true satisfaction
- What is your favorite part of being a Christian regarding:
 - Your identity, Relationships and Calling
- How does the thickness or weight of God displace the fog or vapor of all His competitors?

5. **Mission:** Listening as Mission. Questions your gift. Reflection as Evangelism.

7,655,957,369 People in the world in 2018 and NOT ONE OF THEM WANTED TO HEAR MY TESTIMONY OR YOURS! Growing up in a Christian Culture, I surmised that I was supposed to “share my testimony” so non-believers would come to know, love and believe in Jesus. Problem: none of them wanted to listen to my testimony and most wanted to talk about anything other than faith, belief, life after..., God, salvation, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Heaven, Hell. So what to do. What to do. During my 40s I met a guy, Al Dayhoff, he told me to let them go first and listen. “Consider their story more important than your own” and they will in turn ask to hear yours after they have shared theirs. And Al was right.

It was like how you get into Chili’s first. You get to the first door and open it for the folks who got there the same time you did. They say thank you and go in front of you only to realize that at the second door they now have to hold it for you and bingo, bango, bongo, you go in ahead of them. Let others go first and they will then demand your story after they share theirs. Amazing.

So now you can be people’s “Jesus guy” or “Life-After Guy”. It works like this. Most folks have “people”. You know, “their” lawyer, “their” lawn man, “their” mechanic. Truth is they are not really “theirs”. They actually share them with lots of folks. But what most don’t have is their very own “Jesus Guy” or “Eternity Guy”. So I offer to be that for folks and say you can call any time and ask any question but the odds are I won’t know the answer but can find out for you in short order. Most folks love it! All our friends have questions about Jesus, the church, life after, eternity, heaven and hell so to offer to be their go to is pretty darn terrific.

So first thing I do is ask the Al Dayhoff questions promising not to interrupt except to ask a question for clarification. Then I will write up the questions and their answers so that if they die I promise that I will go to their home and read to their family “what they believed”. It is great fun. When I meet with them and read their thoughts back to them, they hate their answers and feel that they are in “eternal trouble”. I then get to share with them the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Many fall into Jesus like he is their hammock on a spring day.

Here are Al’s questions:

- Where do you think the world came from?
- What do you believe about God?
- What do you believe about Jesus?
- What do you think happens after we die?
 - Bonus Question: If you were to die tonight and stand before God what would you give as a reason He should let you into His Heaven?
- If you could ask God one thing what would it be?

Then I write it up and off we go.

So find a friend this week and ask if you can do a spiritual interest survey. Ask the 5 questions and report back to them. I have found they convert themselves by their own answers.