

Lesson 1 — “Life Is Like a Breath”

Text: Ecclesiastes 1:1–11

Main Idea: Life doesn’t last forever, so we should enjoy every day God gives us and live for him.

Key Memory Verse: “Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 1:2 ESV)

The Story Explained

1. Who Is “the Teacher”?

A long time ago, a very wise man wanted to tell people what he had learned about life. The Bible calls him “the Teacher.”

He may have been like King Solomon, who was very wise and rich. The Teacher had seen everything—fun times, hard times, good days, and bad days.

He wanted to help people understand what really matters. So he wrote a book called “Ecclesiastes.”

2. What Does “Meaningless” Mean?

The first thing the Teacher says sounds a little sad:

“Everything is meaningless!”

But the word “meaningless” really comes from a Hebrew word that means “breath.”

Think about when it’s cold outside. You breathe out, and you see a tiny cloud in the air. Then—poof!—it disappears.

That’s what life is like. Our days come and go very fast, just like that little puff of breath.

So the Teacher doesn’t mean life is bad. He’s saying life goes by quickly, so don’t waste it!

3. Working Hard but Getting Tired (v. 3)

The Teacher asks, “What do people get for all their hard work?”

He had watched people work all day, every day—planting crops, building houses, making money—and he wondered what it all added up to.

He saw that we spend so much time trying to get “more.” But in the end, we can’t take any of it with us when we die.

It’s like working hard to build a giant sandcastle at the beach. When the waves come, it washes away. That’s what life is like when we forget God.

4. God’s World Keeps Spinning (vv. 4–7)

The Teacher looked around and saw that the world kept going, even when people came and went:

- The sun rises and sets every day.
- The wind blows north and south and all around again.
- The rivers keep flowing into the sea, but the sea never fills up.

Everything in nature keeps moving, following the plan God made. The world doesn’t stop when people die.

The Teacher realized that God’s world is big and steady—and we are small and short-lived.

5. “I’m Tired of It All!” (v. 8)

The Teacher said, “Everything is wearisome.” That means life can feel like a lot of work!

People keep seeing new things and hearing new things, but they still aren’t happy for long.

Think about toys. You might really want a new toy. You play with it for a while, but then you get bored and want another one.

The Teacher says grown-ups do the same thing! We always want more.

God wants us to remember that only he can fill our hearts with joy that lasts.

6. “Nothing Is Really New” (vv. 9–10)

The Teacher said, “There’s nothing new under the sun.”

That means people keep doing the same kinds of things, over and over.

Sure, we have new stuff—phones, cars, computers—but people are still the same. We still want to be happy, safe, and loved.

The Teacher saw that even though the world looks new, the human heart hasn’t changed.

7. “People Forget So Quickly” (v. 11)

The Teacher ended this part by saying that people don’t remember those who lived before, and someday others won’t remember us either.

That sounds sad—but it helps us see the truth: we aren’t here forever.

So instead of trying to be “famous,” we should try to live in a way that makes God smile.

We might not be remembered on earth, but God never forgets his children.

What the Teacher Learned

The Teacher wasn’t being grumpy—he was being honest. He wanted us to know the truth:

Life goes by fast. The world is big. We can’t control everything.

But that’s not bad news—it’s good news!

Because we don’t have to control everything. God is in charge, and we can trust him.

The Teacher wants us to stop chasing stuff that doesn’t last and start enjoying the things God gives us—family, friends, food, laughter, and love.

He wants us to wake up each morning and say, “Thank you, God, for this day. Help me use it well.”

Applications

1. Life Is Short—Use It for Good

God gives each of us time—some days, some years—to do good things. Don’t waste your time doing wrong or being mean. Help people. Love your family. Pray. Learn about God. Psalm 39 says life is like a breath—here for a moment, then gone. So make your breath count!

2. The World Keeps Going Because of God

The sun rises, the wind blows, the rivers flow—all because God made them that way. You don’t have to worry about keeping the world spinning. God does that! When you see a sunrise or a storm, remember: God is powerful, and he keeps everything working just right. If he can run the world, he can take care of {you}.

3. More Stuff Won't Make You Happy

The Teacher said our eyes and ears never get enough. That means we always want more—more toys, more screen time, more fun. But when we finally get what we wanted, we still want something else! Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 6: “Don’t store up treasures on earth.” Real happiness comes from loving God and being thankful, not from having {more things}.

4. God Makes Life Special

Sometimes life feels boring—school, chores, bedtime, repeat. But when you do those things with a good heart, it makes God happy. You can turn every day into worship by doing your best and being kind. Colossians 3:23 says, “Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord.” So even washing dishes can make God smile!

Discussion Questions

1. When you breathe out on a cold day, what happens to your breath? How is that like life?
2. What’s something that never seems to end—like the sun rising or the ocean waves coming in?
3. Why do you think people always want more toys or new things?
4. What’s one way you can enjoy the life God gave you today?
5. How does it make you feel to know that God remembers you even when others forget?
6. What can you do this week to thank God for the time he’s given you?