

# Life Under the Sun

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon contrasts life under the sun, which is empty and meaningless, with life in the sun, which is rich and fulfilling, and encourages listeners to choose the latter by living a life that pleases God.*

**Duration:** 32:01

**Scripture:** 1 John 5:1

**Topics:** "Vanity Of Life", "Gods Purpose"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Ecclesiastes and the perspective of King Solomon as he reflects on his life. Solomon had achieved great success and experienced everything life had to offer, but he ultimately found it empty and unfulfilling. He realized that all his labor and accomplishments were in vain. The preacher emphasizes the phrase 'under the sun,' which represents life on a human level, devoid of God's purposes. The sermon encourages the audience to read and study the book of Ecclesiastes to gain insights into the vanity and emptiness of a life lived apart from God.

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## Transcript

Let's turn in our Bibles to 1st John, chapter 5. Go to Revelation and then go left a couple of books. 1st John, chapter 5, through verse 13, 1 through 13. I'll read the first, the odd-numbered verses.

Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the even-numbered verses, and so we stand as we read the Word of God. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

By this we know that we love the children of God. When we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not grievous.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world and this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God. This is he that came by water and blood even Jesus Christ not by water only but by water and blood and it is the Spirit that beareth witness because the Spirit is true.

For there are three that bear record in heaven the Father the Word and the Holy Spirit and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth the Spirit the water and the blood and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men the witness of God is greater for this is the witness of God

which he hath testified of his Son.

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. He that believeth not God hath made him a liar because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record that God has given to us eternal life and this life is in the Son.

He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life and that you might believe on the name of the Son of God.

Let's pray. Father we are so thankful for that life that we have in Christ Jesus. The life that is in the Son.

Father we pray that this day you'll help us to understand the difference between life under the Son and life in the Son. And may we come to know Lord the richness of that relationship that is possible for us to have with you because of your Son. Bless the study of the Word today Lord.

Open our hearts now that you might be able to speak to each of us Lord through the Word. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen. As we are journeying through the Bible on Sundays we've come now this week to the book of Ecclesiastes.

We plan to take Ecclesiastes in three Sundays. So four chapters a week for the next three weeks as we go through Ecclesiastes. And I'm sure that you're going to find this a very fascinating book and one that gives us great and rich insights into life itself and into the vanity and the emptiness of a life that is lived apart from the purposes of God.

So read over the first four chapters of Ecclesiastes. Join with us tonight as we begin our study through this book of Ecclesiastes. This morning we'd like to draw your attention to the first chapter verse 14.

Where Solomon here declares, I have seen all of the works that are done under the sun and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit. This phrase under the sun, life on the human level. Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes Solomon is going to use this phrase life under the sun many times.

Solomon wrote this book of Ecclesiastes when he was an old man. He had had the opportunity to observe life from the top. He was the richest man in the world.

The daily supply of food that was necessary to feed his household and servants was 150 bushels of flour every day, 300 bushels of grain, 10 prime beef, 20 commercial beef, a hundred sheep beside the deer, the roebucks and the gazelles and the fat fowl. Every day needed that just to supply the needs of the household. He had lived life to the fullest.

He testified of himself, whatever my eyes desired I kept not from them. I withheld not from my heart any joy. He had done it all.

And then he asked, what can a man do who comes after me that is more than what I have already done? Having seen it all, having done it all, he's now coming to the end of the road. He's looking back over his life. He realized that he lived life at its best under the sun.

And yet he concluded that it had left him empty, unfulfilled and frustrated. He said, I have seen everything that is done under the sun and all is vanity and vexation of spirit. It's all empty.

It seems like we go through seasons of life. The dream world of early childhood. Life is fun and games.

Chuck E. Cheese's and Toys R Us. Birthdays and Christmas with it seems like eons of time between them. And then we go into grade school, the beginning of true socialization, no longer just parents and doting grandparents, but other children, rivalries, choosing friends, minor spats, no longer just fun and games, but reading, writing and arithmetic.

And then on into high school and college. And here's where we begin our dreams for the future. What we want to be or what we want to accomplish in life.

We have the feeling of immortality. Like we've got forever to do it. No real thought of death or dying.

Choices, many choices that will affect and influence our future, either good or bad. And then on into the 20s. College behind us.

And now the beginning of the pursuing after our dreams. You've got good health, a strong body, energy to spare, exuding with confidence as you begin the race. And for most, the choice of your life mate.

And then the 30s. You begin to see the potential of accomplishing your dreams, the raising of the family, the glorying in the accomplishment of your children. On into the 40s, your children are now graduating from high school and college.

As your goals are now being accomplished, you begin to discover that they have not brought to you the happiness and satisfaction that you thought that they would. You begin to question the choices that you made when you were young and immature. Did you choose the right career? You're not really satisfied or happy.

Maybe you should have chosen another career and maybe it's time for a career change. I've got half my life ahead of me and usually it's time when a person takes inventory. Half my life is gone.

I made choices. I've accomplished the goals. I'm not happy or satisfied.

Do I want to spend the rest of my life in the same way that I spent the first half of my life? Did I choose the right partner? And you think that you're still young. In your mind, you're very young. But your body is beginning to get a little bit out of shape.

And so maybe you should go to the gym and work out because you know that you can still get in shape. All you have to do is commit yourself to it. And many people then face what is known as the midlife crisis.

Then you get into the 50s. You notice that your parents are aging. You've lost some of your aunts and uncles.

The thought of death now occasionally crosses your mind. Some of your friends that you had in high school have actually died, but that's still very far off for you. You still have plenty of time.

Then you get into the 60s. The thoughts of retirement begin to come to your mind. What will I do when I retire? Am I ready to lay down the trowel and search for a rocking chair? Where is the contentment and sense of fulfillment that I thought I would have when I came to this stage of life? Have I achieved all of the goals? What will happen to me after I die? Well, I still have plenty of time to think about that.

We enter into the 70s. And finally, we begin to get a sense of our mortality. We know that at this point, our days are numbered.

The body functions begin to slow down, as do our steps. We no longer are interested in engaging in sports. We can be content to just sit and watch others pass the ball and catch it.

We begin to think very seriously of just how short the future is. And we finally have come to the realization of mortality. You recognize that the future has its time limits, and so you begin to look back on life and try to analyze life from this perspective.

That's where Solomon was when he wrote Ecclesiastes. He was at that stage of life where he had done it all, experienced it all, accomplished all of his goals and ambitions. And now realizing that time is about up, recognizing his mortality, he's looking back over life and he's seeking to analyze his life.

Life that he lived under the sun. And in verse 3 of chapter 1, he began to wonder what profit a man had for all of his labor under the sun. We often get the same kind of thoughts.

We used wisdom and prudence to develop our estate. We were careful with our pennies. We did not live lavishly.

We drove an extra mile to save five cents on a gallon of gas. We didn't drive the latest model car. We didn't have the biggest TV screen.

We were careful on how we spent our money so we could save it and have a sense of security in our later years. But we realized that we are soon going to die. We have more than what we needed.

The excess will be left to our heirs. And as I've watched these kids and their careless expenditures, they're going to go out and blow it all. Why did I work so hard to save it? Why did I scrimp? Why did I cut myself short? I saw a big beautiful motor home the other day and on the back it says, we're enjoying our kids inheritance.

And I sometimes wonder, you know, and that's where Solomon was. I've amassed this fortune and yet it's empty because I look at my son and I realize that he's foolish. He doesn't use good judgment.

He doesn't have good sense and to think that he's going to have it all and he's probably just going to go out and waste it. Solomon there in chapter two, verse 17, as he looked at all of this, he said, therefore, I hated life because the work that I wrought under the sun became grievous unto me for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. I hated all of my labor for which I'd taken under the sun because I'm going to leave it to those that will come after me and who knows if they will be wise or be fools.

Yet they're going to rule over all of my labor wherein I have labored and wherein I have showed myself to be wise and prudent under the sun. Solomon looking back sees that life sort of moves in cycles and sort of a monotonous kind of a cycle. He said one generation passes away, a new generation takes its place.

The sun rises, the sun sets, the rivers run into the sea and yet the sea isn't full. The waters evaporate into gas and are carried by the clouds back over the land where they are deposited to run in the rivers back into the sea. Life gets so tedious, don't it? And I mean, it's just that monotony, it seems, of life.

And then Ecclesiastes 1.9, he says, the thing that has been is that which shall be and that which has been is done is the same that shall be done. And there's nothing new under the sun, it just goes in cycles over

and over again. And so he began to search for things that were meaningful in his life under the sun.

He thought to know, to understand, to have wisdom. His father had told him to get wisdom, get understanding, and so he applied himself. He said, I gave my heart to know wisdom.

That must be the chief goal of life. And then 1 Kings 4.29, we read concerning Solomon, God gave Solomon exceeding great wisdom and understanding. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all of the children of the east country in Egypt.

For he was wiser than all men and his fame had gone out through all of the nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs, he composed a thousand and five songs. He spoke of trees from the cedar tree in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springs out of the wall.

He spoke also of beasts and of fowl and of creeping things and of fish. People came from all over the world to hear the wisdom of Solomon. This guy could talk to you about zoology, biology, or just any subject and full of wisdom.

But as Solomon now looks at his wisdom, he found that it also was empty and meaningless. For now, at the time of death, he wrote, I saw that wisdom excels folly as far as light excels darkness. And yet I observed that death comes to the wise and to the fool.

Then I said in my heart, as it happens to the fool, it will happen to me. So how was I more wise? I said in my heart, this also is vanity. For how does a wise man die just like a fool? Therefore, I hated life because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

So what did all of my wisdom do for me? Here I am at death's door and I'm going to die just like a fool. All of the wisdom that I've amassed, what value is it now? It may be that you are seeking to find meaning and satisfaction in life under the sun. But take a page out of Solomon's book.

You'll never find true fulfillment in life under the sun. God did not intend that we should just know life under the sun. He thought maybe he could find it in wealth, that that would bring him satisfaction.

But yet he had wealth above all that were before him. But now he hates the riches because he's going to leave them to his foolish son. God has ordained that true life is not found under the sun.

S-U-N. But true life is discovered in the sun. S-O-N.

As we read in our scripture reading in 1st John 5, this is the record. God has given to us eternal life. And this life is in the sun.

And he who has the son of God has life. Jesus said, I've come that you might have life and that more abundantly. Real life is more than just breathing and eating.

There are people that do that every day, but they don't have a clue as to what real life is all about. Paul said if a person was just living for pleasure, they were actually dead while they were still alive. You remember one day that rich young ruler came running up to Jesus, fell on his knees before him and said, good master, what good thing must I do to inherit this age abiding life? He had watched Jesus.

He had seen that Jesus had a quality of life that exceeded anything he had yet experienced with all of his riches and youth and so forth. Yet here's a man who has a quality of life. There's a peace that is there.

There's a assurance that is there. There's a joy that is there. Things that I have not yet experienced with all of my money and with all of my position.

And thus he comes to Jesus seeking the secret of this age abiding life. In the 17th chapter of John, John records for us the prayer that Jesus prayed the night that he was betrayed when he said, father, the hour has come. Glorify your son that your son may also glorify you.

You have given him power over all mankind that he should give eternal life, age abiding life to as many as you have given him. And this is life eternal that they might know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Living in fellowship with God, that's where life really exists.

It isn't life under the sun. It's life in the sun. Of course, we have John 3 16 with which we are all familiar.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever would believe in him would not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. And he who believes in him is not condemned.

But he who believes not in him is condemned already. Life under the sun, no hope, no future. It's vain, it's empty.

Whereas life under the sun is empty and unfulfilling, life in the sun is total fulfillment. It all goes back to the purpose of your existence. When God created man, what was God's purpose? When God created you, what was his purpose for your existence? We're told in Revelation chapter 4 that the purpose of God for our creation is that he might be pleased with us.

And for his pleasure you were and are created. Now if that is basic, if that's the very basic purpose of your existence, is to bring God pleasure. Then that would mean that if you are living for your own pleasure, you're missing the purpose of your existence.

And no wonder you feel when you're through with the experience, you feel empty. You feel like life has to be something more. You start looking for the next adventure or the next goal.

Because having satisfied the goal, you find that it didn't do for you what you thought it was going to do. It didn't bring you that sense of fulfillment that you thought you would have. And so the quest, the search.

And so life under the sun is a constant quest and search. And it always comes up empty, empty. Everything is empty.

I'm frustrated. Whereas life in the sun, if you will live your life to please God, then you'll find that your life will be rich. It's very fulfilling.

It's very satisfying. Paul the apostle said, for me to live is Christ. And then to die, well, that's gain.

What a contrast between the end of Solomon's life, lived under the sun, and the end of Paul the apostle's life, lived in the sun. As Paul came to the end of the road, he's now ready to face the executioner. The Roman government under Nero will soon sever his head from his body.

And so Paul writes, the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course.

And I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, our righteous judge shall give to me. And not only to me, but to all of those that love his appearing.

What a contrast. What a difference. The person who lives his life under the sun, pursuing his own goals and ambitions, living for pleasure, ends up empty, cynical, hating life.

Whereas that one who has dedicated his life to Jesus Christ, to serve the Lord in whatever capacity he might desire that I serve him. When you come to the end of the road, it's rich. It's been full.

It is so satisfying. And you take that next step on into the presence of the Lord. Life in the sun, life under the sun.

It's one or the other. Today you are living your life under the sun or life in the sun. And it's your choice.

The one will end as did Solomon with cynicism and emptiness. The other will end in glory with our Lord throughout eternity. What will it be? Your choice.

Father, how we thank you for that rich, full, abundant life that you have given to us in Christ Jesus. Lord, we do pray that today we might stop and analyze our life. Am I living, Lord, the life that pleases you? Or am I living, Lord, to please myself? Help us, Lord, to in analyzing things, to make the right decisions and the right choices.

Not to live for just now life under the sun, which will one day quickly come to an end. But may we live that life in the sun that never ends. And enjoy, Lord, forever life in the kingdom of God.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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