

Series - Jesus is The Answer

Date/s - 26 Nov 2017

Topic - Purpose - What is the Meaning of Life?

Speaker/s - Pastor Ernie Song

**Welcome** [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

[www.thesource4ym.com/games/](http://www.thesource4ym.com/games/)

[www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html) < [go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS](#) >

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**Worship** [15 min]

You may select songs like “You You Are God”, “When I Survey”, “I Offer My Life” or “Worthy Of It All”.

**Spiritual Objectives**

At the end of the cell discussion, cell members will:

- Learn that the pursuits of pleasure, wisdom and hard work are meaningless;
- Understand that the meaning of life is found in a personal relationship with Christ; and
- Commit to align our priorities to God’s will and fulfil our life purpose.

**Word** [45 min]

Pastor Ernie started his sermon by sharing how scores of people- men, especially - experience what psychologist term as a “mid-life crisis” between the ages of forty to sixty. This is a phase where people are triggered to re-evaluate their lives thus far; for many, it may lead to feelings of anxiety and depression and drastic life changes. Pastor Ernie also shared that no matter our status in life, illness and the winds of unexpected sorrow will strike all at some point or another. Amidst the troubles of this life, we will need to find purpose and meaning.

Pastor Ernie then taught from the book of Ecclesiastes, concerning one man’s search for the “meaning” of life. We see the Teacher (Qohelet) of Ecclesiastes (whom scholars widely regard as Solomon), submitting himself to a thought experiment in his quest to find the answer to this question.

First, the Teacher tested himself with pleasure (Ecc 2:1-11). Pastor Ernie highlighted how he did not deny himself “what is eyes desired”, but acquired all kinds of pleasures ranging from amusement, to women, to possessions. He even became the richest person in history! Yet, at the end, the Teacher considered all pleasure was vanity, and “a striving after the wind”.

Second, the Teacher turned to wisdom. This could broadly encompass morality, and good works. Pastor Ernie shared that the Teacher’s conclusions about wisdom is that even the search for such is pointless. Ecc 1:18- “For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.” And, Ecc 2:16 – “For of the wise as of the fool, there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool!”

Third, the Teacher explored if work is the answer to life’s meaning. Once again, he arrives at the same conclusion that hard work too is an exercise in futility – “Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun” (Ecc 2:11). Pastor Ernie also brought up Ecc 2:21- “when one dies, the work is left to someone else, who did not toil for it.” This too, is a tragedy.

Pastor Ernie then concluded that the meaning of Life is a Person. He expounded from a short word study on John 1:1, sharing that the root word of the “Word” used in that context referred to a Person. That Person is Jesus Christ. Because

our meaning is found in Jesus, we can live purposeful lives even amidst tragedies and vicissitudes of life, because our meaning is not anchored in our circumstances, but in a constant and unchanging Person.

### Discussion Questions

1. **The first thought experiment in Ecclesiastes presents what life is like “under the sun” where life is reduced to nothing more than what our five senses apprehend, i.e., pleasures. Think about how this reduction is, to a large extent, the reality of modern culture. We are encouraged to relentlessly pursue the pleasures of our sensory, bodily existence. Share some ways that you see this pleasure-seeking, God-denying lifestyle being played out in the media and in major trends of society. What are some lies that are implicit in these messages?** [10 min]

**Leader’s Notes:** *This is a recap and ice-breaking question for members to recognize how the pleasure seeking aspect of Ecclesiastes is not very different from modern society. Some lies held out about pleasures is that **all we have are the things we could see, feel, touch, smell and hear, and pleasures have no consequences, and are harmless.** Pastor Ernie also shared cautionary tales from the lives of various famous and wealthy celebrities (e.g., Michael Jackson), who realized that at the peak of their fame and fortune that pleasures do not satisfy but instead leave us with dread.*

*We must recall that there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9). The Teacher’s findings though dated long time ago, his thought experiments are still relevant and practical for us who live in the twenty-first century. In a sense, the Teacher, on behalf of us all, explores and tests the various concepts that life holds out as its meaning of life, and shows us how these things are empty promises.*

2. **Pastor Ernie shared from the book of Ecclesiastes how the pursuits of morality and hard work, for their own sake, will not satisfy us. How are you tempted to find meaning in being a good person, or in being a hard worker?** [10 min]

**Leader’s Notes:** *A relate question. Have members share and discuss what could be some common examples of how morality and hard work are being extolled as supreme virtues in our society. For example, Pastor Ernie shared how a person’s family can become his meaning of life, especially in the context of parent-child relationships. This “idol” will let us down eventually, when our children are no longer around, or do not turn out the way we want them to be.*

*This question allows members to share deeper about their personal struggles in balancing these legitimate pursuits, and pray for each other. The appropriate conclusion is that while morality and hard work are not wrong per se and are gifts from God, they are enough to satisfy our hearts, if they are all of what our existence will ever be. We were made for something –Someone – greater.*

3. **Pastor Ernie shared how the meaning of life is ultimately found in a Person. Similarly, read and meditate on John 17:3 “This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent”. Take some time to reflect on what it means to find meaning in our relationship with Jesus.** [10 min]

**Leader’s Notes:** *A reflect question for members to reappraise their own lives in light of this truth, as defined by God Himself. The answer to the meaning of life is a personal relationship with Jesus. Without it, our existence is merely a lonely, brief and meaningless breath in the wind. Our meaning of life is not a goal to achieve, nor a role, a task, a status or a privilege, but a journey of increasing intimacy of walking with our personal Lord and Saviour.*

Also, read Galatians 2:20-21 “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Only God can help to uproot the idols in our heart, through a personal encounter of His love for us. Members are encouraged to share from their personal experiences on the pitfalls of chasing after these false idols, instead of seeking God. Leaders can take some time to lead the group in a time of corporate prayer, to thank Him for His mercy that He alone has the power to redeem our idolization of pleasure, wisdom or work.

4. **Pastor Ernie concluded with his sharing on the life of the Apostle Peter, and how he was a transformed man after his life purpose was changed after he was restored by Christ. Living for Christ became his, and the other disciples’ life purpose and driving force. What are some practical ways you can commit to re-order your life’s priorities to align with this truth?** [10 min]

**Leader’s Notes:** This is a response question. Members can also be led to take an inventory of their time, to consider if there are any other idols (be it pleasures, wisdom or work) which they have allowed to become futile and fleeting substitutes for finding life apart from God. Leaders may also get members to break into small groups to share more and if time permits and to pray for one another for specific action steps that they can commit to.

### **Works** [10 min]

Let’s pray:

1. Deep down in our hearts, we would acknowledge that the meaning of life is found in Lord Jesus alone. And out of this abiding in Him, we will produce lasting fruits.

### **Announcements**

#### 1. **Love Out Loud (Christmas gift market)**

Sundays, 10 Dec & 17 Dec | 10.30am - 2pm | Fellowship Atrium

This Christmas, love someone in your home, workplace, neighbourhood or on the streets with a gift!

The Gift Market features a thoughtfully curated mix of vendors offering Christ-centered gift items. Let God’s love be revealed as you give cheerfully this Christmas!