

Our Only Hope

Master copy- Jim

Copy 1 – Sound Booth

Copy 2- Worship leader

SLIDE 1 Introduction (about ?? mins)

1. You'll notice in your bulletin today's very strange looking outline. Not much of an outline really! More of a sketch.
2. I have two purposes with those sketches, well three
3. Purpose one- A different way to keep you engaged in the outline. I know it looks like a lot, but it's not.
4. Purpose two- If your kids get antsy or bored give 'em a pen or pencil and let them color in the hearts- sort of like a coloring book.
5. Purpose three- I guess- If you get antsy or bored...you can color it in too.
6. You'll notice that all of the hearts but the last one has a hole in it.
7. And that's what we are talking about this morning- that hole in our heart.
8. It's not a real of course. But, sometimes we feel like we have something missing.

SLIDE 2 Jelly Donut (about ?? mins)

1. Sometimes our hearts are like a jelly filled donut, without the jelly.

SLIDE 3 Reeses (about ?? mins)

1. Or a Reese's Candy bar without the peanut butter. You get the picture.
2. And while these are fun little pics to look at, these are serious issues that cause us pain and grief in life when we realize the emptiness we have in our heart.

SLIDE 4 Heart with Hole (about ?? mins)

1. I think you know the feeling of this pain and grief. It's not a physical pain, but an aching right here. It feels physical.
2. You feel this pain when you stop long enough to reflect on your life and realize that something is missing. It's a longing that's gone unfilled. This can happen to both unBelievers in Jesus and Believers.
3. Unfortunately, as Believers, we are not immune from this.
4. Sometimes in the middle of the night when you are laying there and realize you've wasted time by focusing on the wrong

things. Or, that you could have done better with your time.

5. You realize you've wasted your time filling that longing in your heart with the wrong thing.
6. You filled your heart with what you thought mattered most only to realize it didn't matter at all.
7. That is where Solomon, the author of Ecclesiastes, finds himself as he writes the book.
8. He is a man at the end of his life, reflecting on his accomplishments, his relationships, his efforts, all the great things he's done, and he suddenly realizes he has missed it.
9. He still has a hole in his heart longing to be filled. He's not satisfied with all that he has done.

SLIDE 5 Scripture Passage (about 3 mins)

1. As you open up to Ecclesiastes 3:9-14 let me give you a little background.
2. Written probably about 900 to 1000 years before Christ, Solomon was King of Israel for about **TBD** years- from a young age.

3. If you were to read the entire book of Ecclesiastes and other parts of the Old Testament, you'd find that Solomon was both wise and foolish. Perhaps the wisest and the most foolish.
4. And Solomon admits to this foolishness in this book.
5. Listen to his words as he talks to us from nearly 3000 years ago about his reflection on his life.
6. READ Ecclesiastes 3:9-14

⁹What do workers gain from their toil? ¹⁰ I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. ¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. ¹² I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. ¹³ That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. ¹⁴ I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him

7. You can almost hear him saying: God made you to be joyful. To be fulfilled. To be filled up.
8. He gave you important work to do and wants you to enjoy this life- it is a gift from Him.
9. Solomon in this book tells us to enjoy the life God has given to us. But, the underlying message is also one of warning: If we don't correctly fill that eternal longing in our heart, this life with all of it's highs and lows, is all we have. It can feel sort of hopeless.
10. Our life becomes meaningless if all we do is enjoy it without an eternal view of what we're doing.
11. So, were going to spend the next few minutes on this passage and some others in Ecclesiastes seeing what God intended for us to do with that hole in our heart, and how we fill it with other things.
12. Again, even as Believers we fall into the trap of filling that hole in our heart with the trappings of this life.

SLIDE 6 (1) Made for Eternity (Eccl 3:11)

1. Let's fill in that first heart.
2. Somewhere in his life Solomon realizes people were made for eternity. And he reflects on that thought here.
3. Re-read 3:11... *He has also set eternity in the human heart.*
4. God intentionally made us with a longing to think eternally. To have "a forever" mentality about our work.
5. If you are real honest with yourself, you do want your life to count. To make a difference.
6. God gave that to you. That is not a random thought that comes to you. That longing for eternal significance is built into us from birth. By design. It is a gift!
7. But, look at the rest of v11... "*yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*"
8. You see God put this longing in us but did not give us the ability to have it auto-filled with what really matters.
9. (NEED Scripture passage about this).

10. Instead, God allows us to choose what we want to fill that hole. V10- "*the burden God has laid on the human race.*"
11. So, God gives us this desire to act eternally, to be joyful in our existence, and then let's us decide how to fill it. It is our duty, our work, to fill that hole.
12. He does not hide the answer from us, but simply let's us decide how to fill that yearning we have in our heart.
13. Let's go through some of the answers we often come up with to fill in that yearning for existence.

SLIDE 7 (2) Job or Career (Eccl 4:4-6)

1. Heart #2- We fill that gaping hole in our heart with our job. Our career. JOB or CAREER.
2. READ Eccl 4:4-6
3. God's word says, lazy is bad, verse 5, but being a workaholic with is no better. Just as bad. A chasing after the wind.
4. Listen I know a little bit about this one.
5. I am ashamed to admit that for much of my early years, I worked too much. Put too much emphasis on things that didn't matter.

6. It's been a constant struggle for me to get this right.
7. You see it's easy to fill that hole in your heart with job or career because it brings success and what we think is freedom.
8. But, job or career can become a cruel task master. It wasn't until I got let-go (fired) from not one job, but two, before I finally understood what God meant by filling in that hole with Him, not my career.

SLIDE 8 (3) Recognition (Eccl 4:16)

1. Let's jump down to heart #3.
RECOGNITION
2. Look at chapter 4 again, versus 13-16.
3. READ Eccl 4:13-16
4. Let's be honest here. It feels pretty good when we get recognized for our work, our accomplishments. Those accolades tickle our pride.
5. God is not speaking against recognition here, but he is warning that it is impossible to fill that desire for significance by counting on accolades or recognition from other people.

6. Eventually, like it says in verse 16, “those who came later were not pleased with the successor.” That is, eventually the new King was not liked by the people, either.
7. Eventually, the people who you look to impress will disappoint you, and that hole in your heart is not really filled at all. Your search for eternal significance that God put in you, is still unresolved.

SLIDE 9 (4) Money (Eccl 5:10)

1. Alright, sometimes in life we try to fill that hole in our heart with money or wealth. Things.
2. We are looking at Heart #4. MONEY
3. Look at what Solomon says about the meaningless pursuit of wealth.
4. READ Eccl 5:8-12
5. Pursuing wealth does three things:
6. First, creates a greed that is hard to break free from. V10 says “whoever loves money is never satisfied with his income.”
7. You never have enough if you use wealth to fill that eternal desire that’s in your heart.

8. Second, wealth makes you attractive to others who want what you got. You end up having to protect it, guard it, keep it safe.
9. V11 says, "As goods increase so do those who consume them."
10. You see, God is warning us, as your wealth increases, others want to help you spend it, consume it, and get more of it.
11. A final warning about money is from V12, "The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him NO sleep."
12. Money, more correctly, becomes a consuming enterprise to get more, keep people away from it, and shepherd it.
13. Now, I want to be clear God's word does not prohibit money or wealth. But there is plenty to say about love of money.
14. Need scripture passage....

SLIDE 10 (5) Family (Eccl 6:3)

1. Ok, Let's look at Heart #5.
2. You can label this as "Family" but off to the side write, "the good life."
3. The "good life" is however you might define it. It might be a large family.

4. The "good life" might be life in a good neighborhood.
5. It might be what your heart desires as a lifestyle.
6. Take a look at Eccl 6:1-6.
7. Solomon seems to be telling us, "look you have gathered around yourself your family, your stuff, your good name, your livelihood. But, it counts for nothing. It will all be destroyed."
8. Now, Solomon is not saying that family isn't important.
9. Instead he is reminding us that if you use your family, your good name, your livelihood as a means to fill that need for eternal significance, then you've missed it.
10. Because someday it all goes away, it returns back to dust.
11. Jesus himself reminds us of our destiny.
12. **READ Scripture passage...**
13. You see, if you look to your lifestyle as the thing to give you meaning in life- you are going to be very disappointed.

SLIDE 11 (6) Education (Eccl 9:11)

1. Alright, let's fill the hole in the Heart in #6 here. "Education"
2. Sometimes people try reach significance in life be gathering to themselves the world's wisdom.
3. Ok, so to be crystal clear on this. There is nothing wrong with educating yourself, either formally in a classroom, professional development, or through skills or career training.
4. God has given us the ability to learn. (Need Scripture passage).
5. But, when education becomes the thing that we try to use to fill in our need for eternal significance that God put inside of us, then we will be really disappointed.
6. READ Eccl 9:7-10- pretty dismal sounding
7. But, he's not done yet, Eccl 9:11
8. So, from Solomon's view, all the education in the world will not prevent you from ending up D E A D. Not a really happy conclusion.
9. Your educational level, your professional development, your skill set, will not fill in that emptiness we all feel at some point in our life. That emptiness that God put there.

10. I know this is pretty dismal message, but hang with me for a just a few minutes and it'll get better.

SLIDE 12 (7) Desire for Justice (Eccl 8:14)

1. One last heart filler for us.
2. Heart #7 is A Desire for Justice.
3. We want to fill in that eternal significance with seeing justice done.
4. Solomon was a man of justice.
TBD...Story about his judgement
5. He wanted justice to be served up to those who had done wrong.
6. Read with me, Eccl 8:14.
7. So, don't think justice is going to happen for you each time. This life is going to be unfair.
8. And because of that, Solomon goes on to state a conclusion about this lack of injustice in the world.
9. Read Eccl 8:15.
10. In other words, since you are not going to get justice in this life, the best you can do is enjoy life for as long as you live.
11. You see, through Solomon, God was saying to enjoy the life I am giving you.

Don't look for justice around every corner, on all issues. Justice to those who do wrong to you, or to others, is not going to fill in the eternal longing in your heart.

12. Justice is elusive and you'll never have it long enough to fill in that eternal gap.

Simply enjoy each day I have given to you.

13. Ok, but that's not the end of Ecclesiastes.

14. Solomon goes on like this for a few more chapters. And finally, he sums up this dreary and sometimes depressing book.

SLIDE 13 (8) Fear God ... (Eccl 12:13)

1. Here's what he says.

2. This is our last heart, and notice it does not have a hole in it.

3. Solomon says this in Eccl 12: 9-14.

4. "...here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

5. Keep in mind what Solomon declared way back there in chapter 3 verse 11. *"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."*

6. So, God put this longing in our heart for eternity. It's the way He designed us from the beginning. A yearning for something more significant than just job, recognition, money, family/the good life, education, or justice.
7. Turns out the only way to fulfill that yearning, to fill in that hole in our heart, is to honor God and keep His commands. Our hope in this life and for eternity, is in God.
8. And when you think of honoring God, you have to think of honoring the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

SLIDE 14 Jesus is Our Only Hope

1. You see, Our only hope in this life is through knowing Jesus as savior. You cannot fill that eternal longing in your heart with anything the world can offer. It's all meaningless.
2. Trying to find something man has to offer to bring you significance is like chasing the wind. You'll never catch it. Never.
3. And then one day as you look in the rearview mirror of life, you'll realize you missed it. Not only did you not enjoy life the

way God intended, but you missed serving God and still have that hole in your heart.

4. So, I want to ask you right now. As we close in prayer. Do you know Jesus as your only hope? Or, are you still counting on work, money, recognition or justice to bring you happiness?
5. I would ask you right now give your life to Christ if you don't know Him. Let Him fill in that hole in your heart.
6. And, if you're a Believer and you need to confess that you've filled that hole in your heart with something or someone other than Christ, confess it now.
7. Pray...