



SHADOW MOUNTAIN

LEADER

Packet

We do not have an outline this week.

As we continue our stand-alone series, you will notice more Red Notes than usual. Since this series does not have an accompanying sermon, we are providing you with plenty of content to lead your group through the lesson.

Getting Started

1. When you think of a *great* day, what comes to mind? Who is with you? What are you doing? How do you feel? Describe what it looks like for you to have a perfect day. **We are working to get our group thinking about what we enjoy and how life goes well for us. While there are challenges and pains in life, focusing on the large part of life that can be enjoyed is what we will be discussing throughout this lesson.**
2. In a broader sense, how do you know that your *life* is going well? What are the ingredients for a high-quality, purpose-driven existence? **You may have noticed that humans are preoccupied with **finding life**. Everywhere you go, in every situation, people are looking for the best life possible. We say it this way: "That's really living" or, "Life is good." We are in constant pursuit of a good life.**
3. Outside of following what the Bible teaches, how do people go about looking for the "good" life? Describe some non-biblical strategies. **Most times, a person will make choices that are illegal, immoral, unethical, or downright evil, in the pursuit of what they think will bring them more life. It sounds crazy, but it is, unfortunately, true most of the time.**

Going Deeper

1. King Solomon, the son of King David, did some research into the good life. Read the following verses and discuss what he found. The purpose of the book of Ecclesiastes is to tell us what happens to a man who looks for life apart from God. Solomon tried to find a good life in pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, and it wasn't there. Then in wealth, and it wasn't there. And then in business, and it wasn't there. He tried to find it in pleasures of all different kinds, and it wasn't there either. He always came up with this same conclusion: "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity," because *he was trying to find life apart from God.*

- a. Ecclesiastes 1:1, 2 The sub-themes of Ecclesiastes are that contentment cannot be found in human endeavors or material things, while wisdom and knowledge *alone* leave too many unanswered questions. This leads to a sense of hollowness.
- b. Ecclesiastes 5:10 King Solomon goes through a list of things he tried in seeking fulfillment: career achievements, materialism, alcohol, pleasure, even wisdom. His conclusion? All of it is "meaningless."
- c. Ecclesiastes 12:8 This verse is an echo from Ecclesiastes 1:2. It reminds us that Solomon found out **the hard way** that seeking after experiences or things, without the guidance and direction of God and His purposes, leads us to a dead end. Remember that Solomon began as a man poised for greatness. Both his wisdom and wealth were legendary in the ancient world. As the son of David and Israel's third king, he brought peace to the land and launched a massive building program. He began to backslide, however, when he took hundreds of foreign wives and concubines. Solomon **let their idolatry influence him** as he slipped further away from the one true God.
- d. Ecclesiastes 12:13 With its dire warnings and record of futility, Ecclesiastes could be a depressing book, except for its exhortation that true happiness can be found only in God. Written ten centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, the book of Ecclesiastes urges today's Christians to seek God first if they want to find purpose in their life.

2. Read John 1:4-5. What does this verse say about the person who gives life? Who is this person? Also, what does it say about those who live without Him (i.e., those who live in darkness)? There are four key words all the way through the Book of John: **life, light, truth, and love**. Life comes from God, and when it is revealed, it's called **light**. And that light is revealed through **truth** and through **love**. That's what the book of John teaches us: *Life is the real meaning that God wants us to have*. And how do we get that **life**? Through the light that God gives us. And what is that **light**? It's manifested through the **truth** of the Word of God, and through **love**.

Note: At this point in the lesson, it's important to pause and remember that the "good" life is an ever-shifting proposition. Historically, a person's measurement of what was good for them was quite different than what we might say is good today. We need a better measuring tool than our own internal compass to help us find what is truly good.

3. Read Jeremiah 29:11-29 and Matthew 10:18. How do these two passages give us a clue about how to pursue a good life? Describe a time when you started to realize and practice this in your own life. It might be a good idea to also look at Hebrews 13:8 to help the group reflect on the fact that goodness never changes in God's kingdom. He has determined what is good because He is good.

Note: It's as if the Bible is telling us, "The good life is not something we go and get from *something*. In order to have a good life, you've got to get it from *someone*... from the source of all life: God." **Bonus:** Read Psalm 36:9.

4. Read Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 as a group. When you think of the Word—Jesus Christ—being with God in the beginning, what kind of picture comes to mind? Tell your story of the way in which Jesus has given you life. In the first verse of his gospel, John goes back past John the Baptist, past Abraham, past Adam, and he says, "In the beginning was the Word..." He says to us, "This One of whom I speak is from eternity past. He is the eternal God." In a very real way, John 1:1 takes you back farther than Genesis 1:1 to tell you one truth: that Jesus—the real giver of life—is the eternal God who wants *real* life for you.

5. Now read Genesis 1:26. Think about the “us” in this verse. How does this verse illuminate the way in which God gives life and the way in which we can enjoy the good life? What do you notice about His relationship with Jesus (the Word)? In what way is your relationship with Jesus similar? Different? ***God is personal.*** Look back at John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word,” and it says, “...and the Word was with God.” The word “with” in this passage means ***face-to-face***. That tells us that Jesus Christ, who is from eternity, had *personal intimate fellowship* with God the Father. ***And this is a key indicator as to how a person is to experience the good life...in a personal relationship.***
6. Read John 1:10-11 and John 3:19. Paint a picture of a person living in darkness, resistant to Jesus’ love. ***Sadly, people don’t accept Jesus Christ because, deep down, they know that if they do, they will have to change. Before Christ, you and I were just like that. We didn’t want Jesus Christ coming into our lives. We didn’t want His life and His light because when the light shines, it exposes the darkness in all of us. Feeling exposed compels us toward change. At the very core of every sinful heart, men reject Jesus Christ because they don’t want to change. They love darkness rather than light. God revealed Himself, and He could go on shining that light into the hearts of men all over the world, but until those people come to the place where they’re willing to repent, turn from their ways, and say, “I will accept that life and that light,” the light cannot shine in their hearts.***

Applying the Message

1. When you think of Jesus (the Word), which of the four descriptors below feels like the way in which you most often think of Him? Perhaps a good way to connect with this question is to say, “When I think of Jesus, I think of...”
- Life
 - Light
 - Truth
 - Love
2. With that in mind, how does this awareness help you create an *eternal, unchanging, God-dependent lens* through which you view the challenges, successes, setbacks, and victories of your life? In the eternal scheme of things, how is God giving you a good life?