



# EVERYTHING UNDER THE ~~SUN~~ SON

Ron Pickell

***Everything Under the Sun Son – Participant’s Guide***

Author: Ron Pickell

Cover design: Claudia C. Pech Moguel

Page layout: Claudia C. Pech Moguel

Available at:

AdventSource

5120 Prescott Ave.

Lincoln, NE 68506

402.486.8800

[www.adventsource.org](http://www.adventsource.org)

© 2021 North American Division Corporation of  
Seventh-day Adventists

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or by any information storage retrieval system without the written permission of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN# 978-1-62909-913-2

# Introduction

*...is about the search for the meaning of life on planet earth. Qoheleth (Hebrew for teacher or critic) sums up human existence as life sucks and then you die!*

Interestingly enough, I have discovered over the years as a college chaplain that the book of Ecclesiastes has a warm place in students' hearts. I never really understood this until I faced some of my own life questions. Solomon's swan song is well fitted to the cynical young adult perspective—ancient themes for a good Coldplay song or U2's *Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*. But after reading and rereading Ecclesiastes and having my own narrow escape with death, I have come to understand something about this book that I never really got before. Ecclesiastes is an honest critique of life under the SUN missing clear assurance of an afterlife.

It's not that Solomon doesn't believe in God. It's more like he had a lot of questions that his current theology wasn't answering. He's actually right where many people find themselves in a world of so many inconsistencies. So many of our God questions get answers when we reflect deeply into God's revelation of Himself in Jesus. This is Solomon's problem. Solomon needs to meet God in Jesus Christ. The Apostles commented on their good fortune of learning about God in Christ that previous generations only understood opaquely—see I Peter 1:10-12.

Due to its straightforward and honest indictment of life outside of God's personal intervention in Christ, Ecclesiastes might be the book to begin with when reading through the Bible. It is traditionally grouped among the wisdom literature of the biblical canon along with the other works of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, and Song of Songs. In addition, the Apocrypha includes the Book of Wisdom and Sirach. Jesus referred to the three divisions of the Old Testament as "the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44). The wisdom literature was lumped in with the Psalms or Writings.

Many groupings today include Law, Prophets, History, and Wisdom. The Law lists what God requires, the Prophets show what God reinforces or reminds us of, the History

books serve as the timeline that groups all the books together, and the Wisdom literature is a reflection on how to think about life with God and its meaning.

This is why I am suggesting that Ecclesiastes should be at the beginning of any reading of the Bible or at least inserted right after the story of the fall of the human family in Genesis 3, since it describes life on planet earth as a result of sin in a closed system separated from God and the prospect of eternal death.

The Critic (Qoheleth) concludes that life under the sun is a vapor—a hopeless chasing after the wind. But what if Solomon had met Jesus and learned about the Gospel? What if he had been given a glimpse into God’s vision and purpose for the human family in the mission and ministry of Christ? How would life have appeared to him if he could have captured a view of life in the SON instead of the narrow, limited perspective of life under the SUN?

St. Augustine considers this very idea in the *The City of God* where he argues about the fleeting happiness of life in the city of man compared to the city of God. Like many of today’s philosophers and poets, the stoics claimed that given the proper balance of action and repose, one can achieve happiness in this life. But Augustine masterfully demolishes their arguments step by step, and, like Solomon of old, un-masks the many illusions that people down through the ages have maintained about the “good life.” His strongest argument is in the area of relationships. In a nutshell, Augustine argues, like Solomon, that relationships are the most important and valued experience in life under the sun, but even our cherished relationships disappoint as evidence for the good life at the thought of losing those we love through suffering or death.

Solomon tells the truth about life under the SUN. The illusions of the good life even for someone who had it all (his own assessment) were “*dust in the wind*,” to quote the song by Kansas. But what if there is more to life than living under the SUN? What if Augustine is right? What if Aslan is real and like the valiant Reepicheep in C. S. Lewis’ *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, a glorious life in Aslan’s land awaits us just beyond the surf of this world? What if our life under the SUN because of Jesus’ victory over sin and death is just the trailer and life in the SON was God’s intention all along? What if the *city of man* life is only the first leg of the journey on

to a *city of God* life as we pass through the portal of Jesus' resurrection?

This is what we want to consider in this Journey series. There have been many, many Bible study guides written for the book of Ecclesiastes, but this one is inviting us to re-think it from the perspective of life in the SON in place of life under the SUN as Solomon critiqued it. In this journey through Qoheleth's account of the meaning of life I want to challenge us to see this book from the new perspective as a bridge between the despair of the Old Testament trailing off in broken covenant after broken covenant and hopeless future outside of God's intervention into the bright light of a new agreement between God and the human family. From this new horizon God takes on human flesh and enters into a new covenant with Himself and Jesus on our behalf as the federal head of our species to save the human family from sin and death. He is the SUN SON or light of God coming into our world (John 1:4, 5), penetrating the dark, hopeless, and meaningless life lamented by wise king Solomon.

Did God provide Solomon a prism of this light when he wrote about "eternity being set in our hearts" (Ecclesiastes 3:11), "who knows if the spirit of man rises up" in death (Ecclesiastes 3:20), and "going to our eternal home" (Ecclesiastes 12:5)? Certainly, but outside of God's promise and provision in Christ, these too are more of a vapor of light compared to Solomon's overall assessment echoed in the phrase "no one knows the future and who can tell what is to come" (Ecclesiastes 8:7; 10:14). Solomon is right—outside of the SON "we still haven't found what we're looking for" (Bono) and never will without the SON of righteousness lighting the way!

---

Titles and  
Topics  
Covered in  
*Everything  
Under the  
SON*

Journey through Ecclesiastes doesn't follow a typical linear pattern from one chapter to the next as in "*round and round goes the wind*" (Ecclesiastes 1:6). Instead, we have opted for more of a thematic approach touching on the key criticisms of life under the SUN.

1. Life Meaning Under the SUN SON ..... 8
2. Wisdom Under the SUN SON ..... 12
3. Prosperity Under the SUN SON ..... 16
4. Time Under the SUN SON ..... 20

5. Justice Under the SUN SON.....	24
6. Relationships Under the SUN SON.....	28
7. Work Under the SUN SON.....	32
8. Balance Under the SUN SON.....	36
9. Fate Under the SUN SON.....	40
10. Judgement Under the SUN SON.....	44
11. Destiny Under the SUN SON.....	48
12. God Under the SUN SON.....	52

---

## Breaking Down *Journey*

*Journey* was created for larger weekly on or off campus meetings in a teaching format and small group discussion. The beginning story or illustration introduces the topic of study. ***Journey Together*** helps ease participants into the topic through ice-breaker related questions. ***Road Map*** is the main passage for discussion followed by questions that help draw out the topic. If you are leading *Journey*, feel free to depart from these as needed and come up with your own questions, while staying on track with the main direction of the study laid out in the leader's guide. ***My Story*** has been prepared as a continuation of the larger group meetings for smaller groups that meet during the week to check in with one another and reflect on how God is using *Journey* in their daily life. We recommend these groups be flexible in terms of location and meeting time. Also, the amount of questions are limited in the *My Story* section, allowing for more personal interactions and life application. ***Back Story*** is a helpful guide for those leading out in the *Journey Series* and is only included in the leader's book.

---

## Getting the most out of *Journey*

Here's what you're going to need for Everything Under the SUN SON.

- Good soil—An open and receptive heart
- Working the soil—Determination and diligence
- Hunger & thirst—Desire to follow God as He leads

We also strongly advise reading the entire book of Ecclesiastes since *Journey* only zeroes in on selected passages. Use this study guide for your group reading/discussion. The important thing is to really lean into Solomon's life critique. Let *Journey* guide you through his lament. In fact, set it aside if it's getting in the way of hearing the Teacher. Remember, Ecclesiastes is the real study, not *Journey*!

Best Practices: The five S's of hearing and discerning God's voice

- **Seek**—Pray for God to open up the passage for you. Is there a promise for you to claim, a sin to confess, a word for you to follow, an insight to share?
- **Soak**—Read the passage each day and write down any observations, thoughts, questions, connections, or anything God speaks to you about the passage.
- **Seal**—Seal God's word to you deep within your heart by taking some time to meditate on the most important truth to you this week. Ask God to open the deeper recesses of your heart to teach you what you need most for your life this week.
- **Script**—Journal or write if even a few lines, noting the ways that God spoke to you from the passage, your meditation, or our group time together. This will help you keep better track of God's voice and the way He is speaking through scripture.
- **Share**—Share with someone what you are learning from your time with God in Journey. As you share what you are learning, it will help drive God's word home to you even more and you will notice how God will use what He has revealed to you to bless others.

---

## *Journey* Covenant

I want to follow Jesus in the noble purpose He has for me. I want to participate in Journey to enhance my own relationship with God this year. I will commit to doing the weekly assignments and small group meetings.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

My best times of availability are:

Morning: \_\_\_\_\_

Evening: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

# Life Meaning Under the ~~SUN~~ SON

Anne and Ben were both enthusiastic members of our college group. However, after their young marriage fell apart, Anne was disillusioned about life and God. How could she have been so wrong about Ben? Where was God? The break-up and divorce shook her to the core and left her questioning everything. She was a very new Christian and could not understand how God could have led her into such disappointment with Ben. The divorce caused her to back away from our fellowship and from God, and we lost touch for a while. A few years down the road I ran into her and asked her about her life now. She had met someone who she was truly in love with, but he was an agnostic. When I asked about her faith, she said she also had many doubts. She could no longer call herself a Christian. Her new religious label was *pedestrian*. She had given up on any grand purpose in life. She was on a journey with no certainties of what lay ahead.

That's the feeling I get from King Solomon in this first chapter of Ecclesiastes. Life under the sun had dissolved into an uncertain day after day existence. He had become a pedestrian journeying through life with no idea where it was going to end up. Life under the sun turned into one day after another, but life under the Son opens up a whole new vista of possibilities that could have changed everything for him. Let's compare the two perspectives.



1. What gives you the most joy in life and why?

---

---



2. What would you like printed on your tombstone?

---

---

---

**Dead End Road Map 1: Ecclesiastes 1:1-11**

3. Can you identify with Solomon? Have you ever felt life has lost its meaning?

---

---

---

4. Would you consider Solomon to be depressed here? Have you ever felt trapped or depressed by the seeming monotony of life? How do you handle such disillusionment?

---

---

---



**Road to Life Map 2: Romans 8:18-30**

1. Solomon complains that there's nothing new going on. What are some new things you are experiencing right now in your life? What new thing is Paul waiting/hoping for in his message to the people of Rome?

---

---

---

2. What future hope are you looking forward to? What do you think Paul means by the glory to come?

---

---

---

3. How does the Spirit help us with the disillusionment of life under the sun? How have you experienced the Holy Spirit's help in forming a prayer to God?

---

---

---

4. How is God bringing something good out of a bad situation in your life? Describe what that looks like. What do you think Paul means by "all things working out for good"?

---

---

---

5. How does Paul describe life under the Son in this passage in comparison with Solomon's assessment of life under the sun in chapter one?

---

---

---

6. How can this group pray for you today?

---

---

---

"I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power." Ephesians 1:17-19



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

---

---

---

2. What are you learning about God's purpose in your life?

---

---

---

3. Who do you know that is struggling with life purpose?  
How can you help?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Wisdom Under the ~~SUN~~ SON

The first bit of wisdom I picked up in college was nobody owes me anything. Like many nuggets of wisdom, I learned it the hard way. I was sharing a place with a friend I had not known very long but got along with really well. We had a lot of fun together and were learning to trust one another. I was also becoming good friends with a girl that I was very attracted to. She was smart, fun to be with, had a great personality, and like my friend I was living with—a fairly new Christian. I thought things were going well with the “girlfriend” when the hard lesson landed upon me. My roommate met the girl I was hoping to woo into a dating relationship and jumped ahead of me. The two of them started going out.

I was surprised, hurt, and angry that my roommate had asked out the girl I liked. I imagined us better friends than for him not to consider my own intentions with her. His response was, “I don’t owe you anything!” I had to ruminate on what he said. Like I said, it was a hard lesson learned. The “girlfriend” had a right to date whomever she pleased and in the end I knew he was right. I had to chalk it up to an important lesson learned. I still believe that good friends are considerate and look out for one another. But as the old saying goes—all is fair in love and war and no one owes us anything. I have tried to incorporate that into my life ever since. It has saved me a lot of grief when things don’t go the way I want them to.



1. What are some of the life lessons you have learned?

---



---

2. Who is the wisest person you know and what makes them so wise?

---

---

---

**Road Map of Fools:** Ecclesiastes 1:1-11; 7:1-5

3. What is meaningless about wisdom under the sun?

---

---

---

4. What is the heavy burden that God has laid upon us and why is it a burden?

---

---

---

5. How is wisdom like an inheritance or shelter in Ecclesiastes 7:12?

---

---

---



**Road Map of the Wise:** I Corinthians 1:18-25

1. How does Paul compare the wisdom of life under the sun with the wisdom of God and life under the Son? How would the wisdom God expressed here make Solomon even wiser?

---

---

---

2. How does the cross of Christ reveal the wisdom of God?  
How does it confound the wise?

---

---

---

3. Why does the cross seem foolish to the Greeks and present a stumbling block to Jews?

---

---

---

4. When did the cross of Christ begin to make sense to you? How would you explain the wisdom of God that Paul talks about here to someone else?

---

---

---

5. How can this group pray for you today?

---

---

---

“Who is like the wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? Wisdom makes one’s face shine, and the hardness of one’s countenance is changed.”  
Ecclesiastes 8:1



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

---

---

---



# Prosperity Under the ~~SUN~~ SON

Back in the day, Publisher's Clearing House was the mail order get rich scheme. Receiving the coupon in the mail addressed personally to me was one of my first realizations of transitioning into adulthood. I thought of all I could do with the money if I would be so fortunate to win. I could just imagine the sweepstakes van pulling up to our door and Ed McMahon (who was the face of Publisher's Clearing House back then) knocking on my door with our winning check.

I stood in the post office hallway holding the reply card, bargaining with God about how generous I would be with my winnings and then it hit me—I could be rich if I wanted to be. With all the advantages of living in a free capitalist country like the USA, theoretically anyone can be a millionaire if they want it bad enough. You just have to make it a priority. But prosperity is more than a fat bank account achieved by personal effort or having the winning number. Let's see what Solomon and Jesus have to say about living the good life from their diverse perspectives.



1. What was your first job and how much did you get paid?

---



---



---

2. What does prosperity look like for you?

---



---



**Road Map of an Impoverished Soul: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11**

3. Solomon talks about being tested with pleasure. Have you ever been tested with pleasure? What do you think he means by that?

---

---

---

4. What are some of the great projects he undertook in his lifetime? Why does he consider all these endeavors meaningless?

---

---

---

5. What was missing in Solomon's prosperity?

---

---

---



**Road Map to a Heavenly Inheritance:  
Matthew 19:16-30**

1. What about the Rich Young Ruler story reminds you of Solomon's disillusionment? What wisdom could Solomon offer the young man about "the good life"?

---

---

---

2. How does Jesus define prosperity to the young man? How do their views on prosperity differ?

---

---

---

3. What did Jesus promise the disciples about prosperity in this life and the life to come? What is the key to prosperity in life under the Son?

---

---

---

4. Why does Jesus say it's hard for someone rich like Solomon or the young man to inherit eternal life?

---

---

---

5. How can this group pray for you today?

---

---

---

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19-21



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

---

---

---

2. What are you learning about the good life?

---

---

---

3. What do you need to let go of to receive more in return from God?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Time Under the ~~SUN~~ SON

I once had a nightmare where time was running out. In my dream I was back in college and had a paper due that I was feverishly working on but getting nowhere. My notes were scattered, I couldn't even identify a coherent theme, and the paper was due the next day. Suddenly the dream shifted to anxiety about relationships. Why was I not married yet? How could I meet someone? Time was getting away from me and I needed to get on with my life. As I explored potential prospects in my dream, different people I had dated came to mind and I thought of how I might get back in touch with them. Then my wife came to mind and I thought I should contact her to see how her life was going. As I considered how we might reconnect, suddenly reality kicked in. I woke up and calmed down, realizing we were connected and married. Carolyn and I were completely happy together.

When I woke up I was so thankful to have her in my life and to not have to rejoin the dating scene. I was also aware that college and seminary were distant memories with no papers due. I'm not sure what time crunch I was facing, but time under the sun was definitely bearing down upon me about something. Let's see how life under the Son blows apart the space/time continuum!



1. What is your favorite season and why?

---



---



---

2. What is the most important date you ever missed?

---

---

---

**Road Map Through Time:** Ecclesiastes 3:1-17

3. Solomon says there is a time for everything under the sun. Is assigning a time for everything a good thing or a bad thing—why or why not? What do you never seem to have enough time for?

---

---

---

4. What do you think Solomon is suggesting by God

---

---

5. setting eternity in our hearts?

---

---

---

6. Is Solomon promoting hedonism or gratitude in verses 12 and 13? Explain why you answered the way you did.

---

---

---

7. What is the relationship between time and God bringing everything into judgement?

---

---

---



---

## Road Map to Eternity: Acts 17:22-31

1. Paul claims that times and habitations are fixed by God in order that we might find Him. How can the limitation of time help in our search for God?

---

---

---

2. Paul also states that a day (time) has been designated by God in which He will judge the world by the person of Christ. What does the judgement of Christ reveal about the future?

---

---

---

3. Why did the philosophers of Athens scoff at Paul's message of the resurrection of Christ?

---

---

---

4. What are the implications of the resurrection of Jesus concerning time under the sun?

---

---

---

5. How can this group pray for you today?

---

---

---

"Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day." II Peter 3:8



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

---

---

---

2. How is God using this week's study to set eternity in your heart?

---

---

---

3. How is God helping you find a time for everything under the Son?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Justice Under the ~~SUN~~ SON

We had some work done on our house recently and were basically taken for a ride. Job performance was poor and workers were inexperienced. Our contractor finally left the job unfinished with construction materials piled up in our backyard. We contacted the finance company that disbursed our loan money to the contractor, but they were unable to do anything more than exert some limited pressure on him. We even submitted a construction complaint to the Contractor State Licensing Board against him, but they lacked the authority to do anything more than pressure and cajole him to do the right thing. In the end, we were left to either sue the builder or continue to put pressure on him to reimburse us for work we paid for that he never completed.

Solomon complains that another sour note about life under the sun is the issue of injustice—the injustice of wickedness in place of justice and righteousness, and of the similar fate of animals and humans that both end their life in death. Is God just? This is the moral question of the universe. Life under the sun leaves it an open question, while life under the Son is an emphatic yes!



1. When was the last time you were treated unfairly?

---



---



---

2. If you could choose one of your pets to go to heaven, which one would it be and why?

---



---



**Road Map to Indifference:** Ecclesiastes 3:16-22

3. What is unjust about life under the sun according to Solomon?

---

---

---

4. What do you think is meant by, "I said in my heart..."? Is Solomon posing a wish here or stating a fact about God's justice?

---

---

---

5. Where do you think animals or humans go when they die?

---

---

---

6. How does knowing something about the hereafter provide meaning and purpose to what happens in the present?

---

---

---



**Road Map to Justice for All:** John 8:1-11

1. What are your thoughts, concerns, or questions about the story between Jesus and the woman caught in adultery?

---

---

---

2. What is different from this story about justice in life under the Son compared to life under the sun?

---

---

---

3. What do you think Jesus wrote in the sand that turned the woman's accusers away one by one?

---

---

---

4. In life under the sun, Solomon considers in his heart what God will do in deciding the fate of all living things. What could he have learned about God's sense of justice in life under the Son from this story?

---

---

---

5. How can this group pray for you today?

---

---

---

"The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son. Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life." John 5:22, 24



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

---

---

---

2. How do you compare the justice of God in life under the sun with life under the Son?

---

---

---

3. Why is it important to know that God has committed all judgement of the human family over to Jesus?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Relationships Under the ~~SUN~~ SON

Our son Brian (pseudonym) learned about friendship the hard way. He was so excited to finally attend the middle school where many of his neighborhood friends were going. He would be with other kids he knew. He had been planning this with his good friend Jason for a couple of years and his mom and I finally agreed to let him transfer from church school to public school. But things didn't actually work out as he had planned. Jason treated him badly and acted like he didn't even know him. He was an outcast in a much larger school and an environment he had never been in before.

Another neighborhood friend suggested he transfer to the magnet school where he attended. Mark was a true friend. When others made fun of him for being the new kid, Mark stood up for him. He brought him in to meet all his buddies. He did whatever he could to make Brian feel welcome. Brian tells the awkward story of one time being caught with his zipper down. To support his friend, Mark unzipped his own pants to show all his friends how cool Brian was. Mark taught Brian how to be a true friend. It was a lesson he never forgot and has shown up in his own life when others have been left out or marginalized. Relationships under the sun were at the top of Solomon's list, but even these could easily dissolve into envy and bitterness. If only he could have seen how different relationships could be under the Son.



1. Who was your closest childhood friend?

---



---

2. What lessons have your friends taught you about relationships?

---

---

---

**Road Map to Envy and Strife:** Ecclesiastes 4:4-12

3. According to Solomon, what is the primary motivation in life under the sun?

---

---

---

4. What do you think Solomon means by two folded hands as opposed to one? Why is one hand with tranquility better than two folded hands?

---

---

---

5. How easy is it for you to ask for help or to help someone else?

---

---

---

6. What was meaningless about the business described in v. 8?

---

---

---



---

## Road Map to Intimacy: John 15:9-17

1. What do we learn in these verses about love and friendship under the Son?

---

---

---

2. What is the relationship between the love that Jesus received from His Father and His love for the disciples?

---

---

---

3. Why is it important to note that Jesus chose the disciples as opposed to them choosing Him? How does our love for one another demonstrate life under the Son?

---

---

---

4. Do you feel more like a servant of Jesus or a friend? What does a friendship with Jesus look like for you?

---

---

---

5. How can this group pray for you today?

---

---

---

“We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death.” | John 3:14



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

---

---

---

2. What are you learning about relationships under the Son?

---

---

---

3. Why is it important that Jesus considers you His friend?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Work Under the ~~SUN~~ SON

I can personally identify with Solomon on the disappointment of building something beautiful just to release it to someone else. As an undergrad, I took a woodworking class and built our own oak trestle table (Ethan Allan design). It had pull out extension leaves on either end with seating capacity of up to sixteen. I also made some benches to match since we couldn't afford chairs.

Over the years many, many people gathered around our beautiful table for holidays and special occasions. Unfortunately, when we moved to our current house, the dining room was too small for such a big table and we had to store it in our dingy basement. Unfortunately, the basement was not kind to our table. It collected moisture and needed minor structural repair. What to do with it? Sell it? Donate it? We pulled it out and began a restoration. After refinishing the surface, it looked beautiful again—like new! But we still lacked the space to keep it in our dining room. Imagine our disappointment after building it and refurbishing it only to loan it out to some family friends that had space for it. This is Solomon's relent in all the work we undertake under the sun. Whatever beautiful thing we create or accomplish will one day be left to others after we are gone. How is human toil under the Son more satisfying than toil under the sun?



1. Describe something you made with your own hands. How important is it to you and why?

---



---



---



2. What is something you have given away or lost that you wish you still had?

---

---

---

**Road Map to Hard Labor:** Ecclesiastes 2:17-23

3. What about toil under the sun causes Solomon to hate life?

---

---

---

4. When has your *heart begun to despair over all your toilsome labor under the sun*? Describe what that feels like and how it contributes to a meaningless existence.

---

---

---

5. How do you feel about someone else enjoying the benefit of your accomplishments?

---

---

---

6. What is the difference between job and vocation and how does understanding the difference help answer Solomon's question about *what people get for all their toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun*?

---

---

---



## Road Map to Lasting Treasure: Matthew 6:19-24

1. What do these verses advise about building up treasures on earth? What do earthly treasures reveal about our hearts?

---

---

---

2. What does bad eyesight or blurred vision have in common with what Solomon refers to as *the vexation of work* under the sun?

---

---

---

3. How do you keep an eternal perspective in the work you do and how does it guard against the futility of work under the sun?

---

---

---

4. How can this group pray for you today?

---

---

---

“Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” I Corinthians 10:31



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

---

---

2. What are you learning about the difference between a job and vocation?

---

---

---

3. How is your work more than a job and glorifying God?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Balance Under the ~~SUN~~ SON

I love food and the saltier, the sweeter, and the richer tasting, the better. But ... I recently learned that I have cardiovascular disease and am now forced to go on a low sodium, low fat, and low sugar diet. While I was in the hospital recovering from a major heart attack, my family scoured the refrigerator and dry goods cabinet for anything that did not meet the new requirements and gave away nearly eight bags of groceries. Embracing the new dietary restrictions have been painful, but as much as I love food, I love living more so I am learning to appreciate the new austere measures.

I am also learning about balance. The pendulum had definitely swung too far to the rich food's category. On the other hand, I could not imagine keeping up the bland diet forever. I am now learning to find a healthy, tasty medium—thesis, antitheses toward synthesis. I'm learning to watch my salt intake without eliminating it altogether. The same holds true about my sweet tooth. As for fat and animal products, I have adopted a basic vegan diet that is still taking some getting used to. As Solomon suggests, stay measured in all things—especially work and fun. But how can we achieve that when we feel so pushed by the clock of time? Here is where life under the Son again is the answer to the unbalanced neurosis of life under the sun.



1. What have you ever done to the extreme in religion or revelry?

---



---



---

2. Where are you finding the most balance in your life right now? Explain.

---

---

---

**Road Map to Instability:** Ecclesiastes 7:15-18

3. Can you think of anyone who has perished in their righteousness? What do you think Solomon means by this?

---

---

---

4. How can being too righteous or wise lead to our destruction?

---

---

---

5. What is the balance between wickedness/foolishness and righteousness/wisdom? How does imbalance with these lead to an early death?

---

---

---

6. What do you think Solomon means by "fear of God" and how does it lead to life balance?

---

---

---



---

## Road Map to a Perfect Rhythm: Matthew 11:28-30

1. Jesus offers rest to all. How does proper rest lead to life balance?

---

---

---

2. What does Jesus mean by taking on His yoke? What is the yoke He is referring to here and how does taking it on lead to soul rest?

---

---

---

3. What is the relationship between Jesus' invitation to come to Him and the "fear of God" that Solomon referred to?

---

---

---

4. How has the yoke of Jesus been easier than being unyoked? How has being yoked up to Christ brought a restful balance to your life?

---

---

---

"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:12b, 13



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

---

---

---

2. What are you learning about the importance of life balance?

---

---

---

3. Where do you need more balance in your life right now?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Fate Under the ~~SUN~~ SON

When I was serving as a chaplain at the University of Tennessee, I had a student come to me about his life purpose. He had been in a terrible automobile accident that he believed he should not have survived, nevertheless here he was. He was left with many physical disabilities, but even more importantly, serious brain injuries, making speaking difficult. The question he had was, "Does God exist, and could I prove it?"

Before the accident he considered himself an atheist, yet surviving the accident made him wonder if fate, God, or the universe had somehow spared his life. If God did exist and allowed him to live, he wanted to know why. I tried to help him with the evidence for God while making clear that proving God is impossible. Only God can prove His existence. Nothing seemed to satisfy him.

Finally, he agreed that a simple miracle performed by God would be enough for him to believe. I asked, "What kind of miracle?" He replied that something as simple as praying for the lights in the room to turn on though the switch was in the off position. I wanted to make sure that simply having the lights turn on would be enough. Initially he said, "Yes." Then he thought for a moment and said, "Well, I guess there could be another explanation for the lights coming on while our eyes are closed." The bottom line is it is easier for people to believe that life under the sun is controlled by fate than to believe in the providential working of God. Let's see how life under the Son challenges the fatalism of chance.



1. When have you ever questioned God's existence?

---



---



---



2. When was the last time you experienced God's providence?

---

---

---

**Road Map to Chance:** Ecclesiastes 5:18-20

3. How do you feel about poverty or prosperity as our lot in life?

---

---

---

4. What is the difference between Solomon's understanding of God's interaction with our lives and fate?

---

---

---

5. Have you ever felt that your life is completely outside your control—that God is pulling all the strings for good or evil?

---

---

---



**Road Map to Providence:** Ephesians 1:3-14

1. How is being predestined in Christ different than determinism or fate?

---

---

---

2. Sin was the choice made by the human family signaling our eternal fate. But here, Paul spells out that we have been *chosen* by God, *included* in Christ, and *marked* by His Holy Spirit for salvation. What does this say about choice and fate?

---

---

---

3. How is life *in the heavenly realms* different than life under the sun?

---

---

---

4. Paul blesses God for acting on our behalf in Christ. How has God intervened in your life? What difference has it made?

---

---

---

“God rescued us from dead-end alleys and dark dungeons. He’s set us up in the kingdom of the Son he loves so much, the Son who got us out of the pit we were in, got rid of the sins we were doomed to keep repeating.”Colossians 1:13, 14



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

---

---

---



# Judgement Under the ~~SUN~~ SON

I recently was given a speeding ticket while transitioning from a higher speeding zone down to a lower one. I didn't realize I was speeding and wondered why I was being stopped. I tried to plead my way out of it making the usual excuses that I had never noticed the change in speed zone, but to no avail. To dismiss the points against my driving record and avoid the fine, I would need to plead my case in traffic court before the judge.

I decided to go for it and gamble that the police officer might not show up to prosecute my case. I rehearsed what I was going to say to the judge. Imagine my relief when the judge called my name, and the officer didn't show. The judge asked how I wanted to plead. Of course, I told her not guilty and since my accuser hadn't bothered to show, she dismissed the case.

One day, according to Solomon, we will have a hearing before the judge of the universe and trust me that the prosecuting attorney will definitely be there to accuse and prosecute our case. The Devil knows every infraction we have ever committed under the sun. Fortunately, our judge is also our advocate, knows our case, and has already served our sentence. Like the judge I went before, He has the power to dismiss the case. This is the difference between divine judgement under the sun and judgement under our perfect attorney and judge—the living Son of God.



1. What are some things you wish you hadn't done as a child?

---

---

---

2. When was your last court appearance?

---

---

---

**Road Map to Reckoning:** Ecclesiastes 3:15-18

3. What concerns you most about God calling the past to account in your life?

---

---

---

4. Where have you seen wickedness in the place of justice and judgement? What do you think Solomon means by this?

---

---

---

5. Solomon argues that there is a time for everything—even a time for judgement. Why is divine judgement important and necessary for life under the sun?

---

---

---

6. What deeds do you think will weigh heaviest in our judgement?

---

---

---



---

## Road Map to Acquittal: John 5:24-30

1. How would you compare divine judgement according to Solomon and Jesus?

---

---

---

2. According to Jesus, a time has been set of life or death for the human family. Even the dead will rise for divine judgement. What or who is the basis for this judgement and the only way to prepare for it?

---

---

---

3. Jesus says there is a way to avoid God's judgement altogether. How is this possible and how does it offer peace for the future?

---

---

---

4. Solomon says that justice and judgement under the sun is subject to wickedness. What is shielding judgement under the Son from this?

---

---

---

"For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."  
John 9:39



# Destiny Under the ~~SUN~~ SON

The year 2020 seemed more like an apocalyptic movie where the earth stood still, held captive by a tiny virus that during the writing of this lesson had swallowed up the lives of 3.4 million people worldwide. Fortunately, in our family the pandemic was more of an interruption and inconvenience. We found ways to continue working online and to even hold virtual church and campus ministry services. None of our immediate family contracted the virus with the exception of a cousin from my wife's side of the family who also suffered with many other extenuating health issues.

However, all this changed when a good friend of mine who was a doctor came down with the virus and surprisingly succumbed to it. He always seemed invincible to me, but as Solomon complains—no one escapes death. Not even the wisest man in all the earth, which is one of his greatest complaints. The meaning of life under the sun is not easy to discern due to time, fate, and the inescapable reality of death for all—animal and human. The sun sets for all in life under the sun. How does life under the Son change all that? Let's compare these together!



1. What are two things on your bucket list?

---



---



---

2. What do you think happens to people after they die?

---



---



---



**Road Map of Destiny:** Ecclesiastes 9:3-6, 10

3. How would you describe Solomon's understanding of death?

---

---

---

4. Of all there is to dread about death, what is most distressing? What concerns you most about death?

---

---

---

5. Solomon claims that death is final—no awareness, no knowledge, no afterlife. How do you feel about that? What do you think about those who disagree with Solomon and hope in an afterlife?

---

---

---

6. Who do you miss most that has died? Who would like to see again and why?

---

---

---



**Road Map to Eternity:** John 11:1-44

1. What surprises you most about this story?

---

---

---

2. Why was Jesus glad that Lazarus had died?

---

---

---

3. How does Jesus define death under the sun? How is death under the sun different than death under the Son?

---

---

---

4. What is the connection between the raising of Lazarus and Jesus' own resurrection from the dead? What hope do you glean from these stories for your loved ones who have died and our own impending death?

---

---

---

5. How can this group pray for you?

---

---

---

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'" John 11:25, 26



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week?

---

---

---



# God Under the ~~SUN~~ SON

Momi was a Japanese international student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. We became acquainted through a weekly dinner hosted in our Advent House student center. She was a delightful, energetic, and curious person that we all loved and appreciated. Momi was raised as a Buddhist, but like anyone who travels abroad to other countries, she was interested in religion and culture in the States and was visiting Christian churches and campus fellowships like ours.

After one of our dinners, she asked about my faith. I shared with her how I came to believe and follow Jesus. I asked if she would be interested in learning about the God of the Bible and she was very interested. We started reading and discussing the book of Genesis. She was very intrigued. In one of our studies, she mentioned how impressed she was with the God of the Bible as very busy with creation and establishing the earth. In another conversation I asked her thoughts about Jesus. She said, "If there is a God, I would hope He would be like Him." Like Momi, Solomon knew God under the sun and refers to Him again and again, but more as an authority figure we will all one day have to answer to, and not as a personal, loving being. Like my friend Momi, I can't help but think that Solomon could have wished that God was really like Jesus!



1. What were your first impressions of God as a child?

---



---



---

2. How would you explain God to a friend?

---

---

---

**Road Map of Duty:** Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13, 14

3. How do you feel about Solomon's picture of God?

---

---

---

4. Solomon says that fearing God and keeping His commandments is the conclusion of the matter. Is this merely a concession or an answer to the critic's questions?

---

---

---

5. What is our whole duty and what does it have to do with the meaning of life?

---

---

---

6. What are you doing to remember about your creator in the days of your youth? Why is this so important to Solomon?

---

---

---



---

## Road Map of Grace: Luke 15

1. What surprises you most about these stories?

---

---

---

2. How does Jesus describe God here?

---

---

---

3. How would you compare God under the sun that Solomon describes with God under the Son in the stories that Jesus tells?

---

---

---

4. What more would you like to learn about life under the Son?

---

---

---

“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”  
Colossians 1:15-17









# “Nothing new under the sun. The one who has the Son has life” Ecclesiastes 1:9 & I John 5:12

There is no better place for the light of God to shine than on a university campus. Students from a broad spectrum of society, from diverse cultures and nations are seeking knowledge and even truth. How great then are the possibilities for letting our lights shine. How great will be the contrast between earthly knowledge and divine truth if believing students and teachers live out their faith in an environment that can be hostile to faith.



*Everything Under the  
Sun Son*  
Leader's Guide  
available at  
[AdventSource.org](http://AdventSource.org).

  
Seventh-day  
Adventist Church  
**AdventSource**

ISBN 978-1-62909-913-2  
  
9 781629 099132