

THE PRIZE: Under Pressure

Session 7 – Stepping into God’s Plan for Your Life

Leader’s Guide

Featuring Guzan, Cacau, Enoh, Kaká, Mulenga and Solomon

DVD – 22:06 to the end

WARM-UP

Share a time with the group when you had an experience or were given a gift that made you happy or that you were thrilled to receive.

TEAM HUDDLE

Top international footballers get many rewards for their achievements. Discuss the kind of lifestyle you think many of them “enjoy.”

Retired footballers often have high levels of mental illness, suicide, dependency (alcohol, drugs, gambling), higher-than-average divorce rates, and even financial difficulties. What is your reaction to this? Why do you think this might be the case?

Alternatively, if you want to be a little more creative and have the time, you could do the following:

Get a bunch of magazines or newspapers that can be ripped up. In small groups or pairs collect pictures or headlines of the things that the advertising media sells us as the dream or perfect life (e.g. pictures of a house, car, girlfriend, money, etc.). Stick the pictures on a board or on the table and talk about why people want these things and why people believe these things will make them satisfied or content in life.

COACH’S CORNER

Read Ecclesiastes 1:12 – 2:11

I, the Teacher, was king of Israel, and I lived in Jerusalem. ¹³I devoted myself to search for understanding and to explore by wisdom everything being done under heaven. I soon discovered that God has dealt a tragic existence to the human race. ¹⁴I observed everything going on under the sun, and really, it is all meaningless—like chasing the wind.

¹⁵What is wrong cannot be made right.

What is missing cannot be recovered.

¹⁶I said to myself, “Look, I am wiser than any of the kings who ruled in Jerusalem before me. I have greater wisdom and knowledge than any of them.” ¹⁷So I set out to learn everything from wisdom to madness and folly. But I learned firsthand that pursuing all this is like chasing the wind.

¹⁸The greater my wisdom, the greater my grief.

To increase knowledge only increases sorrow.

Chapter 2

I said to myself, “Come on, let’s try pleasure. Let’s look for the ‘good things’ in life.” But I found that this, too, was meaningless. ²So I said, “Laughter is silly. What good does it do to seek pleasure?” ³After much thought, I decided to cheer myself with wine. And while still seeking wisdom, I clutched at foolishness. In this way, I tried to experience the only happiness most people find during their brief life in this world.

⁴I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards. ⁵I made gardens and parks, filling them with all kinds of fruit trees. ⁶I built reservoirs to collect the water to irrigate my many

flourishing groves. ⁷I bought slaves, both men and women, and others were born into my household. I also owned large herds and flocks, more than any of the kings who had lived in Jerusalem before me. ⁸I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both men and women, and had many beautiful concubines. I had everything a man could desire!

⁹So I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom never failed me.¹⁰ Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure. I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors. ¹¹But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.

With what things does the writer of Ecclesiastes say he has filled his life?

1:12-18 (Power - he was king, wisdom, knowledge, academic success)

2:1-3 (Having fun, wine, partying)

2:4-6 (Great achievements, fine property)

2:7-8 (Wealth, fame, lots of women and sex)

Do these things bring the writer of Ecclesiastes contentment?

How does he describe them? Does this surprise you? Why or why not?

He describes it as a “chasing after the wind” – in other words, trying to find lasting peace, satisfaction and contentment in these things is like trying to keep up with the wind, you’ll never get there!

Wealth, fame, achievements, status and sex, when used appropriately in the right context are not bad things, but they cannot bring us lasting fulfillment. Why do you think people make these things the sole aim of their lives?

The Bible is clear that the center of the human problem is the human heart (Jeremiah 17:9; Acts 3:10-17, 23), and that the human heart is an “idol-making factory.” It is interesting to note that the first of the Ten Commandments relates to idolatry (Exodus 20:3). Idolatry is more than just bowing down to man-made statues. It’s what happens when we turn created things into ultimate things. We make money, sex, fame, etc., more important and of greater value than knowing and following God. We think these created things can give us what ultimately can only be found in relationship with our Creator.

Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty.” John 6:35 (NIV)

What do you think Jesus means by this?

He’s basically saying that only He can fully satisfy us.

According to all the players on the video, only Jesus can bring us lasting fulfillment. As Brad Guzan says, “I think everyone needs Christ in (his/her) life.” How do you respond to this statement?

Depending on where the individuals in your group are spiritually, there may be an opportunity to close this Bible study series by inviting people to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. As Romans 10:9 (quoted by Enoch) states, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

WARM-DOWN

Spend some time in silence asking God if there are any things in your life that are more important than your relationship with Christ: ambitions, possessions, hobbies, activities, relationships, ideas, ways of looking at the world (however good they may be), etc.

Read Psalm 42:1-2 together:

*“As the deer longs for streams of water,
so I long for You, O God.*

*²I thirst for God, the living God.
When can I go and stand before Him?”*

Pray that the Holy Spirit would reveal to you more of the reality of who God is, and that you would have a desire to know Him more and serve Him more.

EXTRA TRAINING

Memory Verse

Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty.” John 6:35 (NIV)

Prayer/Worship Focus

Spend time reflecting on what you have learned and how God has spoken to you through this Bible study series. Thank Him for anything you have learned that has challenged you or encouraged you in your walk with God.

Putting it into Practice

Look over the previous sections of “Putting it into Practice.” Is there any area where you really need to take steps to put into practice what has been suggested?

If you have not yet made a commitment to Christ, or are still not sure what that might mean, why not talk about it to your group leader or someone in your group who is already a follower of Jesus?