



Week 4
**NO MORE GOING
THROUGH THE
MOTIONS**

No boxing champion attained that status by simply going through the motions. No Olympic gold medalist reached that pinnacle of achievement through a ho-hum attitude of routine. Settling into predictability gets a man stuck in a dangerous location: the comfort zone. Nothing amazing ever came from a comfort zone.

Describe common results associated with going through the motions.

In what ways does going through the motions contribute to a life of mediocrity?

Meaning is found beyond merely going through the motions. It comes when you commit to a sold-out, all-in, no-turning-back pursuit of God Himself. He's ready. Are you? Let's look together at Solomon's quest for meaning and learn how it relates to men today.

Ask someone to pray before watching the video teaching.

WATCH

Use these statements to follow along as you watch video session 4.

Far too many men are living without substance in their lives.

When a man disconnects from God, he's disconnected from the source of meaning.

If all of life is only in this life, you'll never have the life that you're looking for. You'll just go through the motions.

Only when a man brings forever into time, only when heaven is integrated into history is meaning brought to the activities.

God will allow meaninglessness in the life of a man who does things without Him being connected to it.

God says, "In this world you leave Me out, and you are not going to be able to break out and to experience life as I intended it to be experienced."

Make God your priority, and He will inject meaning in your life because He will make eternity enter time.

God says, "When I don't define who you are as a man and you let any and everything else define your manhood, your manhood is in trouble because your manhood will be without meaning."

MAN UP

Use the following questions to discuss the video teaching.

Read the following verse together.

*The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear
God and keep His commandments, because this
applies to every person.*

ECCLESIASTES 12:13

Solomon had it all. Status. Power. Fame. Money. Women. Freedom. Attention. Control. You name it; he had it. You'd think he would have been the happiest man on earth, but he wasn't. In fact, the man who had it all spent an inordinate amount of his time pondering the meaning of life. He couldn't quite figure out why he was here and what he should do.

Neither Solomon's pursuits nor his conquests gave him the kind of satisfaction that lasts longer than a good meal or a movie. He wanted more. He wanted authentic meaning, the kind that doesn't depend on other people's validation, a paycheck, or a contest to win.

In what ways does Solomon's pursuit of significance and meaning mirror many men's quests today?

How can a lack of meaning contribute to a lifestyle of resignation just to go through the motions?

Going through the motions creates a life that looks like life but without the meaning. It takes our responsibilities at work, to our families, to God, and to others and makes them nothing more than a routine. It saps all meaning and purpose from our lives.

Because we've been created in the image of God, we have an inherent need for meaning, creativity, significance, and purpose. We mirror God's greatness within us, so a life in which we merely go through the motions is wearisome for us, not only physically but also emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically.

Brainstorm some creative ways to break out of the box of going through the motions. Begin with your spiritual life. Then move outward.

On the video Dr. Evans said, “We have men today who are busy doing stuff like building careers, making money, playing sports, and more, but they are asking or desiring the thing they are doing to give them the meaning in doing it. And that’s what God will not allow.” Meaning can’t be found apart from God because God is the Source of all meaning.

What are some common places men look for meaning other than God?

Read James 4:13-16. God supplies meaning in your life because He supplies life itself. Nothing exists outside His direct supply. The primary principle in identifying your purpose and, as a result, identifying your meaning involves locating God. Don’t search for yourself, your purpose, or your significance. Search for God. He knows where those goals lie.

Have you seen someone make plans, only to have God intervene and suddenly change those plans? What did they learn?

Solomon arrived at this conclusion when all was said and done: “Fear God and keep His commandments” (Eccl. 12:13). I like to say it this way: align your thoughts, words, and actions underneath the overarching rule of God in every area of your life. That’s God’s kingdom agenda for you. When you do that, you’ll experience the visible manifestation of His power and purpose both in and through you.

Identify one specific way you can align your thoughts, words, or actions this week underneath God’s overarching rule.

PRAYER

Close the session with prayer.

Father, mold us into men of meaning and significance. Give us wisdom to avoid spending our lives in futility and instead to pursue You and Your purposes. Help us break out of our comfort zones of going through the motions and discover lives of significance as You work in and through us. In Christ's name, amen.

HIT THE STREETS

Three Steps to Success

If you want to find the secret to life and success, look to the Author of life. In other words, if you want to find your purpose, don't go looking for your purpose. Look for the Purpose Giver. The clearest way to find out who you are isn't to look at the man in the mirror but to look at God, the One who gives you your identity. When you find your Creator, you find you. God has given us three clear steps we can follow to live a life of success.

1. Fear God

To fear God doesn't mean the kind of fear you might get if you watch a thriller or get lost in a strange city late at night. Fear of God involves reverence and honor. It's similar to the fear you'd give a judge in a courtroom or a high-ranking government official. Fearing God shows up in your thoughts and actions when God influences them. When you seek to align what you do and who you are with Him and His revealed will, you're living a life that fears God.

2. Keep His Commandments

God has revealed a number of commandments throughout Scripture, but if you want a sure way of knowing how to obey them all, He has given us two to summarize. Jesus said you must love God and love others:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

MATTHEW 22:37,39

When you obey these two commandments completely, you'll naturally live out all of the other commandments. Love is compassionately and righteously pursuing the well-being of another person. It isn't first and foremost an emotion. Love is an action. Make loving God and loving others your highest commitment in life, and you'll be a spiritual success in all you do.

3. Include God in Your Planning

Planning is good and important, but excluding God from your planning is a sure way to head in the wrong direction. James boldly tells us:

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."

Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

JAMES 4:13-16

Including God in your planning means bringing His perspective to bear on all you do. It also leaves room for the Holy Spirit to shift your thinking and your plans midstream.

Fearing God, keeping His commandments, and including God in your planning are three critical components for living out the full expression of the man God designed you to be. God created you to be great and to fulfill your destiny. By following His road map, you'll discover a life of purpose and fulfillment you never dreamed possible.

BIBLE STUDY 1

Chasing the Wind

I was on a cruise a couple of years ago, and as I stood on the boat looking out over the vast ocean, I recognized my insignificance. All around me was water, the largest body of water in the world. Here I was, a little speck on a boat that seemed huge to me but that was itself a tiny speck in the middle of that huge ocean.

When I turned around and looked at the stern of the boat, I noticed a striking phenomenon. As the ship sailed through the water, it caused a lot of turbulence and created a dent in the water. A couple of seconds later, however, the water closed the gap, and everything was back to normal. The ship had left no permanent mark on the ocean.

What impact do you hope to have had on the world when your time here is done?

What steps are you taking to ensure that's the legacy you're leaving?

Legacy is an important subject on my mind right now, as it should be on the mind of every man. Too many of us go through our lives and leave little or no impact for good. Even King Solomon wrestled with this fear. Having a purpose and leaving an impact for God's kingdom matter. But how do we do that according to God's kingdom plan?

Read Ecclesiastes 1:12-15 and answer the following questions.

What's the "grievous task" (v. 13) Solomon referred to in this passage?

Describe the result of "striving after wind" (v. 14). How does this illustration apply to a life lived outside God's prescribed plan?

Do you ever struggle with your own meaning or purpose? If so, how does that struggle affect your emotions or productivity?

What does chasing the wind look like in your life? How closely is the struggle for meaning and purpose tied to chasing the wind?

If you've ever tried to catch wind, you know it's uncatchable. Not only are we blind to its movement, but we also can't touch it. It's impossible to catch something you can't see or touch. Yet that's exactly what King Solomon compared life on earth to. Life lived apart from God's divine wisdom and plan amounts to nothing more than the futile pursuit of "striving after wind" (v. 14).

We start to chase the wind when we go through life without giving thought to our eternal purpose or to God's leadership in our lives. When that happens, other goals replace the goal of knowing and living for Him, and we chase a life that truly isn't worth having.

List some benefits King Solomon must have experienced in his life, whether they're in the area of pleasure, finances, work, or power.

Despite having these benefits, King Solomon said his life was meaningless ("vanity," v. 14) apart from God's rule and authority. Why do you think God's rule and authority play such a critical role in our own pursuit of significance and satisfaction?

God has put within each one of us a sense of the eternal, a yearning for things beyond space and time, desires like ultimate purpose and meaning. Although God has set us in the mundane routine of earthly life, He wants us to look beyond the realm of earth for something greater.

Read Ecclesiastes 3:11. When have you felt the pull of eternity in your soul? How might this longing motivate us to live a life that goes beyond merely checking off tasks and going through the motions?

You can't find your ultimate purpose in life by looking at life on this earth. The only way you can find the answer to the eternal question of purpose, significance, and meaning that echoes loudly in your heart is by looking into eternity's definition of these ideals. And when you look into eternity's perspective, you'll find God's answer waiting for you.

The minute you start looking at life to find the meaning of life, you miss the very life you're looking for. As long as you focus on wealth, power, pleasure, work, people, or anything else to find the meaning of life, you've lost what you're looking for.

What are some common pursuits that men use today to define their significance or meaning?

Why is it important to focus only on God and His view of your significance and meaning?

Men often find their significance and meaning in their careers or in their roles as a husband and provider. Although these are good gifts from a God who loves us, if we don't pursue those purposes with God's eternal purpose in mind, we're simply going through the motions. We'll fall short of the glory that God has given us. Our wheels are turning, but we aren't getting anywhere.

Only when you view life as God's gift can you begin to find its purpose. Only when you live in time from the perspective of eternity can you find life's meaning. In other words, if you want to find your purpose, don't go looking for your purpose. Look for the Purpose Giver. If you want to find the secret to life, look to the Author of life. When you find your Creator, you find you.

Jesus said:

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

JOHN 10:10

Life isn't found in the living but in the Living One. Jesus agreed with Solomon. Life is a gift from God, and He defines it for you.

In what ways are you merely going through the motions?

God often uses our past experiences, as well as our gifts, passions, and opportunities, to lead us to our ultimate purpose in Him. Consider those aspects of your life. How could you continue to pursue these same passions in ways that bring ultimate honor and glory to God?

PRAY

Pray about aligning all of your life underneath God's overarching, comprehensive rule. Ask God to reveal more answers to the previous questions and to fine-tune your understanding of His purpose for you. Seek to obey Him by reading, meditating on, and studying His Word. Praise Him for the purpose He created you to fulfill.