

You Are What You Love: Week 1

Week: 1 You Are What You love

Ecclesiastes 1:1-3, *You are What you Love* by James Smith, Chapter 1

Announcements:

Awareness Activity:

Take a moment and write on your notes an answer to these two questions:

What does the good life look like?

How do I get it?

Opening Illustration:

It's interesting how the concept of beauty changes over time. Not just styles but beauty itself. If you go back to the 1400's in Italy and look at their descriptions of beauty in their literature, dramatic plays, and historical documents, you will find it very different than the descriptions used in the 1990's.

Let's say a popular author was to finish this sentence:

As the beautiful women walked in the room, I couldn't help but notice...

1400's Renaissance: ...how white her skin was, how large her hips were and how round her stomach was.

In the 1990's: ...how frail she looked, extremely thin, fragile and tan.

It's one thing to be aware of what a culture likes. It's another to see through the mechanisms that cause you to like or prefer them.

Dr. James Smith says it like this.

"...our most fundamental orientation to the world – the longings and desires that orient us toward some version of the good life – is shaped and configured by imitation and practice." Dr. James Smith (Smith, *You Are What You Love* page. 19)

For most people, what they hear repeated in a positive way will eventually become their preference.

Overview for the Series

Our verse for the year is:

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Our goal is to help you to become love ethnographers.
Generally, students of what people prefer and love and why.
Specifically, what you love and prefer and why.
Tactically, what your loves and preferences are and how to shape them.

There are two primary resources we will use throughout this series.

1. Ecclesiastes out of the Wisdom Literature section in Scripture.
2. *You are what you Love* by James Smith.

With this in mind let's turn to the text.

Scripture:

Ecclesiastes 1:1-3 ESV

- 1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
- 2 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.
- 3 What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

- This is from the wisdom literature section of scripture. This includes Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job. Think of them as three voices. Proverbs is a wise young counselor; Ecclesiastes is a middle-aged brilliant cynic and Job is an older experienced man.
- All three books in the Wisdom Literature section work to answer two questions:
 - What is a good life?
 - How do I get it?
- It opens and closes with this, "Hevel, Hevel, everything is utterly Hevel." The word *hevel* is often translated "meaningless" or "vanity". The literal translation is "vapor" or possibly "smoke". In context it seems to carry the idea of an enigma. The cynical teacher is not saying that they have no meaning but that the meaning of most things is merely a vapor.
- What humans often do is give something that is eternal, our love and affection, to what is merely brief "smoke." It isn't saying the "vapor" things in life don't matter, it is saying that we have our affections out of order, and we need to enjoy these things that are "vapor" correctly in order to find the meaning of life and live it well.
- Let's reflect on this for a moment. What in your life do you give huge affection and attention towards that is merely a quick vapor?

Final Thoughts:

When I first became a personal trainer, I had to learn to do health assessments of people. I found it interesting how people often had a very flawed view of themselves. We would take measurements, body composition, cardiovascular assessments and more. By the time I shared the actual health of the person with them they were often surprised. They would look in a mirror every day but couldn't see what they really were. This is so true of us. The wisdom literature will work like a truth telling mirror. It will show what we truly love and what to do about it.

The health assessments also did one more really important thing.

They revealed what the sum of their daily practices were actually making them into.

Next Steps:

Take the Romans 12:2 card in your bulletin and put it up somewhere you can see it every day. I want you to read, memorize, pray it over you and the people you love.

Lastly, fill out the next steps card as the Spirit leads you.

References:

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Ec 1:1–3). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Smith, James K. A. You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, a Division of Baker Group, 2016. Print.

Body Types through the years: <https://www.scienceofpeople.com/ideal-body-types-throughout-history/>

Understanding the Wisdom Literature: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/wisdom-series/>

Understanding the literature types and postures of Wisdom Literature: Bartholomew, C. G. (2012, 2016). Wisdom Literature. In Faithlife Study Bible. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

The word used here, hebel, means “vapor” or “breath” and is used in Isa 57:13 parallel with “wind” and in Prov 21:6 for “a fleeting vapor.”

Garrett, D. A. (1993). Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs (Vol. 14, p. 282). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Ecclesiastes is a book of wisdom sayings that examines the meaning of life's endeavors, the value of common wisdom, and the problem of injustice. The opening verse presents the speaker as a member of David's royal family, but his name is not mentioned.

Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). Faithlife Study Bible (Ec 1:1). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.