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2 All is vanity

- In the book of Ecclesiastes, the Teacher takes a cold-eyed look at the world and says: “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!” (1:2)
- He insists . . .
 - Everything that man strives for is worthless, meaningless, and and absurd.
 - In both men and society, the Teacher spots extreme pride in human appearance, possessions, and accomplishments.
 - In other words, he looks around and sees narcissism—excessive self-love and admiration.

3 Narcissus

- According to a Greek Myth, there was an exceptional hunter named Narcissus, who was very proud of his hunting abilities.
- Yet he disdained those who admired him.
- As divine punishment, he fell in love with his own reflection in a pool.
- Not being able to leave the image of his own beauty, he wasted away and died—becoming a flower.

4 Sigmund Freud

- The term “Narcissism,” comes from Sigmund Freud who knew about the Greek Myth of Narcissus.
- He used it to describe a personality trait of
 - egotism,
 - vanity,
 - conceit, and
 - simple selfishness.

5 Psychology today

- According to Psychology Today (Jan. 1, 2006), narcissism can range from an annoying tendency to a serious clinical disorder.
 - Very insecure, yet very selfish.
 - Desire to be the center of attention and admiration.
 - Exaggerates achievements.
 - See people as objects that are to be used. Rules don’t apply to them.
 - Hypersensitive to criticism.
 - Can’t handle rejection.
 - Vindictive and hold grudges.
 - Moody (Lots of ups and downs)

6 Narcissism

- The groom who won't let his bride's overweight friend be a bridesmaid because he doesn't want her to mess up the wedding pictures.
- The woman who has such confidence in her impeccable taste that she routinely redecorates her daughter's home, without asking.
- The guy who thinks he's so handsome that he takes a self-portrait every night before bed, just to preserve the moment.
- Then there's business tycoon Ted Turner, who said, "If I only had a little humility, I'd be perfect."

7 Narcissism

8 Admiration

- "It's not so much being liked, It's much more important to be admired."
- "Studies have shown narcissists are willing to sacrifice being liked, if they think it's necessary to be admired."

9 admiration

- The craving to be admired is a red flag, one of the clearest warning signs of narcissism.
- It pops up in . . .
 - weddings,
 - home decorations,
 - cosmetic surgery,
 - in college admissions. and even
 - in the church.
- QUESTION: How can we spot this tendency in ourselves and in the people around us? And what can we do about it?

10 Real self-worth

- Does self-worth come from our worldly accomplishments?
 - And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. (Ecclesiastes 4:4 NIV)
 - I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. What is twisted cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted. (Ecclesiastes 1:14-15 NIV)
 - The true character of a Narcissist is to be admired. But according to Ecclesiastes, both his motive and his accomplishments matter little.
 - What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26 NIV)

11 Center of the Universe

- Are we the center of the universe?

- I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. (Ecclesiastes 2:18 NIV)
- Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand. (Ecclesiastes 5:15 NIV)
- The truth of human life is that our days are numbered, and our time on earth passes quickly.
- All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever. (1 Peter 1:24–25 NIV)
- The only thing that remains is God and what He has said and promised.

12 Our own faults

- Are we blind to our own faults?
 - What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless. (Ecclesiastes 2:22–23 NIV)
 - Narcissistic people have a fatal flaw. They are blind to the fact that all their striving to manipulate people brings them little joy or real happiness.
 - Instead they blame others or the system and continue on their quest to achieve self-worth by gaining admiration.

13 The end of the Journey

- Moving beyond vanity begins when we discover that self-worth is not gained through selfish worldly accomplishments or the admiration that comes from them.
- If our lives are empty, then we should admit it and make the appropriate changes.
- If we don't, we could be called to give an account for our lives before we are ready.
 - "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:21 NIV)

14 The end of the journey

- Jesus teaches us that God—not ourselves—should be the center of our lives.
- Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:29 NIV)
- So how do we make God the center of our lives?
 - Love God with all our hearts . . . love our neighbor as ourselves.
- How does the book of Ecclesiastes end?
 - Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14 NIV)

15 Chasing after the wind

- Being self-centered, and self-absorbed may very well be an indication that our relationship with God is not complete. Why?
- When we are being affirmed by God, we won't need the affirmation or the admiration from people. We are content.
- QUESTION: Are we wearing ourselves out with labor and toil that is not satisfying the soul?

16 The couch

- Real Narcissistic people lack the ability to judge themselves.
- They blame and use people for their own self-interest. They also lack empathy.
- However, all of us, from time to time do demonstrate self-centered attitudes and actions.
- These weaken the presence of God in our lives and tempts us to rely on sensual gratification and worldly admiration as a substitute.
- This then makes it an imperative that we do self-examination.
- Why? Because it is good for our souls.

17 ARE WE CHASING AFTER THE WIND?