

the Mess

Genesis 3:1-7

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die." "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman.

Genesis 3:1-7

"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked."



What came before

What came after

Heaven

Earth

Holiness

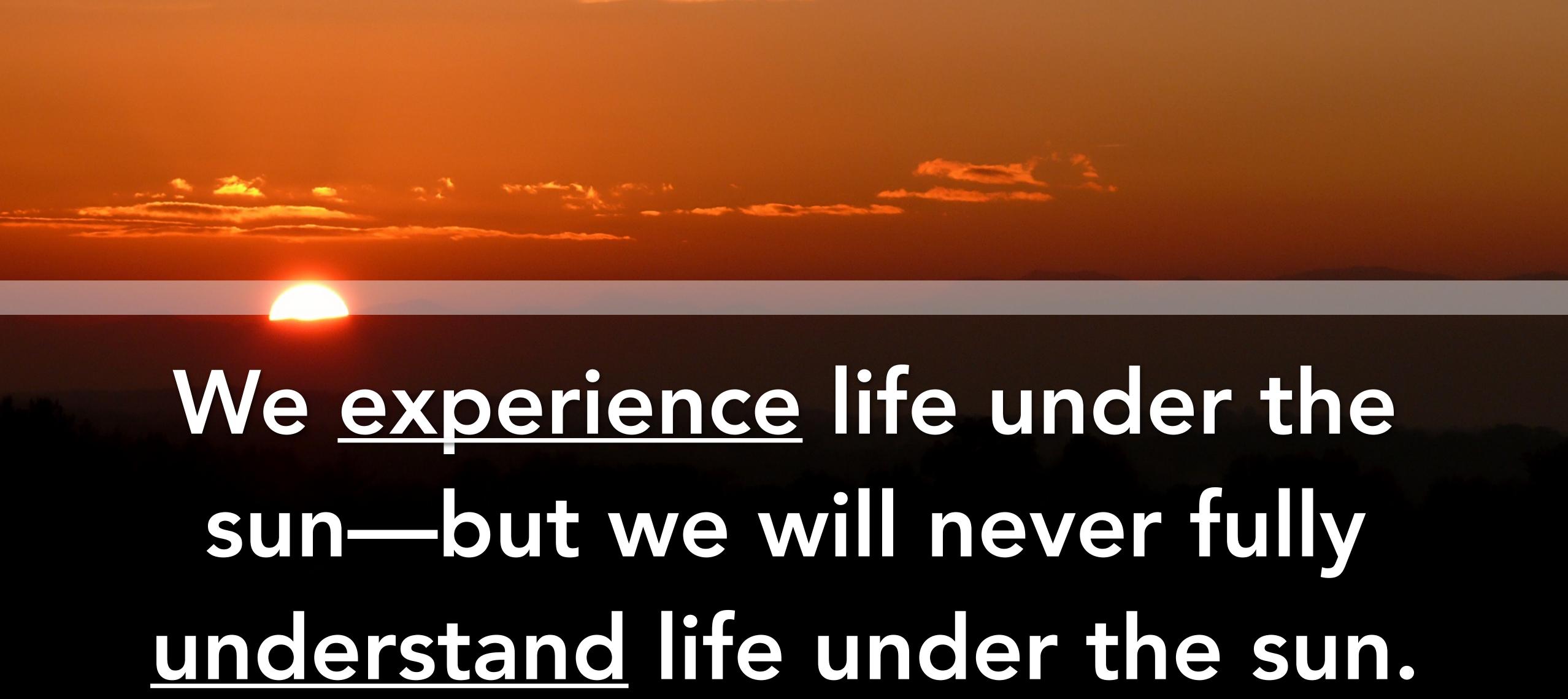
Sinfulness

Perfection

Brokenness

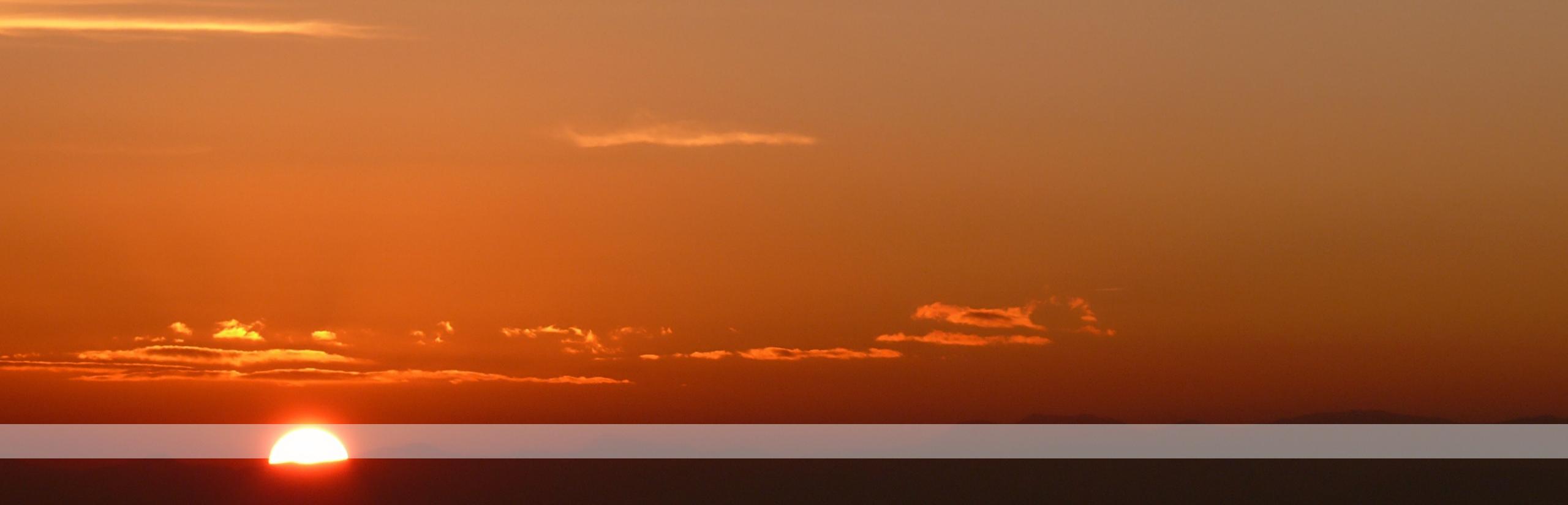
Life above the sun.

Life under the sun.

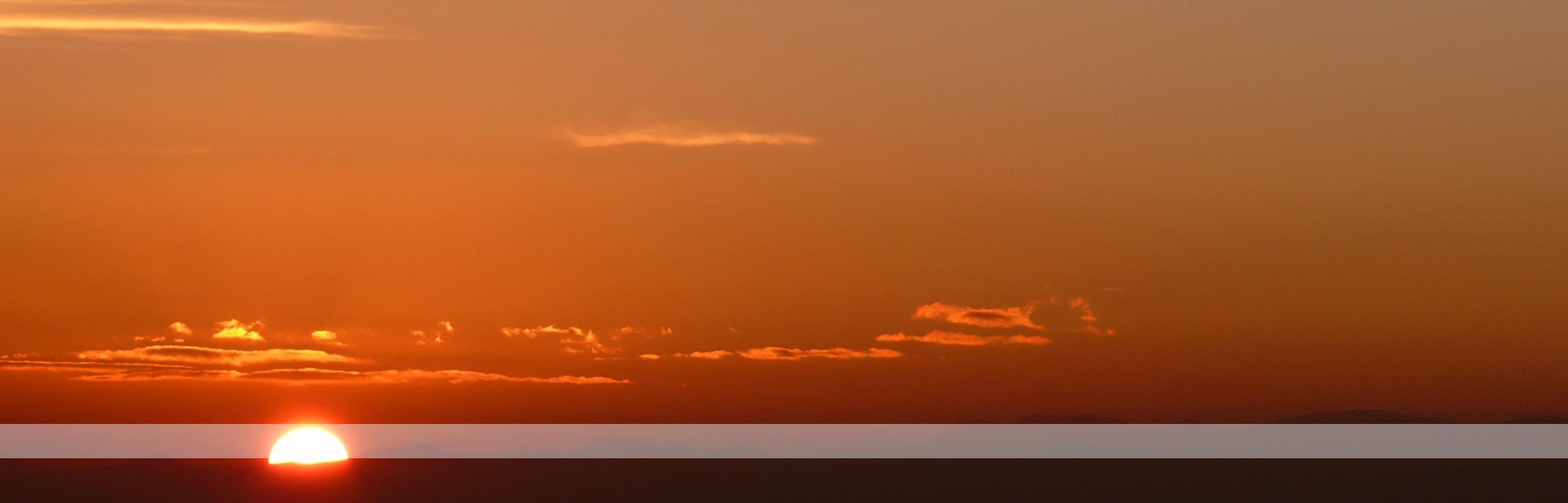


Matthew 7:24-25

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house..."



The critic (Solomon) takes a long, hard look at the rain, floods and winds that we all experience every single day.



1. Corruption & Oppression.

Ecclesiastes 3:16

"And I saw something else under the sun: In the place of judgment wickedness was there; in the place of justice wickedness was there."

Who is speaking up for the powerless? Who will defend those who have no voice?

Ecclesiastes 3:17
"I said to myself:

God will bring into judgment the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time to judge every deed."

Yes, but what about right now?

Ecclesiastes 4:1

"Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors and they have no comforter."

In the Bible, <u>oppression</u> involves cheating our neighbor of something, defrauding them, and robbing them. It involves making unjust gain. It is the abuse of power, financial and otherwise, perpetrated on those who are not so powerful and are indeed vulnerable—the poor, the widows, orphans, and strangers. Go into any corner this globe (3,000 years ago—or today), and you will find oppression everywhere.

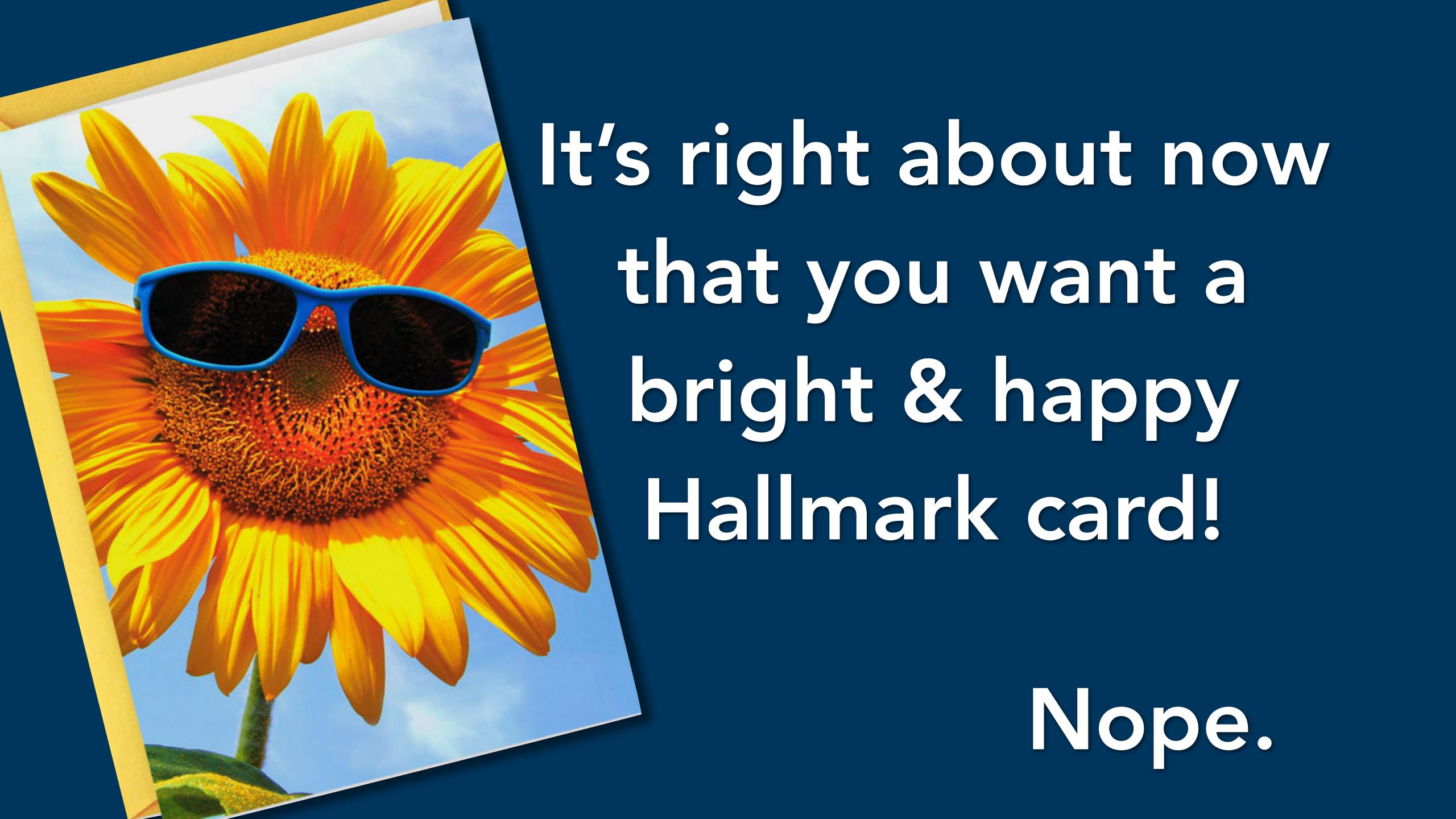
Why?

Because whatever corner you go into you find people.

And wherever you find people, you find oppression.

Why?

Because the human heart is sinful. Broken.



Ecclesiastes 4:2-3

"And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive. But better than both is the one who has never been born, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun."

Dead is good. But never born is even better.



But it's not just those "over us" who oppress us...
we step on each other to get ahead.



Ecclesiastes 4:4

"And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.



"Any friend can share your sorrows and failures, but it takes a true friend to share your joys and successes."

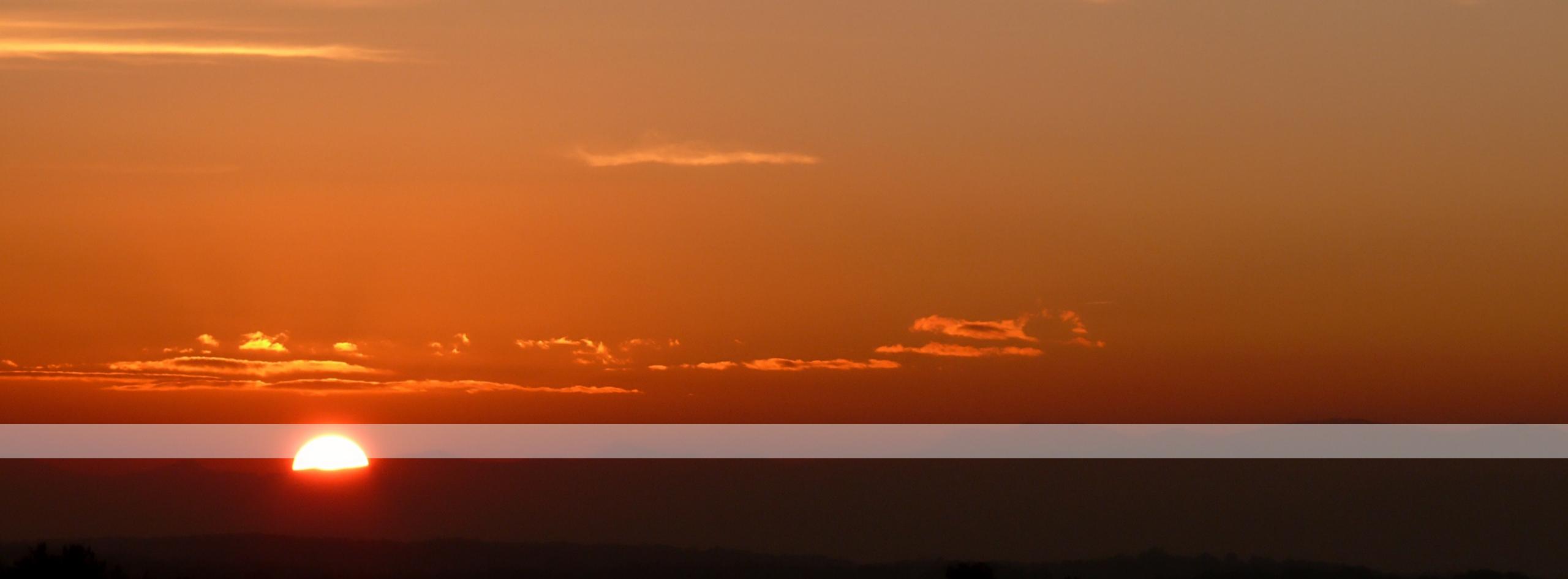
An Old Proverb

The critic is going deep inside the human heart.

What he doesn't find is contentment.

What he <u>does</u> find is laziness on the one hand, and workaholism on the other.

(vv. 5-6)



3. Isolation & Loneliness.

Ecclesiastes 4:7-8

"Again I saw something meaningless under the sun: There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. "For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?" This too is meaningless a miserable business!"

It's possible to "have it all" and actually have nothing at all.

It's not about money or possessions. It's about love. It's about people. It's about relationships.

God designed us to flourish in loving relationships.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Four benefits of companionship:

- 1. Potential for a larger profit.
 - 2. Help in time of need.
- 3. Emotional support (& warmth).
 - 4. Defense and Protection.

Yes...marriage is a great application.

But it's far more than that. (v. 7)

There is strength in numbers.

The answer to "life under the sun" isn't taking advantage of others—or envying them—or isolating ourselves.

These are all dead ends. Meaningless. Chasing after the wind.

Our only hope is in admitting that we need help.

It's in seeking companionship.

It's in turning to God.

