

# ECCLESIASTES

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VANITY, VANITY  
ALL IS VANITY

## STUDY GUIDE



SUMMIT VIEW CHURCH

# INTRODUCTION

At some point in your life, potentially multiple times, you'll ask yourself, "Is this all there is?!?" We have spent countless hours, exhausted our resources, and put all of our efforts into climbing to the top of the proverbial mountain. Once we've reached the top, we often wonder, "Is this all I'll ever have? Is this all there is worth living for?"

## *Have you been there?*

Maybe that is when you start a new hobby. Find a new career. Find a new spouse. The list goes on. We find ourselves having an insatiable hunger and thirst for more. Yet when we get what we were seeking, we're often left wanting.

Ecclesiastes is a book that puts on full display the utter futility of life. Yet at the same time, it is not done in a manner that is Eeyore-ish, asking, "Why bother?!" The book of Ecclesiastes teaches us that, despite our relentless pursuits, we are to live a life of faith and live life to its fullest, for that is God's intent for us. We are to enjoy this life and its pleasures as gifts from God.

Ecclesiastes invites us to escape our rosy-colored view of self. Self-confident lives protect us from cynicism and bitterness, knowing that wisdom, pleasure, wealth, and all our other pursuits are insufficient in providing what we really need. Ecclesiastes invites us to know God is there. He is good and generous. Life makes sense and is fulfilling only when we live with that understanding.



# INTRODUCTION

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide has been specifically prepared with you in mind. It will help life groups grow deeper together in their relationships with God and one another. Each week there are conversation starters to help get things rolling, followed by questions for discussion based on the text. Each week wraps up with personal applications and things to pray for to help you grow spiritually.

We realize you may not be able to get to every question. Pick the ones that would best work for your group. Obviously, you are more than welcome to pull in other resources, or highlights from the sermons each week. Our hope is that by participating in this study, you will have a firmer grasp on the Scriptures and a stronger connection with Christ.

***Note: Considering that we will be taking large sections of text each week, we understand time is limited in your meeting time. Prayerfully consider using what would work best for your group and encourage personal study/devotion for the other sections that you may not be able to cover in group time.***

## AUTHOR

At the beginning of the book, the author identifies himself as "son of David, king in Jerusalem." Other than this, the book is largely anonymous with no specific name given. Jewish and Christian tradition attribute the writing to Solomon. Even though his name is never mentioned within the book, he is the leading candidate as the one who penned it; especially when we take into consideration the author's description of his life and unrivaled wisdom ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), relentless pursuit of pleasure ([2:3](#)), empire building ([2:4](#)) and unequaled wealth ([2:7](#)).

As we study the book of Ecclesiastes, it is important to recognize that there are two speakers within the book, not just one. One of the speakers is referred to as the teacher (*Qoheleth*, a Hebrew term that means "one who assembles a group". Thus, why most translations use the term *preacher* or *teacher*). We see this person speak in [Ecclesiastes 1:12-12:7](#), occupying the bulk of the book.

The other person in the book speaks about the *preacher/teacher*. We see them introduce the book and the speaker in [Ecclesiastes 1:1-11](#) and provide an epilogue at the end of the book in [Ecclesiastes 12:8-14](#). This second speaker goes unnamed, but it is clear that he's speaking to his son ([Ecclesiastes 12:12](#)). The book could be characterized by having a person who is speaking to his son about the thoughts and lessons of the teacher.

# INTRODUCTION

## MAJOR THEMES

**VANITY.** The word *vanity* (hevel) and the longer refrain *vanity of vanities* (hevel hevalim) occurs 38 times. In other Old Testament books, the word hevel has a meaning of *vapor*, *breath*, or *breeze*. Life does not last long despite one's efforts to extend it. Life itself is also something elusive, we cannot fully grasp it or control it. Life is also something that can be quite disorienting and perplexing. When the preacher uses this word, he can be drawing from all these views.

**ENJOYMENT.** “There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat, drink, and find enjoyment in his toil.” The “calls to enjoyment” are frequent (2:24; 3:12, 22; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7–10). The Preacher encourages us to enjoy the life God has given us. That is the best course of action for us.

**TOIL.** Frequently, the Preacher poses a question asking a thematic question (1:3; 3:9; 5:16): “What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?” along with other occurrences of the word *gain* in 2:11, 13, 15; 3:19; 6:8, 11. No matter how much we strive and make an effort, all that we receive is much like the wind, something we cannot control, nor something we can eternally hold onto.

**UNDER THE SUN.** This phrase is used regularly in the Preacher's lesson, referring to a point of time, not necessarily a geographical description. “It's a way of saying that for as long as the earth lasts, in this period of time, this is how things are. This side of eternity, life is a breath.” (*Living Life Backward* by David Gibson, page 28.)

## PURPOSE

The Preacher's message is this: **Life is difficult and then you die.** Ultimately there is no meaning in life. We can't find meaning in wisdom because we can't even discern the time in order to say the right thing at the right time or do the right thing at the right time. Therefore, seize the day.

Tremper Longman suggests that the book of Ecclesiastes is “an idol buster.” Ecclesiastes teaches us that if we try to find the meaning of life in things such as wisdom, pleasure, wealth, work, etc. they will ultimately let us down. They are merely false gods. Ecclesiastes encourages us to put God first and when we do, everything else finds its proper place in life. The book aims to show that there is no contradiction between living life to its fullest and living a life of obedience to God.

# INTRODUCTION

## OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

- I. Prologue (1:1–11)
- II. The Pursuit of Vanities and Solution (1:4–2:26)
- III. God's Design for Time and Life (3:1–15)
- IV. Wickedness and Oppression Under the Sun (3:16–4:16)
- V. Fear God (5:1–7)
- VI. Life “Under the Sun” (5:8–8:15)
  - a. Futility of Suffering (5:8–20)
  - b. Futility of Riches (6:1–12)
  - c. Wisdom v. Folly (7:1–14)
  - d. Limitations of Wisdom (7:15–24)
  - e. The Heart of the Problem: Sin (7:25–29)
  - f. Foolish authorities v. Godly Authority (8:1–15)
- VII. Summary of the Preacher's Conquest (8:16–9:10)
- VIII. Lessons from Wisdom (9:11–11:8)
- IX. Instructions for the Young (11:9–12:7)
- X. The Epilogue (12:8–14)

## SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

**Video:** The Bible Project – Ecclesiastes Overview

**Book:** *Living Life Backward* by David Gibson

**Family Book:** *Golly's Folly: The Prince Who Wanted It All* Eleazar & Rebekah Ruiz

**Commentary:** *Why Everything Matters: The Gospel in Ecclesiastes* by Philip Ryken

**Commentary:** *Recovering Eden* by Zack Eswine

## INTRODUCTION

### WEEK ONE: ECCLESIASTES 1-3:15

Much of what we find within Ecclesiastes is not necessarily a list of imperatives (statements on how to live), but rather an honest description of how we experience our time on earth. Within this section of the book, the Preacher communicates to us how life is nothing but a brief (yet repetitive) blip on the radar while we seek to find meaning in countless things. Ultimately, only in God can we find our lives to be satisfying and fulfilling.

It is important for us to keep in mind that while we discuss and reflect upon the futility of life according to the Preacher's words, we also have redemption and hope in Christ.

## MAIN IDEA

While life on this side of heaven seems futile at times, it is still a gift from God.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** A word that you will find repetitiously within this section of text is *vanity*. What does it mean? What would be a modern-day equivalent for this word?

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## READ & DISCUSS

### READ ECCLESIASTES 1:1-11.

**Q.** These verses give the notion that nothing ever really changes in life. Do you agree?

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**Follow Up:** If the Preacher's words are true, do you find it liberating or frustrating to know that life is repetitive?

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**Q.** In verse 11, the Preacher communicates that our lives will eventually fade from memory. How does that make you feel?

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**Follow Up:** How does this impact the way you think about the legacy you wish to leave? *Hint: See Ecclesiastes 2:18-19 for some insight.*

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**Q.** Have you seen someone (famous, historical, or modern day) arrive at a similar conclusion that we should live as described in these verses? What were they like?

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**READ ECCLESIASTES 2:1-11.**

**Q.** Consider the pleasures listed by the Preacher in Ecclesiastes 2:2-11 (jokes, alcohol, art, nature, money/possessions, music, sex, affirmation, work). How does the Preacher affirm and warn about our partaking in these pleasures?

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**Q.** Can you think of a time where you felt you had gained what you set out for, yet only found in time that you were dissatisfied again? What did you do?

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**Q.** Satisfaction and contentment are ultimately gifts from God. Compare the comment made in Ecclesiastes 2:24 and Philippians 4:11-12. Do you see any connections?

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**READ ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8.**

**Q.** Of the 14 comparisons found within verses 2-8, which one resonates with you most right now? Why?

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**Follow Up:** Which one provides the biggest challenge?

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**Q.** Why is it important for us to understand that it is God who has created time, purpose, and a season for everything? How does this allow you to live more confidently?

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**Q.** Look at Ecclesiastes 3:11-13. This could be seen as a good summary of the entire book of Ecclesiastes. What is the Preacher seeking to communicate?

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**Follow Up:** What does it mean that God has “set eternity into man’s heart?”

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**Follow Up:** Do you see all the pleasures that we enjoy as God’s gift to you?

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**A Time for Everything**

*There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity  
under the heavens:*

*a time to be born  
and a time to die,*

*a time to plant  
and a time to uproot,*

*a time to kill  
and a time to heal,*

*a time to tear down  
and a time to build,*

*a time to weep  
and a time to laugh,*

*a time to mourn  
and a time to dance,*

*a time to scatter stones  
and a time to gather them,*

*a time to embrace, and a time  
to refrain from embracing,*

*a time to search  
and a time to give up,*

*a time to keep  
and a time to throw away,*

*a time to tear  
and a time to mend,*

*a time to be silent  
and a time to speak,*

*a time to love  
and a time to hate,*

*a time for war  
and a time for peace.*

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

**CONNECTING THE DOTS**

Throughout these three chapters of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher wrestles with the experience each of us faces on earth—a striving and working for satisfaction. Yet, the only true certainty we all have is that there is death at the end waiting for us all.

**Q.** Based upon what we've read, heard, and studied, what strategies do you think people (including yourself) use to avoid facing the reality of death?

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**Q.** According to the Preacher, why do you think the idea of embracing and understanding our death allows us a perspective to enjoy life?

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**PERSONAL APPLICATION & REFLECTION**

The word translated to *Preacher* in Ecclesiastes refers to “the gathering or assembly of a community of people.” Therefore, many see the words of the King of Israel, son of David (Ecclesiastes 1:1) being like a pastor in a church preaching to a people. One could read the book of Ecclesiastes as if it were a sermon to a church. If Ecclesiastes is like a sermon, how does this sermon differ from the kind of sermon that you are used to hearing? How can this sermon be one that God appointed for you to listen to and hear at this given point in time?

As we start this brief, but deep, five-week study, begin to reflect upon what God may be teaching you. We will revisit this at the conclusion of our study.



## INTRODUCTION

### WEEK TWO: ECCLESIASTES 4-5:7

It doesn't take long to look around and realize something isn't quite right. Romans 8:19-23 even tells us that creation groans under the weight of sin. It's not supposed to be this way! When God created the world and everything in it, He said it was good. However, when sin entered the world, everything began to disintegrate.

In our study time this week, we're going to compare the observations made by the Preacher in Ecclesiastes with God's redemptive plan.

## MAIN IDEA

God's plan for us leads to fulfilment and flourishing;  
man's way may be temporarily pleasing, but ultimately  
leads to frustration and disappointment.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** We've all started projects with an end goal in mind; an incredible picture of how we want it to be. Then reality sets in. Have you ever had a "Pinterest fail"? Share it and laugh with your group.

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## READ & DISCUSS

### READ ECCLESIASTES 4-1:3.

**Q.** Notice the use of the word *oppression* repeatedly. What comes to mind when you hear that word?

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**Follow Up:** You have heard the saying *absolute power corrupts absolutely*; but this is not God's way. Look at God's command in Genesis 1:26-31. God's plan for leadership fosters the betterment of society. Read the following Scriptures and discuss how God sees oppression, suffering, and our role as His followers:

- Psalm 146:5-9
- Isaiah 1:17
- Proverbs 14:31
- Exodus 22:21-27

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**Q.** How should we act in light of this truth? What does it reveal about God, and what does it show you about the disintegration brought into the world with sin?

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**Bonus:** Can you think of any Scriptures that show us Jesus' heart toward oppression (think of His interactions with individuals who were suffering)?

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**READ ECCLESIASTES 4:4-12.**

**Q.** Culture tells us to strive to get ahead and encourages us to always be looking for the next big thing. What does Jesus say about this? Read [Matthew 6:19-20](#) and [Luke 12:16-21](#). Why do you think it's so challenging to trust God with our "treasures"? What does that reveal about our hearts?

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**Q.** Read [Colossians 3:24](#). Our reward comes from God, but we have to wait for it. Why is it so hard to wait? What can you do to help yourself and those around you endure?

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**Q.** Read [Philippians 2:1-8](#). What was Jesus' attitude toward His position? How is this different than what you see in Ecclesiastes 4:4-6? What is similar? Are you clinging to rights and privileges

that need to be given up for the betterment of others?

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**READ ECCLESIASTES 4:13-16.**

**Q.** Honor and position are meaningless if you are a fool. We should strive to be wise. The book of James tells us that wisdom comes from God and that He gives it freely to those who ask without reproach ([James 1:5](#)). Do you think about asking God for wisdom? How is God's wisdom different from the wisdom of the world?

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**Q.** [Proverbs 1:7](#) says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Growing in wisdom will not happen by accident. In Matthew 7, Jesus tells the disciples to ask, seek, and knock and the door will be opened to them. What is your plan to grow in wisdom and understanding? If you don't have one, will you consider making a plan today?

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**READ ECCLESIASTES 5:1-7.**

**Q.** How do you approach God? Are you quick to speak, but slow to listen to what He has to say? Do you always come to Him with an agenda? When we come to Him this way, we are in danger of missing so much! Read [Isaiah 6:1-7](#) and then re-read [Ecclesiastes 5:1-7](#). How might Isaiah's response to being in the presence of God change your attitude when you come to Him?

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**Q.** How can you foster an attitude of reverence toward God? What do you think of when you think of Him? Do you think of God as a friend, father, or unapproachable? Do you think of Him as far away and removed from your life? Or do you know Him as holy, loving, faithful, merciful, and steadfast? A.W. Tozer says, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." It changes how we approach Him. Spend some time in your group talking through what God says about Himself in [Exodus 34:6-7](#).

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## PERSONAL APPLICATION & REFLECTION

Spend time praying for those in your life who don't yet know Jesus Christ as their Savior. Ask God for boldness to share the Gospel with them. Pray that your Life Group would be a place that is inviting to those who don't have a personal relationship with the Lord and that He would use you to expand His Kingdom. Pray for hearts that are enlightened to the hope of His promises and truth and that as a group and as individuals, you would be lights in the darkness. Don't forget to pray through what you've learned this week. Ask God to give you eyes to see others like He does; for willingness to use your position and possessions for others; for a heart that seeks wisdom; and reverence for who God is.



## INTRODUCTION

## WEEK THREE: ECCLESIASTES 5:8-8:17

Within this next large section of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher takes time to dethrone all the things we quickly elevate to the ultimate in life. Wealth, wisdom, political involvement— while all these things are fine within their proper context, they make really terrible gods. Whether we experience success in these, or suffer great loss, our role is to remember that it is God who gives and takes away. Regardless of what we experience, we must remember that God is with us.

## MAIN IDEA

Put your faith in something that  
is not under the sun.

***“Ecclesiastes was written to smash into tiny pieces our idea that we can be like God. We aspire to have it all, know it all, do it all, achieve it all, be happy forever, have all the answers, never be left scratching our head, and be remembered by all for all time. That’s what we hope for.”***

***– David Gibson, Living Life Backwards***

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** Can you think of something from your life (professional, hobby, etc.) that you poured countless hours and resources into, only to find out that much of what you accomplished was fairly useless?

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## READ &amp; DISCUSS

## READ ECCLESIASTES 5:8-6:12.

Within this section, the Preacher speaks to the ills of being consumed with wealth. Pursuing material gain is ultimately unsatisfying and the labor eventually comes to nothing when we reach the end of our lives. *Note: money/wealth isn’t inherently a bad thing; but the relentless pursuit of it is the problem being spoken of here.*

**Q.** What is the consequence spoken about in verse 12 for the one who pursues wealth?

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**Q.** What is the end result of the individual who makes this their sole focus in life (see verses 5:15-16)?

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**Q.** Connect the life application from these verses in connection to what Jesus teaches in [Matthew 6:19-21](#).

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**Q.** Ecclesiastes 6:7 states that “all the toil of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not satisfied.” Why does our physical labor allow us to feed and clothe ourselves, yet not have the ability to satisfy our souls? What is missing?

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**READ ECCLESIASTES 7:1-14.**

**Q.** Compare Ecclesiastes 7:1 with Proverbs 22:1. What piece of wisdom is being communicated here?

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**Follow Up:** If you could choose one or the other, which would you pick—riches or a good reputation? Why?

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**Q.** Verse 2 of this chapter begins to drive home one of the main ideas of the book of Ecclesiastes—to live your life in light of your last days. How should having a good understanding of our mortality impact the way we live today?

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**READ ECCLESIASTES 7:15-29.**

**Q.** Verses 15-18 describe a reality that is often highlighted in the Scriptures (Jeremiah 12:1; Psalm 37:3, 73:30, 94:3; Job 12:6, 21:13)—the righteous suffer while the wicked prosper. Would you agree with this statement? How does it make you feel that the Bible validates this reality?

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**Q.** In this section of the text, the Scriptures don’t paint a particularly positive picture of humanity (see verses 20 and 29). Is there anywhere in the Bible where we find a similar teaching?

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**Follow Up:** Despite all of that, how does God relate to humanity?

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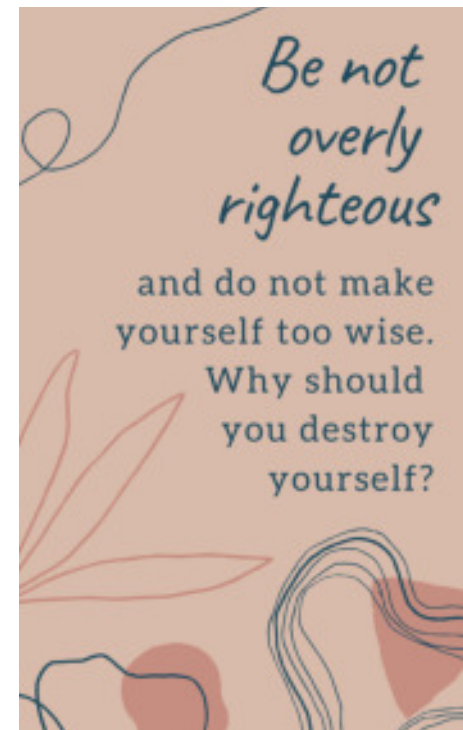
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## READ ECCLESIASTES 8.

**Q.** Verses 1-9 speak to one's level of engagement with civil authority. Does this teaching align with what we read elsewhere? (Consider Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-16).

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**Q.** In your own words, summarize the main point of the Preacher's lesson in verses 10-13.

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**Q.** The phrase "eat, drink, and be joyful" is found in verse 15. What do you think this means? Is it a good approach to life?

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## PERSONAL APPLICATION/ REFLECTION

Read Psalm 39:4-7 (inset). Arno Gaebelein, a former prominent Bible teacher, says, "Read this psalm frequently; it will bring blessing to heart and life."

This Psalm, much like the book of Ecclesiastes, challenges us to think about the brevity of life. While the world around us would like us to ignore this fact or delay the inevitable, as believers we can learn much by thinking about life, death, and eternity and ultimately find meaning.

Through reflecting on all of this, we soon discover the real meaning of our existence must be in relationship to our God.

This week, spend time turning to the only One who can, and has brought about meaning to you and your life.

*O LORD,  
make me know my end  
and what is the  
measure of my days;  
let me know  
how fleeting I am!*

*Behold, you have  
made my days  
a few handbreadths,  
and my lifetime  
is as nothing  
before you.*

*Surely all mankind  
stands as  
a mere breath!  
Selah*

*Surely a man goes  
about as a shadow!  
Surely for nothing  
they are in turmoil;  
man heaps up wealth  
and does not know  
who will gather!*

*And now, O Lord,  
for what do I wait?  
My hope is in you.*

**Psalm 39:4-7**

## INTRODUCTION

### WEEK FOUR: ECCLESIASTES 9-11

Depending on your personality, if we were to look at your schedule, how much of it is planned out? How many of you put together an annual plan of what you would like your life, finances, family, and career to look like? It's fairly common for us to daydream about the future and then try to reverse-engineer what it would take to get there.

While planning and strategizing are never just a task for naught, we often over-estimate what we're able to do and accomplish because ultimately, we are not in control. The only thing we know for certain that will happen is death. The rest is up in the air.

This is the lesson the Preacher further develops in our study of Ecclesiastes.



In this world,  
nothing can be said to be  
certain, except  
*death*  
and  
*taxes.*

*Benjamin Franklin*

## MAIN IDEA

We are not as in control of our lives as  
we think we are.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** What strategies do people (including yourself) use to distract themselves or attempt to control the uncertainties in life?

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## READ & DISCUSS

### READ ECCLESIASTES 9.

**Q.** In your own words, summarize the Preacher's teaching in verses 1-3.

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**Follow Up:** Do you see the tone of the Preacher's message as bleak? Or something else?

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**Q.** After speaking of the one certainty we all face (death), the Preacher reminds us that life is superior to death (see verse 4). He then speaks to finding things to enjoy in this life in verses 7-10. What are some things you could actively seek to enjoy today and tomorrow?

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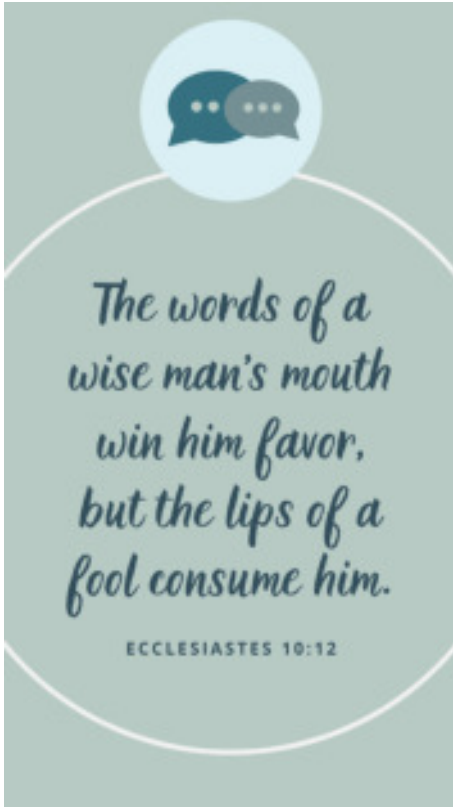
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**Q.** In verses 13-18, the Preacher shares a parable about a poor wise man. What lesson is he trying to convey by telling us this story?

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**READ ECCLESIASTES 10.**

Chapter 10 contains proverbs regarding wisdom and foolishness. The Preacher points out observations that he has made and provides some everyday life application. This chapter could be read like the book of Proverbs.

**Q.** How does the Preacher describe a wise man in comparison to a fool in verses 12-15? Where else in Scripture do we see a similar teaching? (*Hint: The fool destroys themselves with their foolishness.*)

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**Q.** In verse 19, the Preacher speaks highly of bread, wine, and money, even making the statement that “money answers everything”. Yet earlier in his lesson, he states that money can never satisfy (see *Ecclesiastes 5:10*). Is he contradicting himself here? Why or why not?

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**Q.** According to verse 20, what is a reason that we should be careful and cautious in how we carry ourselves and speak about others?

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**READ ECCLESIASTES 11.**

**Q.** In verses 1-6 of this chapter, the Preacher speaks to the uncertainty we have in being able to control circumstances as they arise. Yet, he speaks fairly clearly about how we should handle our resources in light of all of this. What does he say? (*Hint: Live openhandedly and generously.*)

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**Q.** Is it a new idea to you that God has actually commanded us to enjoy the things He has given us (*Ecclesiastes 11:9*)?

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**Follow Up:** What subsequent warning does the Preacher give in light of charging us to enjoy life?

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## CONNECT THE DOTS

**Q.** How do the lessons taught by the Preacher in chapters 9, 10, and 11 line up with the instruction that James gives us in [James 4:13-17](#)? How about [Proverbs 16:3, 9, 19:21](#)?

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## PERSONAL APPLICATION / REFLECTION

Ultimately, the reason we can release control of things in our lives is because God is good and does good. In all the uncertainty we may face in life, we can hold fast to these truths found within [Psalm 37](#).

Take some time reflecting, praying, and pleading these words to God and ask Him to make these truths evident in your life.

*Trust in the LORD and do good;  
dwell in the land  
and befriend faithfulness.*

*Delight yourself in the LORD,  
and he will give you  
the desires of your heart.*

*Commit your way to  
the LORD; trust in him,  
and he will act.*

*He will bring forth your  
righteousness as the light, and  
your justice as the noonday.*

*The steps of a man are  
established by the LORD,  
when he delights in his way;*

*though he fall, he shall not be  
cast headlong, for the LORD  
upholds his hands.*

**Psalm 37**



## INTRODUCTION

### WEEK FIVE: ECCLESIASTES 12

In a very poetic way, the end of the message found in Ecclesiastes is very poignant to our own end here on this earth. The message of Ecclesiastes isn't necessarily the idea that *nothing matters*, but in light of how the book ends, it's that *everything matters*. Ecclesiastes teaches us to live in light of this reality and stop ignoring what's coming towards us—death and judgement. For believers, this is something that is not to be feared, but embraced, for we know what lies ahead.

We need to remember who God is, who we are, and how He has called us to live before the life we have been given by God gets taken back by Him. It is with this knowledge that Ecclesiastes encourages us to live in light of that day; enjoying God, enjoying His gifts, and pointing others to live in a similar fashion.

## MAIN IDEA

Fear God and obey His commandments.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

Q. Does growing older always result in becoming wiser?

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## READ & DISCUSS

### READ ECCLESIASTES 12.

Q. What is the Preacher encouraging us to do when he says, "Remember your creator"?

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**Follow Up:** How can you go about remembering your creator on a daily basis?

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Q. In verses 2-8, the Preacher metaphorically describes the aging process. What images does he use to describe an aging person? (*Hint: He's speaking to a person's eyes, hands, back, teeth, ears, sleeplessness, feebleness, and death.*)

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**Follow Up:** How does this support the Preacher's point about remembering God in the days of your youth?

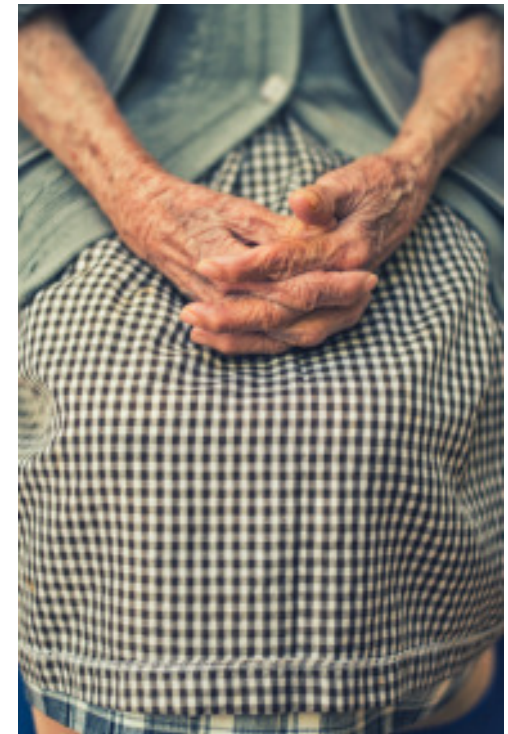
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Q. Who is the “one Shepherd” spoken of in verse 11? Why are his words described as “goad” (sharp as nails)? (*Note: A goad is a spiked stick used to drive animals.*)

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**Follow Up:** The Preacher’s words throughout this book have pushed us towards satisfaction in God—not wealth, possessions, status, etc. Why are these words painful to hear sometimes? During this study, has there been an area where you found yourself being poked or prodded in ways you weren’t anticipating?

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Q. Many scholars describe verses 9-12 as a mini commentary on the entire book. In your own words, how would you provide a conclusion to the book of Ecclesiastes?

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Q. In verse 13, we are told the duty of every person is to fear God and keep His commandments. What does this mean?

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**Follow Up:** According to the Preacher, what is the motivation for fearing God and keeping His commandments? (*See verse 14.*)

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**Follow Up:** Can you think of other passages in the Bible that help us understand what this means?

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## PERSONAL APPLICATION & REFLECTION

At the beginning of this study, we encouraged you to take note of some of the things you think that God may be using the book of Ecclesiastes to teach you. As you reflect upon the last five weeks, consider answering the following questions:

- Has anything shifted in your thinking since the beginning?
- How has God used this book to deepen your faith?
- What was most surprising, intriguing, or challenging to you about Ecclesiastes?
- What are some next steps for you?
- What would look different in your life if you took the Preacher’s message to heart?









## SUMMIT VIEW CHURCH

7701 NE 182nd Avenue  
Vancouver WA 98682  
(360) 260-8300

[summitview.net](http://summitview.net)

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