

The Search

Finding Purpose

leaders guide

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INTRODUCTION

Why Ecclesiastes?

What is the meaning of life? What's my purpose? Where do I find happiness? The wisest man who ever lived placed no limits on the length he would go to find these answers. Join us in our Spring series "The Search," as we go through the book of Ecclesiastes, where together we will discover the answers to these questions.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

We have designed this resource as a guide for you during our series titled "The Search: Meaning, Purpose, Happiness." We anticipate that the more you invest in the study, the more you will get out of it. Some ways for you to join us on this journey include the following:

Sunday Sermons: (April 8 - May 27) Scott and the teaching team will be preaching through Ecclesiastes, and we will discover that all we have been searching for is found in Jesus. This study guide provides space for you to take notes while listening to the messages.

Chair Time: Spend time reading and praying through the passages in your personal time with God each day. Pick a comfortable chair, set aside time each day to read Scripture, pray, and reflect on the questions in this guide.

Life Groups: Join a Life Group where you can journey alongside others. During your weekly Life Group gathering, you will get the opportunity to discuss what you are learning through the Sunday messages and your Chair Time and can support one another as you strive to apply what you are learning in everyday life. If you are not in a Life Group and would like to find out more or are interested in joining one, please visit www.eastpoint.church/lifegroups.

BIBLE STUDY 101

Is this your first time studying the Bible? Or are you feeling unsure how to best read the Bible? We want to come alongside of you and encourage you. Reading the Bible far surpasses reading any blog post, article, or book because every time you read Scripture, God promises to meet you there and accomplish his desires. Through the prophet Isaiah, God puts it like this,

***so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.***¹

Isaiah 55:11

What is the purpose of God's Word? It inspires worship and spurs life transformation, so consider yourself forewarned!

If you do not have a Bible, but you would like to engage in its life-changing truth, you can download a Bible for free right now by searching "Bible" in your phone's app store. The first one that pops up will probably be by YouVersion and look like this.



This is a great option! If you prefer a hard copy, swing by our Chair Time Resource Center under the big chair hanging from the ceiling on Sunday and we would love to give you one!

¹ This and all subsequent references are from the NIV, unless otherwise specified.

As you are reading the Bible, there are a few things you want to keep in mind:

- The Bible was inspired by God, the ultimate Author, and written by over 40 human authors. While the texts were initially written to people thousands of years ago, Scripture is also for us.
- Scripture records the redemption narrative:
 - **In the Beginning** (Genesis 1-2): God created the cosmos.
 - **Fall & Revolt** (Genesis 3-11): Humans (we) blew it and sin marred God's perfect creation and separated us from God.
 - **Chosen People** (Genesis 12-Malachi): God established a relationship with a group of people (the nation of Israel) and charged them to represent to the other nations what it looks like to follow him.
 - **Savior & Redemption** (Matthew-Acts 1): Jesus was the long awaited Messiah; he lived a sinless life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again on the third day.
 - **Church on Mission** (Acts 2-Revelation 20): Jesus instituted the Church and empowered his followers to carry on his mission of making disciples and bringing about his kingdom.
 - **Forever with God** (Revelation 21-22): We expectantly await our resurrection bodies and the new heavens and new earth.
- Being written in a different time and culture, it is of utmost importance that we seek to understand the context of the passage we are reading. The surrounding verses, chapters, book, and even the Bible as a whole will give helpful insight into what the author was communicating to his original audience. Study Bibles and online resources (such as www.biblegateway.com and www.biblestudytools.com) also provide some helpful information about the context of a passage.
- As you read, pray that the Holy Spirit will speak to you through the text. The Holy Spirit was involved in the writing of Scripture, so who better to help interpret it?
- It is always a good idea to study Scripture with a community. You can learn from others and it helps prevent misunderstanding of a passage. Life Groups are designed with this goal in mind.

BACKGROUND OF ECCLESIASTES

Understanding where Ecclesiastes falls in the overarching narrative of Scripture will aid our study tremendously. To catch us up to speed...

- God created the cosmos and it was very good, but Adam and Eve rejected God by disobeying him, resulting in sin corrupting God's perfect creation and severing people's relationship with him. (Genesis 1-3)
- God called Abraham out, making a covenant with him that he would make Abraham into a great nation (Israel). This great nation was intended to be an example to the rest of the world of what it looks like to be in a relationship with God. (Genesis 12-16)
- God followed through on his promise, as he always does, and blessed Abraham with a family through whom the Israelite nation was born - named after Abraham's grandson, Israel (Jacob). The Israelites ended up in Egypt because of a famine. (Genesis 17-50)
- Pharaoh became nervous when the Israelite nation grew so rapidly amongst his people, so he enslaved the entire Israelite nation. After being slaves in Egypt for 400 years, God raised up Moses and delivered them from slavery. (Exodus 1-14)
- Over the next 40 years, Israel wandered around in the wilderness because they did not believe God could give them the Promised Land the first time. During this time in the desert, they experienced God's gracious provision of food, water, and a law that outlined what it looked like to live in relationship with him, so they could be a light to the nations. (Exodus 15-Deuteronomy 34)
- When Moses died, God appointed Joshua to lead the Israelites into the long awaited Promised Land, so Joshua led the conquest. (Joshua 1-24)
- Once in the Promised Land, God appointed judges to lead his people. At this time in their history, the Israelites found themselves in a recurring cycle of disobedience to God, foreign oppression, crying out to God in distress, and God delivering them through a judge. (Judges 1-1 Samuel 7)

- Wanting to be like the other nations, Israel asks for a king. God allowed the Israelites to elect Saul as their king. (1 Samuel 8-31)
- Upon Saul's death, the prophet Samuel anointed David as the next king of Israel (1 Samuel 16). Though he had his ups and downs, David knew God and sought to obey him, and repented when he disobeyed - resulting in David later being referred to as a man after God's own heart. David was the model king of covenant loyalty to which the other kings were compared. (2 Samuel 1 - 1 Kings 2)
- When David died, his son, Solomon, replaced him as the king of Israel. Solomon asked God for wisdom, and God showered his favor on Solomon, making him the wisest and richest man the world had ever known (1 Kings 1-11).
- After experiencing all the world has to offer, Solomon records his reflections for us in Ecclesiastes.

Author

The author refers to himself as Qoheleth, the Hebrew word meaning assembler, preacher, or teacher. Although "the teacher" never blatantly identifies himself, tradition has it that Solomon is the author of Ecclesiastes since Ecclesiastes begins, "The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem" (1:1, emphasis mine).

Occasion

Solomon reigned in Israel from 970-930 BC, and he received not only wisdom from God--per his request, but God also blessed Solomon with lavish and extravagant riches. Solomon records his reflections on life after tasting all the world has to offer, and his conclusion, "'Meaningless! Meaningless!' says the Teacher. 'Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless'" (Ecc. 1:2).

Solomon is right, the search for meaning, purpose, and happiness is utterly meaningless when the sample size is simply what the world has to offer, but what Solomon did not know, and has since been revealed to us, is that Jesus alone satisfies our search for meaning, purpose, and happiness.

Poetry & Wisdom Literature

Ecclesiastes does not flow like a novel; rather, Solomon jumps around as if he is just jotting down whatever comes to mind. In many ways, the scattered and disjointed nature reflects the topic at hand because our human experience is often messy. His writing is rather philosophical in nature as he reflects on the meaning of it all.



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The Search

Series Schedule



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Week of April 8th

The Search: *What is the Meaning of Life?*

Week of April 15th

The Search: *Where Can I Find True Happiness?*

Week of April 22nd

The Search: *How Should I Use My Time?*

Week of April 29th

The Search: *How Can We Make Sense of the Unfairness of Life?*

Week of May 6th

The Search: *When is Enough, Enough?*

Week of May 13th

The Search: *Can I Find Satisfaction in My Work?*

Week of May 20th

The Search: *What Happens When I Die?*

Week of May 27th

The Search: *So What About the Future?*

PREPARING FOR EACH WEEK

1. Read the passage as often as possible - once a day (for shorter passages) or a couple times a week (for longer passages) is a good goal to have. We recommend reading the passage aloud if possible, as this will help you better remember the story. Reading and discussing the passage at the dinner table is a great way to involve your family and friends.
2. Seek to internalize the natural flow of the passage. The goal is not memorizing the passage word for word; rather, strive to be able to share the content of the passage in your own words.
3. Reflect on the study guide questions and jot down some notes or thoughts as this will help you prepare for your group's discussion.
4. If you find additional resources that are particularly helpful in your personal study, please bring them with you to Life Group and share with everyone else so they can benefit too.

*GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. We will share how we are able to apply the lesson from the previous week.
2. Someone will recall the content of the passage, outlining the major points.
3. We will work together to fill in any additional details we remember from the passage.
4. We will read the passage (or key sections of the passage when discussing a longer passage) aloud together.
5. We will discuss the passage using the study guide questions as our guide. (You may wish to have any study resources handy to help bring clarity. Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, commentaries, etc. are a few of the resources you can access online.)
6. We will share prayer requests and ask God to help us apply the lesson in our lives.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR LIFE GROUP GATHERING

Life Groups meet in homes during the week. When you arrive, you can expect to begin the evening with a time to meet and catch up with fellow group members over coffee and snacks. Once everyone arrives, your group will move into a time of Bible study and discussion.* This is a great opportunity to ask questions and discover how the Bible applies to your life. Your group will wrap up with a time of prayer. You may find that the relationships you develop within your Life Group become some of your most meaningful friendships.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE TO FACILITATE GROUP DISCUSSION

Each lesson has far more questions than you could ever reasonably discuss as a group during your group discussion time, so please do not try and answer them all. In conjunction with Scripture, use these questions as a launchpad for your group discussion. We have intentionally provided a number of questions because your conversation may go a variety of directions, and we want you to feel prepared however the Holy Spirit moves.

We are praying these questions will enable you all learn and experience the life-changing truths of Scripture!

The Search

What is the Meaning of Life?

Key Text: Ecclesiastes 1

Supporting Texts: Mark 8:34-38; Romans 8:18-25; James 4:14

CHAIR TIME & LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Celebrate

Before we get started with the study, would anyone like to celebrate how you saw God move in your life this past week? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Check Up

How did you apply what we discussed last time we were together? How is it going? (Let a couple of people share, but not everyone has to share.)

Opening Thought

Throughout life, we all find ourselves asking questions like: "What is the meaning of life?," "What is my purpose?," "How can I experience true happiness?," and many other questions of the like. We aren't the first to ask these questions, and we won't be the last. In this new study, we are going to dive into Ecclesiastes, where Solomon wrestles with these very questions, and prayerfully, we will discover answers to these age-old questions.

Pray

Sharing Question

On page 11 there is a list of all the questions and topics that we will be discussing in this series. As we kick things off, what question or topic are you looking forward to discussing? (Let everyone share to break the ice.)

Bible Storytelling

1. In preparation for your group discussion, read Ecclesiastes 1 a few times. Once you feel as if you have a pretty good grasp of the passage, try summarizing it below, and be sure to note any key facts (people, words, phrases, actions, locations, etc.) that are central to the passage.

- This week we will be primarily looking at Ecclesiastes 1. Before we open our Bibles and read it together, can someone recount the flow of the passage from memory? Don't worry if you can't remember everything; we will work together as a group to fill in the details.

Once you have done your best to summarize the passage, read it together.

- Having just read the passage together, are there any more key facts (people, words, phrases, locations, etc.) from the passage that are important for us to keep in mind as we continue to reflect and discuss?
 - What word is repeated frequently in this passage (and Ecclesiastes at large)?
 - “Meaningless/vanity” v. 2, 14
 - See “Biblical Context” below for a deeper word study.
 - What is Solomon’s conclusion after his extensive search (v. 13)?
 - “... all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind” (v. 14)

2. Read these supporting texts, and then jot down a note on each to help you remember what each of them are about.

Mark 8:34-38

Romans 8:18-25

James 4:14

Interpretation Questions

Biblical Context: In *Ecclesiastes 1:2*, Solomon uses the Hebrew word translated “meaningless” or “vanity” four times in just this one verse. He goes on to use the same word again and again (over thirty times) throughout the rest of *Ecclesiastes*. This Hebrew word literal means “vapor” or “breath.” The word connotes something is fleeting, such as a breath on a cold winter day.

3. What point do you suppose Solomon is trying to make in v. 2?

4. How does this word, “meaningless,” capture and depict our human experience?

5. How does Solomon answer the question he poses in v. 3, “What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun?” (vv. 3-11)

- “The task is never done; it just repeats itself again and again. There is no satisfaction under the sun. The universe is trapped in a meaningless cycle that never ultimately accomplishes anything, and human experience as a whole mirrors this. Our existence can be characterized as one of monotony and pointlessness. It is the same old, same old.”² -Daniel Akin and Jonathan Akin

² Daniel Akin and Jonathan Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Ecclesiastes*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary, (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 311-313, Kindle.

6. What is Solomon getting at when he deduces, "... all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind" in v. 14?

7. Based on this passage (and any prior familiarity you have with King Solomon's life), why is he a good example of trying everything under the sun as he alludes to in v. 14? Digging Deeper: Read 1 Kings 2-11 to get a snapshot of Solomon's life and reign.

8. What does Jesus have to say about the matter at hand in Mark 8-34-38?

9. How does Jesus satisfy our search for meaning?

Personal Questions

10. Have you ever felt like Solomon felt in this passage? Describe the emotions you felt around that experience.

11. Where have you searched for meaning in life? And what did you discover in your search?

Application Questions

12. Reflecting on these passages, the Sunday message, and our discussion together, what do you sense the Holy Spirit asking you to do this week?

- How can we come alongside of you and encourage you as you take this step?
- Next week, we will take some time at the beginning of our gathering to share the step we each took and how it went.

13. How will you share what you have learned with someone who isn't here (co-worker, non-Christian, etc.)?

Closing Thought

As we have already seen, Ecclesiastes is Solomon's raw, unfiltered processing of his experience in life. His conclusion after experiencing all the world has to offer?... Meaningless, everything is meaningless!... Given his experience and knowledge, he's correct, but Scripture reveals a more complete picture to us-- Jesus alone satisfies our search for meaning. As we pray together in a moment, let's praise Jesus for this very thing.

Communication

Share the announcements from the "Groups Weekly" email with your group members.

Care & Prayer

How can we pray for one another this week?

The Search

Where Can I Find True Happiness?

Key Text: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

Supporting Texts: Psalm 37:4; Ecclesiastes 6:6

CHAIR TIME & LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Celebrate

Before we get started with the study, would anyone like to celebrate how you saw God move in your life this past week? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Check Up

How did you apply what we discussed last time we were together? How is it going? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Opening Thought

How can I experience happiness? Since we were kids, we have asked variations of this question. Over the years we have sought the answer through various ways. Tonight, we get to see what God's Word says about the matter. How can we experience true happiness--happiness that lasts?

Pray

Sharing Question

To kick things off, how would you finish this statement, "I will be happy when...?" (Let everyone share to break the ice.)

Bible Storytelling

1. In preparation for your group discussion, read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 a few times. Once you feel as if you have a pretty good grasp of the passage, try summarizing it below, and be sure to note any key facts (people, words, phrases, actions, locations, etc.) that are central to the passage.

- This week we will be primarily looking at Ecclesiastes 2:1-11. Before we open our Bibles and read it together, can someone recount the flow of the passage from memory? Don't worry if you can't remember everything; we will work together as a group to fill in the details.

Once you have done your best to summarize the passage, read it together.

- Having just read the passage together, are there any more key facts (people, words, phrases, locations, etc.) from the passage that are important for us to keep in mind as we continue to reflect and discuss?

2. Read these supporting texts, and then jot down a note on each to help you remember what each of them are about.

Psalm 37:4

Ecclesiastes 6:6

Interpretation Questions

3. What is it about pleasure that is so alluring?

“Pleasure is a good thing that if turned into a god thing becomes an enslaving thing.”

- Daniel Akin and Jonathan Akin ³

4. How does Solomon’s pursuit of happiness parallel our cultural pursuit of the American Dream?

³ Daniel Akin and Jonathan Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Ecclesiastes, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*, (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 645-647, Kindle.

5. What is Solomon's conclusion after his pursuit of happiness through personal pleasure? What does this teach us about our pursuit of happiness?

6. What does it look like practically to "take delight in the Lord?" (Ps. 37:4)

7. How does Jesus satisfy our search for happiness?

Personal Questions

8. Solomon exhausted all the world has to offer in his pursuit of happiness. Where have you sought happiness in the past?

9. If you are gut level honest, where are you seeking happiness now? Why?

Application Questions

10. What step are you going to take this week in order to let Jesus satisfy your search for happiness more than he is now.

- How can we come alongside of you and encourage you as you take this step?
- Next week, we will take some time at the beginning of our gathering to share the step we each took and how it went.

11. Everyone around us is searching for happiness. How can you share what you have learned (through the passage, Sunday message, or our discussion) with someone who does not know what we have discovered--without being weird about it, of course?

Closing Thought

Like our search for meaning, our search for happiness is resolved in the person of Jesus. He alone truly satisfies. Even still, the temptation is to slip back into our former way of thinking because thousands of times every day we are bombarded with different ways the world promises to satisfy our pursuit of happiness. In order to maintain our satisfaction in Jesus, we need Jesus to strengthen us every day, so let's pray towards this end in a moment.

Communication

Share the announcements from the "Groups Weekly" email with your group members.

Care & Prayer

How can we pray for one another this week?

CHAIR TIME & LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Celebrate

Before we get started with the study, would anyone like to celebrate how you saw God move in your life this past week? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Check Up

Last week, we shared a step that we wanted to take in order to let Jesus satisfy our search for happiness more than we were previously letting him. How did this go for you? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Opening Thought

Time; we all have the same amount of it--whether we are the president of the United States or a barista at Starbucks--and yet we all view and experience time differently. Whether it is time in a day or seasons of life, once the time has past, we never get it back. Our lives are composed by how we use our time. Tonight, we continue our search, this time, around how we view, experience, and should approach our time.

Pray

Sharing Question

What are three words you would use to describe your current season of life? (Let everyone share to break the ice.)

Bible Storytelling

1. In preparation for your group discussion, read Ecclesiastes 3 a few times. Once you feel as if you have a pretty good grasp of the passage, try summarizing it below, and be sure to note any key facts (people, words, phrases, actions, locations, etc.) that are central to the passage.

- This week we will be primarily looking at Ecclesiastes 3. Before we open our Bibles and read it together, can someone recount the flow of the passage from memory? Don't worry if you can't remember everything; we will work together as a group to fill in the details.

Once you have done your best to summarize the passage, read it together.

- Having just read the passage together, are there any more key facts (people, words, phrases, locations, etc.) from the passage that are important for us to keep in mind as we continue to reflect and discuss?

2. Read these supporting texts, and then jot down a note on each to help you remember what each of them are about.

John 13:7

Ephesians 5:15-16

Philippians 4:10-13

Interpretation Questions

Take a moment and fill in the rest of this chart based on Solomon's account of the different times in vv. 2-8.

Positive	Negative
Born	Die

Literary Context: Daniel Akin and Jonathan Akin explain, "Matching opposites is a poetical device known as "merism," which not only makes statements about the two extremes but also everything in between them. For example, one common biblical merism is "heaven and earth" which does not mean simply the ground and the sky but everything in creation." ⁴

3. What is the point that Solomon is trying to make here (vv. 2-8)?

⁴ Daniel Akin and Jonathan Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Ecclesiastes*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary, (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 836-838, Kindle.

4. How is God's perception of time different from our perception of time? (vv. 9-15)

- What would it look like for us view time through God's lens of time? How would we live differently?

"There's a freedom that comes from realizing that we are dependent on God, that there's nothing we can do to change His plans."

-Tim Chaddick ⁵

5. How does knowing that God has a grand plan and is in control give us the freedom to enjoy time now?

6. What are some indicators in our lives that we are made for more than time as we know and experience it; we are made for eternity?

⁵Tim Chaddick, *Better: How Jesus Satisfies the Search for Meaning*, (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2013), 100.

7. How do you suppose Paul can say, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstance" (Phil. 4:11b)?

Biblical Context: *Paul writes a letter to the Philippian church (Philippians) while imprisoned for proclaiming Jesus and sharing his faith. In this short letter, he talks about joy/rejoicing over a dozen times.*

Personal Questions

8. How closely is your level of contentment tied to your current life circumstances (positive or negative)? Why?

- If a family member or longtime friend were asked the same question about you, what would they say? Why?

9. Have there been any times or seasons in life that you did not understand in the moment, but now when you look back you have a clearer understanding? How did God move in or use this season?

Application Questions

10. How can we, very practically speaking, live “not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity” (Eph. 5:15-16)?

11. What adjustment are you going to make to your schedule or rhythm of life this week, so you can make better use of the time God gives you?

- How can we come alongside of you and encourage you as you make this adjustment?
- Next week, we will take some time at the beginning of our gathering to share the adjustment we made and how it went.

12. With who would you like to make a better use of your time (ex. family, friends, coworkers, etc.)? How will you maximize the time God gives you with them this week?

Closing Thought

To close I like to read a quote from Exalting Jesus in Ecclesiastes, “God sent His Son Jesus into this cursed world to experience all of the times and seasons that we do. There was a time for Jesus to be born, a time for Him to heal the sick, a time for Him to build up, a time for Him to tear down long-held structures, a time for Him to party with sinners, a time for Him to weep at his friend’s grave, and a time for Him to die. He entered into this miserable world to take on all of its pain and suffering. He took the curse on Himself so that God could turn the evil of the cross— wicked men murdering the Son of God— into the salvation of the world. Romans 8 tells us our lives fit into this same plan, where joy and pain ultimately bring us into conformity with Christ.”⁶

Communication

Share the announcements from the “Groups Weekly” email with your group members.

Care & Prayer

How can we pray for one another this week?

⁶ Akin and Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Ecclesiastes*, 1019-1024, Kindle.

The Search

How Can We Make Sense of the Unfairness of Life?

Key Text: Ecclesiastes 4

Supporting Texts: Ecclesiastes 3:16-17; 5:8; 9:11-12; Romans 5:3-5

CHAIR TIME & LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Celebrate

Before we get started with the study, would anyone like to celebrate how you saw God move in your life this past week? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Check Up

Last week, we discussed an adjustment that we each wanted to make to our schedule or rhythm of life, so we can make better use of the time God gives us. How did that go this past week? What was your experience? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Opening Thought

All over the news we see injustice after injustice. How can we process the fallenness and brokenness of the world we live in? Solomon observed it too, so tonight we are going to see what we can learn from his observations.

Pray

Sharing Question

Briefly describe a time when you experienced the "unfairness" of life. (Go first as the leader and set the tone--remember this is just to break the ice, so don't go too deep too quick or else people might close off. Let everyone share to break the ice.)

Bible Storytelling

1. In preparation for your group discussion, read Ecclesiastes 4 a few times. Once you feel as if you have a pretty good grasp of the passage, try summarizing it below, and be sure to note any key facts (people, words, phrases, actions, locations, etc.) that are central to the passage.

- This week we will be primarily looking at Ecclesiastes 4. Before we open our Bibles and read it together, can someone recount the flow of the passage from memory? Don't worry if you can't remember everything; we will work together as a group to fill in the details.

Once you have done your best to summarize the passage, read it together.

- Having just read the passage together, are there any more key facts (people,

words, phrases, locations, etc.) from the passage that are important for us to keep in mind as we continue to reflect and discuss?

2. Read these supporting texts, and then jot down a note on each to help you remember what each of them are about.

Ecclesiastes 3:16-17

Ecclesiastes 5:8

Ecclesiastes 9:11-12

Romans 5:3-5

Interpretation Questions

3. As you survey the landscape of our society, make a list of some of the injustices you see.

4. Describe the hope Solomon finds amidst the injustice and oppression he observes. (3:16-17; 4:1-3)

5. What is the net result of suffering when God is involved? How does this alter our perspective on suffering? (Rom. 5:3-5)

6. What point is Solomon making about community in vv. 9-12? How does this relate with what he is saying in the rest of the passage?

7. How did Jesus approach the injustice of his day? Do any specific accounts or scriptures come to mind?

Personal Questions

8. How do you find hope in the “unfairness” of life?

9. In vv. 9-12, Solomon highlights the importance of friends who have your back. Describe a relationship that you have in which you have each other’s backs.

10. What are the particular injustices that especially burden your heart that you would love to see resolved in your lifetime?

- What step do you need to take to be part of the solution to this end?

Application Questions

11. What are a couple of ways that you can seek justice for the oppressed?

12. How does your perspective need to change the next time you face something that seems unfair?

13. How will you share what you have learned with someone who isn't here (co-worker, non-Christian, etc.)?

Closing Thought

God hates injustice even more than we do, and he has promised that one day it will come to an end once and for all (Rev. 21:1-5). As we await this day, we shouldn't wait passively but actively. We are charged to overflow God's love by joining him in his work of ending because injustice has no place in God's Kingdom.

Communication

Share the announcements from the "Groups Weekly" email with your group members.

Care & Prayer

How can we pray for one another this week?

The Search

When is Enough, Enough?

Key Text: Ecclesiastes 5:8-20

Supporting Texts: 1 Kings 10:14-29; Proverbs 15:16;
Ecclesiastes 4:6; 1 Timothy 6:6-10

CHAIR TIME & LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Celebrate

Before we get started with the study, would anyone like to celebrate how you saw God move in your life this past week? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Check Up

How did you apply what we discussed last time we were together? How is it going? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Opening Thought

Whether it's with our family, friends, or neighbors, it is easy to look around and find ourselves wanting what they have. Then the mental game starts and we convince ourselves that if we could just have what they have (more), upgrade ours (more), or get a raise (more), then we would have enough--how's that going by the way? Today, we are going to look at what Solomon has to say regarding the matter because he tried running on the "enough" treadmill too.

Pray

Sharing Question

As we get started, how would you complete this statement, "If I had a little more _____, then I would be content and have enough?" (Let everyone share to break the ice.)

Bible Storytelling

1. In preparation for your group discussion, read Ecclesiastes 5:8-20 a few times. Once you feel as if you have a pretty good grasp of the passage, try summarizing it below, and be sure to note any key facts (people, words, phrases, actions, locations, etc.) that are central to the passage.

- This week we will be primarily looking at Ecclesiastes 5:8-20. Before we open our Bibles and read it together, can someone recount the flow of the passage from memory? Don't worry if you can't remember everything; we will work together as a group to fill in the details.

Once you have done your best to summarize the passage, read it together.

- Having just read the passage together, are there any more key facts (people, words, phrases, locations, etc.) from the passage that are important for us to keep in mind as we continue to reflect and discuss?

2. Read these supporting texts, and then jot down a note on each to help you remember what each of them are about.

1 Kings 10:14-29

Proverbs 15:16

Ecclesiastes 4:6

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Interpretation Questions

3. Describe Solomon's experience with riches--highlighting his authority to speak about wealth. (1 Kings 10:14-29)

4. What is the core issue that Solomon is getting at in this passage? (Ecc. 5:8-20)

5. How do these supporting texts (Prov. 15:16; Ecc. 4:6; 1 Tim. 6:6-10) shed light on Solomon's point in Ecclesiastes 5:8-20?

6. What is the solution to turning up the "just a little more" setting again on the "enough" treadmill?

7. How does the gospel (the good news of Jesus) combat the cultural pressure for more, more, more?

Personal Questions

“How we related to money says an awful lot about the spiritual condition of our souls.”

-Tim Chaddick ⁷

8. Why do we think that we will be the exception to Solomon’s (and our) observations--that when we do get a little more, then we will be content and have enough?

- What would Solomon say to us about this?

9. In what area of your life do you frequently find yourself wanting more because you do not feel as though you have enough? Once you have identified an area, pause for a moment, and ask the Holy Spirit, “What is going on under the surface (in my heart) that leaves me always wanting more in this area?”

- How does Jesus satisfy this underlying desire?

⁷Tim Chaddick, *Better: How Jesus Satisfies the Search for Meaning* (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2013), 81.

Application Questions

“Don’t allow money to control you; instead allow the love of Christ to compel you. Sign up for a different economy: the economy of grace.”

-Tim Chaddick ⁸

10. What are you going to do this week to simply enjoy the blessings God has given you? (vv. 18-20)

- Next week, we will take some time at the beginning of our gathering to share what we did and how it went.

11. Given Solomon’s conclusion, what do you sense the Holy Spirit asking you to do this week?

⁸Chaddick, Better, 94.

12. How will you model contentment with what God has given you rather than being driven by more (in your family, workplace, etc.)?

Closing Thought

We've tried our culture's approach of always try to get more, do more, earn more, so we can have just a little more and thus be content, and we've experienced where it has gotten us. How about we give God's approach a try and simply enjoy the blessings he has already given us? Instead of chasing contentment, let's choose to be content--contentment seems to be more about a heart posture anyways.

Communication

Share the announcements from the "Groups Weekly" email with your group members.

Care & Prayer

How can we pray for one another this week?

CHAIR TIME & LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Celebrate

Before we get started with the study, would anyone like to celebrate how you saw God move in your life this past week? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Check Up

In our last discussion, we talked about doing something to simply enjoy the blessings God has already given us; what did you do to practice this last week? How did it go? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Opening Thought

Work, we all do it, but few of us love it. Whether it is in an office, outside, or at home, work characterizes much of our week. Many of us have experienced the frustrations of work, but can we experience satisfaction in our work? And if so, what would that even look like? Solomon wrestled through these same questions, and tonight, we get to discuss this very thing.

Pray

Sharing Question

What is the first job that you ever had? OR What is your favorite job that you have ever had? (Let everyone share to break the ice.)

Bible Storytelling

1. Read these texts, and then jot down a note on each to help you remember what each of them are about.

Ecclesiastes 2:22-23

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13

Ecclesiastes 4:4-8

Ecclesiastes 9:10

Genesis 2:15

Genesis 3:17-19

Colossians 3:22-24

Interpretation Questions

2. How do you reconcile these passages in Ecclesiastes as some appear to contradict each other?

3. How would you summarize Solomon's perspective on work?

4. What do we learn about work from the Garden of Eden--Genesis 2:15 (pre-Fall) and Genesis 3:17-19 (post-Fall)?

Biblical Context: *In Colossians 3:18-25, Paul lays out instructions for the various relationships we have in life, revealing how we can honor God through each of them. In v. 22, Paul talks about slaves/bondservants and masters--while our minds jump to what slavery looked like in our nation's history, this is not the slave/master relationship that Paul was referring to in his day and age. Even though it is not a direct parallel, Paul's instructions for slaves/bondservants and masters reveal what the employee/employer relationship should look like in God's economy.*

5. How do Paul's comments in Colossians 3:22-24 shed light on honoring God through our work?

6. Given all of these passages, how should we view our work?

7. How does Jesus provide purpose in our work?

Personal Questions

8. Who do you know that has a healthy satisfaction in their work?
What can we learn from them?

9. If you were to rate your satisfaction level in your work on a scale of 1-10 (1 being absolutely no satisfaction and 10 being fully satisfied in your work), what is your satisfaction level in your work right now?
Why?

- What would it take for you to grow in your satisfaction level?

Application Questions

10. In your current work situation, how can you work “with all of your might” as Solomon talks about in Ecclesiastes 9:10?

11. Reflecting on these passages, the Sunday message, and our discussion together, what step do you sense the Holy Spirit asking you to take this week?

- How can we come alongside of you and encourage you as you take this step?
- Next week, we will take some time at the beginning of our gathering to share the step we each took and how it went.

12. How will you show or share what you have learned about satisfaction in your work with your coworkers this week?

Closing Thought

As we've seen, God instituted work in the very beginning, but as a result of the Fall, "painful toil" all too often characterizes our work. By God's grace, we can experience satisfaction in our work when we have a proper perspective on it. Rather than dreading what composes 40-50 hours of our week, let's ask God to give us satisfaction in our work as he uses us to accomplish the purposes he lays before us.

Communication

Share the announcements from the "Groups Weekly" email with your group members.

Care & Prayer

How can we pray for one another this week?

CHAIR TIME & LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Celebrate

Before we get started with the study, would anyone like to celebrate how you saw God move in your life this past week? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Check Up

Last week we discussed satisfaction in our work. How did you approach your work differently this past week given our discussion last time? How did it go? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Opening Thought

Tonight's topic of discussion is more somber in nature. Death isn't fun to talk about, but avoiding the subject isn't a healthy approach either. Solomon lays out his reflections on death in the raw, unfiltered way we've come to expect, and in doing so, he opens up the conversation for us.

Pray

Sharing Question

When were you first confronted with the reality of death (Let everyone share to break the ice.)

Bible Storytelling

1. In preparation for your group discussion, read Ecclesiastes 9 a few times. Once you feel as if you have a pretty good grasp of the passage, try summarizing it below, and be sure to note any key facts (people, words, phrases, actions, locations, etc.) that are central to the passage.

- This week we will be primarily looking at Ecclesiastes 9. Before we open our Bibles and read it together, can someone recount the flow of the passage from memory? Don't worry if you can't remember everything; we will work together as a group to fill in the details.

Once you have done your best to summarize the passage, read it together.

- Having just read the passage together, are there any more key facts (people, words, phrases, locations, etc.) from the passage that are important for us to keep in mind as we continue to reflect and discuss?

2. Read these supporting texts, and then jot down a note on each to help you remember what each of them are about.

John 11:1-44

Romans 6:23

1 Corinthians 15:12-58

Interpretation Questions

3. Thinking about the funerals you've been to and conversations you've had, what are some of the ways that our culture talks about or refers to death?

- When we pause and think deeper about these common phrases and sayings around death, what do they reveal about how we view death?

4. What are some ways the people try to run from or escape the reality of death?

5. What words would you use to describe Solomon's attitude around death?

6. What conclusions does Solomon draw regarding death?

7. How does contemplating death change the way you think about life?

8. What Solomon didn't know, but we now know is that Jesus changes everything in the conversation around death. How would you respond to Solomon's reflections on death given what you know about Jesus? (John 11:1-44; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:12-58)

Personal Questions

9. What was your first encounter with death? How did it shape you?

10. In what ways have you processed death in the past that were helpful?

Application Questions

GriefShare: *Processing the death of a loved one is challenging, and you don't have to do it alone. GriefShare is a support group for those grieving the loss of a friend or family member that meets weekly at The Point. Check out www.eastpoint.church/griefshare for more information.*

11. In v. 7-10, Solomon shares his advice for making the most of the life we have. What is one thing you are going to do this week to enjoy the life God has given you?

12. How can you make the most of the life God has given you now since “no one knows when their hour will come” (v. 12)?

- How can we come alongside of you and encourage you in this?
- Next week, we will take some time at the beginning of our gathering to share how it is going.

13. Given the uncertainty of death, how will you share the hope of life in Jesus this week?

Closing Thought

As Solomon oh so clearly lays out, death apart from Jesus is uncertain and meaningless. What Solomon aches for, the New Testament answers--Jesus resolves death by paying the wage of sin (death) and rising again, giving us the hope and promise of new life, eternal life. So while death stings right now, it isn't the end of the story for those of us who know and follow Jesus.

Communication

Share the announcements from the “Groups Weekly” email with your group members.

Care & Prayer

How can we pray for one another this week?

The Search

So What About the Future?

Key Text: Ecclesiastes 12

Supporting Text: Matthew 22:37-40

CHAIR TIME & LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Celebrate

Before we get started with the study, would anyone like to celebrate how you saw God move in your life this past week? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Check Up

How did you apply what we discussed last time we were together? How is it going? (Let a couple of people share, but everyone doesn't have to share.)

Opening Thought

As we wrap up our study in Ecclesiastes tonight, Solomon's ultimate conclusion about life is revealed. Through discussing his conclusion, we will recap where we have been and draw our own conclusion and application points, so that we can live live characterized by meaning, purpose, and happiness.

Pray

Sharing Question

What was your favorite age, or what age are you looking forward too? Why? (Let everyone share to break the ice.)

Bible Storytelling

1. In preparation for your group discussion, read Ecclesiastes 12 a few times. Once you feel as if you have a pretty good grasp of the passage, try summarizing it below, and be sure to note any key facts (people, words, phrases, actions, locations, etc.) that are central to the passage.

- This week we will be primarily looking at Ecclesiastes 12. Before we open our Bibles and read it together, can someone recount the flow of the passage from memory? Don't worry if you can't remember everything; we will work together as a group to fill in the details.

Once you have done your best to summarize the passage, read it together.

- Having just read the passage together, are there any more key facts (people, words, phrases, locations, etc.) from the passage that are important for us to keep in mind as we continue to reflect and discuss?
 - What is Solomon's bottom line conclusion when it is all said and done?
 - Vv. 13-14: fear God and keep his commandments; God is the judge of all

2. Read this supporting text, and then jot down a note on each to help you remember what each of them are about.

Matthew 22:37-40

Interpretation Questions

3. How do we prize youth in our culture? In what ways is this good, and in what ways is this bad?

4. At the very end, Solomon boils it all down in vv. 13-14. How does what he state here help us make sense of Ecclesiastes as a whole?

5. What does it mean to “fear God” in v. 13?

6. What parallels do you see between what Solomon says in vv. 13-14 and what Jesus says in Matthew 22:37-40?

Personal Questions

7. Ecclesiastes is a record of Solomon’s reflections on life, and in vv. 13-14 he shares his deductions after trying everything life has to offer. Based your life experience up to this point, what conclusions have you drawn? (This may take some time to put into words, but try to summarize your view of life in a sentence or two.)

8. While our days are numbered, we have no way of telling how many more we have. What do you want to characterize your remaining day (as few or many they may be)?

Application Questions

9. How can we remember our Creator in everyday life as Solomon instructs in v. 1?

10. Reflecting on our study in Ecclesiastes over the last couple of months, how do you need to live differently? What are you going to do about it?

- How can we come alongside of you and encourage you as a group towards this end?

11. With whom do you need to share what you have learned through this study in Ecclesiastes? How will you share it with them?

Closing Thought

To wrap things up, I'd like to read a quote from Tim Chaddick in his book titled *Better*, which is basically his take on Ecclesiastes and how Jesus satisfies the search for meaning, "What's the point in life? It is this: to know Jesus, be made more like Him, live as He calls you to live, and be with Him forever. Until we understand that nothing matters without Him, we won't understand that everything matters because of Him. Everything else is vanity."

Communication

Share the announcements from the "Groups Weekly" email with your group members. Remind group members that this is your last regular Life Group Gathering before summer break. (We encourage you to periodically get together as a group for social or service activities (once a month is probably a good frequency), but we take a break from the regular weekly rhythm for the summer.)

Care & Prayer

How can we pray for one another this week?

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Akin, Daniel L., and Jonathan Akin. Exalting Jesus in Ecclesiastes. Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016. Kinde.

Chaddick, Tim. Better: How Jesus Satisfies the Search for Meaning. Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2013.

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