



ECCLESIASTES

Faith Covenant Church

Lesson	Date	Subject	Verses
1		Wisdom	Intro/1:1-2:11
2		Seasons	2:12-3:15
3		Popularity	3:16-4:16
4		Riches	5:1-20
5		Prosperity	6:1-7:14
6		Obedience	7:15-8:17
7		Reflection	9:1-10:20
8		Conclusion	11:1-12:14

Ecclesiastes

Lesson 1

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

Introduction to Ecclesiastes

Though there is no mention of who the author is of Ecclesiastes, it is widely believed to be King Solomon, due to points in the book that match up with Solomon's life such as Son of David, king in Jerusalem (1:1), great wisdom (1:16), extensive building projects (2:4-6), incomparable wealth (2:7-9), and his many proverbs (12:9). It is estimated that the book was written around 940 BC, which would have been 9 years before Solomon's death in 931 BC. The words of the book seem to be that of a tired man looking back over his lifelong search for meaning and purpose. Ecclesiastes derives its name from the Greek work *Ekklesiastes*, which when translated into English means *the Preacher*. Before the Bible was translated to Greek, the Hebrew word for Preacher was *Qoheleth*, (*kohelet*) which literally is an official speaker of an assembly of people.

Ecclesiastes is considered to be a pessimistic, or negative book of poetry, however this is a mistaken view. There is a common misinterpretation of the Hebrew word *hebel*, to be meaningless in the NIV, or vain in other translations, however the word actually better translates to vapor, puff of smoke, or brief as a breath. We see other examples of *hebel* in the Bible in:

Psalm 39:5-6

5 You have made my days a mere handbreadth; (*hebel*) the span of my years is as nothing before you. Everyone is but a breath, (*hebel*) even those who seem secure. 6 "Surely everyone goes around like a mere phantom; in vain (*hebel*) they rush about, heaping up wealth without knowing whose it will finally be.

Psalm 39:11

11 When you rebuke and discipline anyone for their sin, you consume their wealth like a moth—surely everyone is but a breath (*hebel*).

Proverbs 31:30

30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; (*hebel*) but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

The *Qoheleth*, never resigns himself to atheism or, agnosticism, but firmly holds to the notion that the fear of God is man's strongest duty.

Ecclesiastes

Lesson 1

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Introduction of Ecclesiastes

As we study Ecclesiastes we will see that it is a meditation on what it means for our lives to be like a whisper spoken in the wind: here one minute, and carried away forever the next, and also how life seems to elude our grasp in terms of lasting significance. Wisdom literature asks, what does it mean to fear the Lord, in the world the Lord has made? Along with Job, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes is a meditation on what it means to be alive in a world that God made, and called good, yet which has also gone so very wrong, often in catastrophic ways. If we won't live forever, or even long enough to make a lasting difference to the world, how then should we live? It will take the whole of Ecclesiastes to answer that question, and we will unpack it verse by verse over the next 8 weeks.

Ecclesiastes **Lesson 1**

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

Background: The Preacher begins his judgement of life when it is viewed from purely a world view, under the sun.

Toil under the sun

Read Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

1. Compare Ecclesiastes 1:3 with Matthew 16:26. What is the important lesson you learn?
2. What is the problem with man looking for satisfaction in things of this world? Where can real satisfaction be found? (See Philippians 4:6-7, 11-13)
3. How permanent is anything we are able to do in this world?

Lesson: _____

Wisdom

Read Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

4. Why is the search for worldly wisdom a never ending circle?

Ecclesiastes

Lesson 1

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5. Why is the pursuit of knowledge vain in the following verses?

Verse 13:

Verse 15:

Verse 18:

6. How are you applying yourself to the understanding of wisdom? Of madness and folly?
What have been your results of these applications?

Lesson: _____

Pleasure

Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

7. What stayed with the Preacher throughout all of these things he pursued? Why is that significant?

8. What was the purpose of the Preacher's quest?

9. In which of these things have you searched for fulfillment?

Lesson: _____

Challenge: What path will you follow this week in search for fulfillment?

Ecclesiastes

Lesson 2

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

Last week we saw The Preacher begin his judgement of life when it is viewed from purely a world view, in toil, wisdom, and pleasure. This week the Preacher will continue his judgement in wisdom & folly, grievous work, and remind us everything has a season.

Wisdom & Folly

Read Ecclesiastes 2:12-16

1. What 2 things happen to both the wise and the fool?
2. Why does the Preacher reject that having any wisdom, has any lasting importance?

Lesson: _____

Grievous work

Read Ecclesiastes 2:17-26

3. What does the Preacher conclude is good for man to do? Why is this good to do?
4. How can the preacher's conclusions about work, and labor be considered consistent with the teaching in Colossians 3:23 to work hard to the best of our abilities?
5. What quickly causes the pride of our accomplishments to pale?
6. What gets you up in the morning? (What are you laboring after?)
7. How would you describe "true joy" to someone who has no idea of it?

Lesson: _____

Ecclesiastes

Lesson 2

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

Everything has a season

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

8. How is God's providence illustrated in these verses?

9. How must we respond to the works of God that we cannot comprehend? (see 2 Corinthians 5:7)

10. What are you trying to add to or take away from what God has done? What do you need to do to correct this?

11. How could you have a wiser perspective of your time?

12. Which of these seasons are you currently in? How are you dealing with it?

Lesson: _____

Challenge: How will you fear God this week?

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

Last week the Preacher taught us about wisdom and folly, grievous work, and there is a season for everything. This week we will look at the Preacher's view of judgement, oppression, and the vanity of popularity.

Judgement

Read Ecclesiastes 3:16-22

1. What consolation do we have, despite the evil that prevails?
2. In what sense is mankind no better than beasts?
3. In what sense is mankind different from beasts?
4. How has justice been replaced with wickedness in your life, or the lives of those you know? How do you deal with it?

Lesson: _____

Oppression

Read Ecclesiastes 4:1-12

5. Why does the Preacher praise the dead over the oppressed?
6. What are the benefits of having friends or companions in the following verses?
Verse 9:
Verse 10:
Verse 11:
Verse 12:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

7. Consider the time you spend working, versus the time you spend relaxing with others. Could you spend more or less time on either of them? How do you plan to do this?

8. What practical steps can you take to prevent laziness, or being overly busy?

Lesson: _____

Popularity

Read Ecclesiastes 4:13-16

9. Why is it better to be a poor but wise youth, than an old but foolish king?

10. How does the Preacher illustrate the vanity of popularity?

11. What do you learn from the old king?

12. What do you learn from the poor wise youth?

Lesson: _____

Challenge: How will you live your life for Jesus this week?

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

Last week we learned about the wickedness of judgement under the sun, oppression, and the vanity of popularity. Today we are going to study about vows to God, the briefness of riches, and gladness of heart

Vows to God

Read Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

1. Why is it important for us to be sincere and serious in our worship of God? (see Matthew 6:7, 15:9; Isaiah 1:10-17)
2. What is the proper motivation behind faith in God?
3. Why is the pursuit of ceremonialism a vain attempt to find fulfillment?
4. In what ways could someone's mouth lead them into sin? How has your mouth led you into sin?

Lesson: _____

Briefness of riches

Read Ecclesiastes 5:8-17

5. Why can someone who loves wealth, never be satisfied with wealth?
6. Why is it impossible to find security in the wealth we accumulate, to provide that security?

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

7. How are you finding satisfaction in your toilsome labor?
8. How are you enjoying the gifts God has given you?
9. According to these verses, or any other scripture you may know, how can the hoarding of riches be evil?
10. How does the Preacher describe the life of a miser?
11. In what ways does your life reflect the life of a miser?

Lesson: _____

Gladness of heart

Read Ecclesiastes 5:18-20

12. How is a little bit of contentment able to give someone peace and tranquility?

Lesson: _____

Challenge: How will you find security in Jesus this week?

Ecclesiastes

Lesson 5

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

Last time we met we learned about being ceremonial faithful, in making vows to God, the vanity of hoarding of riches, and finding satisfaction in our toil. This morning we will look at enjoyment lost, the heart of the wise, and wise shelter.

Lost enjoyment

Read Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

1. Are riches, wealth, and honor evil things? What is the evil affliction associated with them?
2. How is a stillborn child better than a prosperous man?
3. How is a person's life like a shadow?
4. What advantage do the wise have over the fools? (see previous lessons)

Lesson: _____

Heart of the wise

Read Ecclesiastes 7:1-10

5. Why is someone's day of death better than the day of birth? What scripture do you know to support this?
6. What can you learn about death, and funerals from these verses?
7. When have you looked back and thought about the "good old days?" How do you feel about those days now?

Lesson 5

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

8. What other scripture verses do you know that speak of foolish anger? What do you learn from them?

Lesson: _____

Wise Shelter

Read Ecclesiastes 7:11-14

9. How is wisdom a shelter, as money is a shelter?
10. What is the value of wisdom?
11. How do you react when going through bad times?
12. What about the future concerns you?

Lesson: _____

Challenge: How will you seek God's shelter this week?

Lesson 6

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

In our last lesson the Preacher taught us about enjoyment that has been lost in our toil, the benefits of a wise heart, and the wise shelter is in God, Today we will look into extremes, schemes, and obedience.

Extremes

Read Ecclesiastes 7:15-26

1. How could a person be overly righteous, or overly wicked?
2. Why might a person go to extremes in righteousness or wickedness?
3. What realizations about ourselves, and our fellow man, should make us more tolerant, and patient with others?
4. How are we bewildered by the things we see going on in the world today? What can we do about it?

Lesson: _____

Schemes

Read Ecclesiastes 7:27-8:1

5. What does “adding one thing to another to discover the scheme of things” mean to you?
How can you put this into action in your life?

Lesson 6

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

6. Why do you think the Preacher has found only one upright man, and no upright women? Who is the one man? (see Job 33:23-24)

7. What is the only thing the Preacher has found?

8. How can wisdom, brighten someone's face, and change their hard appearance?

Lesson: _____

Obedience

Read Ecclesiastes 8:2-17

9. How are we counseled to act before those in charge of us?

10. What will wisdom tell us about the king, and his position?

11. Though the wicked may not immediately reap what they sow, what eventually is their downfall?

12. What is true about the work of God? In light of this, what should be our response to His work?

Lesson: _____

Challenge: How will you fear God this week?

Ecclesiastes

Lesson 7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

Last week, we learned that wisdom overdone is not really wisdom at all, that wisdom can change a person's hard appearance, and life is sometimes unfair. Today we will look at the Preacher's reflections that there is a common destiny for all, wisdom is best, even if it is uncertain, and that there are consequences to certain actions.

Reflection

Read Ecclesiastes 9:1-10

1. How can death be fair and unfair?
2. What is the hope of those who are still living?
3. What are some of the good things the Preacher lists, that we can enjoy in this life?
4. What does "Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil" mean to you?

Lesson: _____

Quiet words

Read Ecclesiastes 9:11-18

5. How should we prepare for the unavoidable uncertainty of death?
6. What tragedy do you notice about the story of the wise man in these verses?
7. List some Bible examples where one wise man made a great impact.

Ecclesiastes

Lesson 7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

8. List some Bible examples where one foolish person brought about great destruction.

Lesson: _____

Consequences

Read Ecclesiastes 10:1-20

9. How does a fool announce his folly? (see Proverbs 18:2)

10. Why won't an unjust ruler react fairly to criticism of him?

11. How are fools consumed by their own lips?

12. Why is there a time to keep silent?

Lesson: _____

Challenge: How will you live the life God has given you with gladness this week?

Lesson 8

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding –Proverbs 9:10

Last week we learned of the common destiny for all, being wise is better than folly, and sometimes silence is golden. Today we finish our study of the Preacher with wise investing, being wise in your youth, and the final conclusion of the matter.

Investments

Read Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

1. How should we react to things we cannot change or control?
2. How much of your life is shaped by confident predictions about the future?
3. Who causes the wind to blow, the baby to grow, or the seed to grow? What does this teach you about where your trust should be?
4. How are you living entirely for success, that in the end you failed to succeed or enjoy life?

Lesson: _____

Wise youth

Read Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:8

5. How are you enjoying all of the days you live?
6. What do you remember about your days of darkness?

Lesson 8

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7. How can someone remember their creator in their youth?
8. How is your future shaping your present?

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Final conclusion

Read Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

9. What good are the words of the wise?
10. What kind of advantage do we have by listening to the Preacher?
11. Based on what we know of the Preacher, how do you think he came about his conclusion of the matter?
12. Now that all has been heard, what conclusion do you arrive at after studying Ecclesiastes, and what has brought you to that conclusion?

Lesson: _____

Challenge: How will you fear God, and keep His commandments, all your days under the sun?

