

SOLOMON THOUGHT ABOUT LIFE

ECCLESIASTES 1



KEY PASSAGE: Proverbs 3:7

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What does God know? God knows everything about the past, present, and future.

CHRIST CONNECTION: People spend their lives trying to get riches, power, and fame, but none of it lasts. Only a life spent trusting in Jesus as Savior and following Him will matter in the end. Jesus lived, died, and rose again so we could find purpose in Him and be with God forever.

STORY POINT: Solomon taught that life has no meaning apart from God.



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The book of Ecclesiastes is part of the Old Testament poetry and wisdom division. Ecclesiastes was written by King Solomon toward the end of his life as he reflected on his legacy and leadership. Though he had all the riches and wisdom life had to offer, he relayed in this writing that nothing matters apart from fearing the Lord and walking in His ways.

If everything is worthless, how are we to live meaningful lives as Christ followers? How is Jesus able to redeem our purpose in life?

The overall tone of Ecclesiastes seems pretty dreary. Solomon spoke of the meaninglessness of all our hard work and effort as people in a fallen world. These ideas seem to be in stark contrast to the ideas of God's beautiful, wonderful creation that we find throughout Scripture. A deeper look reveals that Solomon wasn't commanding his readers to stop caring about working hard, investing in the next generation, or experiencing what life has to offer. Instead, he poetically explained how lives spent on pursuing only the things of this world have no eternal meaning and will not be remembered.

The pursuits of this life are done in vain when we place them above our pursuit of the Lord and the wisdom He provides. Everything loses its meaning when held up against the cross of Jesus Christ. Only a life built on faith in Jesus will matter in the end.

When we order our lives with Jesus as our main pursuit, we experience the purpose and meaning that Christ died for us to receive; we experience life everlasting here and now. The gospel frees us from chasing after temporary, empty things and transforms our hearts to love and serve God. Christ died so that we may have life and have it in abundance (John 10:10).

Lead boys and girls to see the beauty of a life spent pursuing Christ! When all else seems meaningless, in Him we find our meaning as creations lovingly fashioned by a good Creator. Pray that they would turn from their sins and receive the gift of abundant life.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- ☐ "Follow Jesus" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- ☐ 8–10 foot-long rope
- ☐ tape
- ☐ stickers

Session Starter (Option 2)

- ☐ variety of leaves, 1 or 2 per kid



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- ☐ colander or sieve
- ☐ pitchers filled with water, 2
- ☐ clear bowl
- ☐ bowl

Activity Choice (Option 2)

- ☐ ink pads
- ☐ watercolor paints
- ☐ paint brushes, 1 per kid
- ☐ construction paper, 1 piece per kid

Reflection and Prayer

- ☐ Bible story coloring page



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- ☐ countdown video
- ☐ Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- ☐ Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- ☐ "Solomon Thought About Life" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster

Questions from Kids

- ☐ "Unit 12, Session 3" Questions from Kids video

Key Passage Activity

- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "Fear the LORD (Proverbs 3:7)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)
- ☐ sticky notes, 1 per kid



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

| **SAY** “What is the most special item you own? What makes it so special to you?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Follow Jesus” activity page.

| **SAY** “We can follow many different paths in life, but only a life spent trusting in Jesus as Savior and following Him will matter in the end.”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: MAKE IT MATTER!

Before the session, wrap tape around the first 5-6 inches of a 8–10 foot-long rope. Guide two leaders to hold the rope while the kids place stickers on the taped portion, trying to cover as much of the tape as possible. Tell kids to not place any stickers outside of the taped portion. Prompt kids to think about how the taped portion of the rope represents our life on earth, and the rest represents our eternity.

| **SAY** “The taped portion of the rope could only hold so many stickers. We could live trying to gain money, get the most friends, make the best grades, or be the best athlete—but none of it lasts. How we live our life now affects how we will spend eternity. Today, we will learn how **SOLOMON TAUGHT THAT LIFE HAS NO MEANING APART FROM GOD.**”

☐ OPTION 2: LEARNING FROM LEAVES



Before the session, gather a variety of different leaves from the trees around your house or church. Provide each kid with a piece of paper and a crayon. Show them the leaves you gathered, and invite them to pick one leaf each. Demonstrate how to cover their leaf with a sheet of paper and color over the paper with a crayon. This will pick up all the grooves and lines, leaving the kids with an imprint of their leaves. Encourage them to hang on to their leaf drawing as a reminder of what they will be learning.

| **SAY** “Leaves grow, change color, and soon die. But God designed the leaves with good purposes. Did you know that the leaves help make food for the tree or plant? They do! They make sugar for the plant. Leaves also produce oxygen for our planet. Big trees with lots of leaves provide shade. And we experience their beauty when they change colors. God controls the seasons and the changing of the leaves, just as He is in control of our lives. Even though the leaves may only be alive for a short time, God has given them purpose. Today, we’ll learn how we find meaning and purpose when we follow Jesus.”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “Hi, kids! My name is [your name]. If you have a Bible with you, will you hold it up? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] Today, we will be in a book of the Bible called Ecclesiastes. The book of Ecclesiastes is in the Old Testament right after the book of Proverbs.

As we hear our story, we will see that **SOLOMON TAUGHT THAT LIFE HAS NO MEANING APART FROM GOD.** [Display the Story Point Poster.] How we live matters! God wants to give our lives meaning and purpose in Him because He loves us. Let’s pray together: ‘God, thank You for making Yourself known to us so we can find meaning and purpose in You. Give us ears to hear and hearts to believe Your Word. Amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “What does God know? Who remembers the answer? [Allow responses.] **God knows everything about the past, present, and future.** Let’s say the answer again: **God knows everything about the past, present, and future.**

King Solomon’s wisdom came from God. He wasn’t wise on his own. Solomon understood that God knows everything. Today, we will learn how God spoke through Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes and how God helps us understand that we are wise when we love Him and follow Jesus. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “After David died, God chose Solomon to be king over the Israelites. Solomon was young and didn’t know how to lead God’s people well. God appeared to Solomon in a dream and told Solomon to ask for anything. Solomon asked for wisdom to lead God’s people. God gave Solomon wisdom, and Solomon used his wisdom to build a temple for God. The temple was a place for the Israelites to worship God, and it was also a reminder of God’s presence and His promise to build a forever kingdom through David’s family. Today, we will learn how Solomon wrote a book called Ecclesiastes and shared how our lives have no meaning apart from God. ”



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Ecclesiastes 1:1-11. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Solomon Thought about Life.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

SOLOMON THOUGHT ABOUT LIFE

“Solomon was the richest man in the world. He was famous. He was wiser than any man who had ever lived. He was the most powerful person in all of Israel. Yet, Solomon realized that having all these gifts could never give his life meaning and purpose.

Solomon wrote a book called Ecclesiastes to teach this truth to other people. The book begins this way:

“‘Absolutely worthless,’ says the Teacher.

‘Everything is absolutely worthless.’

What does a person gain for all his hard work?

All his sweat and effort that he gives under the sun?

A generation of people dies, and another is born,

But the earth is pretty much the same as it has always been.

The sun rises and sets over and over, the same as it always has.

The wind rushes to the south, then to the north, and it’s always turning in cycles.

The streams all flow to the sea, but the sea is never full, and the streams keep flowing.

Everything is so tiring, more than anyone wants to say out loud.

No matter what you see, you always want to see more.

No matter what you hear, you always want to hear more.

What has been before will be again.

What you do today, you’ll have to do again tomorrow.

There is nothing new anywhere under the sun.

No one remembers the people who came before them.

And no one who will be born in the future will be remembered either.”

Solomon wanted people to realize that no matter what we do on earth, none of it really matters unless we are living for God’s glory. Knowing and serving God is what truly matters (Eccl. 8:12).

Christ Connection: People spend their lives trying to get riches, power, and fame,

STORYTELLING TIPS

Use facial expressions:

As you read, invite kids to use facial expressions to describe how Solomon felt about life. This will help enforce that life without God is sad and empty.

Change locations:

If weather permits, consider teaching the lesson outside. Prompt kids to look around at all God has made. Remind kids that all of this is meaningless apart from God who created it!



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

but none of it lasts. Only a life spent trusting in Jesus as Savior and following Him will matter in the end. Jesus lived, died, and rose again so we could find purpose in Him and be with God forever. ”

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ God gave Solomon riches, fame, and wisdom. But Solomon wanted to remind people that all of these things would never be as important or as wonderful as God. What book did Solomon write to help people understand this truth? [Allow responses.] Through the book of Ecclesiastes, **SOLOMON TAUGHT THAT LIFE HAS NO MEANING APART FROM GOD.**

Solomon understood that everything on the earth is the same as it has always been. What are some things that happen in your life every day? [Allow responses.] The sun rises in the morning, and we wake up. The sun sets, and we go to bed. We eat, we play, and we do chores. Doing these activities without honoring God through them won’t matter in the end. But when we do these activities for God, we know they will matter because they glorify Him.

What did Solomon say matters in life? [Allow responses.] Solomon said what matters most is knowing God and living for Him. Even though people are sinful, those who trust in Jesus will be forgiven of their sin and can live for God. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ Only a life spent trusting in Jesus as Savior and following Him will matter in the end. Jesus lived, died, and rose again so we could find purpose in Him and be with God forever. Have you trusted in Jesus? Do you follow Jesus and live for Him? ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 12, Session 3” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How can we remember to serve the Lord as we go about our days?
2. How does following Jesus give our lives purpose?

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

SAY “ Orvil Reid was a missionary to Mexico from 1938–1976. One way Orvil drew in crowds to share the gospel was through strong-man feats. One time, nine male students tried to pull an iron bar from Orvil’s grip but could not succeed. Another time, Orvil challenged four men to bend his outstretched arm. During another feat, Orvil clasped his hands together and challenged 32 men to pull them apart. After these performances, Orvil would share the good news about Jesus. ”

Invite kids to perform some fun “strength-building” skills. Lead kids to do jumping jacks, arm circles, crab walks, and to lay on their stomachs while lifting feet, legs, hands, and head into



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the air to see how long they can maintain the pose. Compliment the kids on their acts of strength.

Close in prayer, thanking God for sending missionaries like Orvil Reid to tell the people of Mexico about Jesus. Thank God for the purpose He gives Christians to tell others about Jesus.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Proverbs 3:7 together.

SAY “Solomon taught that earthly things don’t last. We know how to live with purpose when we turn away from sin and turn to Jesus. Now let’s explore this truth more in our key passage.”

Write a word or two of the key passage on sticky notes. Place one sticky note on each kid’s forehead. Encourage them to work together to find out which word each person has. Instruct them to arrange themselves in the correct order of the key passage. Once the kids are lined up, help them recite the key passage from memory along with you.

Lead kids to sing “Fear the LORD (Proverbs 3:7).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “God, thank You for providing us with what is lasting through your Son, Jesus. Help us be light in a dark world and share the meaning and purpose You offer with those around us. Amen.”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles, and display the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Ecclesiastes 1. Share how the book of Ecclesiastes is in the Old Testament poetry and wisdom division. Discuss how Ecclesiastes shares two perspectives: a life lived without God and a life lived trusting God.

Consider pointing out Jerusalem (H5) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ecclesiastes 1:8, or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verse aloud.

SAY “ Have you ever had a toy, but then it broke and you couldn’t play with it anymore? [Allow responses.] Or maybe you’ve had a toy, but then didn’t want to play with it anymore. Toys don’t last, and no matter how many toys or treasures we have, we eventually get tired of them and want something new. Everything on earth fades away. But a life lived for God will never fade away. God gives our lives purpose, and those who trust in Jesus will live with Him forever. ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “ How does God give us purpose? ”

Tell kids that everything God does is for His glory. This means that God is most important and most valuable because He is Creator and King. God made us to bring Him glory. When we live in ways that help others see how wonderful, valuable, and great God is, we bring Him glory. Encourage kids to think about how they are living with purpose to glorify God.

SAY “ Why does following Jesus matter? ”

Tell kids that this world and everything in it will not last, but God is eternal. Jesus came to forgive our sin so we can have life with God forever. But life with God forever starts now. We follow Jesus to show how God has saved us from sin and changed us to love Him most. Following Jesus brings God glory. Encourage kids to remember that others can see how we follow Jesus and want to follow Him too.

SAY “ How can you help others live for what matters most? ”

Prompt kids to think about people they know or see every day who may not know Jesus. Encourage them to share the gospel with those people. Remind kids that we glorify God when we share the gospel with others. Tell kids that we love people when we help them see how Jesus came to save them from sin.

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: EMPTY OR FULL?

Lead kids in an object lesson to demonstrate how trying to fill our lives with the things of this world will leave us empty. Hold up a colander or sieve, and tell kids it represents a life without God. Hold the colander above a bowl. Slowly pour in water from a pitcher while describing things people may chase after to find meaning (money, fame, relationships, power, good deeds, etc.). Prompt kids to see how the colander is left empty in the end. None of the “things” last.

Next, place a clear bowl on a table. Tell kids this bowl represents a life following Jesus. Pour in water from a pitcher while describing ways we live for Him such as sharing the gospel, encouraging friends, being generous, praying for others, working for His glory, etc. Prompt kids to see how the bowl is full.

SAY “ Living for God and following Jesus gives our lives meaning and purpose. Everything we do by faith in Jesus, even eating and sleeping, can be used to glorify God. Today, we learned that **SOLOMON TAUGHT THAT LIFE HAS NO MEANING APART FROM GOD.** ”

☐ OPTION 2: PAINT WITH PURPOSE



Provide kids with a piece of construction paper, washable ink pads, watercolor paints, and paint brushes. Lead kids to take their thumb and press it onto the ink pad. Then tell kids to make several thumbprints on their paper. Next, challenge kids to turn their thumbprints into a picture using the watercolor paints. Then invite kids to share their pictures with the group, showing how they gave each thumbprint a purpose in their painting.

SAY “ Every one of you has a thumbprint unique to you. No one else has a thumbprint just like you. God created you with a special purpose: to glorify Him! Like you created your thumbprints to have a purpose, God made you to live for Him. We all have special ways God has gifted us to make Jesus known. Whether we obey our parents or score a soccer goal, we all can show that Jesus is most special to us and live for Him. ”

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.