

PART 2

CONNECT GUIDE

THE MEANING OF LIFE

a series in ecclesiastes

**WALLACE MEMORIAL
BAPTIST CHURCH**

Composed By: Chase Campbell
Designed By: Jarred Morgan

AS WE BEGIN A READING PLAN

WEEK 5

- Day 1: Ecclesiastes 1:1-11
- Day 2: Ecclesiastes 2:14
- Day 3: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
- Day 4: Ecclesiastes 4:4-6
- Day 5: Ecclesiastes 5:10

WEEK 7

- Day 1: Ecclesiastes 11:5
- Day 2: Ecclesiastes 12:1-8
- Day 3: Ecclesiastes 3:9-11
- Day 4: Ecclesiastes 4:7-12
- Day 5: Ecclesiastes 5:8-9

WEEK 6

- Day 1: Ecclesiastes 6:7
- Day 2: Ecclesiastes 7:20
- Day 3: Ecclesiastes 8:8
- Day 4: Ecclesiastes 9:7
- Day 5: Ecclesiastes 10:12-14

WEEK 8

- Day 1: Ecclesiastes 6:11
- Day 2: Ecclesiastes 7:21
- Day 3: Ecclesiastes 8:14
- Day 4: Ecclesiastes 12:12-14
- Day 5: Ecclesiastes 7:13

WEEK FIVE

INTRODUCTION

Living in the 21st century has some very particular pitfalls. Many of them, however, are the same as what the ancient world faced, just jazzed up with different marketing techniques, and sold to us under different names. Every moment in history is unique, but the teacher in Ecclesiastes would also point out that the same cycles and trends always seem to envelop those moments. When we read the Bible, we learn the basic principles of life that are unchanging. We learn about human sin, the holiness of God, and how we can eventually repair that relationship through Jesus.

On the other hand, we don't deal with kings, or statues at altars, or even much of the agricultural life that is depicted in the Bible. We have to contend with technology, political tribalism, and the soul crushing conformity that comes with suburbia and its social expectations. More than anything though, we deal with information overload. We carry around small screens that constantly broadcast advertisements, traumatic stories, rage bait, and anything else that can distract us. Many people have been stuck in this type of information overload for so long that the distraction has become a companion that allows them to ignore reality and create a false sense of security in a digital world. Ecclesiastes, as biblical wisdom literature, calls us to reject this distraction and take another approach.

Wisdom literature isn't a story like most of the Old Testament. It's not a list of doctrines and applications like many of the New Testament letters. No, wisdom literature is a call to stop, sit in the silence, clear your mind, and consider the difficult complexities of reality and how we can seek God in the midst of them. Wisdom literature calls for a prayerful meditation that invites the Holy Spirit to share truths with us that transcend facts and commands. It's not just a methodology, it's a discipline.

To that end, this guide will be a daily practice of that discipline. Each day will be a short reading, followed by a guided prayer time. I'd like to invite you to spend 15 to 20 minutes each day with this guide. Silence your devices. Walk away from the TV. Ask the Spirit to supernaturally calm the anxieties of your heart. Then consider all the ways the wisdom from Ecclesiastes still speaks to us today. Our first steps in combatting the overload of our technological world will be embracing silent calm, and seeking peace that only Jesus can offer. Yeah, it's difficult and it will probably stress you out the first few days, but just like any other discipline, you have to practice it to get better. I hope you're able to find time, peace, and maybe even get a glimpse of who God is, and how He moves the world to spread His kingdom.

DAY 1: ECCLESIASTES 1:1-11

UUPG Prayer Focus: Husseinat in Sudan / Kimr in Sudan

We all go through times where we feel stuck. It's like the world itself just ignores all our effort and the progress we're trying to make. The dishes have to be done again, the floor needs vacuuming, and we have to pay more taxes. It almost feels like the world is cursed... because it is. Genesis 3 tells us that the Earth is cursed because of our sin. We will only eat by toil and pain and we will return to the dust we came from. We can ignore this pain and distract ourselves, or we can put our hope in Jesus and His work. Jesus walked with us in this futility, but He was never enslaved by it like us.

Today let's take the time to ponder futility, and how it drives us to the Gospel.

- Spend a few minutes thinking about how the work never seems finished, and how there's always one more problem. Face the realization that eventually one of those probably will be the end of our time on this Earth. Lament the difficulty that we all experience because of human sin.
- Now, take some time to thank God for making the consequences of sin a reality in this world. If we only found out about the consequences of our sin on the day of judgment we'd have no hope. It's the pain of sin, death, futility, and struggle that lets us know our need for God.

In a strange way, the futility of this world is still an act of mercy from God.

- Thank God that there is more to existence than this life "under the sun." Thank Jesus for His sacrifice that will allow us to live with him in the new Heavens and the new Earth where there will be no more pointless toil, but ultimate fulfillment.
- Ask God to guide you to someone who is struggling with futility and needs to hear about the hope of Jesus.

DAY 2: ECCLESIASTES 2:14

UUPG Prayer Focus: Deaf Syrians in Syria / Baniya in Nepal

Have you ever had that moment where you're trying to figure something out and it just kinda "clicks?" You know what to do, or perhaps in hindsight you know what you should have done. Those moments feel inspiring, they give us hope. One of the best things about believing the Gospel is that we get the Holy Spirit who can interpret the Scripture for us and give us those moments. That victorious feeling of awareness is wisdom, not just human wisdom, but an understanding of righteousness that comes directly from God. Yet that same wisdom and awareness can also cause us to see the pain, the difficulty, and the futility of this life. We feel inspired when the Spirit guides our path, but we can often feel weary when the Spirit convicts us of our sin. We can become envious of the fool who is simply unaware of their own morality, or even the world

around them. In the end though, it's better to be overwhelmed with difficulty and be aware of it, than to happily walk into our own eternal demise.

Today, let's take some time to clear our minds, ask God for wisdom, and thank Him for both the victory and the burden.

- Ask the Holy Spirit for the wisdom to see the world through His eyes. Ask for the awareness to see His work around us, and to have His compassion for those who are walking in darkness.
- We are all distracted by technology, entertainment, advertising, and the futility of daily tasks. Ask God to protect you from distraction that will keep you walking in darkness.
- Ask God to guide you to those who are still deceived by foolishness and walking in darkness. Pray that you would be able to speak the Gospel to them and let Jesus open their eyes.
- Pray that the church would not shut our eyes, but that we would humbly engage a darkened world.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to convict us when we choose the ease of foolishness instead of the awareness of wisdom.
- desires. Where did it lead you? Why was it so fleeting? What was the aftermath? What would you do instead if you were focused on the righteousness of God?

DAY 3: ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8

UUPG Prayer Focus: Qiubei Zhuang in China / Golden Palaung in Myanmar

No two days in our lives will ever be the same. Each day has its own challenges, victories, pains, and joys. If we're not careful we can end up wasting our days hoping and waiting for something that never comes. In our error and misguided desire we can make every day a time to work, and never accept the time to rest. If we're always taking the time to speak, but never recognizing the time to be silent we'll become empty noise and miss the wisdom of other perspectives, especially that of the Holy Spirit. Each circumstance in our life can help us gain wisdom and open our eyes, but we must seek that understanding from God.

Today, let's take an extended time to ponder the different seasons of our lives. What they required from us, and what they taught us.

- Take 5 or 10 minutes to reminisce on the different phases and eras of your own life. Which was your favorite? Which ones were the hardest?
- Which phases of your life taught you the most? What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about the character of God?
- Have you ever been looking forward to the next season

of your life so much that you missed an important moment where you were? Have you ever longed for the past so much that you were oblivious to the present?

- Read Romans 8:28. Thank Jesus for his mercy and grace that can redeem every moment of our lives regardless of how difficult that might be.

DAY 4: ECCLESIASTES 4:4-6

UUPG Prayer Focus: Levantin Arabs in Egypt / Tihama in Saudi Arabia

In humanity there is often a disparity in motivation. Some people seem to have a nervous energy that forces them to be engaged, working, and pushing all the time. Then there are those who simply don't want to even move more than is absolutely necessary. Which one is better? Neither one. We can't earn righteousness, we can't merit the love of God, and in the end we can't outrun our mortality. We also can't sit still and expect God to bless our laziness. We can't expect to eat, unless we go to the kitchen, we can't expect to find joy unless we put in a little effort. Apathy and industry can often be two sides of the same sin. We can't find joy unless we also have rest. We need to have the humility to accept that we are finite creatures that need rest. We have to take the responsibility to use the gifts and talents that God gave us. We have to honor that God gave us hearts and minds that seek fun, excitement, relaxation and laughter. We also have to take up our cross daily and follow after Jesus.

Today, as you clear your mind and listen to God, think about the balance between work and rest.

- Are you more prone to laziness or overwork? Laziness is a rejection of God's design. Overwork is a rejection of God's sovereignty. Why do you have the temptation to lean one way or the other?
- Ask God to show you where you need to relax and trust Him more. Ask God where He would like to see more effort from you in life.
- What type of effort and work bring you joy? What type of rest and recreation gives you peace?
- How can we simultaneously rest in trusting Jesus while still giving everything we have to His kingdom? Take an extended time to think on this one. Silence your thoughts and listen to the Holy Spirit.

DAY 5: ECCLESIASTES 5:10

UUPG Prayer Focus: Tunisian Arabs in Lybia / Yemeni Arabs in United Arab Emirates

Do you remember your first paycheck? Mine was 120 dollars. I thought I was rich. Then I had the shock of how much things actually cost. That feeling of getting paid, being secure, feeling like you can finally do something... it fades very quickly. When it comes to amassing wealth, our twisted human nature only has one goal: MORE! It often seems that the more wealth

a person amasses the more they want, and as that addiction deepens we become willing to do whatever it takes to acquire it. Solomon was one of the wealthiest men in the world during his reign, and he called it all futility. Today we have billionaires raising their stock portfolios while children starve. We watch foreign warlords commandeer and sell medicine, while their countrymen die in the streets. The New Testament tells us that a love of money is a root of all types of evil. We would do well to heed this warning.

- Think about all the times you've been paid, and all the times you've missed out. Why do you think we allow money and greed to cause us so much stress in this life?
- It seems as though both people with poverty and people with wealth often have the same draw to amassing more. What should this teach us about money and fulfillment?
- Jesus says that wherever our treasure is, that's where our heart will also be. Think about where you spend your money. What does it say about your priorities?
- The cure for wealth addiction is generosity. What do you give to on a regular basis? Are you putting your money where your mission is?
- Ask the Holy Spirit to align your mind with Jesus and how He saw worldly wealth.

DISCUSSION GUIDE: MAY 10, 2026

WEEK FIVE: ECCLESIASTES 3:1-15

This week we focused on individual statements and how to consider what the teacher said. We spent time in meditation and prayer, pondering how the teacher's word about life should be interpreted in light of the Gospel. Today, your campus pastor will walk you through how we think about the passage of time, how we spend our days and energy here on Earth, and how we should view our time here relative to eternity. Pay special attention to how the perspective of "under the sun" differs from the eternal perspective of the Gospel.

ACTION STEP

How will I live out the action step this week?

CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK 5

- It is often hard to define how different times in our lives are separate, yet all part of the same thing. What season or eras of your life have been your favorite? Which ones have been the most difficult?
- Go back and read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 with your class. If there really is a time for all these different things, then what does that time look like for someone who is putting their hope in Jesus? Describe how each time that's mentioned by the teacher, looks different for a believer.
- It is common right now to hear encouragement to "be present" in the moment. How can we be present, be thankful for our day to day lives, and still be people who are focused on eternity?
- Reread verse 11. What does it mean that God has "put eternity in our hearts." How does a desire for eternity complicate our focus in day to day life?
- Many people despair as they age, they feel the pressure of time and fear the eventual losses it will bring. How can we share the Gospel in a way that will give hope to people who have anxiety about the passage of time and the temporary nature of the world?

WEEK SIX

DAY 1: ECCLESIASTES 6:7

UUPG Prayer Focus: Kannaya Christian in India / Mango in Chad

When we think of the word "appetite" our minds immediately drift to food. Most of us would say we love food, we all have a favorite food, and meals that bring us happy memories. We even ruminate sometimes on what our last meal would be if we got to choose it. Why is it that we don't hate food like we hate repetitive chores? Having to do the dishes and laundry over and over again is mind numbing and monotonous. Yet, we have to eat multiple times a day and we often celebrate it? When we thank God for our food before each meal we are recognizing that a process He created is necessary, and sustaining to us. We love food, and hate chores, because the process gives us life. Remember, humanity was eating before we ever fell into sin, the curse of sin is the pointless toil and pain that goes along with it.

We all have appetites for more than food though. Some of us love adventure, others love learning, others even still enjoy things like crafting, or tending gardens. God Himself placed many appetites in your heart. Often when we enjoy the process as much as the payoff it's because that pursuit is part of how God made us unique. Our sin however, corrupted many of those processes, and created tasks that drain and weary us. The hard part is that we do so much in our lives that we often can't tell the difference.

Ponder on processes and payoffs today as you consider these things.

- First, ask the Holy Spirit to show you which parts and processes of your life are being corrupted by sin. Ask the Spirit to convict about what pursuits you need to leave behind... even if you enjoy them.
- What are your favorite things to do? What activities cause you to love the work as much as the result? Can you pursue that task for God's glory and worship Him through that process?
- Sometimes we have to repeat the same process over and over to survive and be healthy. This can teach us how to continually return to God, His Bible, and speaking to Him through prayer. How can the repetitive tasks of our daily life teach us more about depending on God?
- Are there things that you are pursuing in life that could be leveraged for evangelism? Is your job, or one of your favorite hobbies a way to meet people who don't yet know Jesus? Pray, and ask that the Spirit would give you direction on how to use these processes to know God and share His kingdom

DAY 2: ECCLESIASTES 7:20

UUPG Prayer Focus: Marasari in India / Deaf Kazakhstans in Kazakhstan

In modern American culture, anxiety and depression have reached epidemic status. Just a quick look around the world and it's easy to see why. Many of the factors that induce anxiety can be shut out. We can take a day off work, we can delete our social media apps, we can embrace discipline with our spending and eating habits. The external factors can be mitigated, but what do we do when the anxiety comes from within? We feel guilty for not being enough. We feel trapped because we don't know how to fix our problems. We feel the dread of knowing that everything is temporary and in this life we will eventually lose everything we love. The solution isn't easy. First we have to actually recognize that we're not enough, and that we can't do anything about it. The good news is that we're not alone. No one, not one single person is enough. The teacher told us this 3000 years ago in Ecclesiastes 7:20. Part of the anxiety we feel is the mistaken belief that we're alone in our shortcomings, but this is actually the state of all humanity. Everyone is messed up, everyone is sinful, there are no "good" people. Paul reiterates this in Romans when he tells us that "all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God."

It's ok to be upset about our shortcomings, but don't listen to that little voice inside you that says you're the only one. Mourn your sin, but take hope in the fact that Jesus came to save us from that exact problem. Think about this as you pray today.

- Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to show you places where you need to repent and mourn your sin.

- Meditate on the fact that you are not alone in this problem. Jesus was the only one without sin. Everyone else who has ever lived was just as broken as we are now.
- Realize that God knew your shortcomings and failure before you were ever born and still chose to create you and love you.

DAY 3: ECCLESIASTES 8:8

UUPG Prayer Focus: Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan / Lao in Vietnam

One of the hardest things to admit in this life is that we're not strong enough to control the world around us. We are born with internal desires and the motivation inside that says we need to set things a certain way. We want that control over our circumstances so we can finally feel safe. We even clean, rearrange, and maintain our surroundings just to give ourselves the illusion of safety and control, but inside we know that we are powerless to guide what's happening. We know this every time we feel a consequence for our actions. It reminds us that there are forces larger than us, beyond our control that we are powerless to change.

Instead of lamenting this, take joy in it. You have no control over anything but yourself, and even that control is limited. God has a better vision than any of us, and if we took control we would only mess up what He has created. We should

be thankful when our illusions of control and power are shattered. Perhaps the worst fate in the universe is to believe that your intelligence, charisma, wealth, or position give you a pass. No greed, oppression, destruction, or arrogance will be overlooked, no matter who the person is.

Ponder this as you pray today.

- Thank God for shattering your illusions of control. Ask Him to give you peace in your dependence on Him.
- Meditate on all the circumstances in your life that you can't do anything about. Now praise God for being bigger than all of these issues.
- Think about how powerless you actually are in the face of the world. Sit on this and let it humble you.

DAY 4: ECCLESIASTES 9:7

UUPG Prayer Focus: Sonde in Democratic Republic of the Congo / Assyrians in Iraq

Have you ever considered that the daily life of Jesus was somewhat... mundane? Jesus lived in a time where most people barely had enough to last them from day to day. He was most likely a day laborer with the other men in His family. For close to 20 years. When He began His ministry He spent most of the time eating and talking with a few close friends. Miracles

for the sick, and conflicts with the religious social order only account for a small percentage of what happened in His life.

Perhaps the best way that we can imitate Jesus on a daily basis is to do all the simple things with a better focus. To eat with thankfulness that you get to live another day. To be amazed by nature and the world around us. To share these moments with other people. To do the small tasks with integrity. The God of the universe chose to take joy in the small things. Ponder this as you pray today.

- Begin by thanking God for the everyday tasks that He has given you. Ask Him to open your eyes to the value of the average day.
- Ask God to remove your desire for distraction. Maybe even put down your phone and take an extended break from your social media apps.
- Spend several minutes thinking about the daily life of Jesus. The living God who saved the universe chose the mundane of our achievement culture's sad attempts at self justification.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of where you can simplify your life and find contentment in day to day living.

DAY 5: ECCLESIASTES 10:12-14

UUPG Prayer Focus: Afshari in Iran / Lampung abung in Indonesia

Have you ever noticed that the people who seem to be the least aware, often have the most to say? It's as if their inner monologue doesn't work, and they can't think without the use of their mouth. They brag about themselves, take credit for what they did not do, belittle others, and often contradict themselves. Sadly, in our culture we have often celebrated people like this as brave or "honest" instead of foolish and condescending. We let the absurd rambling of the arrogant be touted as strength and encouragement instead of blasphemy.

On the other hand, we also know people who bring others great joy with every word. They are always encouraging and building others up. They seem to be thankful for everything around them. Jesus said that our mouths speak from the overflow of our hearts. We do not create our identity by our words, we only reveal it. Mediate on this as you pray today.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom. God tells us that this is a gift He loves to grant to His people as long as they would ask,
- Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you when you speak foolish words.

- Think about the people in your life that speak with gracious humility and encouragement. Ask the Spirit to help you imitate them, like they imitate Jesus.
- Ponder how our culture celebrates foolish and arrogant bravado. Are there places where you are guilty of cheering celebrities, musicians, and leaders when they speak this way? How can we reject this type of arrogance that the world seems to esteem so highly?

DISCUSSION GUIDE: MAY 17, 2026

WEEK SIX: ECCLESIASTES 3:16-4:3

This week we focused on individual statements and how to consider what the teacher said. We spent time in meditation and prayer, pondering how the teacher's word about life should be interpreted in light of the Gospel. Today, your campus pastor will walk you through how we view justice, injustice, social structures, and our civic responsibilities. We will try and break free from the political tribalism that is plaguing 21st century American relationships. Pay special attention to how the perspective of justice is altered by Jesus' command to remember the poor and oppressed as opposed to the teacher's view of inevitable corruption.

ACTION STEP

How will I live out the action step this week?

CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK 6

Today, instead of just having a discussion, we are going to pray for those who experience injustice. As a class you can move through each of these prayer points, and then discuss how the church can address these issues in a way that allows us to share the Gospel.

- Spend a few minutes thanking God for the religious liberty we have in 21st century America. Thank Him for all the people who fought for this freedom and made sacrifices so we could worship freely. What can you and I do to ensure that future generations experience this same freedom?
- In Ecclesiastes the Teacher says "all come from dust, and all are going to dust." Read Isaiah 26:19 and spend a few minutes thanking God that our eternal destination is more than dust. How can we talk to people about setting their hope in a world beyond this one?
- In our culture we often struggle with the biblical concept of "lament." Take a few minutes to lament the injustices of our culture. Things like racism, abortion, greed, corruption, the destruction of our natural resources for profit, religious persecution, and sex trafficking. Thank Him for civil rights leaders, pro-life movements, and Christian apologists who campaign for biblical justice here on Earth. How can we petition for justice while still maintaining our focus on eternity? How can our cultural engagement be about "on Earth as it is in Heaven?"
- Read Luke 4:14-21. Jesus quotes Isaiah, and tells us this is what He came to do. Spend a few minutes praying, and ask the Holy Spirit to convict us and motivate us to have a heart for the poor and oppressed. What opportunities here at church can help us engage in this type of ministry?

WEEK SEVEN

DAY 1: ECCLESIASTES 11:5

UUPG Prayer Focus: Shawiya in France / Rai Bhat Muslims in India

Have you ever stopped to consider how little we know about what's going on in the world? No, I'm not talking about conspiracy theories, so let's put the tin foil hats away. I'm asking if you've ever really stopped to consider how big this world is, and how many things are happening at once compared to our very tiny ability to perceive it. I can barely keep up with what is going on in front of me. We can't even see everything that's in the same room as us unless we physically move. Personally, I can barely hear if there's more than one sound happening.

Yet, we serve a God who sees all things at once, and not just in order. God is looking at all of time and eternity as if it's no more than a single moment. He's not overwhelmed or stressed by any of it. He's guiding every single moment to make an ultimate monument to the glory He deserves. Today, think about the sovereignty and omnipotence of our God, and praise Him for it.

- Take a few minutes and recognize how small your perception of the world is right now. Let this humble you.
- Consider Romans 8:28. If God has called you to salvation then He is also using every event and circumstance in the

universe to bring about your ultimate good. Thank Him for this grace and mercy that we could never deserve.

- Silence everything around you for a few minutes. Clear your mind and think about how powerful and expansive our God is and has always been. Don't move on from this thought. Let it linger. Ask God to show you how great He is, and how His glory is the ultimate good.
- Take a moment of gratitude that you can depend on an all powerful God instead of your limited abilities.

DAY 2: ECCLESIASTES 12:1-8

UUPG Prayer Focus: Tswa in Zimbabwe / Kyrgyz in China

Today's reading is a reminder that Solomon is a tragic figure, not a hero. The beginning of his life was filled with adversity and pain. His dad killed his mother's previous husband. His brothers and sisters were guilty of perversion, fratricide, and civil war. He was forced to take the throne of a kingdom at a young age. Yet when God offered him a gift, he chose wisdom, and received great blessings. He started well and had every advantage, both in Earthly privilege and cosmic blessing. Yet he ended up abandoning God for pleasure and distraction. He ended up giving statues and foreign rulers the same reverence he gave to the one true God. He had everything, and it all amounted to nothing.

Let's not make the same mistake in our lives. Jesus has offered us the chance to be reconciled with Him. We can know God, and be forgiven. We can freely accept grace when we're in a situation that rendered us absolutely helpless. Let's not make the same mistake as Solomon. If you are young then leverage your whole life to Jesus now, and make the most of it. If you are old then don't let disappointment and bitterness keep you from clinging to the grace of God. Let's abandon our own desires and be grateful for what God has offered us through Jesus.

- Begin by thanking God for the gift He has offered you through the sacrifice of Jesus. Accept this gift, and let it grant everything else necessary.
- Pray for those who are young. That they would see their need for God early so that they can make the most of their lives. Pray that they would listen to wisdom. Pray that they would endure to the end.
- Pray for those who are old. Pray that they wouldn't become bitter and disappointed. Pray that they would have the humility to accept grace. Pray that they would be mentors and encouragers instead of demanding validation and homage from younger generations.
- Pray that all ages and generations would place their hope in eternity and not in this life.

DAY 3: ECCLESIASTES 3:9-11

UUPG Prayer Focus: Ahiska Turks in Uzbekistan / Zambezi Tonga in Zimbabwe

Why does life hurt so often? Clearly that's not a question that can be answered in a single sentence, but we can address part of the underlying reason. This passage in Ecclesiastes tells us that God made everything appropriate in its time, but that He also put eternity in our hearts. Because of our sin, everything is temporary. We were built for eternity, but we have to suffer loss every day in this fallen world. That longing for security, for something that can't be taken away from you? That's the eternity in your heart at war with the temporal consequences of sin.

Jesus is the only answer to the pain of life. Let that thought guide you as you deal with all the struggles of this world today.

- Think about how the fear of loss gives us all anxiety. Spend a few minutes lamenting the sin of humanity that caused this.
- Think about your desire for security and stability. Thank God that He will remake a world where this is the case.
- Think about someone who is struggling with the pain of life. Pray for God to reveal Himself to them,
- How can you extend kindness to someone dealing with the pain of life so they can hear the message of Jesus?

DAY 4: ECCLESAISTES 4:7-12

UUPG Prayer Focus: Nefusa Imazinghen in Libya / Banda in Chad

The most common American myth is that of the “self made man.” The idea that an individual can bring about “success” on their own, without exploiting anyone, or asking for their help. It’s an arrogant fantasy that denies God’s design, and our need for other people. This passage reminds us that even if someone was able to achieve something like this, it would still be useless futility, because in the end there would be no one to share or celebrate it with you. This doesn’t mean that our every waking hour needs to be spent around people, that “extroverts” are somehow more spiritually mature, or that codependency is a virtue. After all, Jesus spent over 40 days completely alone at times. It is a reminder though, that God created us to interact, and to depend on each other. Paul tells us in Galatians to bear one another’s burden, and John says the world will know the church by how we love each other.

Ponder your relationships and interactions as you pray today.

- When you succeed or achieve something, who do you celebrate with?
- How does sharing an experience make it more valuable?

- Pray that the Holy Spirit would convict you when you become arrogant about what you can accomplish on your own.
- How are you creating better relationships and giving encouragement among the other members of your church?

DAY 5: ECCLESIASTES 5:8-9

UUPG Prayer Focus: Machhiyara in India / Mahisyadas in India

Have you ever heard it said “the more things change, the more they stay the same?” Often cliches like this are rooted in a proverb type explanation of the human experience. Ecclesiastes tell us not to be surprised when we see oppression of the poor and perversion of justice. Corrupt officials spread their corruption by always protecting each other. Yes, governments are appointed by God and the leaders within them will be judged on how they executed their responsibilities, but it seems that corruption is the only thing we can count on when it comes to rulers and power.

It has become a common idea today, that we should abandon our principles to fix political situations like these before we focus on our faith, or that we are allowed to compromise between political methods and Christianity. The idea that there are “special situations” where we can set our Christianity aside

to gain political power is blasphemy. We will still be judged for participation in this type of behavior as well as our approval of others who do the same. Let us not make the same mistake as ancient Israel. We follow Jesus not the whims and corruptions of Earthly rulers. Think on this as you pray today.

- Pray that the Holy Spirit would convict corrupt leaders and officials of their sin so they might repent and follow Jesus.
- How can you as a church member seek the good of oppressed people when the world exploits them?
- Think about all the ways you can be a witness by standing against racism, fighting poverty, helping the sick, and calling out corruption.
- How can the church make it clear that we are of Jesus' kingdom and not of the world?

DISCUSSION GUIDE: MAY 24, 2026

WEEK SEVEN: ECCLESIASTES 9:1-10, 11:8-10

This week we focused on individual statements and how to consider what the teacher said. We spent time in meditation and prayer, pondering how the teacher's word about life should be interpreted in light of the Gospel. Today, your campus pastor will walk you through the ever present reality of death. Pay special attention to how the perspective of "under the sun" differs from the eternal perspective of the Gospel.

ACTION STEP

How will I live out the action step this week?

CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK 7

- Today is a difficult subject. Before delving into our discussion, take a few minutes and let anyone who is grieving or struggling share their difficulty, and ask for prayer.
- Read Genesis 3:8-24. Why was death the consequence of sin? How can the pain of death drive us to the Gospel? How can we use our own grief to share the Gospel?
- The teacher in Ecclesiastes tells us to enjoy life despite death. Jesus came to this earth knowing He would die a terrible death for us, and still had joy. How can we live in a way that exhibits enjoyment and thankfulness even when we know we'll experience loss?
- The teacher only addresses life "under the sun," meaning that there is nothing beyond this world. How does Jesus' promise of eternity give us hope in this life now, and not just after death?
- There are always people in our church and in our social circles dealing with the pain of death. What can you do as a class to comfort and care for people who are experiencing grief?

WEEK EIGHT

DAY 1: ECCLESIASTES 6:11

UUPG Prayer Focus: Kalmyk-Oirats in Mongolia / Chikunda in Zimbabwe

In the ancient world there were far fewer pastimes and entertainment options. One of the most common things in urban areas would have been an amphitheater for public speaking. An orator would take the stage and deliver a speech in a format similar to open mic nights of our time. Like most open mic nights, there were often those who engaged in little more than incoherent rambling. Many thought they could dazzle the crowds with their words, but they ultimately had nothing of substance to say.

In the 21st century we're much more advanced... and by "advanced" I mean we've made this problem so much worse. In the age of social media we've created a chorus of mindless opinions where vitriol and shock outweigh sincerity and expertise. By participating in social media we drown ourselves in poorly formed opinions and marketing scams. In the past few years we've made this problem exponentially worse by adding AI programs that imitate the resounding gongs and aimless thoughts of this world.

Perhaps one of our greatest opportunities for witnessing to

the world is quietly listening, instead of always expressing our opinions. Ponder that as you read several other verses today.

- Read James 1:19. Think about all the time you could listen more before you speak.
- Read Proverbs 26:4-5. Meditate on when it's best to walk away, and when it's necessary to intervene.
- Read Colossians 4:6. Consider how your tone may communicate as much or more than your words when you speak.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you when you speak too quickly. Ask the Spirit to help you hold your tongue when you should listen.

DAY 2: ECCLESIASTES 7:21

UUPG Prayer Focus: Konjo Pesisier in Indonesia / Medari in India

Have you ever been offended by someone only to realize that you've done the same thing to others? Perhaps you made an offhand remark, but the person took it much more seriously than you meant it. Then the next day, you find yourself equally upset because of what a different person said. As Christians, we often have to practice the difficult art of "just letting it go." This is a type of forgiveness that allows us to focus on our own relationship with God instead of trying to moderate others. If we are secure in the love of God and what He has called us to

do, then we won't be as easily offended and we can focus our energy on more important things.

It also allows us to be more aware of when we need to react and intervene. Was someone's tone a little off because they were hungry or stressed? We should let that slide and ask how they're doing. Is a fellow church member exhibiting a pattern of condescension, abuse, or aggression? Then as their friend we need to address this behavior and call them to repentance. By placing the correct weight and emphasis we can learn how to show wisdom in a difficult situation.

- Think of all the times you've spoken too harshly, or quickly. Is there anyone you need to go back and apologize to about this?
- Think of all the times you've had your feelings hurt by what someone else has said. Is there anyone you need to forgive in your heart because of resentment you're holding on to?
- What is the line between a stray word, and a pattern of sin? How should we address this as fellow church members?
- Read Matthew 18:21-35 and meditate on forgiveness.

DAY 3: ECCLESIASTES 8:4

UUPG Prayer Focus: Gond (Kannada) in India / Deaf Chadians in Chad

It is impossible to live in this world and not be mortified at the lack of justice. We see people full of venom and hate who are glorified as "truth tellers," while someone who speaks up for the oppressed is silenced. We see hard workers denied pay while corporate CEOs still get million dollar bonuses from government bailouts. We see people marginalized and excluded because of racism. We see our Christian brothers and sisters around the world persecuted by authorities who should be protecting them. In our own country we are seeing people lose their jobs for not participating in "pride month" festivities.

Is this awful? Absolutely, every part of it. Should we fight it? Yes, as Christians it's important to raise our voice and be a witness for justice. Is it going to stop? No. That's where we have to embrace a better world view than Solomon. He fell into despair because of injustice "under the sun." We know that justice will be perfected on Judgment day. We know that Jesus took the punishment for every evil and injustice on the cross. We also know that He cares for the oppressed. So let's not be overcome like Solomon. Let's seek the good of others everyday as a witness for the world to come, and not put our hope in this one.

- Take a few minutes to mourn and lament injustices all over the world. Cry out to God for mercy. That he would ease the plight of those who suffer so they can hear His message.

- How can your personal actions reflect the goodness of God's kingdom instead of the injustices of this world?
- How can Christians affect social change while still keeping our focus on the Gospel?

DAY 4: ECCLESIASTES 12:12-14

UUPG Prayer Focus: Kurahina Setti in India / Goroa in Tanzania

We can make all the observations we want, and we still won't have all the information. We can try every solution, hack, and quickfix, but we can't erase sin. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God. No, "fear" doesn't just mean wonder and awe, it also means that we should fear the consequences of our sin and our foolishness. The last verse of the book makes it clear that every single action and thought will be subject to judgment. We can write about it til our fingers bleed, but we won't change anything until the Spirit moves and changes the hearts of the People. Read these words, and take a few minutes to feel the urgency of change that's needed from God. Let your prayers today reflect that urgency.

- Ask God to change the hearts and minds of people around you. Ask that the Holy Spirit would convict them of their sin and then come to you to hear the Gospel.
- Think back on all the times you strayed from God's desires and how many things He's forgiven you from. Praise Him,

and thank Him for His mercy.

- Praise God for His justice. Remember that He will right every wrong in His time.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate your reading of Scripture so that you'll find wisdom, instead of vexation and futility.

DAY 5: ECCLESIASTES 7:13

UUPG Prayer Focus: Senaithalaivar in India / Iraqi Arabs in Sweden

Who can make straight what God has made crooked? When humanity rebelled against God in the garden He had to punish sin. Genesis 3 outlines the curse of sin and what it has done to humanity. Genesis 3-11 shows us how sin spread to all the world. As humans our nature is corrupted and we are powerless to do anything about it. Who can make straight what God has made crooked?

Jesus.

God Himself was incarnated in human flesh and walked on this Earth. He experienced the injustice, corruption, and pain of this life. Jesus, however, did not sin. Instead He lived an absolutely perfect life, then willingly gave it up as a sacrifice so we could know God once more. Jesus didn't have to die, but

He chose to suffer the greatest injustice that has ever been done when He was executed on the cross. He paid the price we could not. He is the one who can make the crooked path straight again.

- Thank God for making the effects of sin real so that we would know our need for Him.
- Thank God for sending Jesus so that our debt could be paid.
- Spend several minutes meditating on how sinful we are compared to how perfect and holy Jesus is.
- Ask the Holy Spirit for the opportunity to share this message with someone else.

DISCUSSION GUIDE: MAY 31, 2026

WEEK EIGHT: ECCLESIASTES 5:18-20

This week we focused on individual statements and how to consider what the teacher said. We spent time in meditation and prayer, pondering how the teacher's word about life should be interpreted in light of the Gospel. Today, your campus pastor will walk you through a biblical definition of "the good life," and what that specifically means for a follower of Jesus. Pay special attention to how the perspective of living for Jesus instead of ourselves changes everything and gives us hope.

ACTION STEP

How will I live out the action step this week?

CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK 8

- When you hear “the good life,” what does that mean to you? What does your perfect day or week look like? How can we all use our different preferences about the good life as a means of sharing the Gospel?
- Ecclesiastes 5:20 says that God allows us to be occupied with the “joy of our hearts.” Is there a line between seeking the joy of your heart, and being selfish? What is that line? How can we balance responsibility and recreation? How can we fight against “hustle culture,” “functional identity,” and works based religion with this lifestyle?
- The teacher was ultimately drawn away from God and into idolatry because the desires of his heart were uncontrolled. How has Jesus changed the desires of your heart over the years? How can you use your testimony of growth to mentor and inspire someone else who is being changed by Jesus? What about someone who doesn’t yet know Jesus, how can our stories of growth be a witness to them?
- Today’s message concludes our series in Ecclesiastes. Many find this book to be difficult because the concepts are so broad, and the thoughts so open ended. What particular message or insights from this series have inspired you? What have you learned from our time in Ecclesiastes?

