

Ecclesiastes

HEVEL, HEVEL, EVERYTHING IS HEVEL

3 Jan- 21 Feb





WHY STUDY **ECCLESIASTES?**

Everywhere you look, people are trying to be happy without God. We experiment in a million different ways. The book of Ecclesiastes shows the absurdity of those experiments. Old Testament Solomon, King David's son, tried every field of endeavor and pleasure known to man, and his conclusion was, "It's all vanity."

"VANITY" = EMPTY, PURPOSELESS

ECCLESIASTES IS THE DRAMATIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF SOLOMON'S LIFE WHEN HE WAS AWAY FROM GOD.

He experiments in seeking satisfaction in the following:

SCIENCE—the laws of nature (1:4-11)

WISDOM AND PHILOSOPHY (1:12-18)

PLEASURE (2:1-11)

MATERIALISM—living for now (2:12-26)

FATALISM—we are slaves to destiny (3:1-15)

EGOISM—excessive self-interest (3:16—4:16)

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY (5:1-8)

THE PURSUIT OF WEALTH (5:9—6:12)

MORALITY—the "good life" (7:1—12:12)

RESULT OF EXPERIMENT: Even if we possess the whole world and all the things that men consider necessary to make their hearts content, nothing satisfies us other than knowing Jesus Christ.

Working it Out



Read Ecclesiastes 4:1-16

It's the beginning of 2021! Why don't you go around and introduce/re-introduce yourselves to each other. What are some of the aspirations for each of you this year?

General

- Describe the themes in this chapter using 3 words each. Go.
- What are the three groups of people that the Teacher talks about in this chapter?
- Why is 'two better than one'?
- What does v6 mean?
- Recall what it means to chase after the wind.

Deeper

- What does v4 say about the reason we 'toil'? Can you use personal experiences to provide grounds for this claim?
- Commentator Jim Winter says: 'For most, the question "For whom do I toil?" comes too late!' What does this mean?
- Some have put forth many names for the inspiration behind the two kings in vv 13-16. Can you think of anyone that also follows this pattern?
- Where might you see these groups of people in the world?

Application

- Are you conscious of the negative effects of materialism in your life? If you are comfortable, share some specific experiences with your lifegroup.
- In your study of Ecclesiastes since the beginning of this series, what do you think is/are the solutions to the problems we face in Chapter 4?

Activity

- Go around in a circle and finish the sentence using some of the conclusions made in Chapter 4:
It is better to be _____ than to be _____.
- Consider a memory verse from any of the passages this week and commit to learning it. Be prepared to be quizzed next week!

Keeping it Real



Read Ecclesiastes 5:1-20

Icebreaker: Share with one another the qualities that you like the most in other people

- What are the themes in this chapter? If may not all be unified.
- Parts of this chapter is in second person. Who is the Teacher instructing?

General

- What other the instructions given to us in vv 1-7?
- What does God dislike?
- Recall a time when you have made a hasty promise. How did it go?

Deeper

- What are the right ways to make a promises and prayers to God? Why and what qualities that it reflect?
- There are some forms of worship that are completely 'pretentious' and self-glorifying rather than God-glorifying. Can you think of any other passages dealing with proper worship?
- The Teacher discusses something he considers a 'grievous evil'. What is it and why do you think he uses such strong language?
- Opposed to that, what does the teacher consider to be good? How many times has he now repeated this message so far in this book? Why?

Application

- Improper forms of worship can actually distance people from God. Are there any forms of worship you find unhelpful at Northreach? What about churches your hear about all over the world?
- Nominate a materialistic goal to let go of this week.

Activity

- Go around in a circle and finish the sentence using some of the conclusions made in Chapter 4:
It is better to _____ than to _____.
- Consider a memory verse from any of the passages this week and commit to learning it. Be prepared to be quizzed next week!

Give God your Heart



Read Ecclesiastes 8:1-17

Icebreaker: Describe a time when you have been envious of another person.

Care to share?

- Read the passage and make some key observations.
- Notice the awkward placement for the beginning of chapter 8.

General

Why do you think this is?

- What are the themes for this chapter?
- Who is it directed at?
- Take turns to list all the instructions throughout this chapter.

Deeper

- The Teacher seems to conclude that life isn't fair. What examples does he use? And what hope does he give us?
- How would you respond to the question: 'If God is just, why does he continue to allow injustice to prevail?'
- What are the most common forms of injustice people are facing these days?
- Remember that the early Christians faced a lot of injustice. How were they instructed to live? See 1 Peter 2:18-25; Eph 6:5-9; Luke 6:27-36)

Application

- Verse 15 includes the fifth 'joy' passage in this book. Name one aspect of your life that you are worried about. How can you shift your attitude to one of joy?
- Recall a time when you felt unfairly treated. How did you react in that situation?

Activity

- Go around in a circle and finish the sentence using some of the conclusions made in Chapter 4:
It is better to _____ than to _____.
- Consider a memory verse from any of the passages this week and commit to learning it. Be prepared to be quizzed next week!

Read Ecclesiastes 11:1-10

Icebreaker: Just for fun, share with each other one of the wisest/most useful pieces of advice you've ever received. It may be related to anything!

- Read the passage and make some key observations.
- What are the themes for this chapter?
- Who is it directed at?
- You may skim the chapter before and after this one. How does Chapter 11 fit into the sequence?
- On the surface level, what does the Teacher say is wise to do?

General

- Different interpretations have debated on the meaning of 'shipping your grain across the sea'. What are some interpretations that exist? Discuss the validity of some of them.
- What does this passage say about being proactive? And do you know any other passages about living boldly? Or not letting opportunities pass by?
- Considering the other meaning, what could this passage also say about being generous?
- Why can it be a good thing that we do not know which of our investments may succeed?

Deeper

Application

- Can you recall a time when you 'sowed' (made an investment) and received an unexpected or pleasant 'yield' (reward)? Recount the story.
- What is one way you can sow into your community this week?

Activity

- Go around in a circle and finish the sentence using some of the conclusions made in Chapter 4:
It is better to _____ than to _____.
- Consider a memory verse from any of the passages this week and commit to learning it. Be prepared to be quizzed next week!

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