



Job & Ecclesiastes

*Life Group
Study Guide*



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How to Use this Study Guide

This guide was written as a companion to our Life Group study in Job and Ecclesiastes this summer, beginning in June and continuing through August. We've prepared this guide in hopes that it will encourage you in your daily walk and prepare you to engage well as you study with others in your Life Group.

Each week's lesson contains a brief overview of the week's passage, and then five days worth of study. Each day, you will find a short introduction, three questions to get you thinking about the text, and then challenges to apply the text and pray for God to use it in your life. A careful reading of the day's passage and answering the questions should take most people about 15-20 minutes a day.

However you use this guide, our prayer is that it would continually drive you to make the study of God's Word a regular habit. May the Lord richly bless and sustain you as you meditate on His Word.

The Study Guide Team



Introduction

By Pastor Jason Hall

Most Christians, when asked, would say the book of Job is about suffering. While that is true to a certain extent, it also misses the bigger picture. The story of Job certainly contains accounts of suffering, but I believe the sum of the whole is much more than that. It is a portrait of a God who moves not just in the midst of the suffering itself, but also in our experiences of it – the pain, the grappling, the doubt, the faith, and everything in between. He is sovereign, even in (especially in) our difficult and sometimes shattering circumstances.

Our study of Job will take up about half our time this quarter, which means that this will be an introduction to the major themes of Job rather than an in-depth analysis. Job is 42 chapters long, and we cannot do justice to all its riches in seven sessions. Nevertheless, it is profitable for us to take even a handful of weeks and whet our appetite for this story, and to put our feet in the water, so to speak. Perhaps it will spark in you a desire to spend even more time meditating on the lessons of Job's tale, as the Holy Spirit of God has delivered it to us.

One quick reminder about Job: It is about 95 percent poetry. While the opening chapters are a straightforward story, almost the entire rest of the book is poetic. We keep this in mind because poetry teaches in a different way than prose. In poetry, we are instructed as we are moved; poetry is designed to be emotive. As author Christopher Ash writes, "Job is a blend of the affective (touching our feelings) and the cognitive (addressing our minds)." Bear this in mind as you read and study the book, since the same goes for Ecclesiastes as well.

If you would like to study Job even more fully, I'd recommend to you a couple of resources, both by the author I just quoted, Christopher Ash. His recent book, *Trusting God in the Darkness*, is a short introductory guide to Job that would be excellent to read along with this study. And Ash published a full-length commentary on the book, *Job: The Wisdom of the Cross*, several years ago. It is worth your attention as well, especially if you are looking for a verse-by-verse analysis.

According to Pastor Mark Dever, much of Ecclesiastes has to do with how we measure success. Likely written by Solomon in his later years, the book's overriding question is, what makes life worth living? The Preacher, as Solomon calls himself in the book, concludes that fearing and obeying God is the "secret" to life success – but he only comes to that conclusion after dabbling in virtually every other human pathway.

Ecclesiastes, like Job, is mostly poetry. So, in addition to the figurative and emotive language, we'll also encounter hyperbole and exaggeration – outsized statements meant to be provocative, to get us to think deeply about the lessons of the book as they are applied to life. Because Ecclesiastes is a relatively short book at 12 chapters, during our six sessions we should be able to cover most of it.

If you'd like to dig deeper into your Ecclesiastes study, I would recommend *Exalting Jesus in Ecclesiastes* by Daniel and Jonathan Akin, part of the Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary series. It's a strong but accessible expository guide.

Taken together, Job and Ecclesiastes are two of the books (along with others like Psalms and Proverbs) which English-language scholars often group together as Wisdom writings. These books have, as a primary purpose, to apply the law, or teachings, of God to everyday life in light of the fear of the Lord. Let us pray that in this quarter's study we may all pursue such wisdom, in the context of Christ's redemptive work.



Job 1:1-2:10

We will start our study of the book of Job by being introduced to the main character, Job. Although he is a godly man, he is about to undergo a lot of suffering. We will learn about God's sovereignty—He is in full control of everything. Satan seeks permission from the Lord to inflict any sufferings upon Job. He first attacks Job by taking away all his possessions and his children, and then inflicting him with sickness. In reading the prologue, we will also get to learn something that Job doesn't know—that the sufferings he is about to face have nothing to do with his character. Instead, God allows them to prove to Satan that Job's strong faith in God has nothing to do with the material blessings. The main lesson I pray we will all learn is that God is sovereign over everything, including our sufferings.

Prepared by John Nyota

Day 1: Job 1:1-5

In these first five verses the author introduces us to Job. We will learn where Job lived, about his family, and his health. But even more important we will get to know about his integrity.

Read verses 1-3: Write everything you learn about Job from verses. What did he do on behalf of his children (verses 4-5)?

According to the text what kind of person was Job morally & spiritually (verses 1 and 5)?

With this brief description of Job's character in these first five verses, the author sets the context for the rest of the book. Read Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 3:5-8; 9:10; and 16:6. What do you learn about fearing the Lord?

Apply: Job was not perfect (sinless) but was living an obedient life. As a result his peers regarded him as a blameless man. He was a man of integrity. May this be true of you due to your love of God—your worship and obedience to his Word.

Pray: Father, we pray that we will seek to revere you by spending time with you in the Word and obeying all that you are teaching us. As a result, may we be people of integrity to all people around us—to your glory.news.

Day 2: **Job 1:6-12**

Having introduced us to Job, the author now switches the scene to heavenly courts. We will focus today on verses 6-8 and read about the council in heaven, Satan, and God's testimony about Job.

Read Psalm 89:5-8; Isaiah 6:1-8, 1 Kings 22:19-23. What do you learn about the sons of God and the council in heaven?

Describe God's description of Job to Satan.

What kind of testimony do you think God would give about you?

Apply: God's testimony for those who are in Christ is that they are righteous based on their faith in Christ (Romans 5:1; 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Have you placed your faith in Jesus Christ? If you haven't or aren't sure, I encourage you to talk to a pastor or leader at Richland Creek.

Pray: Jesus, we thank you for giving your life as our ransom. As a result we who have repented and placed our faith in you stand righteous before God. We pray that we will seek to love you with all our hearts all the days of our lives.

Day 3: Job 1:6-12

Today we will focus on verses 9-12, looking at Satan's reasoning of why Job fears the Lord. We will also learn about Satan's power and God's sovereignty.

What is Satan's response to God's testimony about Job (9-10)?

What do we learn about Satan's power? (10-12)?

What do these verses teach us about God's power? What encouragement do you get from this?

Apply: Satan is very powerful compared to human beings; however, his power is limited. God is all-powerful and Satan has authority only as far as God allows him. Nothing happens to us without God allowing it. So no matter what comes our way, let us remain faithful and seek to let God accomplish His will in our lives.

Pray: Father, we want to thank you for the fact that victory is on our side no matter what Satan may throw at us. For greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). May we always remember this truth.

Day 4: **Job 1:13-22**

God gives Satan permission to afflict Job, but limits him to Job's possessions. Job suffers big losses in quick succession. We are going to look at how Job responds to all these losses.

Describe the tragedies that fell upon Job.

How does Job respond to all these tragedies that fell upon him (20-22)?

Read 1 Peter 1:6-7 and James 1:2-4. Why does God allow sufferings to come upon believers?

Apply: Job chose to worship the Lord in the midst of losing everything. We should be worshipping God because He first loved us and reached out to save us. Do you have a regular habit of personal worship? What's your response to the challenges that life may bring to you?

Pray: Holy Spirit, fill us with the hunger to worship you. We pray that we will spend more time with you through the Word and prayer, resulting in us becoming more Christ-like and glorifying you here on earth.

Day 5: Job 2:1-10

Job remained faithful to God in spite of losing all his possessions and also his children. The trials now become even more intense. God allows Satan to attack Job personally.

Read 2:3. What is different in what God says about Job here compared to what He said in Job 1:8?

What limitations did God place on Satan regarding his attacks (verse 6)? How did Satan attack Job (verses 7-8)?

What advice did Job's wife give to him? What's Job's response (9-10)?

Apply: We will go through trials in our lives. What is your attitude towards those life challenges? We should seek to honor God no matter what comes our way—because all things work together for good for those who love him (Romans 8:28). How prepared are you to face trials?

Pray: Lord, we pray that we will seek to honor you in our lives, even when we face challenges. May the good that you want the world to see be evident to those around us and we pray that you will be glorified in both good times and tough times. Amen.



Job 12-14

“You reap what you sow! You are a worthless fool who deserves much worse!” Can you imagine a friend saying such things to you in the moment of your greatest suffering? How would you respond? Job felt the sting of judgment coming from Zophar the Naamathite—the third of his three friends who came to “show him sympathy and comfort him” (Job 2:11). Instead of mercy, however, Job’s comforter mocked his pain.

Chapters 12-14 contain Job’s specific answer to Zophar’s scathing accusations in Job 11. In addition, Job offers a general response to his other friends, Eliphaz and Bildad — thus bringing the first round of speeches to a close. In the days ahead, we will see Job grapple with the reality of his suffering as he presses his circumstances up against what he believes to be true about God and what he thought was true of the world. Though Job’s friends cannot fathom the idea that Job’s suffering is undeserved, Job continues to argue that he stands blameless before God. The weight of it all brings Job to a place of great despair. He knows the only answer is vindication from God Himself. If only he could die and rise again to new life.

Prepared by Elizabeth Rodriguez

Day 1: Job 12:1-12

Job begins his response to Zophar with sarcasm. Though Job's friend implied that he is a great fool (Job 11:7-12), Job is wise enough to understand that life in a sinful world isn't always as it seems.

Look back at Job 1:8 and Job 2:3. Is Job's assessment of himself as "a just and blameless man" (ESV) accurate? Why or why not? Is Job claiming to be a sinless man? (See Job 7:21, 13:26) What is he really saying to his friends?

Read Habakkuk 1:1-12. Are things always as they seem in a sinful world? What contrast is Job drawing in verses 4 and 6? What is Job, like Habakkuk, struggling to understand?

Though there is sarcasm behind much of what Job says in this passage, there is truth in his words. What attribute of God does Job affirm in verses 9-10? How can right understanding of God's character comfort Job in the midst of his suffering?

Apply: Instead of lifting Job out of his suffering, his friends sought to bury him in shame. Their words revealed not wisdom but folly. Life in a sinful world is messy and complicated, but God's ways are not our ways. We ought not to look upon the suffering of another and jump to the conclusions. God alone judges rightly: "For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13).

Pray: Father, thank you for the example of mercy and humility I have in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him, you have shown me what is good. Search my heart, Lord. If I have ever added to the suffering of a friend with arrogant words, please forgive me. Give me the courage to acknowledge it and ask my friend for forgiveness. God, help me to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with you.

Day 2: Job 12:13-25

Job knows that God is the source of wisdom. The wisdom of “the aged” (the three friends to whom Job sarcastically referred in Job 12:12) pales in comparison to the wisdom of “the Ancient of Days” (Dan. 7:13). Likewise, might, counsel, and understanding are His. No human can stay the hand of God.

List every human role Job speaks of in this passage. What types of positions are these (verse 24)? How does the world view these roles?

In what way is God’s power evident? According to Job, how does God’s wisdom and might compare with that of the people listed in the previous set of questions? Explain using the vivid picture Job paints in verses 22, 24, and 25.

Read Isa. 40:9-31. Is Job’s assessment of God’s wisdom, power, and authority accurate? Use verses from Isaiah 40 to support your answer. How might Job’s words in verse 16b contribute to the three friends’ understanding of God’s sovereignty?

Apply: “Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord...” (Prov. 3:7). Our Sovereign Lord has the wisdom, power, and authority to reduce even the greatest leaders to nothing. From major events that lead to the rise and fall of nations to the minute details of an individual human life, nothing happens outside of His will. Nothing is too hard for Him. “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.” (Ps. 115:3)

Pray: “...O Lord my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent... O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all...” (Ps. 104:1-2, 24). Lord, true wisdom comes from you. May the word of Christ dwell in me richly, that I might admonish others in all wisdom.

Day 3: Job 13:1-12

Job's patience grew thin. His frustration is palpable in this passage. The words of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar brought him no comfort and could not shed any light on the matter. Continuing this argument would prove futile, as the friends' assessment of Job's circumstances — and God's character — is incorrect.

What is the first thing Job says in this passage? What is Job claiming? In Job's eyes, how do his wisdom and knowledge of God compare to the three friends?

How does Job describe his friends, and their words, in this passage? What are their offenses, according to Job?

Job's comforters presume to speak for God. Yet, how does Job characterize their actions in verses 7-9? Why? (See Job 1:8, 2:3, 11:1-6) What will be the consequence?

Apply: We cannot give what we do not have. Job's friends did not seek the truth, nor did they seek God. Instead of comforting Job, the friends compounded his suffering. May we base our words and actions upon the wisdom of God, not our understanding.

Pray: Lord, you are the Great Physician. The gospel message is the medicine I need as an encouragement to persevere through the trials and suffering I will experience in this fallen world. Help me to continually apply the truth of your Word and your wisdom in all circumstances.

Day 4: **Job 13:13-27**

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are not qualified to hear Job's case. Thus, Job wants to appeal to Almighty God Himself, for there is no higher authority. Job knows that he is innocent and pleads for the opportunity to present his case before God, even if means placing himself in peril.

Read Esther 4:6-16. Esther's life was in danger, but she found favor with the king. Does Job believe he is in danger as he seeks an audience with the King of Kings? Why or why not? Look closely at verses 13-19. What does Job pray will be the outcome? What will that outcome prove?

What does Job ask of God (verses 20-22)? What is he pleading for?

Look back at Job 1:1, 4-5. What did Job understand about sin? (See Lev. 17:11, Heb. 9:22, Rom. 5:8-10) What is Job struggling to understand?

Apply: Where do we turn in the midst of our suffering? Job knew “the hand of God had done this” (Job 12:9). As a result of his loss, suffering, and public humiliation, the enemy was sure Job would curse God. Yet, Job turned toward God and not away from Him. He sought God out for vindication and to understand his suffering.

Pray: Lord, you are good and your love endures forever. “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” (Ps. 139:23-24)

Day 5: Job 13:28-14:22

For a brief moment, Job's friends are silent. As Job speaks to God, his tone changes. He pleads for mercy instead of judgment, praying that he might die in peace and God's wrath would pass over him. While Job soberly assesses the reality of death, he also expresses hope in resurrection and the forgiveness of sin, which is the only answer to man's greatest problem.

What is Job describing in 13:28-14:6? (See Ps. 90:10, 1 Chr. 29:15b, and Eccl. 6:12) What imagery does he use?

What contrast does Job draw between the life of a man and the life of a tree? Does Job believe there is more hope for a tree than a man? Why or why not?

What does Job ask in verses 4 and 14? Why are these questions significant? What answers do we find in Scripture? (See John 11:23-27 and 1 Cor. 15:3-5)

Apply: Resurrection proves man's condition is not hopeless! By grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, there is forgiveness of sin and eternal life in Jesus Christ. God made a way for man to be restored to right relationship with Him. We have hope because "He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also..." (2 Cor. 4:14-15)

Pray: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all [my] iniquity, who heals all [my] diseases, who redeems [my] life from the pit, who crowns [me] with steadfast love and mercy." (Ps. 103:2-4) Lord, may I never take your demonstration of love in Christ for granted!



Job 17-19

Job has truly miserable comforters. They offer no God-based hope but rather a cycle of judgment and condemnation portraying themselves as more righteous than Job. Round and round, they argue a works-based mindset. Their basic conclusion: Since you are suffering, you must be in sin. In chapter 16, Job asks them the motive behind their “comforting words.” Job acknowledges that God, not his friends, are wearing him out, for it is God who allowed his circumstances — including allowing his “friends” to “comfort” him! At the end of chapter 16, Job poetically unrolls a record of how God has “gone to war” against him, although Job had not gone to war against God! This would evoke a sense of hopelessness in anyone! Who would want the God of the universe warring against them? Job clings to the hope that God will stand up for him, whether in his life or death. God is his judge, not his friends, and not even himself..

Prepared by Stef Dowd

Day 1: Job 17

To paraphrase Job's friends, "Admit your sin and your life will change instantly! Just do it!" While confession is necessary for forgiveness and change may occur quickly, life change typically occurs in our hearts and minds, not our circumstances. As chapter 17 begins, remember it is a direct continuation of Job's reply in the previous chapter. Take time to read chapters 16-17 together, using chapter 17 to answer the following questions.

What is it that Job desires from God? Rescue from his circumstances? Fire from heaven to fall on his "friends"? Read verses 3-4.

Who does Job acknowledge as the source of his current situation? Is he correct? Read verse 6.

Job is told that repenting would turn his "night into day." Who is the focus and savior in that thought process, Job or God? Why?

Apply: These "friends" believed Job could change his life quickly. If it was possible to change your life on your own, without God, would you? If so, your faith and hope are in yourself. What steps should you take to ensure your faith and hope remain in God?

Pray: Lord God, I confess putting faith and hope in myself rather than You. Give me the courage to hope in and trust You. Amen.

Day 2: Job 18

Bildad resumes condemnation of his friend, whose “spirit is broken.” While addressing Job, Bildad gives a chilling description of hell. Terror. Famishing. Darkness. He is narrating what will happen to Job because of his supposed “wickedness.” At the same time, he is declaring the eternity of any person who has rejected God.

Describe in your own words the general tone or attitude of chapter 18.

According to Bildad, who receives punishment and tribulation?

Read Matthew 25:31-46 and John 16:33. According to Jesus, who receives punishment and tribulation? What do Jesus’ answers offer that Bildad’s do not?

Apply: Does the reality of hell convict you to share the Gospel or keep you content to condemn? Or, are you numb to those in the darkness?

Pray: Lord Jesus, saying, thank You for rescuing me from hell in your death and resurrection will never be enough. I offer you my life and ask that you help me share the light of the Gospel with those in darkness so that they may have the same eternal rescue as I do.

Day 3: James 1:19-22

At the beginning of their visit, Job's friends sat in silence with him for seven days. However, since those days, their words have revealed that their minds were not silent concerning Job's suffering. By chapters 17-19, both Job and his "comforters" have come a long way in expressing their feelings vocally. These verbal interchanges reinforce a biblical truth — our words matter and reveal our true beliefs.

Read Proverbs 10:19 and 12:18. How have the words of Job's friends proven these verses to be true?

Based on James 1:19-22, when is a Christian to speak?

Why should a Christian be quick to listen and slow to speak? Would there be a benefit in being quick to listen and slow to speak within Bildad and Job's interactions?

Apply: Every human, except for our Lord Jesus, struggles with words. The words of Christians are to build one another up and offer grace, Ephesians 4:29. In what ways could you be a "doer" of the implanted Word by building up your brothers and sisters in Christ today?

Pray: Holy Spirit, you dwell within me, and without you, my words are shallow encouragement. Please teach me how to edify, build up, and strengthen my brothers and sisters in your Word, not my own. When I share the Good News with others, I entrust my words to you.

Day 4: **Job 19:1-22**

Bildad's conviction that suffering is a result of sin evolves into an ultimatum: "Job, your words are worthless. Repent or suffer the hell I described." How presumptuous! The only One worthy of making such an ultimatum is He who suffered the terrors of and defeated Hell — Jesus. Job swiftly reminds Bildad that his words mean nothing either.

In chapter 17:13-15, Job is hopeful in his suffering and tribulation. What does he say regarding his hope in verse 10?

Verses 8-12 describe a military attack, explaining Job's "hope status." What military-type words do you see?

Who does Job declare the leader of this attack? Read verse 12. Is he correct or incorrect? Who is genuinely leading the attack against Job?

Apply: Have you felt God was attacking you while you were suffering or felt forgotten and left to suffer alone? Read Psalm 13, allowing the truth of God's Word to guide your thoughts and emotions.

Pray: Jesus, my Savior, you never leave me to suffer alone, though you suffered alone on my behalf. My present and future hope is in you. Please, open my eyes for opportunities to share this eternal hope.

Day 5: Job 19:23-29

Within this passage is a frequently quoted verse, “For I know that my Redeemer lives.” This hopeful message may not seem to flow with the rest of the chapter or book, yet like any verse, the context reveals its place not only in the book of Job but the entire Bible.

Why does Job want his words “written or inscribed in a book” and “engraved on a rock forever”? Read verses 23-25.

Although he felt forsaken, whom does Job believe his “Redeemer” to be?

When does Job believe he will see God? Is he fearful of the future? What has been renewed in him? Read chapters 17:15-16 and 19:10.

Apply: If you are a Christian, your life has been redeemed! Do you focus on your Redeemer and the mission with which He has charged you? If you are not a Christian, know that Jesus has paid the penalty for your sin and is ready to redeem you. Will you let Him?

Pray: Great Redeemer, far too often, I chose to live a self-focused life, keeping Your Gospel of redemption to myself. May you be my focus, so I can grow in Christlikeness and share Your redemption with others.



Job 27-28

Have you ever heard someone who uses God's name a lot, but their actions and what they have to say reveals that they don't know much about Him? Job has been listening to his friends as they have repeatedly offered their opinions on why Job has suffered. They spoke as authorities on God's ways and judgments, but in the end, God said they did not speak the truth about Him. For all of Job's life, he had been a man of integrity when it came to worship and obedience to God's law. Job has suffered tremendously for a while, yet he maintained his integrity and fear of God with patient perseverance. Job's friends claim that his suffering is because of sin. It seems that Job has searched his mind and heart and has not been able to recall even one unconfessed or unforgiven sin. (Refer back to chapter 1, where Job offered sacrifices to God just in case any of his children may have sinned.) The accusations from Job's friends and Job's answers bring us to a critical question: "When followers of God suffer, is it always because of sin?" As you study this week, search your own heart and attitudes. Do you see any judgmental attitudes that compare to Job's friends? Do you see any ways that you have grown in obedience like Job? Be wise and make the necessary adjustments.

Prepared by Chuck Bounds

Day 1: Job 27:1-2

In today's passage, Job continues his response to the judgmental accusations of his friends. Job begins by expressing his feelings about the extreme suffering he has experienced. He feels like his suffering is undeserved, yet he magnifies God by saying "God lives," and that He is "the Almighty."

Job's situation was almost incomprehensible, losing so much and in physical pain as well. What did Job mean by expressing that he had bitterness in his soul?

Does God mind if we ask "why" questions when we face difficult situations? Does He understand when we express that we feel life is not fair?

Today we often face difficult situations in which we suffer. What types of things would cause us to experience soul bitterness?

Apply: Job believed that it was entirely God's prerogative to allow all that had happened. Job had learned to fear and trust God long before this time of testing. His reaction was to humble himself before God and worship Him. (Job 1:20)

Pray: Dear Lord God Almighty, You are worthy to be worshipped and praised, no matter what is going on in my life. I trust that Your will is good and right. Help me to remain faithful and true, and help me to keep my eyes focused on Your word. Lead me to glorify You in everything I face today.

Day 2: Job 27:3-6

The parable of the Ten Minas concludes the narrative of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem which began in Luke 9:51. The parable seems directed to Jesus' disciples, who expect the kingdom of God to appear soon after Jesus arrives in Jerusalem.

Today we continue to look at Job's response to his friend's judgmental words. Keep in mind what God said of Job in Job 1:8 - that he was "a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil." Job's friends believed that his suffering was the result of sin. Job expresses his feelings honestly, but he is careful to maintain his integrity and fear of God.

Job swore that he would not speak evil or deceitful words against God. How does a child of God become as faithful and bold as Job?

Job's friend Bildad argued that because God is pure and is the sovereign ruler over all of nature and mankind, no man, not even Job, could be righteous in God's eyes. Job emphatically disagrees with Bildad (27:5). On what principle does Job base his belief about being righteous before God?

For perspective, read Genesis 15:6 and compare Job with Abraham.

How did Job come to believe that there was no unconfessed sin in his life? (For perspective, read Psalm 139:23-24)

Apply: The Bible says that Satan is an accuser. Job's friends falsely accused Job of sin, but Job was a man of godly character. He had walked in obedience to God for a long time. We must be disciplined in daily Bible study and prayer so that when we are tested, we may have the steadfast integrity of Job.

Pray: Dear Lord, You are to be worshipped and honored because You are Almighty God, our Creator, and Lord of the universe. Help me, Lord, to live free from sin and keep me close to You. Amen.

Day 3: Job 27:7-23

Warren Wiersbe, in his book, Be Patient: Waiting on God in Difficult Times, says, “Too often, those who say the most about God know the least about God.” In today’s verses, Job tells his friends that he is going to teach them about God. He does so by describing the way of the wicked as a contrast with the way he had resolved to live his life.

How does Job describe the behavior of his friends? (verses 7-8)

Why do you think Job had a greater understanding of God?

Read verses 13-23, where Job describes the wicked. As you read these verses, write down some opposite characteristics of one who is godly.

Apply: In my young adult years, as I was getting serious about studying my Bible and learning to follow Christ faithfully, I met with legalistic criticism from friends who believed themselves to be mature Christians. My godly dad encouraged me by saying, “When you follow God’s Word and obey what it says, you don’t have to apologize for being right. You only have to answer to Him.” There is great peace found in obeying God and waiting on Him to answer your critics.

Pray: Thank you, Lord, for being my God and my Heavenly Father. I trust in Your word to guide me through the trials of life. Help me daily to guard my time with You so that I may glorify you and not sin.

Day 4: **Job 28:1-19**

Today we find that Job has ended his description of the behavior of the wicked. In this chapter, he teaches us about the root of the problem - a focus on material gain and not godly wisdom.

What analogy does Job use to describe what men value? (verses 1-4)

Read Matthew 6:19-21. What did Jesus say happens to earthly treasures?

In this passage, Job is building a case for the value of wisdom. What did he say about finding wisdom in the world around us? (verses 12-13)

Apply: A former pastor of mine defined wisdom as “The proper application of known truth.” Job had been a prosperous man, and suddenly his wealth was gone. Yet, he held tightly to his faith in God. Job was wise in that he believed that trusting God was far more valuable than his earthly possessions. Ask yourself, “what do I value most?”

Pray: Dear Lord, I need wisdom that comes from you. Forgive me when I place more value on temporal things than on my devotion to you. I love you, Lord, and I thank You for loving me.

Day 5: Job 28:12-28

Today's passage begins with Job asking two questions: "But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?" (NKJV) In the book of Proverbs, Solomon answers these questions. We also find answers to obtaining wisdom in the New Testament.

Write down your definition of wisdom and then your definition of understanding.

What is the relationship between wisdom and understanding?

Read Proverbs 2:1-12. Write several truths that apply to what Job is saying about wisdom.

Apply: Wisdom, knowledge, and understanding come from God. He has blessed us with His Word by which we may know about Him and know Him, personally. Many know about Him, but few know Him as their personal Lord, Savior, and Father. Godly wisdom is trusting your life to the true promises of His Word and living in obedience even when our world seems to be falling apart all around us. God is truly good all the time!

Pray: Heavenly Father, You are great and mighty, and the Creator of everything. You are perfect and worthy of being praised. It is incredible to think of the love that You have poured out on us that we may be called Your children. I need wisdom daily so that I may obey Your Word and honor you with my life. Thank you for loving us!



Job 36-37

The discussion so far in the book of Job has been centered around the concept of retributive justice, the idea that the Lord punishes the wicked and causes the righteous to flourish. Job's three friends have given their read on the situation. They have concluded that since God punishes the wicked and Job is clearly being punished, therefore Job must be wicked. Likewise, at each turn Job has shut down his friend's explanation, claiming his own righteousness. So at the end of chapter 31 the question still remains, is God unjust in bringing suffering on the righteous? If that was where the book ended perhaps we would be okay. After all, with what's left we could say, "Though God may seem arbitrary and it seems there's no reason for good people to suffer, I can try to trust God and believe that he is sovereign and rules in wisdom and justice." However, not content to leave the conversation here, Elihu steps to the scene to bring more clarity. He will counter both Job and his friends in the proceeding passages. His four "behold" statements highlight the character of God in light of these struggles.

Prepared by Jase Brown

Day 1: Job 36:5-12

The first of Elihu's "behold" statements in verse 5 highlights how God is impartial towards everyone. At first it seems that Elihu is going to follow the path of Job's friends. In verses 6 and 7 he claims that the wicked get their due and the Lord upholds the righteous. These things are true in an ultimate sense regarding final justice, but Elihu is more concerned about the present. In verses 8-12 he introduces the concept of a "righteous sinner." He acknowledges the possibility that even the righteous struggle with sin and are offered repentance and restoration.

Verse 5 says God does not despise anyone. How is this different than the answers Job's friends gave?

How is the concept of a "righteous sinner" new information in the discussion so far? Why is this concept significant for both Job and his friends?

How does God treat those who are righteous yet caught in the "chords of affliction?" How does He accomplish this work in our lives?

Apply: Being righteous does not mean being perfectly sinless. Instead it means seeking holiness even in the midst of failure. Our suffering can be a clue that the Lord is speaking to us and that we should listen intently to his Word and the Holy Spirit.

Pray: Father, often in pain I stop listening for your voice, but I am here. Teach me to treasure your wisdom which you graciously give to us, and to find joy in your boundless mercy.

Day 2: Job 36:13-21

Elihu now focuses on our response before God. When the Lord speaks, especially through suffering, Elihu says there are two typical responses, either rejection and anger leading to death or acceptance and humility leading to life. In verses 16-21 he is addressing both Job's attitude and his friends' theology. He cautions the three friends to not be hasty in their judgments (verse 17) and cautions Job about his pride ("scoffing," verse 18). He also warns all four not to seek out iniquity (verse 21). Instead, they should recognize that God "rescues the afflicted by their affliction" (verse 15) As C.S. Lewis is famous for saying, pain is God's megaphone.

Verse 16 is rendered differently across translations. What is the idea being communicated here? How does this contrast with the message of the three friends earlier in Job?

According to Elihu from verses 15 and 16 what is one purpose for suffering in our lives? How have you seen this at work?

What does Elihu mean by, "Do not long for the night?" Why would he warn Job against turning to sin in the midst of suffering?

Apply: When we face suffering we have a choice to make. Will we be prideful, angry, and indulgent, or will we be humble, faithful, and patient? It is completely up to us if we will seek the Lord or turn from Him.

Pray: God Almighty, I trust in you regardless of what this life may bring. I know you love me, and I know you will soon restore all things. This is my hope and my peace.

Day 3: Job 36:22-29

The next two “behold” statements focus on God’s wisdom and his hiddenness. By hiddenness I mean there are things about God which are too lofty for us to comprehend. Elihu asks the group, who can possibly instruct the Lord? Is He not the great teacher with all wisdom? Likewise, Elihu asserts that no man can understand the level of intellect it takes to keep the world in motion. Elihu’s point is that when we consider God and what He is up to, we often make grand judgments about elevated ideas with little understanding.

What does remembering the works of God (verse 24) have to do with God being a teacher (verse 22)? How does this help us in times of suffering?

What have you learned from the Lord that helps you endure suffering with joy and hope?

Though it is a rhetorical question, what is your answer to Elihu’s question in verse 29? How does that affect the way you think about God?

Apply: God is our Teacher, the source of our wisdom. Colossians 1:8-10 says that gaining wisdom is the path to living in God’s will. We must seek to know Him and his ways to live a life that is well pleasing to Him and fulfilling for us.

Pray: Father, please help me live in humility, especially when I don’t understand your ways. Help me trust in you and look toward the hope of resurrection and eternal life.

Day 4: Job 36:24-37:13

Elihu continues to praise God for His wondrous works, but this praise is more than just for the sake of worship. He is making a point about God's character. The fact that the Lord keeps all of nature in motion shows his care and compassion on everyone, even those who despise Him. While we experience pain in this life, it is also incredibly important that we remember the great love and grace of the Lord that sustains us every day.

Why does Elihu say his heart leaps when he thinks about the majesty and justice of God (37:1)? Have you ever had a similar reaction?

Why does God often need to “seal our hand” or stop our work in order to teach us (37:7)?

What are the three reasons Elihu gives for God's control over nature in 37:13? How does this help Job understand his plight, and us our own?

Apply: The provision and grace of God that we experience each day should be a constant reminder of our loving Father's goodness and justice. When we go through dark times in our lives we need to remember the countless days before then when the Lord silently provided for our every need in the background. His love and justice flow from every sunrise and every warm meal. When we forget those simple provisions we are tempted to deny Him in the face of pain.

Pray: Lord God, your love for us is new every morning. I confess that I seldom give you thanks for the simple and constant provision you give every day. Please help me rely on you when trouble comes my way and not forget your goodness because of my circumstances.

Day 5: Job 37:14-24

Finally, Elihu moves the discussion from general terms to addressing Job directly. He warns him to stay humble in view of God's power and justice. He reminds Job of his place, and tells him to wait on the redemption of the Lord rather than speaking out of turn. Elihu says that the Lord comes in glory from the north. This is in contradiction to Baal worshippers, who claim Baal will appear from the north. God is the only wise and righteous Lord over all.

Have you ever allowed suffering to cloud your worship of God? How do you worship the Lord even in the midst of great suffering?

Do you ever find yourself relying on things in this world rather than the Lord in times of trouble?

Has the Lord taught you anything through suffering that you could have only learned this way? How has this made you stronger or more faithful to him?

Apply: When we face suffering we, like Elihu, should consider God more as a teacher than as a judge. In our hasty speculations about God's motives we become prideful and make false assumptions. God is faithful to us, so we must resist the temptation to be unfaithful to Him even during some of our most agonizing periods.

Pray: Lord, I trust in your sovereign plan regardless of what it may mean in my life. I know you are working all things together for good. Help me humbly rely on you rather than anything this world has to offer.



Job 40-41

Job has heard from the Lord. In all of his suffering and questions, the Lord has finally responded to him over the previous two chapters and continues in His reply during our study this week. As we open the week in chapter 40, we will see that the Lord, calling Job a faultfinder, gives him a chance to respond to the case the Lord has made. Job's reply is short, and as we progress in our study of these two chapters, we will see the Lord continues to reveal himself to Job.

Prepared by Nicole Caldwell

Day 1: Job 40:1-14

Have you ever been confronted and lovingly offered correction? Much like a parent corrects a child, the Lord corrects Job. God shows Job the error in his questioning of God's purpose and Job's justification in defense of himself.

What is the meaning of the word faultfinder, and is this an accurate description of Job?

Why does Job respond by putting his hand over his mouth?

In verses 6-14, we see God question Job further. What does God ask Job?

Why did the Lord need to offer this type of correction to Job? What had Job incorrectly communicated about God to his friends?

Apply: The sovereign Lord is in control of every moment of our lives, and when we suffer, it is essential to remember that God is not acting out of accord with His character.

Prayer: Lord, give me peace and encouragement as I am reminded that you are sovereign over all things. In every circumstance this world brings my way, you are with me, and I can trust you to love and care for me. Help me, Lord, to dwell in a place of peace and trust even when I suffer.

Day 2: Psalm 89:8-18

During our reading yesterday, we saw the Lord speak to Job in questions. He asked Job in verse 9, “Have you an arm like God?” We will study today a cross-reference to this verse as we turn to the Psalms to better understand the revelation in Job of God’s character.

What are some of the attributes of God we see described here?

How does God use His power (His arm) for the sake of His people?

What are some of the privileges of being God’s people?

Apply: God is faithfully committed to His people and uses His mighty power for the sake of those who belong to Him. We are His, and that is a privilege for which we are not worthy.

Pray: Thank you, Lord, for the revelation of who you are. Thank you for the light of your face to guide our walk. Thank you for sending your Son so that we might be in a relationship with you. Thank you for the shield of the cross that covers our sin and our unworthiness.

Day 3: Job 40:15-24

God begins to illustrate a point here about his reign over creation by pointing to Behemoth. Some scholars disagree on the interpretation of who or what Behemoth is. Some point to the dinosaurs, while others point to the elephant or hippopotamus. It doesn't matter. God makes his point here, giving further revelation of his character regardless of how we classify Behemoth.

What does it mean when God says in verse 15, “which I made as I made you”?

Read Colossians 1:16. Why did God create Behemoth?

Why are all things created? Therefore, what is the purpose of pain and suffering at the hand of a sovereign God?

Apply: God creates all things for His glory. As His people, we must remember that even our suffering is part of His plan over creation as He is sovereign over all things. In all things, He will be glorified.

Pray: Lord, I pray that I would remember the purpose of your creation is for your glory. I pray you would create a heart of worship and praise in me as I face the trials and challenges that this world brings.

Day 4: **Job 41**

Chapter 41 builds upon the illustration and the revelation about creation through Behemoth with the introduction of Leviathan. Some scholars point to Behemoth as the land creature while Leviathan is a creature of the sea. The Lord describes Leviathan in great detail through the entire chapter and in that description gives Job even further revelation of who He is as creator God.

Read the nine questions outlined in verses 1-7. What image does this create for us of Leviathan?

Leviathan continues to be described as a beast of power and might, but is he still governed by the all-powerful creator God?

Turn to Revelation 4:9-11. How do these verses help us better understand how God's sovereign will creates and sustains all things?

Apply: Even though Leviathan is mighty, it still submits to the will of God as a created thing. All things submit to the will of God. His power rules over and sustains all of creation.

Pray: Lord, thank you for holding all of creation together. I praise you, for your purposes are far greater than my understanding. Help me to be reminded of this when I am tempted to question your provision for me.

Day 5: Romans 11:33-36

You may have noticed by now that God doesn't give Job the ultimate reason for his suffering. We have read through God's reply to Job, and God has not yet given any indication of the purpose behind the trials Job has faced. God answered Job instead with a reminder of who He is and grew Job in that understanding. In Job 41:11, we read, "Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine." We are given there a cross-reference to Romans 11:35. We will wrap up our week in Romans as we continue to develop what these words from the Lord in Job reveal to us about God and our suffering.

This passage is a concluding doxology as Paul breaks out in praise. In verse 33, what specific attributes are outlined for praise and worship?

Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah in verses 34 and 35. What do these questions reveal to us about God?

Based on these verses and the previous studies this week, are we ever fully able to understand the mind of God or the purposes of His sovereign will?

Apply: No human being knows the mind of the Lord. The Lord's ways are far beyond the understanding of human beings. Additionally, everything we have is a gift from God, and He is to be glorified.

Pray: Lord, give me trust in your ways. Help me remember that your methods are far beyond my understanding. Humble me when I am tempted to question your sovereignty or your will. Give me a desire to walk with you and to honor and glorify you even in suffering.



Job 42

In his commentary on Job, Warren Wiersbe observes, “Suffering in the will of God is a ministry that God gives a chosen few.” We have journeyed with Job through much sovereignly-ordained suffering and thankfully arrived at the concluding chapter. At the beginning of the book, God referred to Job as “my servant” (1:8,2:3) as He spoke to Satan. At the end of the book, we see God refer to him in this way again (42:7, 8). In all Job’s arguments and self-defense, he never stopped being a servant of the Lord. Because Job was “blameless and upright” (1:1), God had chosen him for this suffering to silence the accusations of Satan. In this final chapter, Job does not receive an explanation from God for all he has been through; however, he gains a more profound revelation of who God is. Job’s heart is now prepared to reply rightly to the Lord’s questioning. His last response to the Lord reflects deep humility, repentance, and trust. Mercifully, God also chooses to use Job as an intercessor for his friends. Lastly, we see the overflowing goodness of God in the blessings poured out in the latter part of Job’s life. Satan has been silenced! Job’s life is a testimony that God is always worthy of worship, even in the darkest places.

Prepared by Faith Cross

Day 1: Job 42:1-6

Let's do a little context work on our verses today. We will look at the passages just before this final response of Job to God. Keep in mind as you read that Job rightly responds to God, even though he never receives an explicit answer to why he had to endure such loss and suffering.

Read 42:2. Was this Job's first response to God's questioning? Review Job 40:3-5 to help you answer.

Read 40:8. This was the final question Job was commanded to answer before God. Does Job answer this question in verses 1-6?

Read 42:3-4. Cross-reference with 38:2-3 and 40:7. Why do you think Job repeats God's questions back to him as part of his response?

Apply: Our God is so merciful to allow Job, his servant, to question His justice and power in this last interaction. We, too, can approach His "throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb.4:16). But let's approach Him with humility, remembering that He made it possible through the death, burial, and resurrection of His only Son for us to draw near.

Pray: Lord, you tell me you are "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness..." (Ex.34:6). I thank you that I can approach you with confidence when I am struggling. Help me be humble as I seek understanding, and if there is no clear answer, help me suffer well.

Day 2: **Job 42:1-6**

These verses are Job's second response to God's questioning. Job has repeated back God's questions, demonstrating he was not just hearing God but listening and internalizing all God revealed to him. Today, let's take a closer look at Job's response.

Look up the attributes of God in a Bible dictionary. In verse 2, which of God's attributes do you think Job is recognizing?

Read verses 3-5. Look closely at Job's answers to the repeated questions. What is Job acknowledging about his character through his answers? What sin/sins do you think he is confessing?

Read verse 6. What is Job's response after he confesses his sin?

Apply: Often, we behave as Job did, letting our limited understanding develop into pride. Let us also confess and repent as Job did! He stopped just hearing, began listening, and seeing his God. This led to recognition, repentance, and trust.

Pray: Lord, I confess I allow my limited viewpoint and limited understanding to lead me into doubt and pride. I forget your awesome sovereignty and merciful providence. Your Word tells me you "oppose the proud, but give grace to the humble" (Jas 4:6). Help me to recognize my sin, repent and grow in trusting You.

Day 3: Job 42:7-9

The “epilogue” of a story always comes at the end and is separate from the final chapter. It significantly impacts the reader, providing a sense of closure by tying up loose ends. Not all stories have epilogues, but thankfully, God gives us a beautiful conclusion to this remarkable book. Today, let’s look at what happened to Job’s friends.

In verses 7 and 9, which three friends are God angry with? Who is missing from the list? Why does God say He is angry?

In verses 7- 8, what does God say about the way Job spoke about Him? How does this impact your understanding of Job’s motivations through the book? (see also 1 Sam. 16:7)

In verse 8, by what means are Job’s friends forgiven? Is it their sacrifice or Job’s intercession?

Apply: God’s perspective of Job is a strong rebuke of Job’s friends and makes a powerful statement about the purity of Job’s heart in all his questioning. God chooses to allow the intercessory prayers of Job to be an acceptable sacrifice for his friends’ folly. This acceptable act of intercession foreshadows Jesus’ intercession for us through His pure, acceptable sacrifice of Himself.

Pray: Lord, throughout your Word, there are so many examples of godly men interceding on another’s behalf. We remember Abraham interceding for Lot, Moses interceding for the Israelites, many of the prophets interceding on their people’s behalf. Let me gratefully remember above all else Your Son, Jesus, interceding on my behalf: “Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost, those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).

Day 4: **Job 42:10-17**

We have seen the outcome for Job's friends as he interceded in prayer for them: the Lord graciously accepted Job's intercession and did not treat them according to their folly. Now let's look closely at the outcome for Job.

Read verse 10a (ESV). To whom is Job reconciled in verses 1-9 before God restored his fortunes? Do you think this is significant?

Read verse 10b (ESV), 12 and 13. What part of the book does the author want you to look back to when you read these verses (Hint: It's in the beginning)? Why do you think the author is pointing you there?

Read verses 16-17. Now cross-reference with Gen. 25:7-8, Gen. 35:28-29, and 1 Chron. 29:28. How are all these verses alike? What significant men are these verses pointing out? Do you think it is important to the original audience that the author described Job's death using this language?

Apply: God is faithful to those who endure suffering. We are told by Peter, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you" (1 Pet. 4:12). We can take great comfort in knowing the beginning and the end of all our stories are in His hands: "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please'" (Isa. 46:10).

Pray: Lord, this is the day you have made; let us rejoice and be glad in it (Ps. 118:24). All of my days were written in your book before even one of them came to be (Ps. 139:16.) Help me to rest in you.

Day 5: Job 42

Today, let's take some time to look at what other authors in the Bible say about Job and suffering. As you read today, ask yourself these questions: Is there such a thing as innocent suffering? What does the Word have to say about this?

Read James 5:10-11. What title is Job given in these verses? Based on these verses, how are we supposed to view Job and the Lord?

Read 1 Peter 2:20-23. What do these verses tell us about innocent or unjust suffering? Who is our example of innocent suffering in these verses? How specifically did He respond?

Read Isaiah 53. Compare how Job suffered with how Jesus suffered. In what ways did Job not suffer well?

Apply: While Job did not suffer because of his sin, he did sin in his suffering. He did not suffer perfectly as our Savior, Jesus, did. We can learn from Job's example about suffering well, and we can be better friends by carefully evaluating how we respond when others are in hard seasons.

Pray: Lord, I thank you for the book of Job. You make it clear you are sovereign and powerful over all suffering. You also let me know you are always listening, always available. I may not receive answers to all my questions, but you will be faithful to reveal more of yourself to me. That will always satisfy more than knowledge.



Ecclesiastes 1:1-2:11

When Solomon became king of Israel, after the death of his father David, he humbly prayed that God would grant him wisdom, and this pleased the Lord. The Lord gave Solomon both wisdom and wealth (1 Kings 3:7-13). God used Solomon to write three books of the Bible: Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes. Solomon also sinned greatly against the Lord, taking pagan wives and building pagan altars for them, and the Lord rebuked him (1 Kings 11:3-13). Solomon had broken the Lord's covenant. The only reason God did not immediately "tear the kingdom away" from him was for the sake of his father, David.

Solomon probably wrote Proverbs and Song of Solomon during the years he was faithfully walking with God. He wrote Ecclesiastes near the end of his life as he reflected on life experiences and lessons learned. As Solomon looked back on his life, he concludes that seeking after the things of this world was only "vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 1:14). Ecclesiastes is a dark study on a life lived apart from God, a hard lesson Solomon learned.

Prepared by Jamie O'Brien

Day 1: Ecclesiastes 1:1-7

The first three verses of Ecclesiastes introduce us to the author and the theme of the entire book. The word “vanity” means “emptiness, futility, vapor, that which vanishes quickly and leaves nothing behind.”

How would you summarize the theme of Ecclesiastes based on verses 1-3?

In verses 4-7, what illustrations from nature does Solomon use to emphasize the futility of man's life and work?

Based on Solomon's assessment of the futility of life, how would you answer the question he poses in verse 3: “What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?”

Apply: Life is filled with difficulties, and there is much that we cannot understand, let alone control. But life is God's gift to us; without Jesus, life is indeed “vanity and vexation of spirit” (Eccl. 1:14). But in Christ, we can live our lives for God and eternity.

Pray: Dear Father God, forgive me for the wasted years I spent living apart from You. Thank you for the gift of life and salvation in Your Son, Jesus. In Him, I find my true identity and purpose.

Day 2: Ecclesiastes 1:8-11

The phrase “All things are wearisome” sums up Solomon’s observations of the repetition of nature. A life that is confined to this earth is full of “weariness” or “full of labor.” Man is never satisfied, no matter how much he sees or hears. Adding to Solomon’s disillusionment was the discovery that there is nothing new under the sun. Things only appear to be new because people do not remember the “earlier things,” and Solomon points out that even the “latter things” will not be remembered by “those who will come later still” (11).

In verse 9, Solomon says, “there is nothing new under the sun.” Is this true?

How would you summarize Solomon’s argument about the futility and dissatisfaction of life based on verses 8-11? Do you agree?

Is there anything in this world that truly satisfies?

Apply: In Eccl. 3:11, Solomon answers the question of why men and women cannot be satisfied with life: “God has put eternity in their heart.” No one can find peace and satisfaction apart from God. We must respond in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ’s invitation: “Come to Me, you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28).

Pray: Dear Father God, only you can create new things, and you begin by making lost sinners “new creatures” when they trust in Christ Jesus to save them (2 Cor. 5:17). Thank you for making me a new creature in Your Son Jesus!

Day 3: Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

Before Solomon continues his search for the meaning of life in Chapter 2, he gives us his qualifications in verses 12-18. He reminds us here that he was king over Israel in Jerusalem, which implies wealth, status, and ability. Solomon explored the extremes of human behavior and found that it was all striving after wind.

In verse 13, how does Solomon describe life “under the sun?” Why do you think he describes life that way?

Based on verse 18, what are the results of wisdom and increasing knowledge?

How does this passage prove that Solomon had fallen out of fellowship with God?

Apply: Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom (1 Kings 10:23). Yet with all his riches and wisdom, Solomon found life to be meaningless, including his own. Only Jesus Christ can provide ultimate satisfaction, joy, and wisdom.

Pray: Dear Father God, your Word tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. In Jesus, you have lavished upon us the riches of Your grace in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of Your will and purpose in Christ Jesus.

Day 4: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

Eccl. 1:12-2:26 is a short autobiography of Solomon's life. He boasted that he was wiser and greater than any who had come before him (Eccl. 1:16, 2:9). Solomon had every resource he needed to experience all that life had to offer as the king of Israel. He found some fleeting satisfaction from the joy of all his accomplishments and self-indulgences. Still, when he reflected on the value of all he had accomplished, he concluded "all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun" (11).

Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 and circle all the "I's" and the verb next to it. Then circle all the occurrences of "myself" you see. What observations can you make about Solomon during this time?

Looking back verse by verse through this passage, write down all the things Solomon was involved in.

Why do you think Solomon said all of this was "vanity and striving after wind?"

Apply: In Ecclesiastes 2, we are introduced to what Solomon found in his search for meaning in life. When pleasure alone is the center of life, the result ultimately will be disappointment and emptiness. True contentment can only be found in Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 6:6-12).

Pray: Dear Father God, forgive me, for I too have spent much of my life pursuing the things of this world that I thought would bring me happiness and contentment. But I know now that true pleasure and joy can only be found in Christ Jesus.

Day 5: Proverbs 3:1-12 and 30:7-9

Proverbs 3 is about giving all of ourselves over to God. It's about releasing our sense of autonomy and self-determination and accepting the fact that God's ways are better than our ways. We'll see six exhortations that will help us be successful in our walk with Christ Jesus. Each has a blessing attached to it, but we can only experience those blessings if we pursue wisdom out of a desire to have a closer walk with God.

Read Proverbs 3:1-12 and list the six exhortations Solomon gives for successful living.

List the six blessings which correspond to the exhortations.

What does the author of Prov. 30:7-9 ask for? How does this contrast with Solomon's pursuits?

Apply: Proverbs 3:5-6 is a promise God's people have enjoyed as they sought the Lord's direction in their lives. When we keep His precepts and obey His commands, He blesses us and prepares us to receive and enjoy His good plans for our lives.

Pray: Father, I choose life in Your Son Jesus Christ. And I pray that You would use me to help others choose the narrow road leading to life in Him.



Ecclesiastes 2:12-3:22

Many years after Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes, Jesus posed a rhetorical question to His disciples in Matt. 16:26: “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?” Solomon’s reflections in the first two chapters give his answer to that question: nothing of significant value. Although hopelessness and frustration seem to abound, we will discover what gives life genuine value as we continue to walk through Ecclesiastes. Watch for Solomon’s ever-so-brief transition from a self-centered mindset to a God-centered perspective regarding not only his life but the purpose of humanity.

Prepared by Stef Dowd

Day 1: Ecclesiastes 2:12-17

The themes of light and dark pervade the Scriptures. Light represents wisdom, life, blessing, and God's presence. Light brings hope. Darkness represents foolishness, death, and cursing, and God's absence. Darkness brings a sense of worthlessness or, depending on your Bible translation, vanity.

Read verses 12-17. List the words describing light. From the same verses, list the words describing darkness.

Is the light in verses 14-15 eternal or temporary? How does the status of this light encourage or discourage Solomon?

Why does Solomon hate his life? Write verses 16-17 in your own words.

Apply: If you have received salvation, the Light is in you! Your life ought to display the purpose of the Light in you. Do you, as Jesus commanded in Matthew 5:16, “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven?”

Pray: God, I praise You for being the Light that has brought salvation to me and offers it to the entire world. May my life shine your eternal light of salvation into a dark world that is cursed and separated from you.

Day 2: Ecclesiastes 2:18-23

Solomon's hatred is profound as his distress continues. The worthlessness of the toil and hard work of his life continues, fueling a self-focused mindset. In the last verses, this mindset transcends itself and includes all of humanity.

What words are used in verses 18-20 that reveal a self-focused mindset? What was the result of this mindset?

Read Genesis 3:17-18. Who is speaking? Who is being spoken to? What is said about toil?

From verses 21-23, a shift from personal toil to the toil of all humanity occurs. At this point, what is Solomon's conclusion about anyone's life?

Apply: In Gen. 1:15, God instructs Adam to work and keep the garden of Eden, so hard work and toiling are not a result of sin. However, a self-focused mindset that sees toil as unjust is a result of our sin nature. What can you do this week to glorify God amid toil rather than thinking about yourself?

Pray: Lord God, please protect my focus from shifting to my toil and forgetting the ultimate struggle you went through on my behalf. May I find my struggling and toiling for you as the blessing it is, not a curse.

Day 3: Ecclesiastes 2:24-26

Work is hard, and sometimes it can seem meaningless. Solomon has already meditated on the futility of work, but is there a positive side to it? Can toil bring pleasure?

Where does enjoyment come from, according to verses 24-25?

How would you summarize Solomon's view of God as expressed in verse 26?

If work is not done for the joy of serving God, what is its value, according to Solomon's final thought at the end of verse 26?

Apply: Everyone works — the difference is who we're working for. Col. 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men."

Pray: Lord, give me an attitude of thanks and joy in the work you have given me to do, and please give my work value by using it for your glory.

Day 4: Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

Long before the Byrds turned it into a pop song in the 1960s, Solomon urged us to keep all of life in this perspective: We are limited, and there are cycles in our short span of life that we often do not understand. Our reaction to these cycles of life can be either cynical or grateful, depending on our worldview.

Solomon builds the poem of verses 1-8 on the foundation of contrast. Write below the contrasting pairs that he uses to make his point. To get you started, I'll note that verse 2 begins with birth contrasted to death.

According to verse 11, what has God put in everyone's heart?

Also in verse 11, we find out that there is a limitation placed on man. What is it?

Apply: When we observe the cycles of life, we are tempted to believe that fate, rather than God, is in control. To remedy that, God has placed a longing for Himself in each of us. We can choose to trust God rather than embrace fatalism.

Pray: Lord, give me faith to know that even when I don't understand what your hand is doing, I can trust your heart and purpose for me.

Day 5: Ecclesiastes 3:14-22

In today's verses, Solomon reflects on a key biblical truth that there is a fundamental distinction between God, who is the Creator, and everything else, which is created. This leads him to some level of despair, but it does not have to be this way.

The words of verses 14-16 recall the cyclical nature of life as reflected in 3:1-8, which we studied yesterday. Who, according to Solomon, is working behind all of these cycles?

According to Solomon's thoughts in verses 18-20, does man have more in common with animals or God? Why?

Read Gen. 1:26-28. What key idea is Solomon missing, and why does it matter?

Apply: Yes, humans are created beings, and apart from God, we will perish just like the beasts. But God also created humans for a relationship with Him, and when we pursue that relationship with our whole hearts, we can find meaning and purposes in life.

Pray: Lord, remind me every day that you are God and I am not, and my purpose in life is to make much of you. Thank you, also, that you created me in your image to love and serve and have a relationship with you that is unique and personal.



Ecclesiastes 4-6

The Preacher has explored the vanity of various aspects of life “under the sun” – that is, a life lived apart from a firm conviction of God’s good and gracious sovereignty. His conclusions have been frustrating. Live with prudence and care? Meaningless. Live with self-indulgence and excess? Meaningless. Put your head down, keep your nose clean, and work hard? Meaningless. Everywhere he turns, there is wickedness in the place where righteousness should be. Life “under the sun” is pretty depressing.

In chapters 4-6, the Preacher will continue to develop this constant theme of vanity “under the sun.” As is often the case with human insight, he will waffle back and forth between discouragement on the one hand and practical wisdom on the other. He will wax proverbial in some of these verses, providing wisdom sayings that mirror the truths expressed in the Proverbs he collected earlier in his life. Look for some genuine, godly reflections mixed in with the woe of striving after things like wealth and fame. As always, we will be careful not to fall into the trap that the Preacher himself sometimes falls into – the trap of believing that God is not both sovereign and good.

Prepared by Jason Hall

Day 1: Ecclesiastes 4:1-8

The Preacher's focus in these verses remains on life lived without God in view. While he opens with some general reflections on the nature of oppression, he closes with proverbial sayings on the subject of work and rest.

As you read verses 1-3, note below the Preacher's conclusions about what happens when oppression overwhelms justice.

To what does he ascribe the motivation for hard work in verse 4? What does he conclude about this motivation?

What is the essence of foolishness and vanity in verses 5-8?

Apply: Apart from God, greed is rampant in human souls. It tears us apart, causes us to harm others, and leaves us empty. Meditate today on how gratitude for God's gifts cultivates generosity, which is the antidote to oppression and strife.

Pray: Lord, remind me that nothing I can earn – money, power, or prestige – can replace you in my life. Give me a desire to give, and let a heart of generosity motivate my work and rest.

Day 2: **Ecclesiastes 4:9-16**

The Preacher picks up the mood as he closes this chapter, ruminating on the importance of relationships. Profound truths are expressed in compact form in these verses.

In verses 9-12, the Preacher expresses four advantages of companionship and three warnings for the loner. Write them out below.

According to verse 13, what is better than either riches or power?

Despite the youth's wisdom and rise from obscurity described in verses 13-16, what is his final end?

Apply: Good friends provide support, encouragement, and help. We should seek out companionship, for wise advice from a friend is worth its weight in gold. If you don't have these kinds of relationships in your life, find a pastor or leader who can help you form them.

Pray: Lord, I give you thanks for all of the godly people at our church whom you have provided to me for my encouragement and strengthening in the faith. Strengthen me to seek good friends and be a good friend to others.

Day 3: Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

Solomon is quite familiar with foolishness; he wrote a whole book (Proverbs) about how to avoid it. There are few areas of life in which human folly shows itself more clearly than in our religion, or lack thereof. In the opening verses of Ecclesiastes 5, Solomon will use language evocative of Proverbs, reminding us to approach God carefully and humbly.

According to verse 1, does God excuse foolish ignorance? What is the alternative to such ignorance?

Verses 2-6 have to do with how we use our words, particularly in our relationship with God. Summarize Solomon's advice in your own words, then turn to James 1:19-27 to explore further the danger of empty words without genuine obedience.

Reflect below on how the message of Eccl. 5:1-7 should impact your prayer life.

Apply: “To obey is better than to sacrifice...” (1 Sam. 15:22) is a consistent refrain of the Scriptures. Reflect today on any inconsistency between what you say and what you do. Confess, repent, and walk forward in joy.

Pray: Lord, you are God, and please allow my prayers not to be filled with empty words, but instead fill me up with your Spirit as I commit my heart and hands to obedience.

Day 4: Ecclesiastes 5:8-20

As children of God, we know in our hearts that contentment is better than desire. To be satisfied with what you have is a fundamental requirement of happiness. And yet, we still struggle with idols of greed, and this sin raises its head often in our pursuit of wealth.

What is the irony that Solomon expresses in verse 10?

In verses 13-17, Solomon uses the example of a man who loses his wealth to illustrate the point that riches are fleeting. Look carefully at verse 13: What mistake did the man make that led to this downfall?

Money itself is not evil, but rather our relentless pursuit of it. What is Solomon's advice concerning our possessions in verses 18-20?

Apply: Prov. 15:16 says, "Better a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure with turmoil." Have you considered that sometimes, when you don't get what you want, it is the Lord's grace sparing you from overindulgence?

Pray: Lord, create in me contentment with whatever you give me, whether little or much. Allow me to be generous with what I have and reflect your character to others.

Day 5: Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

Jesus taught that rich men entering heaven is nearly impossible – so much so that it takes a miraculous work of God. Perhaps one glimpse of God’s grace is that wealth is so unsatisfying in and of itself. The emptiness of riches continues to be Solomon’s theme in Ecclesiastes 6.

Who is it that gives wealth and money, and also gives (or takes away) the power to enjoy them?

Why is the child who never had a chance to live better off than the embittered old man in verses 3-6?

Look closely at verse 9. When we are unsatisfied with what God gives us, what happens to us?

Apply: The Lord gives and takes away. When we learn to live with joy in light of God’s sovereign goodness, our attitude toward possessions changes. They become a means to extend the Kingdom, rather than ends unto themselves. Is this your attitude toward your stuff?

Pray: Lord, take away anything that will take my eyes off you and let your glory and not human wealth drive my appetites.



Ecclesiastes 7-8

In Ecclesiastes 7 and 8, Solomon searches for meaning in a life “under the sun” that seems meaningless. The contrasts between joy and suffering, righteousness and wickedness, obedience and rebellion continually point out how man’s wisdom and efforts are lacking. Only through fear of the Lord and trust in His sovereignty will man find any lasting joy and peace. This week we will join Solomon as he continually wrestles with the frustration of life in a fallen world.

Prepared by Christy Crowder

Day 1: Ecclesiastes 7:1-14

In today's passage, the Preacher seeks to answer the question posed in 6:12: "For who knows what is good for man...?" Through a series of proverbs, Solomon points to the wisdom of finding value in suffering and prosperity.

Note the repeated use of the word "better" throughout today's passage. What do the things Solomon deems "better" have in common?

Read verse 9 and then read Matt. 5:22. What do we learn about God's views of man's anger? How does an attitude of anger disrupt the "better" God wants for us?

Read verse 14. How does the Lord use both joy and suffering in our lives? How does your answer help you answer the question in 6:12?

Apply: Circumstances often feel like we live our lives here "under the sun" in vain. However, we can trust the Lord's plan for our lives because we know it will bring Him glory (Rom. 8:28). Regardless of any circumstance, we are commanded to always rejoice in the Lord (Phil. 4:4) and count even our sufferings as joy (Jas. 1:2-4). What can you do today to choose joy and repent of any anger and distrust you are harboring?

Pray: Heavenly Father, You are wise and eternal. I praise You for your sovereign plan for my life. Through Your grace, You have given me the promise of eternity with You, and that is better than any plans I could ever make. Help me to remember that in Your presence is fullness of joy (Ps. 16:11).

Day 2: Ecclesiastes 7:15-29

In yesterday's passage, we focused on God's sovereignty and goodness, even when we are suffering. Today Solomon continues to seek wisdom and make sense of the "schemes" of mankind.

Read verses 15-18 and focus on the battle between righteousness and wickedness. According to verse 18, who ultimately is victorious?

Read verse 20 and then read 2 Cor. 5:21. Who is the only righteous man? According to 2 Cor. 5:21, for whom did he give up this title, and why?

Read verse 29, Rom. 5:12, and 1 Cor. 15:22. Make a note of the progression of the Lord's perfect creation, man's choice to sin, inevitable death from that choice, and God's mercy on us leading to victory in Christ.

Apply: It can be frustrating when the ways of the world seem counter to our sense of fairness and justice. Wisdom would dictate that righteousness should always win. However, we all know that is often not the case. We can take comfort, though, in Rom. 8:37-39. Through our faith in Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross, we are "more than conquerors" and cannot be separated from the love of our God.

Pray: Dear Lord, we praise You for victory in Jesus! Through Your grace, we are not bound by the injustice of this present age but are merely pilgrims passing through to a time of eternal worship and fellowship with You.

Day 3: Ecclesiastes 8:1-9

As we open chapter 8, we see Solomon's focus shift to earthly rulers and man's obedience to the authorities placed over him.

We read in verses 1-2 that wisdom, while rare, is evident to those who encounter it. According to Prov. 2:6, from where does wisdom come?

While earthly leaders are not always wise, verses 2-3 indicate we should obey them. Read 1 Pet. 2:13-17. Why should we follow the authorities in our lives here on earth?

Read verse 8 and 1 Tim. 2:1-5. Solomon finds the earthly kings lacking in power, yet Scripture commands we respect and pray for them anyway. According to Paul's letter to Timothy, who helps us to reconcile this command of God even when it seems to be in vain?

Apply: It is easy to disagree with the leaders in our government. Scripture commands, however, we are to honor and respect them. Are your words, with friends and family or in your social media posts, honoring and respectful to the authorities our sovereign Lord has placed over you? Have you prayed for your leaders lately?

Pray: Dear Heavenly Father, we praise you for being a God of order. Thank you for the societal structures and leaders you have placed over us. Our sinful nature wants to rebel at these rules. Help us to see them as part of Your plan and, therefore, good. You are worthy of our obedience and trust.

Day 4: Ecclesiastes 8:10-13

The wicked seem to keep getting more vicious, both in our time and in Solomon's. Today's passage finds our author seeking to make sense of why one would seek righteousness when it seems the wicked are rewarded.

In verse 10, Solomon notes the wicked have access to a proper burial, the holy place, and praise of the people. To him, and many times to us, this is “vanity” and very frustrating. Who are the wicked, according to Rom. 3:23? Follow the path of hope for the wicked by reading Rom. 6:23 and Rom. 5:8.

Solomon recognizes humanity's bent toward sin, especially when there aren't immediate consequences, in verse 11. What does 2 Pet. 3:9-10 have to say about God's “slowness to judge?”

Solomon's quest for understanding the tension between the wicked and the righteous concludes in verses 12 and 13. What does he say is the key to having it “be well” for someone?

Apply: It is easy for us to judge others' sins. In Matt. 7:1-5, Jesus reminds us to focus on our own sin first. The passages we read in Romans this week remind us that we are all sinners in need of a Savior. Spend some time today in confession before the Lord. Thank Him for being patient and long-suffering as He molds you into the likeness of His Son.

Pray: Dear Lord, we are blessed to be created in your image. You are holy and faithful. Though we often fail and feel the pain of sanctification, we praise you for your fatherly love that disciplines us with your perfect mercy. We rejoice at being new creations (2 Cor. 5:17), born again by the shed blood of your Son.

Day 5: Ecclesiastes 8:14-17

The Preacher recognizes that it's not good when bad things happen to good people or vice versa. But rather than rejoicing in God's ultimate justice, Solomon just throws his hands up in despair.

Read Jer. 12:1. Jeremiah has a similar struggle to Solomon regarding the prosperity of the wicked. Yet, even in his complaint, how does Jeremiah describe God?

Solomon instructs in verse 15 about our response to the “vanity” found in verse 14. Read 1 Cor. 10:31. Regardless of what “vanity” we encounter, what should the goal of our actions be?

Read verses 16-17 and then read Rom. 11:33 – 36. Note the similarities in Solomon and Paul's conclusions regarding the relationship between man's wisdom and the wisdom of God.

Apply: There are some things “under the sun” we will not know. True wisdom should point us to humility and cause us to admit we can't fully understand all of reality in a fallen world. We worship a God who is capable of more than we can ask or believe. Examine yourself today and ask the Lord to help you see if there are areas of your life you haven't entirely given over to Him.

Pray: Lord, please forgive me for attempting to limit Your power in my life by trying to control things myself. You are righteous and able. Help me trust You more and not compartmentalize my life to feel like I am in control. Your plans are infinitely better than any of mine.



Ecclesiastes 9-10

In chapters 9 and 10, many of Solomon's recurring themes resurface. The universality of death. The gift of life. The dangers of foolishness and the value of wisdom. More than ever, Solomon's cynicism and idealism clash as he works through the purposes of marriage, work, and life in general, in the face of death. Practical wisdom abounds, especially in chapter 10, which reads like a chapter out of the book of Proverbs. But the intensity of the Preacher's sermon reaches new heights. His observations turn to commands: "Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart...Enjoy life with the wife whom you love..." In the words of John Piper, "Don't waste your life!" But don't mistake these words of Solomon as advice to follow your heart. He sandwiches his bold declaration between warnings of the dangers of foolishness and the certainty of death. Life is to be lived to the full but within the boundaries that God has designed. Don't follow your heart because it is full of evil and madness. Instead, pursue wisdom to find joy. This wisdom is not found within us but in the person and Word of God.

Prepared by Robin Hall

Day 1: Ecclesiastes 9:1-6

In today's passage, the Preacher circles back to the theme of the universal nature of death. This time he calls it "an evil that is done under the sun." He then explores the source and consequences of this evil.

In verse 2, Solomon says that there is one event (death) that comes to all. Then he lists, in pairs, all of the types of people who will die. List below all the people he mentions, in pairs as he does.

Why does death come to all people, regardless of their works? Look for the answer in verse 3. See also Jeremiah 17:9-10.

According to the Preacher, it is better to be alive than dead. Why does he say this? What type of reward is he referring to - earthly or heavenly? Look closely at verses 5-6.

Apply: Solomon looked around and saw the truth that everyone would die. Death is an evil that even Solomon, in his wisdom, could not solve. He diagnosed the cause of the evil - the sinful hearts of mankind. But what is the solution? Read 1 Cor. 15:21-26.

Pray: Father, thank You for Your mercy. Even though we have earned death by our actions, Jesus has paid our debt through His death on our behalf. We look forward with hope for the day when death will be forever destroyed, and we will live with You forever.

Day 2: Ecclesiastes 9:7-10

With the reminder from yesterday's text that death will come to all people, Solomon concludes that this should motivate us to live our lives to the full! He commands us to "eat," "drink," and "enjoy life." Don't do anything half-heartedly, whether that be marriage or work. Rather, live life with passion and joy.

Read verses 7-8 as well as 2:24-25 and 3:13. According to Solomon, what is the connection between God and our enjoyment of life?

According to verse 9, what is one of God's intended purposes for marriage?

Why are we encouraged to work hard, according to verse 10? What further motivation do those of us who have trusted Christ have to work hard? See Col. 3:23-24.

Apply: Do you ever get caught up in the responsibilities of being a Christian and lose sight of the rewards? Ask God to restore to you the joy of your salvation.

Pray: Father, thank You for the gift of life and for the abundant hope, joy, and life that came to us as a result of Your salvation. Help us eat, drink, celebrate, love, and work with zealous and sincere hearts until You return for Your bride.

Day 3: Ecclesiastes 9:11-18

Life is not fair under the sun! The fastest, strongest, smartest, and wisest among us do not always win. People ignore wisdom and forget the wise. Yet wisdom is still superior to physical domination and foolishness.

In verses 11-12, what things in life are unpredictable? What things are certain?

What bothers Solomon about the “example of wisdom” that he gives in verses 13-16?

Regardless of this, the Preacher still concludes that wisdom is to be valued. What is wisdom better than in verses 16-18?

Apply: The last phrase of today’s passage is powerful: “One sinner destroys much good.” Never think that you can contain your sin. Sin cannot be contained; it must be killed. Read Col. 3:5-10, then confess and repent of any known sin.

Pray: Father, we thank You that life is not fair because we know that the wages, or fair payment, for our sin is death. Thank You for Your gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus! Help us to daily put off the old, sinful nature and put on the new, righteous deeds that You have made possible for us.

Day 4: Ecclesiastes 10:1-7

Chapter 10 of Ecclesiastes reads similarly to the book of Proverbs. Its inclusion here is another argument for Solomon's authorship of both. As in many other proverbs, wisdom and folly are contrasted and evaluated.

In verse 1, we see a powerful simile where dead flies' ruination of a perfume is compared to what? Can you think of a time when you saw this happen?

What attribute is encouraged in verse 4 at a time when you might find yourself in a difficult situation with an angry authority figure? Read also Prov. 25:15 and 15:1.

Where does the Preacher find folly in verses 5-7? You can find this theme also in Prov. 19:10 and 30:21-22. Why would this reversal have been seen as foolish at this time in history?

Apply: Yesterday, we saw that just one sinner can destroy much good, and today that it only takes a little bit of folly to destroy a wealth of wisdom. We see, also, in verse 2 that wise and foolish actions come from wise and foolish hearts. Ask God to search your heart and reveal any impure motives or desires that need to be put off. Then replace these desires with a desire to know and obey God.

Pray: Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Psalm 139:23-24)

Day 5: Ecclesiastes 10:8-20

Solomon's list of proverbial sayings continues in today's passage. Some of the dangers to be avoided include pits and serpents, drunkenness and slothfulness, wordy fools, and childish kings.

Look at verses 8-11 and note below the everyday dangers of life that Solomon observed.

In verses 12-15, the Preacher briefly contrasts the wise man with the fool. Then he gives warning after warning of the dangers of foolishness. Which of these warnings stands out to you most and why?

According to verses 16-19, how did Solomon think that food and drink should be used? In what ways could it be abused? See also Prov. 31:4-5.

Apply: Solomon wanted his audience to beware of the dangers and pitfalls of life, whether physical or moral. What pitfalls do you need to look out for today? Is it your words, your work, your times of refreshment, or something else? “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Pray: Father, please help me to resist Satan's temptations today, staying firm in my faith in You. Help me to remember that I am not alone in my struggle against sin. Jesus knows my plight, is praying for me, and has provided not only a way out but people to walk beside me. Thank You for Your abundant provision!



Ecclesiastes 11-12

For the Preacher of Ecclesiastes, and for us, life is uncertain. Who knows what or where the next natural disaster might take place? Who knows what the weather will be like next week or next year? Will this year bring prosperity or decline? However, one thing is sure: there is a God. But even His ways are unknown to us. The temptation in such an uncertain world is to be paralyzed by fear. If I don't know which is the right choice, perhaps I won't choose at all. But the Preacher in chapters 11 and 12 shakes us out of our paralysis and reminds us of several fundamental truths. God is at work; therefore, we should be at work, too. True, life is uncertain, but it is also good. Therefore, rejoice in the goodness of life and remember the greatness of God as you go about your daily work.

The Preacher urges us again not to waste our lives. We must remember that life is short, death is inevitable, and so is judgment. It is for this purpose that the Preacher took great care to collect and write his proverbial wisdom. His words are life, given by the one Good Shepherd for our nourishment. We must not ignore the resounding message throughout the writings of Solomon and all of Scripture: Fear God and keep His commandments, for we will give an account.

Prepared by Robin Hall

Day 1: Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

Life is not only fleeting for the Preacher; life is also uncertain. However, life's uncertainties should not paralyze us. There is still work to be done.

Read through verses 1-6. What things in life do we know? What things do we not know?

Despite the many things that we do not know, what are we told to do? Look through all the verses and write out any imperatives (commands).

While verses 5-6 could refer mainly to physical life and work, there are spiritual principles to learn from these verses. Reread them, then read John 3:7-8 and 1 Cor. 3:6-9. What do you learn in these verses about God's work and our responsibility?

Apply: Not only is life unpredictable, but God is also unpredictable and mysterious in His ways. Just as we do not understand how life comes to a baby in the womb, so we do not understand how spiritual rebirth comes to the heart of a hard-hearted sinner. God's Spirit blows where He wills, bringing life and growth where He pleases. Yet, the sovereign work of God should not discourage us from planting spiritual seeds of the gospel. Instead, we should be emboldened to sow the seed "to seven, or even eight," morning, noon or night.

Pray: Father, we know that You are sovereign over all life - physical and spiritual. You are the Creator of all things, and You are always at work bringing life all over the world. Help us be faithful to join You in Your work, planting, watering, and watching for Your Spirit to bring new life.

Day 2: Ecclesiastes 11:7-10

Despite the brevity and uncertainty of life, life is good! The old Preacher advises the young to take joy in their youth and to live life to the full while at the same time being wise in choosing the right path. Wisdom and joy are not opposed to one another; instead, they go hand in hand.

Jot down all the words or images in this passage that point to the joy that life brings.

The Preacher contrasts the days of life (light) with the days after life (darkness) that will come. Based on these verses, what does the Preacher know about life after death?

In light of the twin truths that life is good and that judgment is certain, what instructions does the Preacher give? List all of his command words below.

Apply: Rejoice and remember. How can we balance the two? By keeping our eyes on the Lord. In our joy, we remember that “every good and perfect gift” comes from our good Father. And in our remembering, we rejoice. We do not let God’s judgment drive us to fear, but rather steer us to the joy of walking in the “good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

Pray: Father, we thank You that even when life is hard, life is good because it is a gift from You. And we thank You that we no longer need to fear judgment or the afterlife because Jesus has come to give us eternal life. Help us to remember and to rejoice in Your great salvation all our days under the sun.

Day 3: Ecclesiastes 12:1-8

Today's verses are full of vivid metaphors that describe the aging process and death. However, be careful not to lose track of the clear instructions of the text amid the striking word pictures.

Notice the word “before” that is repeated in verses 1, 2, and 6. What does the Preacher instruct us to do before reaching our elderly years and death (verse 1)?

Verses 2-5 contain a number of metaphors related to the effects of the aging process on the body. Then verse 6 describes several more metaphors related to death itself. Pick out several of the metaphors and note below their possible meaning (for example, the almond tree blossoms are a reference to white hair).

What does the Preacher say in verse 7 happens to a person at death? Notice how Solomon's viewpoint has changed since 3:20-21.

Apply: The temptation of humanity is to live for ourselves in our youth, with the expectation that we will return to God when we are older. However, Solomon has learned the disastrous results of such thinking and desires to warn us of following in his footsteps. What are some ways that you have forgotten your Creator? How are you procrastinating regarding your relationship with God?

Pray: Thank you, our Father and Creator, that You remember that we are dust. You know our weaknesses, limitations, and needs. Help us number our days, remembering that we are like the grass of the field, here today and gone tomorrow. Thank You that Your steadfast love is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear and remember You (Based on Ps. 103:14-18).

Day 4: Ecclesiastes 12:9-12

In verse 9, the speaker changes from the Preacher to a commentator who gives us insight into the Preacher's process of compiling proverbs and the purpose and ultimate source of these words of wisdom.

In verses 9-10, what do you learn about the Preacher? What specifics do you learn about how he compiled the proverbs?

In verse 11, the commentator compares words of wisdom to goads and nails. How is Scripture like goads (look up the definition of the word)? How is Scripture like nails (note what it says explicitly in verse 11)?

Also, in verse 11, who is the source of the words of wisdom? How does this relate to John 10:14-16 and Col. 2:2-3?

Apply: The Preacher took care to write and compile words of truth, words given by the one Shepherd, Jesus. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). As we see in verse 12, we need not look for any other source of truth. God's word is sufficient.

Pray: Good Shepherd, thank You for giving us Your good words that are sufficient to provide everything we need for life and godliness. Help us to routinely plant ourselves by these streams of water so that we may be well-watered, equipped for every good work.

Day 5: Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

These final two verses summarize Ecclesiastes and all of Solomon's writings, and perhaps even all of the Bible. And all of life. Why were you created? What does your Creator expect from you? Where is life headed? Keep reading and find out.

What does the author conclude is the “whole duty of man”?

Why, according to verse 14, is this important?

Take a few minutes to trace this theme and its importance through Scripture. Read Deut. 6:1-2 and 10:12-13, Ps. 128:1-2, Micah 6:8, John 14:15-17, and 1 John 5:2-5. As you move into the New Testament passages, how can we now fear/love God and keep His commandments?

Apply: Despite the uncertainties and inconsistencies of life “under the sun,” the author of Ecclesiastes concludes rightly that at the end of time, when the skies are rolled back, judgment will come. Everything will be unraveled, and all wrongs will be righted. In light of this truth, what type of people ought we to be? How will this view change the decisions you make and the priorities that you pursue today?

Pray: Father of Creation, Judge of the Earth - help me to order my steps carefully today, knowing that I will give an account to You for everything I do and say. Help me to use my time wisely, speak my words carefully, and love sacrificially in the strength that comes from Your Spirit, for Your glory.