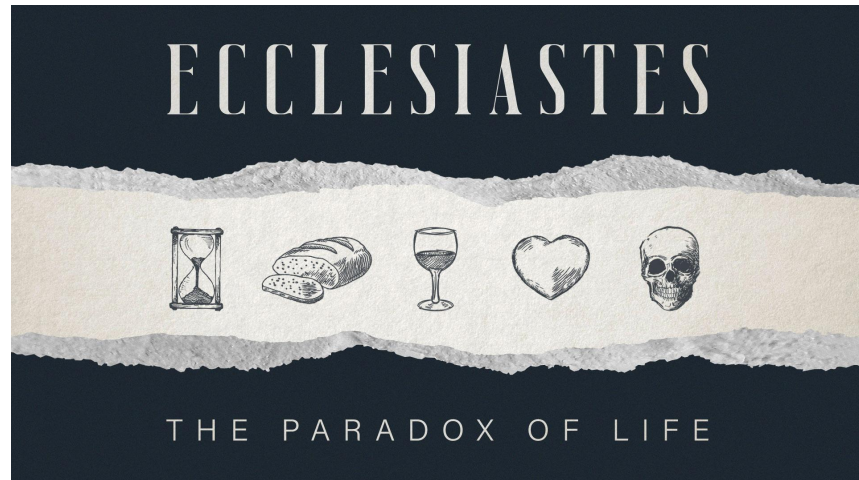


## ECCLESIASTES | DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE



### INTRODUCTION | ECCLESIASTES

It is said that the book of Ecclesiastes was written on a Monday morning and probably by a philosophy major searching for the meaning of life with little to show for it. Ecclesiastes is a book that was written by Solomon, King David's son (Ecc. 1:1) and he sincerely approaches and seeks to find the meaning of life under the sun – the contours of our existence in a fallen world. Solomon does this by asking some of life's hardest questions and isn't satisfied with what we would call, "Sunday school" answers.

In all of his efforts, while commendable, Solomon concludes that if meaning in this life apart from God is the extent of our existence, then life, in and of itself, is miserable. Solomon confronts the paradox of life. That is, why does a righteous man die young while a wicked man prospers? Or if God cares about justice, then why does it still exist?

Ecclesiastes forces us to confront many of these difficult questions and that's a good thing. Many in the church avoid these kinds of questions, but they're the kind of questions everyone thinks about. Life is short, elusive, and hard. How does one find meaning and hope in all of this?

The answer is that we fear God, obey His commands, and enjoy the simple things in our life. And there is much joy in the simplicity of this answer because although Ecclesiastes is an honest and hard word, it's not the last word. Jesus is in the business of restoration and making all things new. And while Solomon concludes that there is nothing new under the sun, the beauty of Ecclesiastes is that it points us to the person and work of Jesus who makes all things new through His life, death, and resurrection for weary sinners.

# ECCLESIASTES | DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

## WHY ECCLESIASTES?

Ecclesiastes is not simply a timeless book of the Bible, it is a timely book for Christians. For the last two years, Christians have had to not simply endure but consider some difficult and trying seasons of uncertainty, death, confusion, and fear. As a result, the Church has not only encountered division, but has almost forgotten how to live in light of the gospel. For many, they have turned toward escapism – pursuing idols, even good things, for the purpose of trying to ignore life. Others have turned toward hedonism – pursuing pleasure because they’re simply looking for something to fulfill their life. Ecclesiastes provides a sobering look of our reality while considering the grace of Jesus for us. This is a wonderful book and series for those who do not know God, but cannot stop thinking about Him.

Ecclesiastes helps to address at least four things. First, this book encourages us to have an honest view of the troubles of life, the paradoxes we all experience. Whether that’s the frustration and futility that we encounter on the daily or the tragedies that exist and why they’re considered “normal.” Second, Ecclesiastes encourages us to ask honest questions about life, questions that examine the hardship of life in a fallen world. Third, though Ecclesiastes sounds pessimistic, it actually exhorts us to consider the goodness of God. While we experience frustration and toil, God is still good and He gives us good gifts. And finally, Ecclesiastes, helps us to live in light of God’s glory and not our own.

## ECCLESIASTES THROUGH THE SPRING

Ecclesiastes will be a hard book. It will be a challenging book, not only because of what we must confront, but because of its complexity. However, Ecclesiastes will be an exciting and redemptive book in that it points us to our ultimate need in Jesus. Ecclesiastes looks to Jesus who entered into the shortness and elusivity of life and dwelled among us only to then die on a cross in our place and for our sin and resurrecting, conquering death and sin and providing us with the hope of a new life in Him, a new heart through the Holy Spirit, and new desires as a result of faith and repentance in Him.

I hope that this series is both fruitful and beneficial for our church and over the next few months, that we would grow together, to know and love Jesus more.

For His glory,

Pastor Marco

# ECCLESIASTES | DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

## COMMUNITY GROUPS

### What Is A Community Group?

Community Groups are small gatherings of people that meet weekly for friendship, accountability, study and prayer, laughter, and occasionally tears.

Community Groups (CGs) serve as the main vehicle of discipleship and care at Storehouse Community Church. CGs' mission is to be a family of disciples on mission for the glory of God.

Each CG is unique and shaped by the people who attend and the city they meet in. And at the heart of each CG is a desire to gather as family and friends, grow in our relationship with Jesus, and go into our cities on mission.

### Why Should I Join A Community Group?

The Bible teaches us that God is relational, personal, and invested which, in turn, means that we are created for friendship and community. CGs are more than a weekly event, but a time to grow and cultivate a relationship with God and others.

### Where Do Community Groups Meet?

CGs are strategically planted throughout McAllen and its surrounding cities in an effort to engage our city and community. Whether meeting at a home, local coffee shop, or college campus, we desire to see every aspect of our cities blessed by God's people.

### How Do I Get Connected?

There are two ways that you can get connected. You can visit our Connect desk on Sunday and our volunteers will help you through the process or you can visit [storehousemcallen.com/discipleship](https://storehousemcallen.com/discipleship) to learn more and sign up!

# ECCLESIASTES | DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

1. [Living Life Backwards: How Ecclesiastes Teaches Us to Live in Light of the End by David Gibson](#) - "Keeping the end in mind shapes how we live our lives in the here and now. Living life backward means taking the one thing in our future that is certain—death—and letting that inform our journey before we get there.."
2. [Ecclesiastes: Life in a Fallen World by Banner of Truth](#) - "What can we expect from life in a fallen world? How are we to live as redeemed people in such a world? In 22 concise chapters, Benjamin Shaw shows that the answers to these questions are to be found in the message of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes."
3. [Exalting Jesus in Ecclesiastes by Daniel Akin](#) - "Rather than a verse-by-verse approach, the authors have crafted chapters that explain and apply key passages in their assigned Bible books. Readers will learn to see Christ in all aspects of Scripture, and they will be encouraged by the devotional nature of each exposition."
4. [Everything a Child Should Know About God](#) - Encourage your little ones to learn and grow with God with *Everything a Child Should Know About God* from bestselling author Kenneth N. Taylor. Designed for parents to read aloud to children, this hardbound book features whimsical illustrations throughout, each chapter has a brief explanation and a related question to pose to children. Dr. Taylor explains in child-friendly language the essential Bible truths you want your child to know.
5. [What Every Child Should Know About Prayer](#) - Best-selling author Nancy Guthrie and much loved illustrator Jenny Brake team up on this biblical theology of prayer for children. Nancy explains in child-friendly language what prayer is, how and why we should pray, and the things we can pray about. There is a Bible verse for each topic, and a prayer for children to make their own. This book will introduce children to the gift of prayer and will encourage them to enjoy speaking to their father God

# ECCLESIASTES



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE

### DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK ONE

ECCLESIASTES 1:1-11

#### DISCUSSION

- ::: Some of the themes of Ecclesiastes are to fear God in everything and enjoy the good gifts that God gives. What area of your life are you not “fearing God” in? What would it look like to submit that area of your life to Him? In which mundane activities are you failing to enjoy God? How would your perspective of these activities change if you were to enjoy God fully in them?
- ::: There are three false options to our toil and vanity of life: escapism, nihilism, or hedonism. Escapism – where we avoid the frustrations of life. Nihilism – where life has no meaning or value. Hedonism – just live it for tomorrow we die. Just try to avoid the frustrations of life. Nihilism – Believe that life has no objective meaning or value. Which of these three are you most tempted to fall back on, if you are not focusing on Christ? Which of these three do you most often see in unbelievers around you?
- ::: No one or nothing will be remembered, says Solomon. But the gospel shows us that Christ’s work will be remembered. What practical steps can we take to remind each other of Christ’s work in our daily lives?

#### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP | NATURE WALK

Go for a walk outside and talk about the changes you see in nature. How is it different in the morning, evening, and night? Are the leaves changing color? Are there nuts on the trees? Maybe there are different flowers? How about the temperature? You could take a camera to photograph your findings or collect items to make a Season Collage with what you find. Reflect together on God as our Creator and the One who is in control over all the changes we see around us.

# ECCLESIASTES



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE

### DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK TWO

ECCLESIASTES 1:12-2:17

#### DISCUSSION

::: Ecclesiastes opens with a perspective about life apart from God. What does it look like to pursue wisdom devoid of God? What does it look like to pursue wisdom in light of God?

::: Solomon chases after wisdom and knowledge, pleasure and perfection only to conclude that they are all vanity. What have you sought or seen people chase after for joy and fulfillment? Why do these pursuits (apart from God) not lead to joy and meaning?

#### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP | DISCUSSION

::: Have you ever played hide and seek? When was there a time you played hide-and-seek and thought, "This is getting frustrating...I've looked everywhere and can't find what/who I'm looking for..."? What did you do about it?

::: What other times do you feel so frustrated, even annoyed, after so much effort you put in for something or someone? How are you giving those frustrations to God in prayer, asking for His help?

::: Read *Romans 8:20*. How does this remind us of God's design for all his creation? (e.g. He is the source and author of our hope.)

# ECCLESIASTES



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE

### DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK THREE

ECCLESIASTES 2:18-26

#### DISCUSSION

::: A pastor said, “Life is not about accumulating more; it is about treasuring the Savior more, and pouring our lives out for the good of others – this is satisfying.” What are practical ways that we can treasure our Savior in our daily lives? How can we “pour” our lives out for those in our GG? What are some ways that you could “pour” yourself out for those outside of the church?

::: Solomon’s pursuit of the meaning of life under the sun was selfish and in the end, though he had almost everything, it almost destroyed him. What are practical ways that we can help each other keep our focus on Jesus and others?

#### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP | SEARCHING SCRIPTURE TOGETHER

*Eccl. 2:26a* says, “For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy.” How do we please God? Look to *Hebrews 11:5-6, 12:1-2*.

May our faith in Christ point us to His joy and goodness in everything we do.

# ECCLESIASTES



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE

### DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK FOUR

ECCLESIASTES 3:1-22

#### DISCUSSION

::: What are areas in your life where you seek control? What does it look like for you to surrender control?

::: How could you have a wiser perspective on your time?

::: Philip Ryken writes, "In the divine economy there is a suitable occasion or appropriate opportunity for everything that happens." Are you more likely to see yourself as the "master of your fate" or "victim of circumstance?" How can seeing the sovereignty of God change that?

#### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP | SING TOGETHER!

[Time for Everything Song](#) - A Time for Everything by Dave Godfrey (c) 2002 Daybreak Music



# ECCLESIASTES



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE

### DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK FIVE

ECCLESIASTES 4:1-16

#### DISCUSSION

- ::: Read 1 Corinthians 4:2-5. How do these words encourage you when you think about the injustice and oppression in the world? How might these words challenge and humble you when you think of the sin in your own life?
- ::: Work/Toil: When it comes to work/toil, what motivation do you tend to most often lean toward (envy, laziness, contentment, greed? Other?)
- ::: Marco said that “contentment fights against bitterness, increases thanksgiving, and produces generosity.” Based on that statement, could you say that you are pursuing or have embraced contentment?
- ::: Community: Are you properly treasuring the relationships that Christ has given you through this church? How can we push against the individualism that is so prevalent in our culture?

#### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP | FAMILY ACTIVITY

In Ecclesiastes 4:9 Solomon says that two is better than one. Think of some activities that you can do together or split your children into small groups. Explain how it is both easier and more fun to work together to do things. Thank your child for the times they help you.

# ECCLESIASTES



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE

### DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK SIX

ECCLESIASTES 5:1-7

#### DISCUSSION

- ::: Verse 1 tells us to “draw near to listen.” As one pastor said, “show up and listen up” to the preaching of God’s Word. What are the benefits of the regular hearing of God’s Word? How is hearing from God connecting to doing, in this text?
- ::: Are there places in your life where you find yourself talking more than you listen? How might God be calling you to repent and live more wisely in these areas?
- ::: For many Christians, we try to remake God in *our* image, forgetting that we are the ones created in *His* image. King Solomon’s antidote for this is to spend time listening to God and letting Him set the terms of our experience of Him. What does it look like for you to cultivate a habit of listening to God in this way?

#### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP | SEARCH TOGETHER AND PRAYER TOGETHER

::: SEARCH: Read Ecclesiastes 5:1-3 and Matthew 6:7, (5-15). What kind of words and attitude(s) does God teach us to use in prayer to Him?

#### ::: PRAYER | OUR CONFIDENCE

Dear God, thank you for teaching us that it is better to draw near to you, ready to listen and obey, instead of turning away from you or using so many words to make ourselves look better than others. Your Son, Jesus, made it possible for us to be connected to You by His sacrifice, and now Your Spirit leads us to You each day.

# ECCLESIASTES



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE

### DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK SEVEN

ECCLESIASTES 5:8-6:9

#### DISCUSSION

- ::: What does the Preacher have to say about the love of wealth and the reality of riches? What does he suggest is the wisest way to relate to money?
- ::: 5:19 makes the distinction, saying that the gifts God has given us and the power to enjoy come separately. Give an example of something you thought would satisfy you, but once you had it (or achieved it) you found that you still felt empty?
- ::: What is the difference between the satisfaction that God can bring and the “satisfaction” that money and greed can bring?
- ::: Are there things, places, or people in your life with whom you find it hard to feel satisfied? Reread 5:18-20. How might meditating on the person and work of Jesus help you to align your heart with these verses, either within or in spite of the places where you are dissatisfied?

#### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP | DISCUSSION

- ::: Read Ecclesiastes 5:10. Why do you think people always want more?
- ::: Where in the Bible can we find God’s promises that He satisfies all we need? (e.g. Proverbs 19:23 - The fear of the LORD leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied)
- ::: In Eccl. 5:18-20, we are to consider what we have as a gift from God and worship the Giver, not the gift. What can you do this week to accept and better appreciate what God has given you?

# ECCLESIASTES



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE

### DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK EIGHT

ECCLESIASTES 6:10-7:14

#### DISCUSSION

- ::: What does Solomon say about our ability to understand God's work? Why does this matter?
- ::: How are you tempted to distract yourself with entertainment, work, or nostalgia rather than learning to live life wisely in the face of reality?
- ::: Anger, impatience, greed, nostalgia – what impact should death have on each of these in our lives? Which of these do you need to ask God to help you deal with more wisely?

#### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP | ACTIVITY

::: [Wise Sayings \(link\)](#)

Read each saying and put a checkmark in the box to indicate if they believe the saying comes from the Bible, or from somewhere else. After everyone has had a chance to complete their activity page, go over and discuss the correct choices. Additional Questions:

1. Were you surprised that some very wise sayings were not really from the Bible? 2. Were there any sayings that sounded wise, but were actually not? 3. How can we tell if a wise saying is from the Bible? (By reading and meditating on the Word of God.) In the Bible, it says "Wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare to her." (Proverbs 8:11). The Bible also says "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)

# ECCLESIASTES



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE

### DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK NINE

ECCLESIASTES 7:15-29

#### DISCUSSION

::: This passage warns against false devotion or godliness. Our motivation for righteous living is the fear of God and the love of God. What are wrong motivations for righteous living? How do you know when you are acting out of the right motivations?

::: The Christian life includes trusting God when we don't have all of the answers. Why do we feel like we always need the answers? Saying "trust God" is easy, but what does it actually look like to trust God on a daily basis, especially when we don't feel like it?

::: John Newton said, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner — and that Christ is a great Savior!" How does admitting our sin point us to our Savior??

#### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP | DISCUSSION & PRAYER

::: What does the Bible tell us in the following verses Proverbs 20:9; Romans 3:23; James 3:2; 1 John 1:8; 1 John 1:10? What is different about Jesus' life? What did Jesus do for sinners (all who are not righteous)?

::: Dear God, thank you for showing us how much we need Your love. I am a sinner who needs your forgiveness and love. Thank you for sending Jesus to be the spotless lamb, the one who became sin for me in my place on the cross, so that I could be made clean and righteous before you God. Thank you Holy Spirit for a new heart and life to worship and serve you. Amen.

# ECCLESIASTES



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE

### DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK TEN

ECCLESIASTES 8:1-17

#### DISCUSSION

::: In 8:10-13, Solomon returns to the concept of those who fear God. Throughout the book so far, he has pointed out that people do not always get what they deserve in this life. What is his solution to the reality that sometimes evil seems to prevail and bad things happen to the righteous? What should our response be to these things?

::: Reread Ecclesiastes 8:14-17, then read Matthew 13:24-30. How does Jesus both confirm and expand on the Preacher's words? How does Jesus' parable encourage and challenge you?

::: Solomon writes that there is no satisfying explanation for why the righteous receive the treatment due to the wicked. If we become obsessed with trying to figure that out, we neglect to enjoy God's gifts (8:15). How does Solomon's recommendation to pursue enjoyment relate to all that seems to be vanity?

#### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP | SCRIPTURE MEMORY

::: "And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation." (Luke 1:50)

# ECCLESIASTES



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE

### DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK ELEVEN

ECCLESIASTES 9:1-10

#### DISCUSSION

::: In what way does the phrase “in the hand of God” (9:1) offer security in the face of the reality that death comes to all? How does this relate to Deuteronomy 33:3?

::: Reread Ecclesiastes 9:7-10. What does living in this way, despite the reality of evil, say that we believe about God? In what ways can you bring your life more into line with this way of being in the world?

::: What certainties do you try to control in your day-to-day life? How do you respond to uncertainties?

#### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP | FAMILY ACTIVITY

::: Have a fun challenge between family members to see who can keep their “white garment” (a.k.a. white T-shirt) without any stains for a whole day. While that may be a struggle for 1-hour or during meal time, we can remember the newness of life we have in God through his Son, Jesus. We once were dead in our sin with “stained garments”, but Jesus' work on the cross clothes, all who believe in Him, with His righteousness. Thank God for sending the Holy Spirit to help us continue following Him and enjoying all of God's good gifts.

# ECCLESIASTES



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE

### DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK TWELVE

ECCLESIASTES 9:11-10:20

#### DISCUSSION

::: In 9:13-18, Solomon presents examples of wisdom's ability to produce great results. What happens if wisdom is forgotten or despised? How does the value of wisdom compare with might? Why?

::: Is there any amount of folly in your life that you have allowed to creep in and spoil the wisdom God has given you in Christ?

::: Are there areas of worldly wisdom that you have allowed to coexist in your life alongside true, godly wisdom centered on Christ?

#### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP | FAMILY ACTIVITY

::: Draw out the description of the little city, the poor wise man, and the great king from Eccl. 9:13-16. Take turns role playing between each other of the characters, reinforcing that the wisdom of God is what we need each day to honor Him and know how to treat others with God's love.



# ECCLESIASTES



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE

### DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK THIRTEEN

ECCLESIASTES 11:1-10

#### DISCUSSION

- ::: Solomon encourages us to willingly get involved in life despite its uncertainties. We don't know what the future holds. How does a willingness like this demonstrate a right acknowledgement of God and an appropriately humble view of self?
- ::: Are there areas in your life where you are "withholding your hand" or choosing "not to sow"? Why do you think you do this? How does the message of Ecclesiastes encourage you to act instead?
- ::: 11:7-9 talk about enjoying the pleasures of life. Looking back on this past week, what are things you can take pleasure in and rejoice about? How can you implement this type of thoughtful rejoicing in the Lord in your life in the upcoming week?

#### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP | DISCUSSION

- ::: In verses 1-2 the preacher is talking about when You don't know when you're going to be in trouble, so he advises us to be generous. Give out a portion to seven or eight people, because there might be a time when you're going to be needing help yourself. When did you and your family last help someone in need? What ways can you be generous this week with what God has given you in your neighborhood, at school, or in your church?

# ECCLESIASTES



## THE PARADOX OF LIFE

### DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE | WEEK FOURTEEN

ECCLESIASTES 12:1-14

#### DISCUSSION

- ::: What difference could it make to your life to realize that every duty you have toward someone else, you have toward God first of all?
- ::: Read Matthew 6:25-34. How is Jesus' message here a summation of what the Preacher says in Ecclesiastes? Where in your life can you grow in this sort of living? Where do you see the gospel bearing this kind of fruit in your life?
- ::: Ecclesiastes ends with what Solomon considers to be the whole duty of life, to "Fear God and keep his commandments". Why is this a fitting summary of the life of a believer? How does living this way give eternal significance to everything?

#### FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP | SCRIPTURE MEMORY

- ::: "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)