



Park Community Church

CHASING MEANING

A Study in Ecclesiastes

Small Group Curriculum

Curriculum Guide

The Goal

Park Community Church's small groups are built upon three pillars: gather, transformation, and impact. Using these three fundamental pillars, we anticipate the Holy Spirit to mold everyone in our small groups into the likeness of Christ as we push back the darkness in our city. Much of this work comes from knowing God personally, correctly, and intimately. Our hope is that the small group curriculum will facilitate a deeper understanding of God through his revealed Word in a way that transforms our lives together and moves us into Christ-like action.

Context Questions

Context is key when it comes to interpreting the Bible. Each week, we hope that you will take a few minutes to remind one another of where you are at in Ecclesiastes. Don't feel bound to the suggested questions, but feel free to let the conversation flow naturally. Especially as we study the Old Testament, it is important to understand the context in which the scripture is written.

Textual Questions

As a group, you will observe the text and look for the details. What you are looking for in this section is simply what the *text* is saying. Do not feel the need to jump into application, that time will come. This section will help build a textual framework for the reflection questions that follow.

Reflection Questions

This section is designed to help your group move from hearing and understanding the Word to letting it shape your life. Each week you'll reflect together on questions that invite vulnerability, personal sharing, and accountability. Use this time to consider how the lesson applies to your daily life, whether through a new way of thinking, a fresh heart posture, repentance, celebration, or a conviction to live differently. The goal is that faith would be stirred in both belief and practice, encouraging one another toward growth in Christ.

Week One

Does Life Have a Point? What Good is Wisdom? | Ecclesiastes 1:1-18

Context Questions

1. When you hear the word Ecclesiastes, what comes to mind?
2. When was Ecclesiastes likely written and what was happening in Israel's history around that time?
3. Who is traditionally understood to have written Ecclesiastes? What evidence in the book points toward them?
4. What would wealth, work, wisdom, pleasure, and status have looked like in the ancient Israelite world?
5. How is Ecclesiastes similar and different from other wisdom books like Proverbs and Job?

Textual Questions

Before diving into the questions, have the group simply observe the text. Listen to what they discover as the Holy Spirit leads them. You may naturally cover some of the questions provided below in that discussion.

1. How does the repetition of "vanity" in verse 2 establish the tone and central concern of the passage?
2. Verse 3 asks, "What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?". Trace the ideas of toil, gain, and striving throughout the rest of the chapter. How does the Teacher begin answering his own question?
3. Compare verses 8-11 with verses 4-7. How does the Teacher move from the repetitive cycles of creation to the repetitive nature of human experience? What connections do you see between the two sections?
4. The passage ends with the surprising conclusion that "in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow" (v. 18). How does this

compare with what you might normally expect the Bible to say about wisdom?

5. What would we be missing if this text were not included in the Bible?

Reflection Questions

1. The Teacher begins with the startling declaration, "Vanity of vanities... all is vanity" (v.2). Throughout the passage, he confronts the reality that much of what consumes our lives is temporary and fleeting.
- a. What are some things people build their lives around that feel permanent or significant but are ultimately temporary?
 - b. What are you most tempted to treat as though it will give your life lasting meaning?
 - c. How would remembering the temporary nature of these things change the way you hold them?

2. In verse 3, the Teacher asks, "What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?". His question challenges the assumption that enough work, accomplishment, or progress will eventually leave us satisfied.
- a. Where do you see the desire to constantly accomplish or get ahead in culture?
 - b. When are you tempted to measure the value of your life by what you have accomplished?
 - c. Conversely, when are you tempted to measure the value of *other people's* lives by what *they* have accomplished?

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3. In verses 4-11, the Teacher describes a world of constant activity: the sun rises and sets, the wind blows around and around, streams continually run to the sea. Yet, he concludes, "All things are full of weariness" (v. 8).
- a. Where does life feel repetitive or wearisome to you right now?
 - b. Are there ordinary rhythms of your life that sometimes make you wonder, *"Is this really all there is?"*
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4. Ecclesiastes refuses to give us an artificially optimistic picture of life. The Teacher openly acknowledges weariness, frustration, limitation, and sorrow rather than pretending they do not exist.
- a. Do you find it easy or difficult to bring disappointment, frustration, or questions honestly before God? Why?
 - b. How can a passage like this give Christians permission to acknowledge that some parts of life really are painful or confusing?
 - c. What would it look like for this small group to become a place where people can honestly wrestle with these realities, while still trusting God?
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Week Two

Why is Pleasure so Empty? | Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

Textual Questions

Before diving into the questions, have the group simply observe the text. Listen to what they discover as the Holy Spirit leads them. You may naturally cover some of the questions provided below in that discussion.

1. In verses 1-3, the Teacher experiments with pleasure, laughter, and wine. What conclusion does he reach about each of these pursuits?
2. In verses 4-8, the Teacher lists everything he accumulated and accomplished. What different categories of achievement, wealth, and pleasure do you see in his list? What does the sheer size of the list communicate?
3. Notice the repeated use of "I," "me," and "my" throughout verses 4-10. What does this repetition emphasize about the Teacher's pursuit?
4. Compare verse 10 with verse 11. How does the Teacher's experience while pursuing these things compare with his assessment after he "considered" everything he had accomplished?
5. How does the conclusion in verse 11 connect back to the question he asked in Ecclesiastes 1:3?
6. What would we be missing if this text were not included in the Bible?

Reflection Questions

1. The Teacher intentionally pursues pleasure to see whether it can provide lasting satisfaction: "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself" (v. 1). He explores laughter, wine, possessions, wealth, entertainment, and accomplishment, yet ultimately finds them unable to deliver what he is looking for.

- a. What are some of the primary ways our culture tells us to pursue happiness and satisfaction today?
- b. Which of these are you most tempted to look to for lasting satisfaction?
- c. How can we enjoy *good* things without expecting them to provide something that only God can give?

2. In verses 4-8, the Teacher describes accomplishments and possessions: "I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself." By the world's standards, his life would have been remarkably successful.

- a. How do you measure whether or not your life is "successful"?
- b. How have your definitions of success been shaped more by the world around you than by God?
- c. If achievement cannot ultimately satisfy us, what should distinguish a Christian understanding of success?

3. The Teacher says, "Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure" (v. 10). He had the resources and freedom to satisfy virtually every desire he experienced.

- a. Why do you think getting what we want often fails to satisfy for very long?
- b. Can you think of something you once believed would make you happier, only to discover that getting it did not satisfy you like you expected?
- c. How might our unmet desires teach us something about what our hearts were made for?

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4. After accomplishing everything he desired, the Teacher looks back and concludes that it was “vanity and a striving after wind” and that “there was nothing to be gained under the sun” (v. 11). His problem was not that these things were necessarily bad, but that they could not bear the weight of giving his life ultimate meaning.
- a. How do you recognize when something you enjoy (career, money, relationships, experiences, possessions, recognition) has begun to carry too much weight in your life?
 - b. Are there any earthly desires in your life right now that carry too much weight? How can you enjoy it as a gift from God rather than a source of ultimate satisfaction?
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Week Three

Does Our Work Matter? | Ecclesiastes 2:12-26

Textual Questions

Before diving into the questions, have the group simply observe the text. Listen to what they discover as the Holy Spirit leads them. You may naturally cover some of the questions provided below in that discussion.

1. In verses 12-16, what advantages does the Teacher say wisdom has over folly and what limitation makes them similar?
2. Likewise, the Teacher compares the wise person to one who “has his eyes in his head” and the fool to one who “walks in darkness” (v. 14). What does this imagery communicate about the value of wisdom?
3. Notice the progression in verses 17-20: “I hated life,” “I hated all my toil,” and “I turned about and gave my heart up to despair.” What reasons does the Teacher give for each of these increasingly negative conclusions?
4. Compare the Teacher’s description of work in verses 20-23 with his conclusion in verses 24-26. What changes in his perspective on work and enjoyment?
5. What things does the text say come “from the hand of God,” and how does this contrast with the Teacher’s attempts to gain satisfaction for himself earlier in chapter 2?
6. What would we be missing if this text were not included in the Bible?

Reflection Questions

1. The Teacher recognizes that wisdom is better than folly, "as light excels darkness" (v. 13). Yet he is troubled by the fact that "the same event happens to all of them" (v. 14): both the wise and the fool eventually die.
 - a. How does the reality of death challenge the things we normally use to measure a successful life?
 - b. How should remembering the brevity of life reshape what you prioritize now?

2. In verses 22-23, the Teacher describes a person whose work follows them even when they are no longer working: "Even in the night his heart does not rest." His toil has become a source of anxiety rather than enjoyment.
 - a. Sometimes when we have an unhealthy preoccupation with work, we feel guilty when we rest or feel we are never truly resting. What makes it difficult for you to mentally or emotionally stop working?
 - b. Have you ever allowed your responsibilities, ambitions, or worries about the future to prevent you from genuinely resting?
 - c. What might your inability to rest reveal about what you are trusting in?

3. After describing the frustration of work, the Teacher reaches a surprising conclusion: "There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil" (v. 24). The difference is that he now recognizes, "This also, I saw, is from the hand of God."
 - a. How does seeing ordinary pleasures as gifts "from the hand of God" change the way we experience them?
 - b. What ordinary gifts from God are you prone to overlook because you are focused on what comes next?
 - c. What would it look like for you to receive and enjoy the life God has given you rather than constantly striving for a different one?

- d. How could gratitude help shift your attention from what you still want to what God has already?

Week Four

Can We Thrive in Every Season? | Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Textual Questions

Before diving into the questions, have the group simply observe the text. Listen to what they discover as the Holy Spirit leads them. You may naturally cover some of the questions provided below in that discussion.

1. How does the opening statement in verse 1 frame the pairs that follow in verses 2-8?
2. The Teacher organizes the passage around a series of opposites. What do you notice about the range of human experiences included in these?
3. Some of the pairs describe experiences that happen to us, while others describe human actions. What examples of each can you identify in the text? What is significant about the inclusion of both?
4. How does this poem build on the Teacher's observations earlier in Ecclesiastes about the limits of human control over life "under the sun?"
5. What would we be missing if this text were not included in the Bible?

Reflection Questions

1. The Teacher begins, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" (v. 1). He then describes seasons ranging from those we welcome and those we would never choose.
 - a. What season of life are you in right now?
 - b. What has been easy to receive from God in this season and what has been difficult?

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2. Many of the experiences in this passage are outside of our control. We do not determine every season we enter or how long it will last. Yet much of our frustration comes from wanting life to unfold according to our preferred timing.
- a. Where in your life are you struggling with God's timing right now?
 - b. Are you waiting for something to begin, end, change, or be restored? What has that waiting revealed about your heart?
 - c. What does it look like to trust God when His timing is different from yours?
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3. The Teacher says there is "a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (v. 4). Scripture does not portray faithfulness as always being happy; it makes room for both sorrow and joy
- a. How can Christians sometimes feel pressure to avoid or minimize grief?
 - b. Do you allow yourself to grieve difficult seasons or do you move quickly past them? Why?
 - c. Do you think that we as a small group do a good job of "celebrating with those who celebrate" and "weeping with those who weep?"
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4. Ecclesiastes 3 reminds us that we cannot remain in any season forever. Both the seasons we love and the seasons we struggle through eventually change.
- a. How does knowing your present season (whether good or bad) is temporary change the way you experience it?
 - b. If you are in a difficult season, how might this passage give you hope? If you are in a joyful season, how might it lead you toward gratitude?

Week Five

Why Does Life Feel Unfair? | Ecclesiastes 3:9-4:3

Textual Questions

Before diving into the questions, have the group simply observe the text. Listen to what they discover as the Holy Spirit leads them. You may naturally cover some of the questions provided below in that discussion.

1. In 3:9, the Teacher opens with a question almost identical to one he asked earlier in 1:3. Look back at that verse – what has changed by the time he asks it again here?
2. What does verse 11 mean when it says God has “put eternity into man's heart?” What does the rest of the verse suggest about humanity’s ability to understand God’s work?
3. What is the conclusion in 3:22 and how does it echo verse 13?
4. Verse 14 says that God’s work “endures forever.” What contrasts does the Teacher make between God’s work and human work?
5. Read 4:1. What specific detail does the writer emphasize about the oppressed beyond simply naming their oppression? What does this stress about the oppressed's situation?
6. What would we be missing if this text were not included in the Bible?

Reflection Questions

1. Ecclesiastes invites us to pause and consider what our work is really producing and where we look for meaning in it. In verse 9, the Teacher asks, “What gain has the worker from his toil?”
 - a. How would culture answer the Teacher’s question about daily work?
 - b. How would you answer the Teacher’s question about your own daily work?
 - c. How does the Teacher answer his question about daily work?
 - d. How does knowing that God’s work “endures forever” affect the way you think about your own accomplishments?

2. Ecclesiastes does not shy away from the reality of death, reminding us in verse 20 that “all are from dust, and to dust all return.” Like the animals, all humans share a similar fate (v. 19).

- a. Why is thinking about death as certain uncomfortable for us?
- b. How does the author expect his audience to respond to the certainty of death? How can we reflect this response in our own lives?
- c. Where do you most need the hope of Revelation 21:4 – that because of Christ, God will ultimately remove death, mourning, crying, and pain? How does that future hope help you live faithfully in the present?

3. The Teacher does not rush past the pain of injustice or offer an easy explanation. Instead, we are invited to honestly face the brokenness of life “under the sun” and wrestle with the reality that oppression can leave people feeling powerless, unseen, and without comfort.

- a. Have you witnessed or experienced a situation where injustice went unanswered and comfort seemed genuinely absent, as described in 4:1? How did you respond, or how did it affect your faith?
- b. How does the injustice described point us toward our longing for a Judge who will ultimately make all things right?

Week Six

Can I Make it on My Own? | Ecclesiastes 4:4-16

Textual Questions

Before diving into the questions, have the group simply observe the text. Listen to what they discover as the Holy Spirit leads them. You may naturally cover some of the questions provided below in that discussion.

1. What are the major relationship dynamics in this text?
2. In verses 7-8, what does the man have and what does he lack? What question does he never stop to ask himself? Why do you think the Teacher calls this situation “vanity” and an “unhappy business?”
3. Read verses 13-16. How is the young, poor, wise person contrasted with the old, foolish king?
4. What repeated ideas or themes regarding work in relationship to others in these verses? Where do you see the ideas of striving, isolation, companionship, and impermanence?
5. What would we be missing if this text were not included in the Bible?

Reflection Questions

1. Ecclesiastes highlights that even good work can become distorted when fueled by comparison and envy (v.4). The Teacher invites us to consider whether our work is being shaped by faithful stewardship or the need to prove ourselves, and what it might look like to find contentment in what God has given us.
 - a. Where in your own work do you notice envy (rivalry, comparison) as a hidden fuel?
 - b. What would it look like to pursue excellence without allowing comparison to become your motivation?

- c. How does the gospel free us from needing to prove our worth through achievement?

- 2. Ecclesiastes 4:13–16 highlights the fleeting nature of human influence and recognition. The Teacher describes a ruler who gains influence over a vast number of people, yet reminds us that even the greatest leaders and their accomplishments will eventually be forgotten by those who come after them. Our desire to be known, remembered, and significant can therefore reveal something about what we believe gives our lives lasting value.

- a. Where do you see the pursuit of recognition, influence, or a lasting legacy in our culture today?
- b. Why do we care so much about being remembered after we die, even though we will not be here to experience the legacy we leave behind? What does this desire reveal about the human heart?
- c. Have you ever thought about how you want to be remembered after you die? How should the Christian hope of eternity shape the way we think about significance, recognition, and legacy?

- 3. The king's flaw was that he “no longer knew how to take advice” (v. 13). This exposes the isolation that can come when pride or self-sufficiency keeps us from accepting help. Conversely, the picture of two people standing together points us toward the strength and support found in community.

- a. How does the passage challenge the cultural narrative that we are meant to be completely self-sufficient?
- b. Where are you most tempted to stop listening to counsel – because of pride, position, etc.?
- c. Is there an area of your life where you have been trying to carry something alone that God may be inviting you to share with others?
