

**“Life Under the Sun”:**  
*An Overview of Ecclesiastes*  
*Sermon Notes*

- **All of life is absolutely meaningless under the sun...until or unless all of our lives come under the Son**

**The Author of Ecclesiastes (v.1a; 2 Peter 1:20-21)**

**The Audience for Ecclesiastes (v.1b; 2 Timothy 3:14-17)**

*\*This season, Ecclesiastes will rivet our attention on the...*

1. Vanity of life (1:2, 14; 2:1, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26; 3:19; 4:4, 7, 8, 16; 5:7, 10; 6:2, 4, 9, 11-12; 7:6, 15; 8:10, 8:14; 9:9; 11:8, 10; 12:8)
  
2. Certainty of death (3:2, 20; 6:6; 8:8; 9:2-3, 11-12; 12:1-8; 5:15→ 1 Timothy 6:7)
  
3. Sovereignty of God (3:1-18; 7:13-14; 8:16-9:1; 1:2→Romans 8:20; 11:5→ John 3:8)
  
4. Necessity of Christ (2:1-11→ John 15:11; 16:22, 24; 17:13 2:12-17→ Colossians 2:3; 2:18-23→ Colossians 3:23; 5:1-13→ James 1:19-21; 7:20→ Romans 3:10-26; 12:8→ John 10:10 12:11→ John 10:1-18; 12:13→ Galatians 2:15-16; 12:14→ 2 Corinthians 5:10-15)

**Next Week: Ecclesiastes 1:2-11 - “All is Vanity”**

## MEFC Community Group Study Questions

For the week of September 20th-26th

### Getting Started

1. What sort of familiarity do you have with the book of Ecclesiastes? Have you ever read it all the way through? Done any close study of it? Heard any preaching or teaching from it? Discuss these things with your group.

### Digging Deeper

2. In his wonderful commentary on Ecclesiastes from 1859, British pastor Charles Bridges writes that: “Many learned men have not hesitated to number it among the most difficult books in the sacred canon. Luther doubts whether any exposition up to his time has fully mastered it.”<sup>1</sup> So...what in the world do we think we’re doing here? What sort of hope do normal folks like us have of making progress in a book like this one? If you’re having any trouble answering this question, consider the advice that Paul offers in 2 Timothy 2:7.

### Open Your Bible to Ecclesiastes 1:1...

3. Do you have any thoughts on the identity of the author of this book? If you heard the sermon, what are the two main approaches today in coming to grips with the person who wrote it? What do you make of them? How do truths such as 2 Peter 1:20-21 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17 assure us at the end of the day about the authority of Ecclesiastes in our lives?
4. When the preacher says in 1:2 that “All is vanity”, he’s fully prepared to provide evidence for that claim. Consider the following verses in Ecclesiastes: 1:2, 14; 2:1, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26; 3:19; 4:4, 7, 8, 16; 5:7, 10; 6:2, 4, 9, 11-12; 7:6, 15; 8:10, 8:14; 9:9; 11:8, 10; 12:8. Do you think this way? Which specific truths ring true to you? Which ones (if any) cause a degree of struggle or tension in your heart?
5. One of the central themes in Ecclesiastes is the certainty of death. Read through these Scriptures together as a group: 3:2, 20; 6:6; 8:8; 9:2-3, 11-12; 12:1-8; 5:15→ 1 Timothy 6:7. How much do you think about death? How much do you think the Lord wants for us to think about death (whether our own, that of other believers in our lives, or that of unbelievers in our lives)? Explain. Here are some other passages of Scripture to stir into the discussion as you ponder the answer to that question: Psalm 116:15; John 5:24; Romans 5:12; 6:23; 8:38-39; Philippians 3:9-10; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:4.
6. Another clear theme in this book is the sovereignty of God. Take a look at the following verses together: 3:1-18; 7:13-14; 8:16-9:1; 1:2→Romans 8:20; 11:5→ John 3:8. J.I. Packer was a man who certainly believed the Bible’s clear teaching about the absolute sovereignty of God in all things. Yet, in his classic work, *Knowing God*, the late Packer writes:

“God’s ordering of events in inscrutable; much as you want to make it out, you

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Bridges, *Ecclesiastes*. Geneva Series of Commentaries. The Banner of Truth Trust: Carlisle, PA. (1859) 1998. p.iii.

cannot do so...The harder you try to understand the divine purpose in the ordinary providential cause of events, the more obsessed and oppressed you grow with the apparent aimlessness of everything, and the more you are tempted to conclude that life really is as pointless as it looks.

[This is the message of the author of Ecclesiastes] And of course he is right. For the world we live in is in fact the sort of place that he has described. The God who runs it hides himself. Rarely does this world look as if a beneficent Providence were running it. Rarely does it appear that there is a rational Power behind it all. Often what is worthless survives, while what is valuable perishes. Be realistic, says the preacher; face these facts; see life as it is. You will have no true wisdom till you do. Many of us need this admonition.”<sup>2</sup>

Discuss these observations as a group.

7. One of the most fascinating and important questions we can ask about this book is: what is the gospel according to Ecclesiastes? Or (to put it more pointedly): where is the gospel in Ecclesiastes? Or (again): how does Ecclesiastes make us “wise for salvation which is through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15)? Walk through the following passages. How do they help you to answer this question?

2:1-11→ John 15:11; 16:22, 24; 17:13)

2:12-17→ Colossians 2:3;

2:18-23→ Colossians 3:23;

5:1-13→ James 1:19-21;

7:20→ Romans 3:10-26;

12:8→ John 10:10

12:11→ John 10:1-18;

12:13→ Galatians 2:15-16;

12:14→ 2 Corinthians 5:10-15

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2 J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*. IVP: Downers Grove, IL. (1973) 1993. pp.105-106.