

simply **ECCLESIASTES**

finding hope when
all seems meaningless

simplifying life
re-prioritizing life
cultivating a deeper walk with God

All Bible verses are taken from the New Living Translation unless otherwise indicated.

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You may copy this resource or any part of it to build up God's Kingdom.
Please include the following reference information:

More studies available at
www.SimpleChurchAtHome.com

simply ECCLESIASTES

Outline

The WORD Among Us
How to Use This Leaders' Guide

The Teacher's Lecture

1. [Meaninglessness](#), 1:1-11
2. [Chasing the Wind](#), 1:12-18
3. [Midlife Crisis](#), 2:1-11
4. [Conclusion No. 1](#), 2:11-26
5. [Conclusion No. 2](#), 3:1-15
6. [Conclusion No. 3](#), 3:16-22
7. [Secret](#), 4:1-16
8. [Talk is Cheap](#), 5:1-7
9. [Conclusion No. 4](#), 5:8-20
10. [Six Questions](#), 6:1-12
11. [Wisdom for Life](#), 7:1-14
12. [Wisdom's Limitations](#), 7:15-29
13. [Conclusion No. 5](#), 8:1-17
14. [Death](#), 9:1-12
15. [A Quiet Spirit](#), 9:13-10:4
16. [Wisdom](#), 10:5-20
17. [Hopeful Meaninglessness](#), 11:1-10
18. [The Final Conclusion](#), 12:1-14

Relational Bible Studies

The WORD Among Us

The [Simply Series](#) is a different kind of Bible study. It is not doctrine or life application. It is relational, which means there are no right or wrong answers to the questions in this facilitator's guide.

Relational Bible studies focus on building relationships with God and each other. They create a space for the WORD among us to wash over us, plant seeds in our lives, and change us by the transforming grace of the Holy Spirit.

Relational Bible studies give everyone, no matter what their perspective or depth of Bible knowledge, space to share and contribute to the dialogue as we journey together. They help us discover how our personal story intersects with the Bible story.

These guides are designed to facilitate real and authentic dialogue in such a way that secular and unchurched Truth seekers come away saying, "This is different! This is real."

People need the Everlasting Gospel. Simple Church is about creating a space for Truth seekers to journey together.

May God bless you as you simplify and re-prioritize your life, creating time to "spend" with Truth seekers from all walks of life.

How to Use This Leader's Guide

This leader's guide assumes you have:

1. Read through the www.SimpleChurchAtHome.com web page.
2. Completed the online Simple Church training.

Title

outline

Bible story reference will be listed here.

Message of Hope: Have this idea crystal clear in your mind. This is what you want people to remember for the rest of the week.

Helpful Tip: These tips show up here and there.

The Basic 8: These are covered in the [free online training](#).

1. Collection Box (explained in PhaseONE training videos)
2. Connection Card Envelopes
3. Business Cards
4. Taco Salad Sign-up Sheet
5. a variety of extra Bible translations.
6. Child Safety Poster
7. Blessing Board
8. Email link to online Simple Church Weekly Summary Form (When officially launched this is emailed to your Details Coordinator every Sunday.)

Welcome: We are glad everyone is here. We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. In other words, this group does not exist for us.

Before we introduce ourselves, let's Remember:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of Truth seekers. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We do not try to impress people with how much Bible quoting we can do. We are common people.
- Please be sensitive so everyone has an opportunity to share and contribute.
- Cell phones should be put on "vibrate," or turned off.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What is a high-light or a low-light (a headline) from your week?
3. *[Insert rotation question for the week.]*

Rotation Questions: Rotate through the following three questions:

Week 1: How would you like to simplify your life?

Week 2: How would you like to re-prioritize your life?

Week 3: How would you like to cultivate a deeper relationship with God.

Week 4: How would you like to simplify your life?

Week 5: etc.

At the end of check-in ask the person who facilitated to choose another adult to facilitate check-in next week. Anyone can facilitate check-in. It does not have to be a CORE leader.

Children's Check-In Questions: How did you help Mommy or Daddy this week? (Or they can answer the adult questions.)

The Quiz: A child asks three questions. They randomly choose from the check-in questions people just answered. Ask everyone to raise their hands and the child picks someone to answer the questions.

For example:

1. What was his (pointing to the person) high-light for the week?
2. What was her name (pointing to the person)?
3. How did she want to simplify her life?

At the end of the quiz ask the child who facilitated to choose another child to facilitate the quiz next week.

This is what page 2 of a typical leader's guide for a given week actually looks like.

Facilitator's Directions:

1. *Talk as little as possible, encourage others to share, and avoid a monologue.*
2. Cut on the dotted lines. Distribute questions around the circle. (✂-----)
3. Keep this top part and the bottom part (question D) of this page.
4. Reassure people they do not have to answer the questions, just read it for us.
5. At the end, choose someone to facilitate the questions for next week.

Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first)

Bridge: This transitions the group from the Kick-off Question into the Bible story.

Read the Bible Story from two different translations: Bible story reference will be listed here. (Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible during our discussion.)

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

Some helpful pointers for digging questions:

- Remember: there are no "right answers" to relational Bible study questions. Help people contribute their perspective to the dialogue.
- You DO NOT have to "accomplish" all the questions listed. Use them as a resource from which to select during your discussion.

- Spend a maximum of 50% of your Bible study time on these questions.
- Affirm each answer, no matter what is said, by saying something like, "Excellent, someone else"; "Thanks for sharing, someone else"; "Good, someone else"; "How about the rest of you, what do you think".
- Did you catch the common denominator, "someone else"? You are always affirming and always inviting others to give input.
- If someone gets off-focus, simply say (after they have stopped talking), "What was the question? Let's read it again."

Sharing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

Some helpful pointers:

- Spend a minimum of 50% of your time on these questions.
- These questions are designed to invite people to share portions of their life story as it interacts with the Bible study.
- At appropriate times affirm confidentiality and offer reassurance that this is a safe place to share and grow spiritually.

Group Prayer:

1. We are blessed by being a part of this group, yet it exists for those who are not yet here.
2. Put an **Empty Chair** in the middle of your prayer circle. Pray for the people who are not yet here.
3. Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

At the end of prayer, ask the person who facilitated to choose another adult to facilitate the questions for next week. Anyone can facilitate the questions. It does not have to be a CORE leader.

Lunch:

1. Keep it simple. Keep it easily reproducible.
2. Hostess (one of the CORE4) provides the beans.
3. During lunch have the **Taco Salad Sign-up Sheet** available.

Meaninglessness

outline

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

Message of Hope: Meaninglessness can turn into meaningfulness.

***Leader's Tip:** Most people do not need to be told that life on this earth is rather grim. But people need hope. Ecclesiastes begins with a lot of disparity. It might be tempting to try to make this story a "be happy" story. Avoid this temptation. Later Ecclesiastes will teach us the secret to finding meaning in a meaningless world.*

The Basic 8 Simple Church Tools: Collection Box, Connection Card Envelopes, Business Cards, Taco Salad Sign-up sheet, a variety of extra Bible translations, Child Safety Poster, Blessing Board, Summary Form (which is emailed to the Details Coordinator every Sunday).

Breakfast

Welcome: We are so glad that you are here today.

Setting the Context:

- We come from a variety of backgrounds and seek to create a safe place for Truth seekers to grow spiritually.
- You will notice that we try to avoid fancy religious language. We are common people.
- Let's encourage those who like to talk to give opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What is a high-light or a low-light (a headline) from your week?
3. *[Insert rotation question for the week.]*

At the end of check-in ask the person who facilitated to choose another adult to facilitate check-in next week. Anyone can facilitate check-in. It does not have to be a CORE leader.

Children's Check-In Questions: How did you help Mommy or Daddy this week? (Or they can answer the adult questions.)

The Quiz: A child asks three questions. They randomly choose from the check-in questions people just answered. Ask everyone to raise their hands and the child picks someone to answer the questions.

At the end of the quiz ask the child who facilitated to choose another child to facilitate the quiz next week.

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1. *Talk as little as possible, encourage others to share, and avoid a monologue.*
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3. Keep this top part and the bottom part (question D) of this page.
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5. At the end, choose someone to facilitate the questions for next week.

Kick-off Question: *(60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)*

What is one of the most meaningful things that has happened to you?

Bridge: Everyone is looking for hope and meaning in life. Today we start a new study in the Old Testament book of the Bible called Ecclesiastes where the word *meaningless* is used about thirty times. As we read today's story, you might conclude that this study is going to be a waste of time. But hold on and stay plugged in. If you are looking for the real secrets of life that will give you hope and meaning, then you will not be disappointed. So, let's get started.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. Having only read the first 11 verses, one might think that this king, Solomon, has a real attitude problem. If everything in life is so meaningless, why do you think he takes the time and effort to write this book of Ecclesiastes?
✂-----
2. How do you think Solomon would answer his own question in verse 3?
✂-----
3. Why, in verse 8, do you think Solomon has decided that people are never satisfied or content?
✂-----
4. It seems in verse 10 that Solomon thinks that something has to be “new” for it to have meaning. Why do you think he makes this statement?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

- A) On a personal note, how do you find meaning in the mundane?
✂-----
- B) On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being “meaningless” and 10 being “meaningful,” where would you score your current life experience? What would it take for you to move your score up a notch?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **Meaninglessness can turn into meaningfulness.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.
- Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

Chasing the Wind

outline

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

Message of Hope: Great wisdom brings grief, so be willing to look somewhere else for life's meaning.

The Basic 8: Collection Box, Connection Card Envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad Sign-up sheet, a variety of extra Bible translations, Child Safety Poster, Blessing Board, Summary Form (which is emailed to the Details Coordinator every Sunday).

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Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What is a high-light or a low-light (a headline) from your week?
3. *[Insert rotation question for the week.]*

At the end of check-in ask the person who facilitated to choose another adult to facilitate check-in next week. Anyone can facilitate check-in. It does not have to be a CORE leader.

Children's Check-In Questions: How did you help Mommy or Daddy this week? (Or they can answer the adult questions.)

The Quiz: A child asks three questions. They randomly choose from the check-in questions people just answered. Ask everyone to raise their hands and the child picks someone to answer the questions.

At the end of the quiz ask the child who facilitated to choose another child to facilitate the quiz next week.

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3. Keep this top part and the bottom part (question D) of this page.
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5. At the end, choose someone to facilitate the questions for next week.

Kick-off Question: *(60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)*

In what subjects did you (or do you) get the best grades?

Bridge: It has been said, “If you wanted someone who knew everything, you should have hired me right out of eighth grade.” Today's story is about someone who was wise and possessed knowledge, but as you will see, his life was full of grief and sorrow. Why do wisdom and grief often go together? Open your Bible, and let's continue to explore where life's meaning comes from.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. Why do you think Solomon concludes that gaining knowledge is like “chasing the wind”?
✂-----
2. Knowledge comes in all shapes and sizes: spiritual, biblical, philosophical, legal, medical, etc.... What advice do you see Solomon having for someone whose personal identity and self-worth is based on how much knowledge he possesses?
✂-----
3. In verse 18, how do you think greater wisdom and knowledge increase a person's sorrow?
✂-----
4. When does too much wisdom and knowledge cross the line and become “chasing the wind”?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

- A) On a personal note, where have you searched for meaning in life?
✂-----
- B) With what kinds of grief and sorrow do you live with as a result of your wisdom and knowledge?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **Great wisdom brings grief, so be willing to look somewhere else for life's meaning.**
How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.
- Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

Midlife Crisis

outline

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

Message of Hope: Pleasure and wisdom are meaningless, so be willing to look somewhere else for meaning in life.

The Basic 8: Collection Box, Connection Card Envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad Sign-up sheet, a variety of extra Bible translations, Child Safety Poster, Blessing Board, Summary Form (which is emailed to the Details Coordinator every Sunday).

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Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What is a high-light or a low-light (a headline) from your week?
3. [*Insert rotation question for the week.*]

At the end of check-in ask the person who facilitated to choose another adult to facilitate check-in next week. Anyone can facilitate check-in. It does not have to be a CORE leader.

Children's Check-In Questions: How did you help Mommy or Daddy this week? (Or they can answer the adult questions.)

The Quiz: A child asks three questions. They randomly choose from the check-in questions people just answered. Ask everyone to raise their hands and the child picks someone to answer the questions.

At the end of the quiz ask the child who facilitated to choose another child to facilitate the quiz next week.

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Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

When growing up, what was modeled or communicated to you as giving a person value and worth in life?

Bridge: You may be tempted to think that the author of today's story, King Solomon, is in a mid-life crisis. But you will notice that Solomon is systematically trying to destroy all the common areas that people search for meaning in life. The bottom line is that people would not be willing to listen to his conclusion if they thought there was still hope of finding meaning in all the popular places. So hang in there; starting next week he will begin to give us clues as to where true meaning can be found. Let's open our Bible and read

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11
(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. What different forms of pleasure, good or bad, do you think people use today to try to find meaning in life?
✂-----
2. In verse 10, why do you think hard work ends up on the “meaningless” list?
✂-----
3. How would you describe the differences between wisdom and foolishness?
✂-----
4. Why do you think Solomon is so unhappy with what most people would consider great success?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) On a personal note, what are some of the different accomplishments you have pursued in life to find meaning?
✂-----
- B) What some areas in life where you feel like you are chasing the wind?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **Pleasure and wisdom are meaningless, so be willing to look somewhere else for meaning in life.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.
- Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

Conclusion No. 1

outline

Ecclesiastes 2:12-26

Message of Hope: The ability to enjoy this life only comes from God, so ask Him for the gift.

The Basic 8: Collection Box, Connection Card Envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad Sign-up sheet, a variety of extra Bible translations, Child Safety Poster, Blessing Board, Summary Form (which is emailed to the Details Coordinator every Sunday).

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Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

What is one of your most valued possessions? To whom would you like it to go when you die?

Bridge: Today's story takes a candid look at what happens to our possessions, wealth, and valuables when we die. Today's story also gives the first secret for finding life's meaning in a meaningless world.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 2:12-26.
(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. What do you think are some good motives and some bad motives for gaining wisdom?
✂-----
2. It almost seems that Solomon's motives for what he does are very self-centered and selfish. What evidence of this do you see in this story?
✂-----
3. Solomon concludes that enjoying life and finding satisfaction in his work is a choice that he is not able to make. Where do you think our ability to find satisfaction come from?
✂-----
4. Let's read verse 26 in our different translations. As of yet, Solomon has not told us how we are to please God. What do you think Solomon would say if we could ask him?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) On a personal note, what motivates you to do a day's work and along the way learn as much as you can?
✂-----
- B) How does this story help you identify and focus on the important things in your life?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **the ability to enjoy this life only comes from God, so ask him for the gift.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.
- Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

Conclusion No. 2

outline

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Message of Hope: If you would like the ability to enjoy your life, ask God for this special gift.

The Basic 8: Collection Box, Connection Card Envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad Sign-up sheet, a variety of extra Bible translations, Child Safety Poster, Blessing Board, Summary Form (which is emailed to the Details Coordinator every Sunday).

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Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What is a high-light or a low-light (a headline) from your week?
3. *[Insert rotation question for the week.]*

At the end of check-in ask the person who facilitated to choose another adult to facilitate check-in next week. Anyone can facilitate check-in. It does not have to be a CORE leader.

Children's Check-In Questions: How did you help Mommy or Daddy this week? (Or they can answer the adult questions.)

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3. Keep this top part and the bottom part (question D) of this page.
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5. At the end, choose someone to facilitate the questions for next week.

Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

How would you describe the “phase of life” you are currently in?

Bridge: Today's story gives you the secret for finding meaning when life seems meaningless. Enough said, so let's read the story.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Why do you think verses 1-8 were included, and what is their purpose?
✂-----
2. Verse 9 asks an excellent question, “What do people really get for all their hard work? How do you think most people would answer this question in today's world?
✂-----
3. What do you think Solomon means when he says, “He [God] has planted eternity in the human heart”?
✂-----
4. How do you make sense of verse 14, “God's purpose is that people should fear him”?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) On a personal note, when is a time in your life when a bad situation turned into a beautiful situation?
✂-----
- B) Where do you see the “eternity seed” that Solomon talks about in verse 11, growing in your heart?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **if you would like the ability to enjoy your life, ask God for this special gift.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.
- Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

Conclusion No. 3

outline

Ecclesiastes 3:16-22

Message of Hope: Enjoy life and make the best of it.

The Basic 8: Collection Box, Connection Card Envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad Sign-up sheet, a variety of extra Bible translations, Child Safety Poster, Blessing Board, Summary Form (which is emailed to the Details Coordinator every Sunday).

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1. What is your first name?
2. What is a high-light or a low-light (a headline) from your week?
3. [*Insert rotation question for the week.*]

At the end of check-in ask the person who facilitated to choose another adult to facilitate check-in next week. Anyone can facilitate check-in. It does not have to be a CORE leader.

Children's Check-In Questions: How did you help Mommy or Daddy this week? (Or they can answer the adult questions.)

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4. Reassure people they do not have to answer the questions, just read it for us.
5. At the end, choose someone to facilitate the questions for next week.

Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

What was the last thing you complained about?

Bridge: Today's story gets right to the point when it comes to complaining. Let's face it, all of us have hard times. The questions to ask are, "On what will we focus? What legacy will we leave in this life?" So ready or not, let's read the story.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 3:16-22

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. What do you think verse 17 tells us about Solomon's belief about God?
✂-----
2. Why do you think Solomon compared humans to animals?
✂-----
3. What does verse 21 teach us about death? (Does Ecclesiastes 12:7 add any helpful information?)
✂-----
4. How does one make sense of verse 17 and the last sentence of verse 22? Why would God have a judgement if a person's death is his end forever?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) On a personal note, what do you hope people will remember about you and your life?
✂-----
- B) When facing a negative spiral, what helps you put life into a proper perspective?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **Enjoy life and make the best of it.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.
- Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

Secret

outline

Ecclesiastes 4:1-16

Message of Hope: Meaningful friendships are essential to a meaningful life.

The Basic 8: Collection Box, Connection Card Envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad Sign-up sheet, a variety of extra Bible translations, Child Safety Poster, Blessing Board, Summary Form (which is emailed to the Details Coordinator every Sunday).

Breakfast

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3. Keep this top part and the bottom part (question D) of this page.
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5. At the end, choose someone to facilitate the questions for next week.

Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

When was a time in your life that a friend was there for you during a difficult time?

Bridge: You may have heard the saying, “There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.” Today's story shares one of the secrets to living a meaningful life. But this secret requires risk-taking. Let's read.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 4:1-16

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Why do you think envy is such a successful motivator in people's lives?
✂-----
2. Why do you think so many people search for happiness and meaning in acquiring material wealth?
✂-----
3. Four times in this chapter Solomon refers to life as *meaningless*. What common themes do you see surrounding this word?
✂-----
4. Let's read verses 13-16 again. What do you see as the differences between aspiring to power and accepting the invitations God gives you to join Him in His Kingdom work?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) On a personal note, how do you try to use your power and influence in positive ways?
✂-----
- B) How have you gone against the current to turn meaningless *independence* into meaningful *interdependence*?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **Meaningful friendships are essential to a meaningful life.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.
- Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

Talk is Cheap

outline

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

Message of Hope: Sometimes humble silence before God is better than talking.

The Basic 8: Collection Box, Connection Card Envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad Sign-up sheet, a variety of extra Bible translations, Child Safety Poster, Blessing Board, Summary Form (which is emailed to the Details Coordinator every Sunday).

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Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

On a scale of one to ten, with one being a quiet person who does not like to talk much, and ten being a person who is the life of the party and likes to talk a lot, where would you place yourself?

Bridge: Words are powerful. People use, or do not use, words in a number of ways: for control, manipulation, persuasion, love, kindness, and to bless others. Today's story is quite sobering because, as we will see in a few minutes, God takes our words very seriously.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Let's read verse 3 in all the Bible translations in our circle. When do you think Solomon would say that "activity" crosses the line and becomes "too much activity"?

✂-----

2. How do you think it is possible that too many words reveal foolishness?

✂-----

3. Verse 7 records the second time that Solomon says "fear God." The first time was in 3:15. What are the similarities and/or differences between these two verses?

✂-----

4. If you were to summarize this story for a five-year-old child, what would you say?

✂-----

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) On a personal note, when was a low or desperate time in your life where you made promises to God? What were the promises, and how did you follow through (or not follow through) on your promises?

✂-----

- B) Explain how you have, if any, a healthy fear of God?

✂-----

- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?

✂-----

- D) Remember: **Humble silence before God is sometimes better than talking.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.
- Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

Conclusion No. 4

outline

Ecclesiastes 5:8-20

Message of Hope: The ability to enjoy this life only comes from God, so ask Him for the gift.

The Basic 8: Collection Box, Connection Card Envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad Sign-up sheet, a variety of extra Bible translations, Child Safety Poster, Blessing Board, Summary Form (which is emailed to the Details Coordinator every Sunday).

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Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

For what pleasures in life do you not find enough time?

Bridge: Today's story talks about money and identifies the secret for enjoying life. So, if you find yourself frustrated with life, or discouraged, or angry, or just confused, and you are looking for meaning in life, take this story seriously. If you put it into practice, it has the ability to change your life.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 5:8-20

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Let's define the word *wealth*. What do you think it means, and what do you think it includes?
✂-----
2. Read verse 9 again. What do you suspect is at the root of people's thinking that leads them to believe that more money will bring more happiness?
✂-----
3. Solomon states, in verse 13, "Hoarding riches harms the saver." How does a person know when saving money becomes hording money?
✂-----
4. Reread the following verses: 1:23-25; 3:12-13; 3:22; and 5:18-19. What are the common themes?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) On a personal note, how has the illusion of money and wealth let you down?
✂-----
- B) How do you balance the pursuit of wealth accumulation with being a blessing to those around you?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **The ability to enjoy this life only comes from God, so ask Him for the gift.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.
- Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

Six Questions

outline

Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

Message of Hope: Enjoy life!

The Basic 8: Collection Box, Connection Card Envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad Sign-up sheet, a variety of extra Bible translations, Child Safety Poster, Blessing Board, Summary Form (which is emailed to the Details Coordinator every Sunday).

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Facilitator's Directions:

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Kick-off Question: *(60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)*

Dream a bit—if all goes well, what will happen in your life over the next twelve months?

Bridge: Today's story is rather gloomy. So, we are going to shift gears for a few moments and talk about the gloomy parts of life. Everybody faces good and bad times in life—that is just the way life is. But no matter what we face in life, we must decide how we will respond. This is hard, as you will see in this story. Even Solomon had a hard time practicing his own advice. But it is still good advice. So, let's get started.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. Solomon asks at least six questions in this story. It may be tempting to answer these questions with all negative or all positive answers. Let's consider well our reflections and challenge ourselves to give balanced answers. Dig into these six questions (verses 6, 8, 11, and 12) and get to the deeper issues. How would you answer each of Solomon's questions from both a negative and positive viewpoint?
✂-----
2. Solomon was one of the wisest and wealthiest people who ever lived. Why do you think he was so down on so many things?
✂-----
3. How do you think Solomon's life would have been different if he had practiced his own advice in verse 9?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

- A) On a personal note, how do you make the best of the not-so-enjoyable parts of life?
✂-----
- B) When you are experiencing a hard time in life, how do you go about regaining focus, encouragement, and support?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **Enjoy life!** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

Wisdom for Life

outline

Ecclesiastes 7:1-14

Message of Hope: Wisdom will benefit those who follow it.

The Basic 8: Collection Box, Connection Card Envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad Sign-up sheet, a variety of extra Bible translations, Child Safety Poster, Blessing Board, Summary Form (which is emailed to the Details Coordinator every Sunday).

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Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

Who is someone you admire as a wise person with a good reputation? Why?

Bridge: Today's story is about wisdom. Now wisdom is an odd thing because people who follow it benefit from it even if they do not understand it or believe in it. You might say that wisdom is an "equal opportunity provider."

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 7:1-14

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. When one digs down to the foundation, what do you think determines the strength or weakness of a person's reputation?
✂-----
2. Take another look at verses 1, 2 and 4. What do you think motivates Solomon to say these things about death?
✂-----
3. In verses 2, 3, and 4, how do you see surface activities covering up the deeper issues of life?
✂-----
4. Why do you think it unwise to long for "the good old days" in verse 10?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) On a personal note, how are you tempted to joke and laugh as a way to avoid deeper and more meaningful conversations with people.
✂-----
- B) How do you work through your harder times in life?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **Wisdom will benefit those who follow it.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.
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Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

Wisdom's Limitations

outline

Ecclesiastes 7:15- 29

Message of Hope: Living a God-fearing life is our only hope.

The Basic 8: Collection Box, Connection Card Envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad Sign-up sheet, a variety of extra Bible translations, Child Safety Poster, Blessing Board, Summary Form (which is emailed to the Details Coordinator every Sunday).

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Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

What is a piece of wisdom that has served you well in life?

Bridge: In today's world, there is a lot of emphasis on getting educated and learning good thinking skills. In fact, some people pride themselves on how wise they are. Today's story has both good and bad news about wisdom. Some say that Solomon, who wrote today's story, was the wisest man who ever lived. Let's see what conclusions he makes about wisdom.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 7:15-29

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. How do you think intellect and wisdom are the same or different?
✂-----
2. Let's read verse 17 in our various translations. How do you make sense of the advice in this verse?
✂-----
3. Verse 18 records the third time that Solomon uses the words "fear God." Compare the previous times, 3:14 and 5:7, with 7:18. What do you observe or notice as Solomon develops this theme?
✂-----
4. Let's read verse 26 again. How do you think Solomon would describe a godly woman and a godly man?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) As you walk life's road, into what two ditches are you most tempted to fall?
✂-----
- B) If you were to choose one gem of wisdom that you wished you had learned early on in life, what would it be?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **Living a God-fearing life is our only hope.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

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- Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

Conclusion No. 5

outline

Ecclesiastes 8:1-17

Message of Hope: You are better off by fearing God during your life.

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Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

What is one of the most important choices you have made in life?

Bridge: Today's story recognizes that very little in life is fair. In fact, life is full of injustices, but this does not mean that you have to face a horrible life. Today's story will give you the secret for finding life's meaning, but it is a choice you must make every day.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 8:1-17

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Why do you think so much emphasis is placed on obeying the king?
✂-----
2. In verse 12, how do you think those who fear God are actually better off?
✂-----
3. What links do you see between verse 14 and verse 15?
✂-----
4. What advice would Solomon give on having “fun” and “enjoyment of life” when someone is facing difficult circumstances?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) What types of injustices motivate you into action?
✂-----
- B) When life is hard and unfair, how do you go about choosing to enjoy life and actually having some fun?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **You are better off by fearing God during your life.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.
- Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

Death

outline

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

Message of Hope: Being in God's hands is better than the alternative.

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Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

During the hard times of life, what gives you hope?

Bridge: Today's story will challenge us to look at death. And, it may seem quite hopeless as we read this story. But keep in mind, that Solomon is on a search to find out what it is about life that is worthwhile. So, continue to search with him as we read today's story.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 9:1-12.

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. After reading verses 2 and 3, why do you think anyone would pursue a spiritual life?
✂-----
2. Verse 11 sounds like there is no value in being fast, strong, wise, skillful, or educated. How do you make sense of this observation?
✂-----
3. How do you see “chance” (the last part of verse 11 and verse 12) and “being in God's hand” (verse 1) coexisting in this same story?
✂-----
4. Let's reread verses 5 and 10 from the different translations in our circle. If this is true, why do you think popular Christianity seems to say the exact opposite?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) When have you seen God's favor in your life?
✂-----
- B) What are some of the things in life you value and that also bring meaning and purpose in your life?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **Being in God's hands is better than the alternative.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.
- Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

A Quiet Spirit

outline

Ecclesiastes 9:13-10:4

Message of Hope: Quiet wisdom will serve you well in life.

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1. What is your first name?
2. What is a high-light or a low-light (a headline) from your week?
3. [*Insert rotation question for the week.*]

At the end of check-in ask the person who facilitated to choose another adult to facilitate check-in next week. Anyone can facilitate check-in. It does not have to be a CORE leader.

Children's Check-In Questions: How did you help Mommy or Daddy this week? (Or they can answer the adult questions.)

The Quiz: A child asks three questions. They randomly choose from the check-in questions people just answered. Ask everyone to raise their hands and the child picks someone to answer the questions.

At the end of the quiz ask the child who facilitated to choose another child to facilitate the quiz next week.

Facilitator's Directions:

1. Talk as little as possible, encourage others to share, and avoid a monologue.
2. Cut on the dotted lines. Distribute questions around the circle. ✂-----
3. Keep this top part and the bottom part (question D) of this page.
4. Reassure people they do not have to answer the questions, just read it for us.
5. At the end, choose someone to facilitate the questions for next week.

Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

Who is someone you admire? Why do you admire them?

Bridge: Today's story turns the world's values system upside down. It might be challenging, but consider being willing to go deeper.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 9:13-10:4

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. In verse 16, why do you think Solomon would draw a link between wisdom and one's level of wealth?
✂-----
2. It seems that wealth is a factor for wisdom to be recognized and appreciated by others. How do you make sense of this?
✂-----
3. Read 10:1 again. What are other things that might be similar to foolishness that also spoil great wisdom and honor in a person?
✂-----
4. What do you see as the characteristics of a quiet spirit?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) On a personal note, who is someone you admire who has a quiet spirit?
✂-----
- B) What characteristics of a quiet spirit do you see in the person sitting to your right? (Take some time and go around your circle highlighting each person and giving the rest of the group a chance to share.)
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **Quiet wisdom will serve you well in life.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.
- Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

Wisdom

outline

Ecclesiastes 10:5-20

Message of Hope: It is never too late to gain wisdom.

The Basic 8: Collection Box, Connection Card Envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad Sign-up sheet, a variety of extra Bible translations, Child Safety Poster, Blessing Board, Summary Form (which is emailed to the Details Coordinator every Sunday).

Breakfast

Welcome: We are so glad that you are here today.

Setting the Context:

- We come from a variety of backgrounds and seek to create a safe place for Truth seekers to grow spiritually.
- You will notice that we try to avoid fancy religious language. We are common people.
- Let's encourage those who like to talk to give opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
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5. At the end, choose someone to facilitate the questions for next week.

Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

Who is someone you admire for their life of wisdom?

Bridge: Today's story is about the wise and the foolish. But better yet, it gives principles that anyone can use to increase their wisdom quotient. So, give this story some consideration as we explore it.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 10:5-20

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. What in verses 5 and 6 is considered a mistake? Why?
✂-----
2. What are the differences contrasted in this story between how the wise and foolish live their lives?
✂-----
3. Why do you think King Solomon included verse 20?
✂-----
4. If verse 14 is really true that “no one can predict the future,” what wisdom would Solomon give us in regard to palm readers, psychics, and horoscopes?

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) On a personal note, how has wisdom helped you in life?
✂-----
- B) If you were to make one change toward living a life based on wisdom, what would you change?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **It is never too late to gain wisdom.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.
- Close by saying the **Blessing Board** blessing together.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

Hopeful Meaninglessness

outline

Ecclesiastes 11:1-10

Message of Hope: Meaninglessness makes hope possible.

The Basic 8: Collection Box, Connection Card Envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad Sign-up sheet, a variety of extra Bible translations, Child Safety Poster, Blessing Board, Summary Form (which is emailed to the Details Coordinator every Sunday).

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Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

When you have been discouraged? What gave you hope?

Bridge: Today's story will challenge us to search for hopeful meaningfulness. Can we find enjoyment in the midst of meaningfulness? Is this even possible? Some may yes, and others may say no. But it is up to every person to decide for themselves, because everyone makes the final decision for themselves.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. What principles of business does Solomon offer in this story?
✂-----
2. In this story Solomon does not use the word *risk*, but what kind of council or advice do you think he would give regarding risk-taking?
✂-----

Now read verses 7-10.

3. Why do you think Solomon, in verse 9, says to “enjoy life” and to “remember?”
✂-----
4. Solomon uses the word *meaningless* approximately thirty times in the book of Ecclesiastes. Yet in these few verses there is a command in verse 9 to enjoy every minute of life. How do you reconcile these opposites?
✂-----

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) On a personal note, if you were to take Solomon's advice in verse 10 to not worry and to keep your body healthy, what would you change this week?
✂-----
- B) Where are you taking some risks in your life?
✂-----
- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?
✂-----
- D) Remember: **Meaninglessness makes hope possible.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

- Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.

Lunch: Taco Salad sign-up sheet

The Final Conclusion

outline

Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

Message of Hope: Nothing else matters in life except to fear God and keep His commandments.

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Kick-off Question: (60 second answers, facilitator goes first, go around the circle)

If you were asked for one piece of wisdom, what would you say?

Bridge: Today's story is the last one in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is in this last story that Solomon reminds us that everything is meaningless, but he gives us his final conclusion to his search. This final conclusion is what gives a person's life purpose, meaning, and focus. So, let's take a look.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

✂-----

Digging Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Why do you think so many people spend their best years, their young years, living for themselves and then, when they get old, they think about God?

✂-----

2. Verse 5 talks about one's "everlasting home." What is this talking about?

✂-----

3. Dig deep into this story. What do you find in this story that suggests there is something after death?

Leader's Tip: See verse 14. If death in the grave is final, what would be the reason for God to judge us?

✂-----

4. Let's do a quick review of what Solomon has taught us about death. Read the following verses again: Ecclesiastes 3:21; 9:5-6, 10; 12:7. Based on these verses, what do we know about death?

✂-----

Sharing Questions: (50% of your study time)

- A) On a personal note, having studied this book, how do you think Solomon would advise you to live differently?

✂-----

- B) How has your faith in God shaped your outlook on aging, death, and dying?

✂-----

- C) What is an invitation, a promise, a command, or a warning that you needed to hear today?

✂-----

- D) Remember: **Nothing else matters in life except to fear God and obey His commands.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Group Prayer:

Put **Empty Chairs** in the middle of your circle. Pray for people who will be invited.