



Meaningless?
A Study in Ecclesiastes
WestWay Christian Church

"Everything is meaningless,' says the Teacher, 'completely meaningless!'" - Ecclesiastes 1:2

Ecclesiastes

Background on Ecclesiastes- For thousands of years, people have been asking the following questions: “What is the meaning of life?” “Why am I here?” “How can I find joy and happiness?”

While Ecclesiastes is frequently attributed to Solomon, his name is never mentioned in the book itself. It seems to be written at the end of his life, an epitaph in long form, lessons learned from a lifetime pursuit of meaning and purpose. Some think it is cynical and depressing, while others find it to be satirical, meant to poke fun at the world and those who seek to find meaning on their own terms. Ultimately, it is a very real book. Like the rest of the Bible, it is timeless and timely.

Each lesson has several different elements. You'll **read the text** for the week, there's a suggested **key verse (or verses)** for memorization, followed by **song lyrics** from secular music that speak to the topic, then a specific **study method**. You may want to read the text again as you work through the study method.

On Bible Study:

This challenge requires us to be students of scripture. We must spend time with it, interact with it, stomp on the blade of the shovel and force it into the earth.

As you read through this study, you'll see that there are 3 different Bible study methods used. You'll like some study methods more than others. This is designed to help you view scripture differently and to provide you with a multitude of tools to help you understand what you're reading. Each of the methods used are designed to prevent you from rushing to apply what you've read. Plan on 30-45 minutes per study, possibly longer!

A few reminders about studying the Bible:

- No one, not even God, is keeping score.
- It's not a race.
- Don't compare yourself to others, it's not a contest.
- Just like there's a way to pray that makes you seem holier than you are (on the street corner with loud voice) there's a way to be proud and arrogant when you study scripture.

But...

- It's a relationship. And people in relationships do stupid, crazy things. They get up early to spend time with each other. They stay up late, too late, and fall asleep with one another. They tell others where they are, what they're doing and who they're doing it with. They talk on the phone, Skype, text and Facebook message one another. In short, they are together. They grow close. They miss one another when they're not together. They ask questions. They listen. They answer. They also argue with one another, they disagree. They pushback on one another, and sometimes, they don't find resolution or satisfaction. Studying scripture should be like that.

It's our desire that the body at WestWay have that kind of relationship with God and his word.

We pray that you will have transformed hearts, renewed minds, and this will enable you to be a blessing to others through the power of the Holy Spirit!

Ecclesiastes

This study guide will follow our Summer 2018 message series on Ecclesiastes. Each week, usually by Sunday afternoon, you'll find the message online at westwaychurch.com/media.

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|------------------------|---|
| July 1 2018- | Ecclesiastes 1:1-18- The Pursuit of Meaning |
| July 8 2018- | Ecclesiastes 2:1-11- The Pursuit of Meaning Through Pleasure |
| July 15 2018- | Ecclesiastes 2:18-26- The Pursuit of Meaning Through Work |
| July 22 2018- | Ecclesiastes 3:1-22- A Time for Everything |
| July 29 2018- | Ecclesiastes 4:7-12- A Good Friend |
| August 5 2018- | Ecclesiastes 5:1-7- Worship is Relationship |
| August 12 2018- | Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:9- The Pursuit of Meaning Through Wealth |
| August 19 2018- | Ecclesiastes 9:1-12, 11:7-10- Everyone Dies |
| August 26 2018- | Ecclesiastes 12- Hope |

Ecclesiastes

Read: Ecclesiastes 1:1-18.

Theme: The Pursuit of Meaning

Key Verses: “Everything is meaningless,” says the Teacher, “completely meaningless.”

Generations come and generations go, but the earth never changes.

The sun rises and the sun sets, then hurries around to rise again.

The wind blows south, and then turns north. Around and around it goes, blowing in circles.

Rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full.

Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows out again to the sea.

Everything is wearisome beyond description.

No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content.”- Ecclesiastes 1:2-8.

“And you run and you run to catch up with the sun, but it's sinking

Racing around to come up behind you again

The sun is the same in a relative way, but you're older

Shorter of breath and one day closer to death”- Pink Floyd, “Time”.

5 P Method

Purpose -Why did the author write this? Why is it important to be in the bible? Write a couple of sentences of what you think the theme or topic is.

Primary Verse -Which verse or verses seem to contain the most important thought in the passage? Which one stands out most? Write out the verse & reference.

Promises -Make a list of promises you find. Sometimes you need to infer promises from the passage if it doesn't state them straight out.

Problems -Find anything you don't understand, even a word, and write it as a question.

Practical Application -Think what the passage means to you. What action should you take? What needs to change or be worked on? Application should tell who, what, and when.

Ecclesiastes

Read: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11.

Theme: The Pursuit of Meaning Through Pleasure

Key Verse: “I said to myself, ‘Come on, let’s try pleasure. Let’s look for the ‘good things’ in life.’ But I found that this, too, was meaningless”- Ecclesiastes 2:1.

“I can't get no, oh, no, no, no, hey, hey, hey. That's what I say.
I can't get no satisfaction, I can't get no satisfaction. 'Cause I try and I try and I try and I try.
I can't get no, I can't get no”- The Rolling Stones, “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction”.

OPA Method

Observation -Compile all facts in the passage. Make observations on what the passage says -
Make at least 10-30 observations.

Principles -Draw a few principles from observations you made. Write down what God is trying
to teach you in the passage.

Application -How will you apply the principles to your life? -Be specific – A good application
tells who, what, and when.

Ecclesiastes

Read: Ecclesiastes 2:18-26.

Theme: The Pursuit of Meaning Through Work

Key Verse: “I came to hate all my hard work here on earth, for I must leave to others everything I have earned”- Ecclesiastes 2:18.

“Anthony works in the grocery store, savin’ his pennies for someday. Mama Leone left a note on the door, he said, ‘Sonny, move out to the country workin’ too hard can give you a heart attack.’ You oughta know by now. Who needs a house out in Hackensack, is that what you get with your money? It seems such a waste of time if that’s what it’s all about”- Billy Joel, “Movin’ Out (Anthony’s Song).

SPECK Method

Sins to Avoid -Make a list of sins– wrong actions, attitudes, or thoughts– that are mentioned in the passage to avoid in life.

Promises to Claim -Make a list of promises, these will give us confidence when we doubt God/ face difficult times. Take them to heart and believe what they say.

Examples to Follow -What examples do you find? Is there a right way of thinking or acting described in the passage that you should take as an example in your life? Write it down!

Commands to Obey -Write all the commands you find. When a passage encourages you to take action, take it as a command and write it down.

Knowledge of God -What does the passage tell you about God that you can apply to your daily life?

Ecclesiastes

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-22.

Theme: A Time for Everything

Key Verse: ““To everything (turn, turn, turn). There is a season (turn, turn, turn). And a time to every purpose, under heaven” Ecclesiastes- 3:1-8.

“There’s a time for peace and there is a time for war.

A time to forgive and a time to settle the score.

A time for babies to lose their lives, a time for hunger and genocide.

This too shall be made right”- Derek Webb, “This Too Shall Be Made Right”.

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Ecclesiastes

Read Ecclesiastes 4:7-12.

Theme: A Good Friend

Key Verse: “Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed”- Ecclesiastes 4:9.

“What do I do when my love is away? Does it worry you to be alone? How do I feel by the end of the day? Are you sad because you're on your own? No I get by with a little help from my friends. I get high with a little help from my friends I'm gonna try with a little help from my friends”- The Beatles, “With a Little Help from My Friends”.

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Ecclesiastes

Read: Ecclesiastes 5:1-7.

Theme: Worship is Relationship

Key Verse: “As you enter the house of God, keep your ears open and your mouth shut”- Ecclesiastes 5:1a.

“I hate all your show and pretense, the hypocrisy of your praise.
The hypocrisy of your festivals, I hate all your show. Away with your noisy worship, away with your noisy hymns. I stop up my ears when you're singing them, I hate all your show”- Jon Foreman- “Instead of a Show.

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Ecclesiastes

Read: Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:9.

Theme: The Pursuit of Meaning Through Wealth

Key Verse: “Those who love money will never have enough. How meaningless to think that wealth brings true happiness! The more you have, the more people come to help you open it”- Ecclesiastes 5:10-11a.

“I don't know what they want from me, it's like the more money we come across, the more problems we see”- The Notorious BIG, “Mo Money Mo Problems”.

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Ecclesiastes

Read: Ecclesiastes 9:1-12; 11:7-10.

Theme: Everyone Dies

Key Verse: “Whatever they did in their lifetime—loving, hating, envying—is all long gone”- Ecclesiastes 9:6.

“Several friends came to his grave, his children were so well-behaved.
As the priest got up to speak, the assembly craved relief.
But he himself had given up, so instead he offered them this bitter cup,
"You're gonna die, we're all gonna die. Could be twenty years, could be tonight"- Pedro the Lion,
“Priests and Paramedics”.

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Ecclesiastes

Read: Ecclesiastes 12.

Theme: Hope

Key Verse: “That’s the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone’s duty. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad”- Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.

“There's a man going around taking names, and he decides who to free and who to blame. Everybody won't be treated all the same, there will be a golden ladder reaching down, when the man comes around”- Johnny Cash, “The Man Comes Around”.

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