

GREATER FAITH
June 2020 Bible Study Outline

Introduction

Ecclesiastes is a reflective study on the “good life” described in Proverbs. It is a book of perspective. Two guides with distinct voices lead us through this reflection. The first is depicted as a critical and skeptical Teacher. The Teacher posits that life in general is not always rosy and can be difficult; sometimes filled with up and downs, tension, and disappointments. **In other words, the Teacher believes that life is hevel; not necessarily meaningless; but like smoke or vapor.** The Teacher begs the question, “How do we live a good life in the midst of hevel?” The other guide is the Author. The Author is pensive, wise and gives hope. He allows the Teacher to deconstruct a life without God. He introduces the Teacher in chapter 1 and has the final powerful word on the matter in chapter 12. This month we will be Working Our Way Through four frames of wisdom discovery.

1. Ecclesiastes Bible Study Toolbox

A. Watch Video entitled Wisdom Series – Ecclesiastes:

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/wisdom-series/>

B. Listen to 3 BibleProject™ podcast episodes on Ecclesiastes Studies. The session transcripts in pdf are available also.

- **Hevel**

<https://bibleproject.com/podcast/ecclesiastes-part-1-hevel/>

This is the first in a series of three episodes on the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. This is a really unique book of the Bible. It contains some of most skeptical wisdom in all of the Scriptures, sometimes scandalous and always fascinating.

- **The Gift**

<https://bibleproject.com/podcast/ecclesiastes-part-2-gift/>

The second episodes explore how acknowledging that all of life is "vapor" (Hebrew “hevel”) can lead to the enjoyment of the small and simple delights we encounter in day to day life.

- **The Limits of Labor**

<https://bibleproject.com/podcast/ecclesiastes-part-3-limits-labor/>

The final episode shows how most of our daily time and energy is spent on things that are totally meaningless, which should motivate humility, integrity, and enjoyment of the simple things in life.

2. Discourse of Wisdom

- A study on Ecclesiastes chapters 1-12.
- Ecclesiastes is the second biblical wisdom book.
- The author of Ecclesiastes is not directly identified.
- The Hebrew word “Hevel” is used approx. 38 times in Ecclesiastes

3. Observations in Ecclesiastes

- Time has a given direction →always forward.
- Death is inevitable; it is our destiny.
- Life has an arbitrary/random nature.

4. Core Beliefs

- We all desire meaning & significance in life.
- Life is not meaningless.

5. Working Your Way Through

- Life without God is meaningless.
- What is the meaning of your life?
- Ecclesiastes encourages us to ponder the meaning of life in light of the presence of God.
- *When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is: fear God and keep His commands, because this is for all humanity. For God will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil. Eccles. 12:13-14*

Bible Study Agenda

06/03/20

Theme: Working Your Way Through

Focus: Working Your Way Through Your Soul Salvation

Wisdom Insight: Everything Is Hevel

Hevel is the Hebrew word for smoke, vapor or breath and is used 38 times in Ecclesiastes. Modern translations relate this word to meaningless. In Ecclesiastes 1:1, it says metaphorically that everything is meaningless; life is meaningless. Is this true? Certainly not. It's just that we can't always grasp (just like smoke, vapor, or breath) everything related to our lives. In other words, life is an enigma or paradox. Yet, there is hope. It comes in the form of Jesus Christ Who entered into our hevel once and for all & marched it to the cross.

Ecclesiastes offers the believer an opportunity to understand the emptiness and despair that those who do not know God struggle with. Those who do not have a saving faith in Christ are faced with a life that is hevel. If there is no salvation, and no God, then not only is there no

point to life, but no purpose or direction to it either. Salvation of the soul is a gift and the first step in the process of finding our way to The Way (the Source of wisdom).

Scriptures:

- ECCLESIASTES 1:1 - "Absolute futility [hevel]," says the Teacher. "Absolute futility [hevel]. Everything is futile [hevel]."
- EPHESIANS 2:8-9 – For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift - not from works, so that no one can boast.

Discussion Questions:

- How do we live life in the midst of hevel?
- Is your soul salvation a guarantee of success in life?

Study Notes:

06/10/20

Theme: Working Your Way Through

Focus: Working Your Way Through Your Own Mortality

Insight: The Mystery of Time

Ecclesiastes makes it clear that time has a given direction→ always forward. Yet, time is a mystery. Chapter 3:1 states, "There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven." As we course through this life we have been blessed with, one truth stands tall. Per Pastor, "Every day is a day to accomplish what God wants us to do." Life will move on & will move on without us one day. This leads to the question of our mortality because death is inevitable; it is our destiny.

Scriptures:

- Ecclesiastes 3:16-20 - I also observed under the sun: there is wickedness at the place of judgment and there is wickedness at the place of righteousness. I said to myself, "God will judge the righteous and the wicked, since there is a time for every activity and every work." I said to myself, "This happens concerning people, so that God may test them, and they may see for themselves that they are like animals." For the fate of people and the fate of animals is the same. As one dies, so dies the other; they all have the same breath. People have no advantage over animals since everything is futile [hevel]. All are going to the same place; all come from dust, and all return to dust.
- John 10:10 - I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.
- Philippians 4:13 - I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Discussion Questions:

- How are you spending your time daily as you seek to live well?
- Why is death called The Great Equalizer?

Study Notes:

06/17/20

Theme: Working Your Way Through

Focus: Working Your Way Through Injustice in the World

Wisdom Insight: The Mystery of Injustice

2 deadly viruses are killing Americans – COVID-19 and racism. The daily news, social media, & politics are froth with these injustices. Ecclesiastes posits that there is little justice in the world. Evil & wicked people are in the places that good people should be occupying, and they act without justice, corrupting things that should be just & fair. So, as believers, what is our stance as we work our way through injustice in the world? How can we keep from losing our way in life as external influences bombard us? The answer lies in total trust. In God. Though there is injustice, that is not the end of the story. Because of God, injustice is limited in its scope.

Scriptures:

- **Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 - Again, I observed all the acts of oppression being done under the sun. Look at the tears of those who are oppressed; they have no one to comfort them. Power is with those who oppress them; they have no one to comfort them. So, I admired the dead, who have already died, more than the living, who are still alive. But better than either of them is the one who has not yet existed, who has not seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.**
- **LUKE 18:1-8 -The Parable of the Persistent Widow**

Discussion Questions:

- Describe how total trust in God frees us up to enjoy life despite negative influences?
- Do you believe that the cry for justice lies with us (believers)?

Study Notes:

06/24/20

Theme: Working Your Way Through

Focus: Working Your Way Through God's Plan for Your Life

Wisdom Insight: Invest in Your Life

God has a plan for your life. A wonderful plan. A better plan than you could ever imagine. His plan is a promise for your future. The problem is that it is *not* our plan for our life. If we were given that privilege, we would have no unpleasantness at all in life. And that would ruin us. God is sovereign and has set up the plan of life in a way that we cannot interfere with. He has done so, in order that we should fear Him. Isn't that the conclusion of the matter in Ecclesiastes 12:13? Our Wise Father desires for us to enjoy life & rejoice in any and every circumstance.

Foundation Scriptures:

- ECCLESIASTES 11:6 - In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not let your hand rest, because you don't know which will succeed, whether one or the other, or if both of them will be equally good.
- ECCLESIASTES 12:13-14 - When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is: fear God and keep His commands, because this is for all humanity. For God will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil.
- JEREMIAH 29:11 - For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the LORD's declaration - "plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

Discussion Questions:

- Have you put limits on God by settling where you are in life?
- Discussion: If wisdom is a guide or a compass, why do we get lost in life at times?

Study Notes: