

Read Ecclesiastes 1:3-11; 12:13.

1. Solomon, whom we think wrote Ecclesiastes, begins with an exasperated cry about the seeming futility of life. What experiences have you encountered that challenged your thinking and seemed to make all of life seem meaningless?
2. When talking with someone who is struggling with feelings of meaninglessness, how might you encourage them without using fluffy platitudes?
3. Think about the effort many people spend in pursuit of a career. Which factors seem most threatening to the satisfaction offered by a job?
 - a. Company Downsizing
 - b. Realization that there is always something else to buy
 - c. Passed over for promotion
 - d. Health Problems
4. Starting with verse 4 and ending with verse 7, can you identify four metaphors the author employed to communicate the futility of life?
5. When confronted with overwhelming feelings of futility, how do people deal with those feelings?
6. Discuss how people have dealt with problems, similar to the following topics, for centuries.
 - a. War
 - b. Sex
 - c. Racism
 - d. Greed
 - e. Any others you can think of...
7. Are there some achievements, goals, or possessions that you once thought very valuable but now consider worthless? How does this adjust your view of life?
8. What is meant by “fear God”? What kind of fear is meant?
9. Does the command to keep God’s commandments conflict with the idea of salvation by grace? If not, then what is the relationship between faith and obedience?
10. In view of Ecclesiastes 12:13, how does your relationship with God influence your view of life and what gives it meaning?

Pray as a group over what you’ve studied today.

If anyone has not listened to the Week 1 sermon, we encourage him or her to go to www.donelson.org/read-watch/recentsermons to hear the message on this passage. We encourage you to interact with us as we move through this series.

Read Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26.

1. As the Preacher became King over Jerusalem, what was the first virtue he pursued in order to gain fulfillment (1:13)?
2. On first hearing 1:13 this virtue sounds like a worthy goal to pursue. Why did the author find it ultimately meaningless? How do people pursue this goal today?
3. What was the goal of the author in 2:1? Identify the specific ways in which he pursued this goal. How do people pursue this goal today?
4. In 2:4 the author mentioned another goal for life fulfillment, what was this one? If you were to chase this dream, what would you do?
5. Read the description of 2:7-8. Why do some pursuits of happiness involve the violation of other people?
6. Solomon described his status as having surpassed all who came before him. Why is it that material success often changes the way we treat other people?
7. One would figure that it is better to live as a wise person than a fool but Solomon indicates that there are some events that happen to both the wise man and the fool. What are some events in life that happen to the wise and the foolish alike?
8. Which word/phrase best describes your feelings when realizing that death comes to everyone?
 - a. Does not bother me
 - b. Panic and fear
 - c. Confidence in life after death
 - d. Looking forward to it
9. Ecclesiastes 2 makes it clear that we cannot take our possessions, acclaim, or awards with us after death; rather, we leave everything behind for someone. Will you leave behind something that will help the next generation?
10. How is life with God any more satisfying than life without God?

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If anyone has not listened to the Week 2 sermon, we encourage him or her to go to www.donelson.org/read-watch/recentsermons to hear the message on this passage. We encourage you to interact with us as we move through this series.

Read Ecclesiastes 4:1-6:12.

1. People all over the world oppress others. Why do those with power and resources feel the need to oppress others? What would it take to end the cycle of oppression?
2. How might oppressed people keep from spiraling down into despair?
3. Those who are alone have no one with whom to share life or their experiences. Do you know anyone who seems to live life alone? How may you minister to those who have no family?
4. Those who have a friend seem to be better off. In what ways does it seem that two people are better than one?
5. Many different types of people approach the church building to worship on Sundays. What would make a person's worship like that of a fool?
6. While in worship, why should we limit our speaking? Are you cautious of your words or do you assume that God cannot hear you?
7. Have you made a vow rashly and then failed to keep it? How should you handle the promises that you make to God?
8. How would you describe a rich man who never has enough?
 - a. Insecure
 - b. Greedy
 - c. Hardworking
9. When you read 5:18-20, what do you think is the economic key to satisfaction?
10. Why can some people not enjoy the blessings God has given to them?
11. How might a dissatisfied person re-evaluate their lives in order to discover fulfillment?

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If anyone has not listened to the Week 3 sermon, we encourage him or her to go to www.donelson.org/read-watch/recentsermons to hear the message on this passage. We encourage you to interact with us as we move through this series.

Read Ecclesiastes 7:1-8.

1. Read Ecclesiastes 7:1-8. How many times does the word “better” occur in these verses? (The number may vary from one translation to another.)
2. A good name is considered to invaluable to the author. What kind of lifestyle would secure a good name in life?
3. Most people would rather attend a party than a funeral, but Solomon offers a different proposal in verse 2. What is to be gained by going to a funeral that would make it preferable to a feast?
4. Read Psalm 90 in its entirety. In verse 12 the psalmist asks God to help us number our days. How does this help us gain a hearts of wisdom?
5. If you knew that you would die in one year, what would you do? How would you live? How should you live?
 - a. Do what you had never before done
 - b. Do the most important things
 - c. Sit and whine is self-pity
6. In his book, *The Problem of Pain*, C.S. Lewis wrote, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” This sounds much like Solomon’s thoughts in Ecclesiastes 7:3-4. What should we do to better listen when God uses this megaphone in our lives?
7. Some people can rebuke you in such a way that you thank them for the experience. Who are the wise people in your life who could rebuke you and you would accept it? Why do you accept their rebuke?
8. At what point in our lives is foolish and silly talking exposed as worthless? Do you offer wisdom or foolishness?
9. What is it about a patient spirit that makes it better than a proud spirit? When society sees a patient-spirited person and proud-spirited person, which gets more attention? Why?
10. How may an awareness of our own finitude drive us toward wise living?

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If anyone has not listened to the Week 4 sermon, we encourage him or her to go to www.donelson.org/read-watch/recentsermons to hear the message on this passage. We encourage you to interact with us as we move through this series.

Read Ecclesiastes 8:15.

1. Read Ecclesiastes 8:10-15 and then Psalm 73. Why did it bother these biblical writers that good things sometimes happen to bad people and bad things sometimes happen to good people?
2. Can you recall a time when a bad/evil person seemed to experience great rewards throughout life? What do you think should happen to this person?
3. Wicked people often have great possessions and interesting experiences. What is something enjoyed by wicked people that could make you jealous?
4. In your experience what is the worst thing that you have seen happen to a good/innocent person? Why does this present a challenge to the Christian faith?
5. If good things can happen to bad people, what good is it to be Godly in this age?
6. This passage struggles with the concept of why there is evil in the world, called "theodicy." Have you or someone you know struggled in faith because of this problem?
7. What seemed to place things back into perspective for the biblical writers? Does this help you? Why?
8. The author indicates how futile it is to worry about such matters as who gets hat rewards. What does he suggest people do instead of worrying about these larger issues?
9. Is it possible to have a balance between awareness of deeper issues and oblivious partying?
10. How can we live in view of the bad things of life and still find enjoyment?

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If anyone has not listened to the Week 5 sermon, we encourage him or her to go to www.donelson.org/read-watch/recentsermons to hear the message on this passage. We encourage you to interact with us as we move through this series.

Read Ecclesiastes 12:1-5.

1. How old are you?
 - a. Don't have your driver's license
 - b. Still in school/university
 - c. Single but out of school
 - d. You have kids and life moves at the speed of light
 - e. Empty nesters
 - f. Enjoying the grandchildren
 - g. Getting pretty old
2. Compare the youth that seeks to "sow their wild oats" and those who "Remember (their) Creator in the days of (their) youth." What influences must be on a young person's life to direct and convince them to live a God-directed life while they are still young?
3. What would a life that was to remember its Creator in the days of youth look like?
4. Some will say that those who spend their youth "sowing their wild oats" will have some fun experiences that God-focused youth may miss. What would a God-focused youth miss? How might that be beneficial to one's life? Is there a way that those experiences might be detrimental?
5. For youth who seek to live for their Creator, what influences or distractions might cause problems for them?
6. We understand that God's grace covers all sin so what advantage would there be in living for one's Creator from a young age?
7. What are the metaphors used in verse 2-7 that refer to old age?
8. Though God's grace definitely covers all sin, what might a person miss who spends their youth "sowing their wild oats" instead of following Christ?
9. Write down the name of a young person who is facing or will soon face these spiritual decisions. What might you do to add your voice to their life and encourage them to follow Christ now? (Examples—Take them to eat, go to their games, write them a letter, etc.) (If the young person in mind is not your child be sure to get the parents' permission first)
10. In view of this counsel from Solomon, what message would you have for an older person who is now interested in following Christ?

Pray as a group over what you've studied today.

If anyone has not listened to the Week 6 sermon, we encourage him or her to go to www.donelson.org/read-watch/recentsermons to hear the message on this passage. We encourage you to interact with us as we move through this series.

Read Ecclesiastes 12:9-14.

1. Ecclesiastes 12:9 indicates that the Preacher/Teacher was also constantly learning. What happens to a teacher who loses his desire to learn?
2. While teachers may understand the material they are to teach, the great teachers take the time to consider how they will write or say the material they need to teach. Who were the most effective teachers that you encountered?
3. What proverb acts like a goad in that it motivates you toward right living?
4. In what way are some wise words like nails?
5. Solomon warned his readers to “beware of anything beyond these.” How might we identify the false wisdom sometimes offered in the world?
6. Why do we tend to think that a wise person is very complex?
7. As Solomon sought to summarize wise living, what did he say?
8. When reading Ecclesiastes 12:13 do not forget Proverbs 1:7. Why is the fear of God so instrumental in the development of godly wisdom?
9. Does Solomon’s admonition to “Fear God and keep His commandments” contradict the idea of salvation by grace? Why or why not?
10. If you were to live with the constant realization that God will judge every deed and every secret, how would that influence the decisions that you make? Would that direct you toward wise living?

Pray as a group over what you’ve studied today.

If anyone has not listened to the Week 7 sermon, we encourage him or her to go to www.donelson.org/read-watch/recentsermons to hear the message on this passage. We encourage you to interact with us as we move through this series.