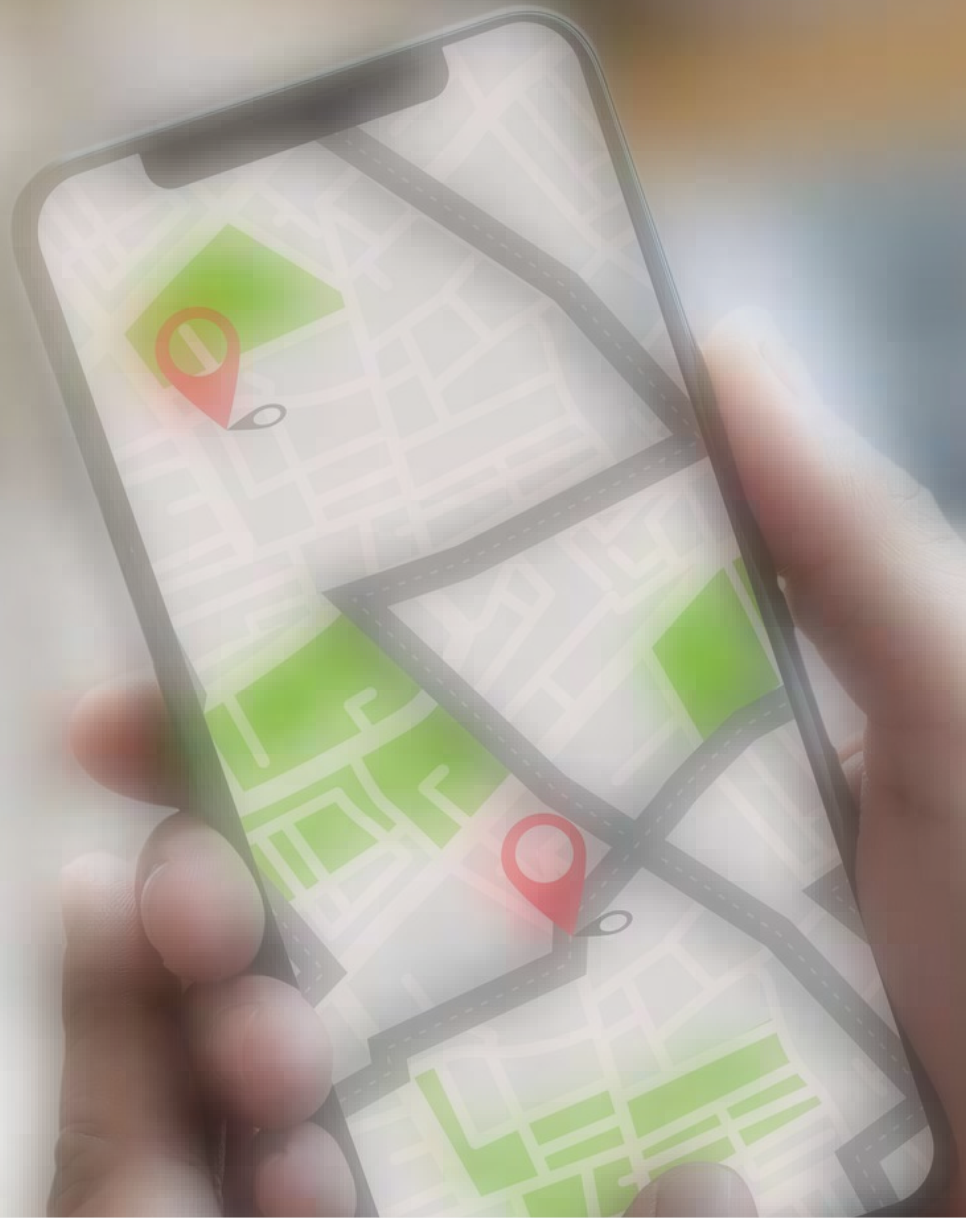




# LEADERS STUDY GUIDE

April 27  
-  
July 27



## Navigating Worldviews

ECCLESIASTES



# NAVIGATING WORLDVIEWS

## A STUDY

on the Book of Ecclesiastes:

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**April 27 - July 27**

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Written by TJ Johnson

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# Sermon Series Overview

This coming Sunday, we begin a new series on the book of Ecclesiastes. To prepare our hearts for this journey together, I'd like to share some exegetical insights.

## TYPE OF LITERATURE

The Old Testament is divided into three categories: Law (Torah), Writings (Ketuvim), and Prophets (Nevi'im). As my Old Testament professor often reminded us, the Law is the foundation of the Old Testament, revealing God's nature, character, and commands. The Writings exalt the Law (think Psalm 1) and call us to delight in it. The Prophets summon sinners to return to the Law and obey it.

Ecclesiastes belongs to the Writings (Ketuvim)—not the Law. This distinction is crucial. Just as you wouldn't read a poem the same way you'd read a scientific journal; we must approach Ecclesiastes with sensitivity to its literary diversity:

- Prose (Ecclesiastes 4:1–3)
- Poetry (A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.)
- Proverbs (Better is a handful with quietness than two handfuls with toil and a striving after wind.)
- Reflections (I said to myself...)
- Instruction (Guard your steps...)
- Anecdotes (I have seen this example of wisdom...)
- Metaphors (Life is a vapor)
- Allegory (Ecclesiastes 12:3–4)

We must be very careful to first note what type of literature the particular passage belongs to and then rightly interpret it according to its genre. Hopefully, this will become more apparent as the elders preach through the book.

## THE END OF THE MATTER

Ecclesiastes is a book best interpreted backwards. Its climactic conclusion—"Fear God and keep His commandments" (12:13)—answers the recurring refrain, "All is vanity." Without this lens, the book's message can easily be misunderstood.

I encourage you to read Ecclesiastes in one sitting (it takes less than an hour). Resist the urge to pause and analyze; instead, focus on the big picture and how the themes

interconnect. This will enrich your engagement with each weekly passage.

## THE CENTRAL FIGURE

God—and ultimately Christ—is central to Ecclesiastes.

- God is the Creator (12:1) who ordains all things (3:11, 11:5).
- He gives life (12:7), wisdom (2:26), and joy (5:19),
- God made "the day of prosperity" as well as "the day of adversity" (7:14).
- God gives us "wealth and possessions," and the ability "to enjoy them" and to "find enjoyment [even] in toil" (5:19; 6:2).
- God tests people (3:18), "has no pleasure in fools" (5:4), and can become angry (5:6).
- God holds people accountable for their actions and "will judge the righteous and the wicked" (3:16; 11:9; 12:14).
- God is to be remembered (12:1), feared (3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12), and obeyed (12:13).

According to Luke 24, Ecclesiastes is a book about Jesus. Only in Christ do we find meaning in life's paradoxes—pleasure and pain, wisdom and sorrow, life and death. He is the interpretive key to Ecclesiastes, the one who makes our "toil under the sun" "new" (Rev. 21:5).

## KEY WORDS

Vanity:

The Hebrew word **הֶבֶל** (hevel), often translated as "vanity," "meaninglessness," or "futility," is central to Ecclesiastes. Hevel literally means "vapor" or "breath," something that is fleeting, insubstantial, and impossible to grasp. The writer of Ecclesiastes uses hevel to describe the transient, elusive nature of human life and efforts, declaring that "all is hevel" (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

Ecclesiastes begins and ends (1:2; 12:8) with "vanities of vanities" (hevel havelim). Hebrew words are intensified by repeating the word rather than using an adverb of degree (such as very). It is a reminder that without Christ, human striving is hevel; in Him, even toil gains eternal significance (1 Cor. 15:58).

Preacher:

The Hebrew word **קֹהֶלֶת** (Qoheleth) is the title given to the author of the biblical book of Ecclesiastes.

"The words of Qoheleth, son of David, king in Jerusalem" (Eccl. 1:1).

The root word means "to assemble, gather, or call together" It specifically speaks of assembling a PEOPLE. This is why the book is titled "Ecclesiastes," from the Greek word *ekklēsia*, "church". Perhaps an appropriate translation would be "pastor." Ecclesiastes is Pastor Solomon gathering the Assembly of God's people (which he literally did during the dedication of the temple) to shepherd them on how to properly live life. For us today, it is a pastoral book gently navigating the congregation through deadly worldviews and ways of living and ultimately pointing us to Christ. It is precisely for this reason that I am excited to read through this book with you.

Assembling with You,

Pastor TJ Johnson

# Sermon Series Overview

April 27, 2025	Ecclesiastes 1:1-11	The Search for Significance
May 4, 2025	Ecclesiastes 1:12-18; 2:12-17	Education
May 11, 2025	Ecclesiastes 2:1-11	Pleasure
May 18, 2025	Ecclesiastes 2:4-11, 18-26	Career
May 25, 2025	Ecclesiastes 3:1-4:6	Utilitarianism
June 1, 2025	Ecclesiastes 4:7-16	Self :Believe in Yourself
June 8, 2025	Ecclesiastes 5-6	Affluence
June 15, 2025	Ecclesiastes 7	Pragmatism
June 22, 2025	Ecclesiastes 8	Government
June 29, 2025	Ecclesiastes 9	Dealing with Death
July 13, 2025	Ecclesiastes 10	Anarchy/Apathy
July 20, 2025	Ecclesiastes 11	Perfectionism
July 27, 2025	Ecclesiastes 12	The Fear of God





# LEADERS STUDY GUIDE

May 4

# Navigating Worldviews

ECCLESIASTES 1:12-18;  
2:12-17

A hand holding a smartphone displaying a map with green areas and red location pins. The background is a blurred image of a hand holding a smartphone.

# EDUCATION



# Education

We live in a city that deeply values education. Beijing has over 90 universities, some of which are among the best in the world. In these universities, students pursue all kinds of degrees, and many spend sleepless nights in labs, working tirelessly on research to solve the world's biggest problems. For many, their worldview is built on the belief that success in education defines life. But here's the question:

Is education enough to define our lives?

This week, we'll learn from Solomon, the wisest person to ever live. He pursued education and wisdom in his search for life's meaning, but his conclusion was,

"All is vanity and a striving after wind."

We'll explore how education is a valuable gift from God—but it also has its limits. Education can't solve every problem in the world. It can't save us from death. And it can't be the foundation of our identity.

Most importantly, we'll see that as believers, we've been given a wisdom greater than any degree—the wisdom to know Christ, our salvation. Only when Christ is the Lord of our lives can we have the right view of education.

Elder Bemnet W. Mersha

# Education

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18; 2:12-17

## The Vanity of Wisdom

12 I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13 And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. 14 I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.

15 What is crooked cannot be made straight,  
and what is lacking cannot be counted.

16 I said in my heart, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge."  
17 And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind.

18 For in much wisdom is much vexation,  
and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18; 2:12-17

## The Vanity of Living Wisely

12 So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done. 13 Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness. 14 The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. 15 Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. 16 For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! 17 So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.



*All Is Vanity*

## Sermon Outline

1. Education is a good gift.
2. Education has limitations:
  - Education can not solve every problem of the world.
  - Education can not stop death.
  - Education can not be the foundation of your identity.
3. The Greater wisdom of all time.
4. Right view of Education.

## Sermon Notes

## Sermon Applications



*All Is Vanity*

## Discussion Questions

**1. Where have you seen education/knowledge fail to deliver the satisfaction you (or someone you know) expected?**

*Education or knowledge often fails to meet career expectations. As people pursue degrees for success, fulfillment, or status, they find that despite their achievements, they still feel dissatisfied or aimless. People with advanced degrees can still feel empty or feel like their knowledge didn't bring the purpose or clarity they hoped for. Knowledge can equip us, but it can't fully satisfy the deeper needs of the soul—like belonging, purpose, or peace. That's exactly what Ecclesiastes wrestles with: the reality that "under the sun," even wisdom has its limits*

**2. In Beijing (and the Expat community), how does society idolize education? What are the most common ways Christians overemphasize education/knowledge?**

*In Beijing, expats and international community education and knowledge could be an idol, as many would treat it as a measure of success, stability, and even identity. Many families are obsessed with their children's education as they go all the way out to pay for their children's top-tier international schools or universities abroad. Often, the cost is not just financial but also the emotional and spiritual health of the family. A lot of parents sign up their kids for afterschool activities from an early age. However, they are driven by the fear of kids "falling behind" other children in their grades. Even in a Christian family, it could lead to children learning more academics and not learning God's law. Many see degrees as a social status that could get people up on level in professional and social circles. Some parents push children for academics because they are deeply tied to their own sense of worth and success.*

*As Christians, we could overemphasize education or knowledge by confusing spiritual maturity with theological knowledge. A theologically equipped person doesn't necessarily mean mature. The knowledge of God's law needs to be applied to the life of a person with love, humility, and obedience. Also, education is different from discipleship. Families and individuals in general should prioritize the process of becoming like Jesus over getting more educated.*



*All Is Vanity*

## Discussion Questions

**3. What sources of knowledge and wisdom speak into your daily life the most (BE HONEST)? In what ways do they regularly shape how you think and live? Are there any changes you need to make in your life?**

*A lot of people, especially young people, go to the influencers listening to podcasts and YouTube videos. A lot of this content could be helpful. But a lot of times, we could measure our success according to what people post online. Another extreme could be over-relying on logic and leaving little room for prayer, Scripture, and godly council.*

**4. What problems in your field (academia, work, etc.) feel ‘crooked’ or unsolvable (Ecclesiastes 1:15)? How does the gospel speak to these?**

*For many of us, there is a constant pressure to perform, achieve, be productive, be recognized, and be promoted. No matter how much we go, it always seems like it is not enough. There is always more to chase, to compete, and to get burned out with.*

*Ecclesiastes captures that sense of frustration—like no matter how hard you work or how much you know, the world remains broken in ways we can’t fix. The Gospel gives us hope, reminding us that our identity and purpose are tied to Christ and who we are in Him. While education and knowledge have meaning, they are not our ultimate source.*

**5. How can you use your education this week to serve others and glorify God?**

*In many ways. Sharing what you have learned with the purpose of encouraging others or helping someone to solve their problems, tutoring someone who is behind. Approaching your education with integrity, humility, and a willingness to serve rather than compete, remember that all knowledge comes from Him, and God gives it to us to bless others.*



*All Is Vanity*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports





# LEADERS STUDY GUIDE

May 11

# Navigating Worldviews

ECCLESIASTES 2:1-11

A hand holding a smartphone displaying a map with green areas and red location pins. The phone is held in a way that the screen is the central focus.

# PLEASURE

# Pleasure

As we continue our journey through Ecclesiastes, this week we'll examine a widely embraced worldview: Hedonism. Hedonism teaches that pleasure is the highest good—that happiness is humanity's ultimate purpose, and life should be spent maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain.

Solomon bookends this section with his resounding verdict on Hedonism: "Vanity!" Yet we must not overreact to his conclusion, for later he affirms that pleasure itself is a good gift from God. In Ecclesiastes, we discover that Hedonism is half-true—as the Westminster Shorter Catechism declares: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and ENJOY Him forever."

But here's the distinction: Happiness is not the chief end—God is. Happiness is the fruit (the reward) for those who come to Christ to taste and see that He is good (Psalm 34:8). To chase happiness apart from God is futile—vanity, a chasing after the wind. Augustine compares the worship of happiness rather than the giver of happiness to A hungry man who licks a picture of bread, rather than asking for real bread from someone who has it.

May we never be found "licking pictures of bread" when we could instead taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

Enjoying God with you,

Pastor TJ Johnson

# Pleasure

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

## The Vanity of Self-Indulgence

2 I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.” But behold, this also was vanity. 2 I said of laughter, “It is mad,” and of pleasure, “What use is it?” 3 I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life. 4 I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. 5 I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. 6 I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. 7 I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. 8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.

9 So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. 10 And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. 11 Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.



*All Is Vanity*

## Sermon Outline

1. The Folly of Pleasure: Why Pleasure Can't Satisfy.
  - A. Pleasure isn't always possible.
  - B. Pleasure isn't always permanent.
  - C. Pleasure isn't always beneficial
2. The Misuse of Pleasure: How We Misunderstand Pleasure.
  - A. Deny all pleasure.
  - B. Overindulge pleasure.
3. The Pursuit of Pleasure: How We Experiment with Pleasure.
  - A. Entertainment.
  - B. Stimulants.
  - C. Accomplishments.
  - D. Arts.
  - E. Sensuality.
  - F. Fill in the Blank.

## Sermon Notes



## *All Is Vanity*

**While pleasure is a good gift from God, it is not ultimate, therefore we must look past the objects of pleasure to find the source of pleasure, Jesus Himself.**

### **Discussion Questions**

**1. How would you define hedonism, and what are some examples of it in today's culture?**

*According to the sermon, Hedonism is a pleasure with the highest good and the chief aim of human life. Maximizing personal pleasure and minimizing pain should guide all decisions, behaviors, and moral judgments. It could manifest itself in the culture of consumerism and materialism, validation through social media, escaping to the entertainment areas, sexual freedom through gratifying self-desires, food indulgences, and a self-centered wellness culture.*

**2. The sermon lists three reasons why Solomon concludes that hedonism is vanity. What were they? Do you find them convincing, or do you think he missed something?**

*According to the sermon, pleasure can't be satisfied because:*

- 1. Pleasure isn't always possible.*
- 2. Pleasure isn't always permanent.*
- 3. Pleasure isn't always beneficial.*

*#1 Life includes suffering and limitations, but there are seasons with pleasure, which are not always available to people.*

*#2 Even the best pleasure has a fleeting nature. Those joys are temporary and flee away.*

*#3 Many forms of pleasure could be self-distracting to humans, such as alcohol, sexual indulgence, and entertainment.*

*A few things that the preacher didn't write about are that pleasure cannot bring healing, and it can't define the purpose of humans.*

**3. When have you experienced the emptiness of worldly pleasures firsthand?**

- 19** *There could be different examples for everyone. Encourage your group to share openly as appropriate.*



## *All Is Vanity*

### **4. Why do some Christians feel guilty when experiencing pleasure, and how does Scripture teach against ascetism?**

*Many Christians could feel guilty about experiencing pleasure because they think it is not godly. We know of the first monks, who, when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire, saw a lot of wealthy people becoming Christians being offended by that and decided to deny the life of materialism and leave the cities or villages and live in the desert on the poles to prove that godly lifestyle includes refusing any earthly pleasures.*

*In modern times, some Christians are taught that holiness involves rejecting anything enjoyable. However, Scripture doesn't say that. Scripture does teach us about self-denial, but it also affirms that pleasure is a good gift from God (1 Timothy 4:4–5, Ecclesiastes 3:12–13, Colossians 2:20–23). Living a truly Christian life means enjoying God's gifts but not becoming slaves to those gifts.*

### **5. When have you (or someone you know) experienced a good gift from God that started to control you instead of pointing you to Him, and how do we overcome the overindulgence of pleasure?**

*Using spiritual disciplines can help to reorder desires. It is important to recognize the roots of desires and set healthy boundaries for the issue, as well as ask for help and build accountability systems. Overall, the root is idolatry, which keeps us away from worshiping one true God and keeping us from worshiping our pleasures.*

### **6. List the various ways Solomon attempted to experience pleasure and share with the group which one tempts you the most and why.**

*Ways Solomon Pursued Pleasure: laughter and amusement (v. 2), wine and indulgence (v. 3), great building projects (v. 4), gardens and parks (v. 5), wealth and possessions (v. 7–8), music and entertainment (v. 8), sexual pleasure (v. 8), fame and reputation (v. 9), hard work and accomplishment (v. 10–11) – A sense of personal pride in success.*





## *All Is Vanity*

**7. Share a time when an ordinary pleasure (a meal, a sunset, a moment of laughter) unexpectedly reminded you of God's goodness?**

*God can use even the most ordinary gifts to remind us of His presence and kindness.*

**8. What practical steps can help us receive and enjoy God's gifts with proper thankfulness? (1 Timothy 4:4-5; 6:17)**

- *1 Timothy 4:4 "everything is created by God is good", all the good things in our lives are a gift from God and not an accident or good luck.*
- *1 Timothy 4:4 "nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving". We are to recognize the good gifts from God and thank Him for that.*
- *1 Timothy 4:5 "for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer." Everything in the world through the Scripture and prayer becomes holy and acceptable to God.*
- *1 Timothy 6:17 "who richly provides us with everything to enjoy." God is the source of everything we hold dear, so do not be ashamed of good things in your life.*



*All Is Vanity*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports



# LEADERS STUDY GUIDE

May 18

# Navigating Worldviews

ECCLESIASTES 2:4-11,  
18-26

A hand holding a smartphone displaying a map with green areas and red location pins. The phone is held in a way that the screen is the central focus.

# CAREER

# Career

Ecclesiastes 2:4-11

4 I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. 5 I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. 6 I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. 7 I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. 8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.

9 So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. 10 And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. 11 Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:18-26

The Vanity of Toil

18 I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, 19 and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. 20 So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, 21 because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. 22 What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? 23 For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.

24 There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, 25 for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? 26 For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.



*All Is Vanity*

## Sermon Outline

Fill out the points as you listen to the sermon.

1.

2.

3.

## Sermon Notes

## Sermon Applications



*All Is Vanity*

## Discussion Questions

**1. Biblically speaking, what does our current culture get wrong about work?**

*In our culture, work defines a person's worth, and culture says that success will satisfy you. Our culture often equates a person's value with their productivity, job title, or financial success. From resumes to social media bios, work becomes the main identifier. There's a deep-rooted belief that if we just achieve enough—get the promotion, launch the business, build the dream—we'll finally be content.*

**2. In what ways do you struggle to balance God's call to work diligently with His command to rest? What does your struggle reveal about what you truly value?**

*The struggle could be with overworking, neglecting to rest, or avoiding diligent work. Ultimately, this tension between work and rest is not just about time management—it's about trust. Do we trust God enough to obey both His call to work hard (Colossians 3:23) and His command to rest (Exodus 20:8-11)?*

**3. What does it mean and what might it look like to 'work unto the Lord' this week (Col. 3:23)?**

*According to Colossians 3:23, our approach to work is an act of worship and service to God, not simply an act to gain personal interest. It means that God is our supervisor, and excellence matters. It also means that the attitude we have as we work counts, and even small "meaningful" tasks have purpose in God's eyes.*





*All Is Vanity*

## Discussion Questions

**4. What frustrations (vanity) are you currently feeling in your work and how might the promise of 1 Corinthians 15:56-58 (not in vain) speak into your current frustrations?**

*Despite any frustrations that anyone can feel at work, the power of resurrection gives us victory over sin. It also shows us that our labor is not in vain. God sees our work. God uses even the slow seasons to accomplish his purposes. Our significance comes from God and not from our work. The work that is not in vain means it has an eternal impact.*

**5. What is one simple way you can “find enjoyment in your toil” this week (Ecc. 2:24-26)?**

*Many. One is to practise gratitude, even for small parts of your work.*



*All Is Vanity*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports



# LEADERS STUDY GUIDE

May 25

## Navigating Worldviews

ECCLESIASTES 3:1-4:6

## UTILITARIANISM



# Utilitarianism

In a world driven by sensory pleasure, instant gratification, and the constant pursuit of material gain, how do we as Christians measure what truly matters?

This week's sermon explores the secular theory of utilitarianism, the belief that the best action is the one that produces the greatest good for the greatest number and places it in conflict with the timeless wisdom of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3 and 6. Together, we'll examine Solomon's reflections on time, purpose, life's ups and downs, and the limits of human understanding. When chasing happiness falls short, what does it truly mean to live well within God's divine timing and order for our lives?

Elder Raphael Moffett

# Pastoral Reflections on Ecclesiastes 3

In The Lord of the Rings, when Frodo learns that Sauron, the Dark Lord, is rising again—and that the burden of destroying the Ring has fallen to him—he laments to Gandalf:

"I wish it need not have happened in my time."

"So do I," Gandalf replies, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

This exchange echoes the wisdom of Ecclesiastes 3. We don't control when we live, only how we live. We don't control what we face, only how we face it. Life "under heaven" unfolds according to God's sovereign design. He ordains every season: times for laughter and weeping, war and peace, seeking and losing.

If given the choice, most of us would pick birth over death, dancing over mourning, gathering over scattering. Yet the Preacher of Ecclesiastes reminds us that both joy and sorrow are necessary. Life is a tapestry of seasons—each to be embraced, each an opportunity to "do good" (Ecclesiastes 3:12) as we walk with God.

I wonder if you see how practical this is to us as a church. Is this a season to "cast away stones" (scattering into home gatherings) or to "gather stones" (pursuing everyone meeting in the ballroom by any means necessary)? In this season of not being able to meet on the tenth floor, what are the things we are called to plant, and what are the things we are called to pluck? Which ministries or routines is it time to break down, and which ministries or routines is it time to build up? Do we as a church believe that there is a season and a time for EVERY MATTER (including our present disruption) under heaven?

May He grant us discernment as we seek His will, trusting that He reigns over every season and that through Christ's death and resurrection, He makes "everything beautiful in its time" (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Let's remember the words of Gandalf, The times are not for us to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

Redeeming the time with you,

Pastor TJ Johnson

# Utilitarianism

Ecclesiastes 3

A Time for Everything

1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

2 a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

3 a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

5 a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

6 a time to seek, and a time to lose;

a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

7 a time to tear, and a time to sew;

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

8 a time to love, and a time to hate;

a time for war, and a time for peace.

The God-Given Task

9 What gain has the worker from his toil? 10 I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. 12 I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; 13 also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man.

14 I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him. 15 That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away.



# Utilitarianism

## From Dust to Dust

16 Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness. 17 I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work. 18 I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. 19 For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. 20 All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. 21 Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth? 22 So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him?

## Ecclesiastes 4:1-6

### Evil Under the Sun

1 Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. 2 And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. 3 But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.

4 Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity[a] and a striving after wind.

5 The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh.

6 Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.



*All Is Vanity*

## Sermon Outline

Fill out the points as you listen to the sermon.

1.

2.

3.

## Sermon Notes

## Sermon Applications



*All Is Vanity*

## Discussion Questions

**1. Reflecting on Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, which ‘time’ or season in your life has been most difficult to accept (e.g., waiting, loss, change)? Why was it hard, and how did you see God at work in it?"**

**2. The poem in verses 1–8 lists contrasting seasons (e.g., weeping/laughing, tearing down/building up). Pick a few pairs and share how both experiences can be ‘beautiful in their time’ (v. 11)? Where have you seen this paradox in your own life?"**

*Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 reminds us that no matter what seasons of life we are going through, God has a greater plan, as it says in verse 11 “He has made everything beautiful in its time.”*

- *A time of weeping and laughing. Weeping could be a moment of releasing trauma, healing, and drawing near to God. Laughing is a way to build up connections with others and enjoy God's goodness.*
- *A time of breakdown and build-up. Breaking down could be a time of ending relationships, jobs, and dreams, which always leads to something better. Building up is always an opportunity to rebuild stronger and wiser.*
- *A time to embrace and refrain. Embracing brings closeness, love, and celebration. Refraining allows us to set boundaries and step back for a season.*

**3. Verse 11 says God ‘set eternity in our hearts,’ and verse 17 reminds us He will judge all things. How does this eternal perspective (see also Romans 8:18) reshape how we face temporary seasons of pain or injustice?**

*Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart...” We always long for something more, beyond the limits of time, pain, and brokenness. As we see the world with the eyes of believers, there is always a greater purpose and justice beyond what we see. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God will do justice at His timing. Romans 8:18 shows that current suffering is temporary and God's glory will be revealed. Eternal perspective shapes us to see that we have hope, and we can*



## *All Is Vanity*

*endure through the suffering. It also frees us from revenge and recalibrates our values.*

### **4. How is God's sovereignty revealed in this chapter and how does that help you trust His timing—even when your 'lot in life' (Ecclesiastes 3:22) feels uncertain or unfair?**

*God's sovereignty is revealed through everything that humans experience and is appointed by God. God is in control of timing (v.11). God's actions are purposeful, lasting, and beyond human manipulation (v. 14). This chapter reminds us that life is not random. It reassures us that God sees the whole picture. It invites surrender, not control. It shifts our focus to faithfulness in the present.*

### **5. What are some ways you have found to be joyful and do good even in hard seasons of life (v. 12, Ephesians 5:16)?**

*Both Scriptures teaches on pursuing intentional joy and goodness, even in a hard season. It is not simply positive attitude, but trusting that God is good even in teh hardest moment of your life.*

### **6. In what ways did Jesus fully embrace “a time for everything under heaven”? For example:**

**a. A time to be born (Galatians 4:4-5), a time to die (John 13:1)**

**b. A time to plant (John 12:24), a time to pluck up (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23) (see also Matthew 13:24–30)** *Jesus perfectly embodied the wisdom of Ecclesiastes 3 — He embraced every season and moment with divine purpose and timing:*

- A time to be born (Galatians 4:4-5), a time to die (John 13:1). Jesus was born exactly at the right moment in history and died at the appointed time, fully aware of His purpose.*
- A time to plant (John 12:24), a time to pluck up (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23) (see also Matthew 13:24–30). Jesus “planted” His life through His death and resurrection, and He will one day return to “harvest” His people in the final judgment.*
- A time to weep (John 11:35), and a time to laugh (Luke 10:21). Jesus wasn't emotionally detached. He wept with the grieving and rejoiced with the faithful.*



*All Is Vanity*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports



# LEADERS STUDY GUIDE

June 1

## Navigating Worldviews

ECCLESIASTES 4:1-16

SELF: BELIEVE IN  
YOURSELF

# Self: Believe in Yourself

In a world that tells us to "believe in yourself," Ecclesiastes 4 reveals the vanity of self-sufficient isolation. True meaning is found not in individualism but in Christ-centered community—where we find comfort, companionship, and strength. Yet even the best human relationships have limits, pointing us to our ultimate need for the ultimate friend who never fails.

Befriending with you,

Pastor TJ Johnson



# Self: Believe in Yourself

Ecclesiastes 4:1-16

Evil Under the Sun

1 Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. 2 And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. 3 But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.

4 Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

5 The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh.

6 Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind

7 Again, I saw vanity under the sun: 8 one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business.

9 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! 11 Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? 12 And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

13 Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knew how to take advice. 14 For he went from prison to the throne, though in his own kingdom he had been born poor. 15 I saw all the living who move about under the sun, along with that youth who was to stand in the king's place. 16 There was no end of all the people, all of whom he led. Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.



*All Is Vanity*

## Sermon Outline

### 1. Reasons for Isolation

- A. The World is Selfish. Ecclesiastes 4:1
- B. Humans are Envious. Ecclesiastes 4:1
- C. Life is Busy. Ecclesiastes 4:7-8
- D. Humans are Arrogant. Ecclesiastes 4:10
- E. Unfriendliness Intentionally Isolates. Ecclesiastes 4:13

### 2. Rewards of Community

- A. Comfort in Sad Times. Ecclesiastes 4:1
- B. Companionship in Good Times. Ecclesiastes 4:7-8
- C. Capital Gain in Working Times. Ecclesiastes 4:9
- D. Assistance in Hard Times. Ecclesiastes 4:10-11
- E. Safety in Dangerous Times. Ecclesiastes 4:12

### 3. Conclusion: Limits of Community. Ecclesiastes 4:16

## Sermon Applications



## *All Is Vanity*

**Life under the sun is meaningful in community not isolation, so seek out Godly friendships.**

### **Discussion Questions**

***\*Answers are written by Discipleship Team Intern - Rob.***

**1. As a group, brainstorm modern causes of isolation (e.g., busyness, technology, cultural barriers). Which ones do you personally struggle with the most? Share practical ways to overcome these obstacles in your own life.**

*Many, including myself, struggle with social media. While it can connect people and offer support, excessive use can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation. This can happen when online interactions replace face-to-face relationships or when people are exposed to unrealistic portrayals of other people's lives, leading to feelings of inadequacy or exclusion.*

*Social media can become a primary source of social interaction, replacing real-life connections. This can lead to a decline in the quality of relationships as the ability to read nonverbal cues and engage in spontaneous conversation is diminished.*

**Solutions:**

- Many people attempt to find their identity by engaging in social media, hoping to find friendships, meaning, purpose in their lives, and to be recognized as a person of worth and dignity. These attempts fail because only in Jesus do we find purpose, dignity, and worth. Realizing that Jesus loves us and has a purpose for each of us provides the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6).*
- Join a church, which is a community of believers, to establish Christian friendships and lasting relationships. Believers are brothers and sisters in Christ and, as such, are now part of God's loving family.*



## *All Is Vanity*

- *One of the most effective ways to defeat isolation is to help and serve others. Jesus said “ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). When we serve others, as Jesus did, we find purpose, meaning, and we love others as Jesus loved others.*

## **2. How does the New Testament model and encourage deep friendships? (Think of examples like Jesus and His disciples, Paul and Timothy, or the “one another” commands.) Which biblical example of friendship stands out to you, and why?**

*It is remarkable and astounding that Jesus, our God, Creator, and Savior, calls us His friends (John 15:5). God’s Word tells us that being a friend entails encouraging each other, helping each other, and being there for each other when tragedy or misfortune enters their lives. Jesus is our ultimate friend, and He calls us to emulate His example.*

*Jesus' closest friends in his life were his disciples. He had twelve who were close to him and followed him everywhere. However, he also had the closest disciples, such as Peter, John, and James. Those three were with him at the most important times of his life. To build up and encourage close and deep friendships, Jesus spent a lot of time with them, fellowshiped, shared the meals, lived under the same roof, unconditionally loved them, and supported them despite knowing their faults and mistakes (cause He was God). He even stayed with them, knowing that some of them would betray him, and he forgave them.*

*As followers of Jesus, we should follow His example of just what friendship entails. First, we want our friends to be born again in Christ. We want them to be friends with Christ, to know Him as their Savior. We follow Jesus example and get to know their hopes, fears, and ways we can help them overcome life’s many struggles. Most importantly, we want them to know that we love them as Christ loves them.*



## *All Is Vanity*

### **3. From Ecclesiastes 4:9–12, what are the key rewards of friendship? When have you personally experienced these benefits in your own relationships?**

*The sermon mentioned a few rewards of community:*

- *Comfort in Sad Times. Ecclesiastes 4:1*
- *Companionship in Good Times. Ecclesiastes 4:7-8*
- *Capital Gain in Working Times. Ecclesiastes 4:9*
- *Assistance in Hard Times. Ecclesiastes 4:10-11*
- *Safety in Dangerous Times. Ecclesiastes 4:12*

*In one of the darkest days in my life, I was befriended by a church. They did not know me but sensed I was in a bad way and reached out to me in friendship. They modeled their friendship on Jesus' concern for the hurting, the marginalized, and the lost. Jesus lived out the words of friendship from Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, and the church did the same. I am forever grateful to them.*

### **4. What are the most common “attacks” Christians should be on the look out for and how can deep Christ-centered friendships practically “prevail against” those attack?**

*One of the most severe attacks Christians can face is that the unbelievers are of this world (John 15:18-19), and they want Christians to conform, compromise, and live by the world's morals and standards. To counter this, Christ-centered friendships can do the following:*

- *Christians are called to worship, pray, and fellowship with each other at church (Hebrews 10:25). By uniting together as children of God, we can prevail against attacks.*
- *Unbelievers are often the first to throw the first stone (John 8:7), ready to judge and condemn someone. This can easily destroy friendships and even result in hatred between the parties involved. Deep Christ-centered friendships want to help friends who may be struggling with sin out of concern and a deep Chris-like love for them.*



## *All Is Vanity*

- *To overcome attacks, Jesus gave us a manifesto of right living, which can be found in the Sermon on the Mount. Read this passage repeatedly because it teaches how to live lives in friendship with others and how to counter those who want to destroy our Christian faith.*

### **5. In what ways have you found Jesus to be the ultimate friend and how should His friendship shape the way we pursue relationships with others?**

*Jesus very much desires that we be His friend(John 15:5). Jesus states, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"(Matthew 11:26-30). As Jesus gives me rest when I am weary and burdened, I want to build relationships with others who are hurting. Who knows if I will be there with them when they are carrying many burdens and who are weary of life's struggles? I want to remind them that Christ is with them and that they have friends who will never desert them, as Jesus never deserts us.*

### **6. What is one practical step you can take this week to deepen a friendship or strengthen fellowship within the church?**

*Many people in the church feel abandoned and alone because of physical or mental problems. They may feel they do not fit in, and they believe no one understands their pain. I want to remind them that they are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and, therefore, are God's children, and Christ considers them His friends. As Jesus is their friend, I most passionately want to be their friend.*

*Practical steps you can choose from, but there are many:*

- *Invite someone out for lunch after church.*
- *Text someone during the week and ask how they are doing and how you can pray for them.*
- *Pray over someone during 2-minute fellowship time at church and ask for their contact information to follow up on them during the week.*



*All Is Vanity*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports





# LEADERS STUDY GUIDE

June 8

# Navigating Worldviews

## ECCLESIASTES 5-6

# AFFLUENCE

# Affluence

In Ecclesiastes 5–6, we see that the endless pursuit of more only leads to emptiness. Materialistic greed promises much but never delivers. And yet, so often we believe the lie that “a little more” will make me happy. A bigger apartment in a better district, a bit more disposable income, that new iPhone or laptop or camera, nicer clothes, more steak dinners, more holidays, more travels, faster internet, better VPNs, a better school, a more prestigious university—fill in the blank!

The Billionaire Andrew Carnegie was once asked, “How much is enough?” He replied, “A little more.” If you find yourself saying, “If only I had a little more...”—let me remind you of Solomon’s conclusion on the matter: Ecclesiastes 5:10 “Those who love money will never have enough. How meaningless to think that wealth brings true happiness!”

Solomon’s solution to greed was contentment. Contentment is trusting that God, not gold, is my greatest good. The good life isn’t found in more stuff—it’s found in more God. The point of these two chapters isn’t that money and possessions are bad... but that they aren’t ultimate.

A key verse for keeping a right perspective on money and possessions is Ecclesiastes 5:18–19:

"Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God."

Accept (be content) and enjoy what God has given you, rather than striving for what He has not given you. The New Testament teaches this same truth in Philippians 4:11–13 (which we often misapply to achieving personal success):

"I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

Learning contentment with you,

Pastor TJ Johnson

# Affluence

Ecclesiastes 5

Fear God

1 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. 2 Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few. 3 For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words.

4 When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. 5 It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. 6 Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands? 7 For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity; but God is the one you must fear.

The Vanity of Wealth and Honor

8 If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, do not be amazed at the matter, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them. 9 But this is gain for a land in every way: a king committed to cultivated fields.

10 He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. 11 When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? 12 Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.

13 There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, 14 and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. 15 As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. 16 This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind? 17 Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.

# Affluence

18 Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. 19 Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. 20 For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

## Ecclesiastes 6

1 There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind: 2 a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them. This is vanity; it is a grievous evil. 3 If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things, and he also has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. 4 For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered. 5 Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he. 6 Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good—do not all go to the one place?

7 All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied. 8 For what advantage has the wise man over the fool? And what does the poor man have who knows how to conduct himself before the living? 9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite: this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

10 Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he. 11 The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man? 12 For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?



*All Is Vanity*

## Sermon Outline

1. Greed brings Oppression, Contentment brings Generosity (Ecclesiastes 5:8-9; 6:10).
2. Greed brings Emptiness, Contentment brings Enjoyment (Ecclesiastes 5:10; 6:7-9).
3. Greed brings Problems, Contentment brings Peace (Ecclesiastes 5:11-12; 6:1-3).
4. Greed is Temporal, Contentment is Eternal (Ecclesiastes 5:13-17; 6:5-6).

## Sermon Applications



### *All Is Vanity*

**The good life doesn't come from "a little more" but rather from a heart that has learned to trust God and contentedly enjoy the gifts we have been given.**

## **Discussion Questions**

**1. Where do you feel the most pressure from culture to chase 'a little more'? How can we actively reject that mindset as followers of Christ?**

*One of the examples from culture to chase "a little more" could be from social media. Social media constantly promotes the mindset that you will be happy and find contentment if you have just a little more. It is not just the accumulation of material wealth that they promote, but also they bombard you with messages to motivate you to recreate yourself. They argue that you are not happy because your present self lacks self-esteem, the proper look, and the right worldview. In short, they want you to question the essence of who you are. They want to recreate you into whatever is now fashionable, which constantly changes.*

*To combat this constant messaging, believers must find their true self and identity only in Christ. Only in Christ does their true self emerge and thus attain meaning and purpose in their lives (John 14:6). Believers must remember that we are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), not in the image of Madison Avenue.*

**2. Where are you most tempted to oppress others in order to maximize your wealth (time, money, status, possessions, etc), and in what ways are you seeking to be generous with what God has given you?**

*This could vary for different people:*

- With time, we can view others as interactions on the way to our success. You may avoid helping someone in need or cut conversations short because you feel "too busy" and want to protect your time for personal goals or rest. Seeking generosity would be offering your time intentionally by being present with someone who's struggling, mentoring someone younger in the faith, or volunteering regularly—even when it's inconvenient. Generosity with time often looks like availability.*





## *All Is Vanity*

- *With money, there is always a temptation to underpay someone for their services or resist giving because of the fear of not having enough for yourself. Seeking generosity would be being generous with money, including regular tithing, supporting missions or those in financial hardship, and practicing spontaneous generosity—buying a meal for a stranger or giving anonymously when someone is in need.*
- *Status shows the power you have in your company or circle. The power God gives us when He brings us high is to help others and not for our own interest. The temptation with status would be to use this status to achieve your own goals and not help people. Seeking generosity would be using status to elevate others—speaking up for the voiceless, encouraging someone publicly, or giving opportunities to others instead of always taking the spotlight.*
- *People could be too protective over their own possessions and not lend them out, for fear of damage or inconvenience. We may prioritize how others view what we own more than how we can use it to serve. Seeking generosity will be opening my home for hospitality, sharing what we have without expectation, or donating quality items instead of discarding or reselling for personal gain.*

*In the pursuit of wealth, many people do not think they are oppressing others. In a culture that promotes the accumulation of wealth as the supreme virtue, any means to accumulate wealth is therefore acceptable.*

**3. Give some examples of how materialism cannot fully satisfy us (maybe from your life or a celebrity or from scripture, etc) and then compare that to the promise that God can satisfy us (Psalm 107:9, John 6:35, Revelation 7:16-17).**

*I am a huge fan of the late Elvis Presley. Elvis had a tremendous voice and was considered very handsome. It is hard to appreciate just how much influence he still has on popular culture. He had everything the world values and more.*





## *All Is Vanity*

*It is often the case that the more you have, the more isolated and alone you feel. Elvis lived a life of loneliness and isolation. He had everything the world offers but was thirsty and hungry for something that only God can provide (Psalm 107:9). And that something is God. When Jesus says, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), it entails so much more than meeting our physical and material needs. French philosopher Blaise Pascal said there is a "God-shaped hole" in all of us that only God can fill, and once God fills it, we have purpose, meaning, dignity, and worth.*

*It is my prayer that those who, such as the late Elvis Presley, will receive the Lord as their loving shepherd and that He will lead them to springs of living water and will wipe away their tears of isolation and loneliness (Revelation 7:16-17).*

### **4. Share a time when chasing 'more' created problems (stress, anxiety, worry, busyness, etc) rather than joy. How might contentment have changed the outcome?"**

*The more we chase what the world values, the more the world overcomes us. The world's values constantly conflict with Christian values and the Christian worldview. One only has to look at the Sermon on the Mount to have a good understanding of what the world values and what our Savior values. It's a battle between the Christian worldview and the world's worldview.*

*Joy, for many, is an elusive enigma because they equate joy with happiness. The joy in Jesus is not unbridled happiness when things are going splendidly but joy in Christ amidst heartache, tragedy, illness, and even death. Life is extremely unfair, and it is only joy in Christ that enables many to live amidst so much misfortune and tragedy, which strikes the rich and more alike.*

*This week's sermon contrasts Ecclesiastes 5:11-12 and 6:1-3. The text shows that even the ability to enjoy everything you have comes from God (Ecclesiastes 6:1-3). On our own, we cannot even understand and realize the joy of contentment with what we have.*



### *All Is Vanity*

**5. Give some examples of how money and possessions don't last, and then discuss how one can "store up treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6).**

*The wealthiest and most powerful die. That is a fact that seems to surprise the most wealthy and powerful. History is full of examples of those who thought that their wealth and power would ensure that they lived forever. The story of the rich man and Lazarus teaches this lesson (Luke 16). The rich man was shocked to discover that his wealth did not protect him from the terrors of hell.*

*Believers in Christ store treasures in heaven by becoming more like Christ every day. Believers should love as Christ loved, feel as Christ felt, work as Christ labored for the unsaved, and be human as Christ was and is human. Only in Christ do humans find their humanity.*

**6. What's one financial habit you sense God asking you to change (e.g., giving more, saving more, spending less on xyz, etc) to reflect contentment in Him?**

*We have to learn to trust God to meet our financial needs. As we battle illness and other problems in life, it challenges us to trust Him more and thus be able to find contentment and rest in Him. We must trust Him to give us our "daily bread"(Matthew 6:31), and His daily bread is the road to contentment.*



*All Is Vanity*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports

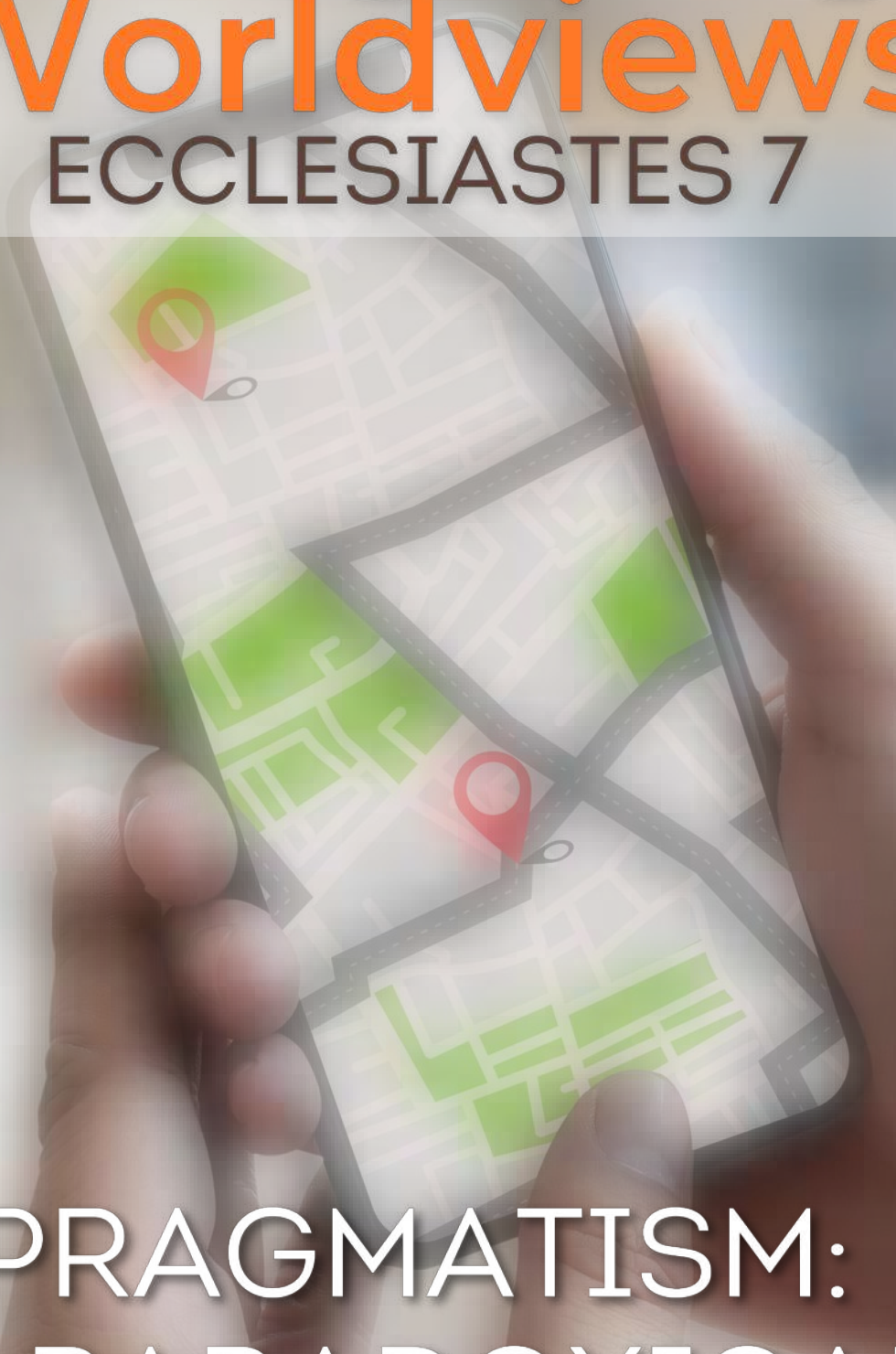


# LEADERS STUDY GUIDE

June 15

# Navigating Worldviews

## ECCLESIASTES 7



PRAGMATISM:  
A PARADOXICAL  
WORLDVIEW

# Pragmatism: A Paradoxical Worldview

In Ecclesiastes 7, the Teacher continues to wrestle with the tension of how to understand who we are and how to relate to the world around us. As each of his reflections yields an unsatisfactory result, he realizes that God made humans in righteousness, but we all have sinned and gone after schemes (Eccl. 7:20, 29). Humans have effectively opted for the pragmatic way of life that “works best” for them instead of the righteous life intended by God.

Pragmatism rules the day. It masquerades as wisdom, often even for the Christian. Since true wisdom is so elusive (Eccl. 7:23), we often settle for that which works, the schemes of man that might prolong our life or effectuate the outcome we desire. It seems like a reasonable alternative. How are we to assess the options before us and choose wisely rather than simply pragmatically? Ecclesiastes 7 and the rest of God’s revelation in Scripture helps us answer this question one step at a time. Join us on Sunday as we take one of those steps together.

Pastor Zach Mazrim

# Pragmatism: A Paradoxical Worldview

Ecclesiastes 7

The Contrast of Wisdom and Folly

1 A good name is better than precious ointment,  
and the day of death than the day of birth.

2 It is better to go to the house of mourning  
than to go to the house of feasting,  
for this is the end of all mankind,  
and the living will lay it to heart.

3 Sorrow is better than laughter,  
for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.

4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,  
but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

5 It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise  
than to hear the song of fools.

6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot,  
so is the laughter of the fools;  
this also is vanity.

7 Surely oppression drives the wise into madness,  
and a bribe corrupts the heart.

8 Better is the end of a thing than its beginning,  
and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

9 Be not quick in your spirit to become angry,  
for anger lodges in the heart of fools.

10 Say not, "Why were the former days better than these?"  
For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.

11 Wisdom is good with an inheritance,  
an advantage to those who see the sun.

12 For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money,  
and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it.

13 Consider the work of God:

59 who can make straight what he has made crooked?



# Pragmatism: A Paradoxical Worldview

14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.

15 In my vain life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evil-doing. 16 Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? 17 Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time? 18 It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them.

19 Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city.

20 Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

21 Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. 22 Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others.

23 All this I have tested by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise," but it was far from me. 24 That which has been is far off, and deep, very deep; who can find it out?

25 I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness. 26 And I find something more bitter than death: the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her. 27 Behold, this is what I found, says the Preacher, while adding one thing to another to find the scheme of things— 28 which my soul has sought repeatedly, but I have not found. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found. 29 See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.





*All Is Vanity*

## Sermon Outline

### Sermon Outline:

1. Wisdom and pragmatism overlap (v. 5, 8, 9, 14, 17, 21-22).
2. Wisdom and pragmatism are not the same (v. 1-4, 6, 8, 10).
3. Wisdom is preferable to pragmatism when they diverge (v. 7, 11-12, 15-19).
4. The pragmatic/wise paradox is self-inflicted and inescapable (v. 13, 20, 23-25, 29).

### Considerations:

1. Incentives of Pleasure and Pain.
2. Return on Investment.
3. Function over Form.

### Personal Reflection Questions Included in the Sermon

- What am I continuing mainly because it has brought pleasure?
- What have I ceased mainly because it has brought pain?
- What results motivate my investment of time and resources?
- Does my pros & cons list include Godly considerations or mainly selfish ones?
- What have I been personally compromising in the process?
- Who have I been affecting by valuing the outcome higher than the procedure?
- What character shaping elements of the process might I be missing out on?
- Can I, in good conscience, ask God to bless what I am doing and the way I am doing it?



*All Is Vanity*

**Pragmatism proves to be an inadequate guide for life because humans have gone in search of ungodly schemes.**

### **Discussion Questions**

**1. Who is the wisest person you know and what is it about them that conveys wisdom?**

*In many ways, the wisest man I ever met was the owner of a hot dog stand. His right arm was deformed, and he could not use it. He was not well educated, and not someone many would want to emulate.*

*I met him when I was about eleven years old, and what I admired about him was his peace and contentment. Where did his contentment come from? His right arm was deformed, and he ran a simple hot dog stand. I do not know whether he knew God or not, but he was very much at peace with himself and the world.*

*He would talk with me and my friends, and he told us he was grateful that he owned his own business, that his left hand worked fine, and that he had a loving family. He said: "What more could I ask for?"*

*His wisdom was founded on the belief that contentment and peace come not from daily striving to get more possessions, more wealth, and more power but just from finding peace and contentment in a simple, uncomplicated life. He did not let the noise of the world, the hatred, envy, and the desire to "have it all," dictate and enslave him. He was truly content. How many of us can say that?*

**2. Pragmatism, often seen as the same as wisdom, is a worldview that evaluates theories or beliefs based on their practical utility. Where and how do you most often see pragmatism celebrated in the world today?**

*God gives us a mind, and He calls us to be pragmatic and logical when making our daily decisions. However, we often have to make a god out of pragmatism. For example, if a woman is pregnant and she believes that she cannot afford to raise this child and pragmatism is her god, then pragmatism demands she abort or murder the unborn child.*



### *All Is Vanity*

*How many wars were justified in the name of pragmatism? How much injustice has been committed in the name of pragmatism? For example, America's Civil War was fought over the South's belief that slaves were essential to their economy, and thus, it was pragmatic and even ethical to own slaves.*

*Pragmatism, without God's wisdom, often leads to evil.*

**3. Ecclesiastes 7 makes clear that in many cases, the wise and Godly response to something is also the pragmatic one. Give two examples of this from your own experiences.**

*We hustle and bustle, debate and ponder, and convene committees to try to find the means to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Jesus was very pragmatic: just feed them, just clothe them (Matthew 25:34-36).*

*Often, the most pragmatic way to help someone in dire straights is simply to tell them the truth. For pragmatism in its purest form is God's truth.*

**4. On the other hand, there are statements in the text that seem to contradict "conventional wisdom," like mourning and frustration being better than feasting and laughter. What other Christian teachings conflict with what the world expects or values and what does this teach us about how we should live our lives?**

*In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' tenets and commands are counter-cultural and contradict conventional wisdom. For example, Jesus demands that we "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). The world says hate and kill your enemies. The world and pragmatism, minus God's wisdom, say march to war and, if necessary, kill millions.*

*Jesus calls believers to help build God's kingdom now. We build God's kingdom by bringing the gospel to a lost world. That brings true peace.*



## *All Is Vanity*

**5. In what situations are you tempted to choose the most pragmatic solution in your life, work, or family while potentially neglecting more God-honoring options? What is the next step to reassess some of your instinctive responses and habits?**

*Pragmatism without God often demands that we must make as much money as we can, for we are taught that there is never enough while neglecting our family and our civic obligations and thus neglecting God. We attempt to ease our conscience by saying, "I am providing for my family, paying my fair share of taxes, and paying tithes."*

*The next step is to realize that we have deified pragmatism. We have made a god out of pragmatism, and we must return to the true God.*

**6. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:10. Discuss Paul's commentary on God's wisdom and how it does not always align with our valuation of pragmatism. For example:**

- **1:20 - How has God made foolish the wisdom of the world (pragmatism)?**
- **1:27 - In what ways has God chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise?**
- **2:1-5 - Why did Paul choose weakness and humility instead of the more pragmatic and effective method of persuasive argumentation?**

*In 1:20, Paul illustrates how, time and time again, God has made foolish the wisdom of the world by showing that those who are considered the wisest, the most educated, and the most powerful have chosen to reject Christ crucified and thus reject salvation.*

*In 1:27, Paul argues that what is considered foolish by the world are those who are weak, forgotten, marginalized( read the Beatitudes) and quickly accept God's grace and salvation, while the strong and worldly wise reject God's grace and salvation.*

*In 2:1-5 Paul wanted to demonstrate that faith is not found in man's wisdom, technological prowess, and pragmatism but only in God's power, His free gift of grace.*



*All Is Vanity*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports

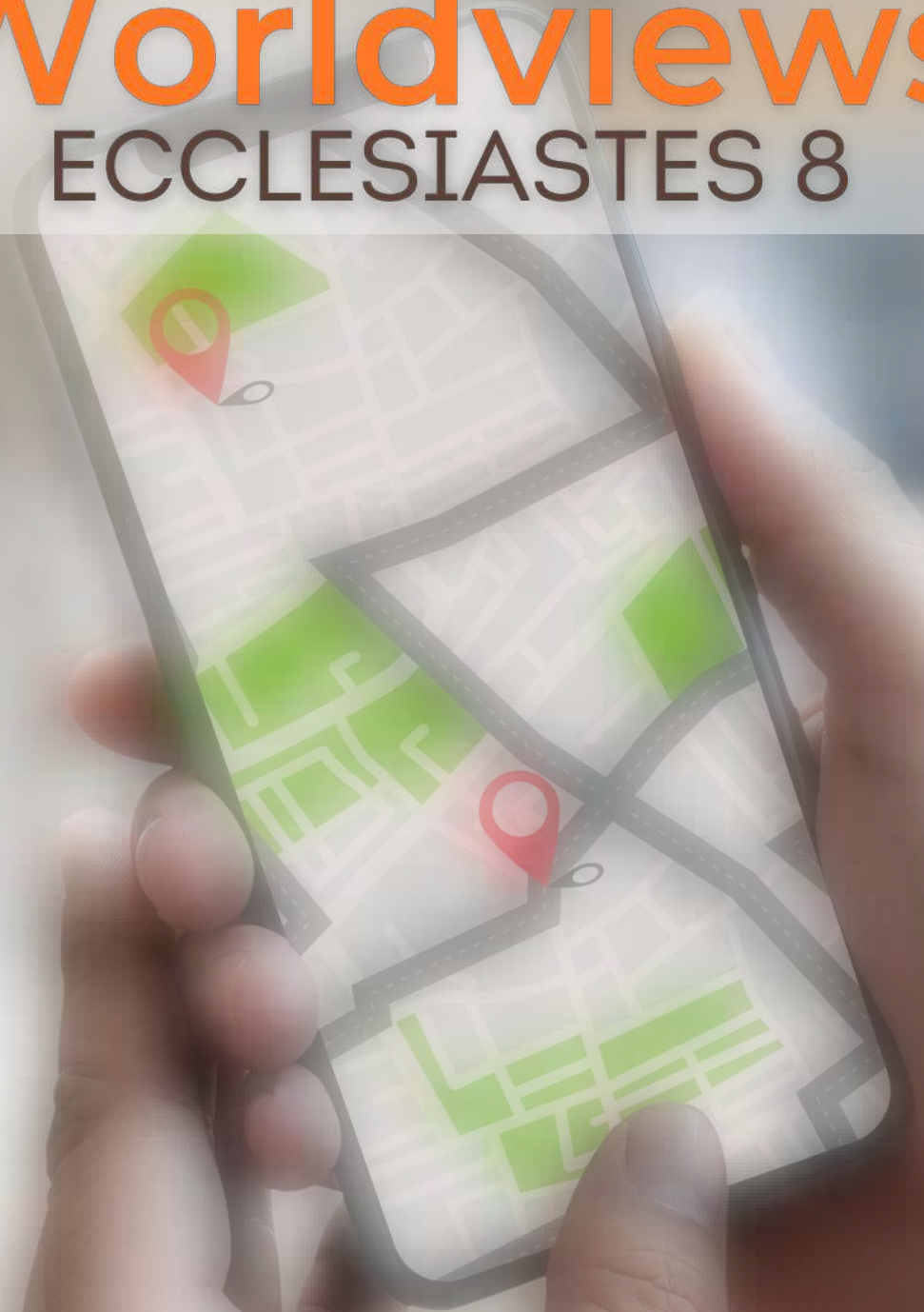


# LEADERS STUDY GUIDE

June 22

# Navigating Worldviews

## ECCLESIASTES 8



# GOVERNMENT



# Government

Living in Beijing daily reminds us of the hope that people sometimes place on government. As a Christian expat, living in the capital of China, home to 178 foreign embassies, regularly reading differing opinions about different governmental systems, I am forced to reckon with Ecclesiastes 8 central truth, governments are good (v. 2 Keep the king's command) but they are not ultimate (v. 9 man had power over man to his hurt).

As Christians, when navigating visa policies, trade wars, immigration restrictions, and diplomatic tensions, we filter it all through a Biblical framework. One that says, God, not government is ultimate. No matter what passport we hold, what governmental system we live under, what policy gets passed, "I know (in the end) that it will be well with those who fear God. For God is the King of Kings who reigns forever and ever.

Submitting to His Lordship with you,

Pastor TJ Johnson



# Government

Ecclesiastes 8

1 Who is like the wise?

And who knows the interpretation of a thing?

A man's wisdom makes his face shine,  
and the hardness of his face is changed.

2 I say: Keep the king's command, because of God's oath to him. 3 Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause, for he does whatever he pleases. 4 For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, "What are you doing?" 5 Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing, and the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way. 6 For there is a time and a way for everything, although man's trouble lies heavy on him. 7 For he does not know what is to be, for who can tell him how it will be? 8 No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death. There is no discharge from war, nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it. 9 All this I observed while applying my heart to all that is done under the sun, when man had power over man to his hurt.

Those Who Fear God Will Do Well

10 Then I saw the wicked buried. They used to go in and out of the holy place and were praised in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity. 11 Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil. 12 Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. 13 But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

Man Cannot Know God's Ways

14 There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. 15 And I commend joy, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun.

# Government

16 When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, 17 then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.



*All Is Vanity*

## Sermon Outline

Fill out the points as you listen to the sermon.

1.

2.

3.

## Sermon Notes

## Sermon Applications



*All Is Vanity*

## Discussion Questions

**1. As expats in a country with different political structures, how do we balance respect for local laws without compromising our allegiance to Christ? (What specific areas are hardest to navigate)**

*First of all, expats must realize that local laws reflect the culture of the country. Therefore, expats should respect the culture and study the culture of the country they reside in and not assume that their home countries have a superior culture or have more fair and equitable law systems.*

*One of the most difficult issues for expats to confront is when a host country's laws clearly infringe and violate the dignity and respect of all people who are made in the image of God( Genesis 1:27). For example, many countries have laws, which reflect their culture, traditions and religious beliefs, that treat women as second class citizens. We must let the Holy Spirit help us to discern how to respond in such situations and how we best help those in need.*

*Ecclesiastes 8 encourages us to approach government with wisdom, discernment, and reverence while also recognizing its limitations and injustice (Ecclesiastes 8:2). As expats, we respect local rules and authorities, not because of blind allegiance but because we want to honor God and we use the wisdom God has given us. Ecclesiastes 8:3-5 reminds us that rebellion without understanding could be dangerous. At the same time, the Holy Spirit will guard us, knowing the right time and way to respond to the injustice (8:5). Vv 11&14 recognize authorities' injustice, so as Christians, we face the tension of honoring the law. However, our ultimate alliance is with Christ. So whenever local laws contradict God's commands, we are clearly to obey God, rather than men, with humility and courage.*



*All Is Vanity*

## Discussion Questions

### **2. Give examples when people put their hope in a governmental system and were disappointed. Has this ever happened to you?**

*Many people have put their hope and faith in their governmental system to lead them and in different political parties. Many people have deified their party or government alliances and are crushed when their party has failed them. It is as if they believe their political party, their god, has failed them. This leads to mistrust not only of their political party but also of their government.*

*The earthly governments are limited and often unjust, corrupted, and not able to bring ultimate righteousness. When we put our hopes into the earthly governments, we are setting ourselves up to fail. Our hope should be in God.*

### **3. Where do you see delayed justice in society today, and as Christians, how do we respond to these injustices?**

*There are many samples, and one of them is that 733 million people face hunger, which is 1 in 11 people worldwide. This is an injustice most grievous. Christians throughout the world must work as one to feed the hungry, for no one made in the image of our Creator should feel the daily pangs of hunger(Isaiah 58:10; James 2:15-16).*

### **4. How has God's sovereignty helped you in an unjust world?**

*Many Christians throughout the centuries have asked how a loving God allows such horrible injustices. Many far smarter people than me have asked this question, and they have had no satisfactory answer. As Christians, we know sin has entered the world and has corrupted mankind and our world. However, this is small consolation to those who have been victims of an unjust world.*

*It takes faith in God's goodness and justice to believe that all things, good and bad, ultimately work for good for those who love Him(Romans 8:28). Job suffered terribly and did not know why God permitted him to suffer but Job said "I know you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted"( Job 42: 2).*



*All Is Vanity*

## Discussion Questions

*God's sovereignty is often mysterious and unknowable but we must trust that God's presence and love are among those who are hurting and in anguish.*

*God, in His sovereignty and love for humanity, planned for His Son, our Savior, to die for our sins and to bear the injustices of the world on His shoulders. Jesus knew, like millions throughout history, what it was like to be seemingly forsaken by His Father(Matthew 27:46), but we can take much comfort that Jesus promises that our true home awaits us, the New Jerusalem, where we are free of sin and injustice. Until that day, let us work with the sovereign God to do our part to combat injustice and help build the Hid Kingdom now.*

**5. Where have you been most disappointed with government and as expats, how can we cultivate joy and gratitude even when governments disappoint?**

*We could be disappointed with the government because they often put their political party and their love of power over the daily needs of their people. We cannot look to governments to bring us joy.*

*The Apostle Paul, while imprisoned in Rome, wrote Philippians and mentioned joy 19 times in this short book. Paul teaches us in the book of Philippians, chapter 4, that we can find joy in serving others. While many governments do much to help their citizens, true joy is found in Jesus, who brings us joy, gratitude, and comfort in all circumstances. Joy such as this is contagious and noticeable among friends and family; it empowers us to help others.*



*All Is Vanity*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports





# LEADERS STUDY GUIDE

June 29

# Navigating Worldviews

## ECCLESIASTES 9



DEALING  
WITH DEATH

# Dealing with Death

As Emily Dickinson once wrote, “Because I could not stop for Death, it kindly stopped for me.” This truth applies to all of us—our friends, coworkers, closest loved ones, and the billions we’ll never meet. It’s a bit overwhelming at times to consider that we are all marching toward one final destiny...death. It is the great equalizer in life—visiting presidents and paupers alike (Ecclesiastes 9:2).

In a city like Beijing, death is often pushed out of sight. Funeral homes sit beyond the city limits; graveyards are tucked away from public view. Funeral attendance is a surprisingly rare occurrence for a city of 20 million. This is why Ecclesiastes is so vital. The preacher refuses to let death stay hidden—out of sight, out of mind. The text shocks us awake and compels us to consider death and cling to the One who conquered the grave.

Dealing with death with you,

Pastor TJ Johnson

# Dealing with Death

Ecclesiastes 9

Death Comes to All

1 But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him. 2 It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. 3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. 4 But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. 5 For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. 6 Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.

Enjoy Life with the One You Love

7 Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.

8 Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

9 Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

Wisdom Better Than Folly

11 Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. 12 For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.

# Dealing with Death

13 I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me. 14 There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siegeworks against it. 15 But there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man. 16 But I say that wisdom is better than might, though the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard.

17 The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools. 18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.



*All Is Vanity*

## Sermon Outline

Fill out the points as you listen to the sermon.

1.

2.

3.

## Sermon Notes

## Sermon Applications



*All Is Vanity*

## Discussion Questions

### **1. What are the different beliefs of life after death, and how does that compare to the Bible's analysis of death?**

*Buddhists believe the defeat of death and salvation is by self-effort only. Hindus believe that the defeat of death and salvation is achieved by devotion, work, and self-control. Muslims believe they defeat death by earning their salvation and paying for their own sins.*

*Christians believe Jesus is fully God and fully man. He was sinless, and he died and was raised from the dead to redeem humankind. If humanity could have reached God any other way, Jesus would not have had to die and rise again. His voluntary death on the cross clearly shows the fact that there is no other way. Those who reject his loving offer of forgiveness do so at their own peril.*

### **2. What does death teach us about our own sin and God's righteousness?**

*Death, particularly the death of Jesus, highlights the severity of sin and the depth of God's righteousness. It reveals that sin leads to spiritual death and separation from God. However, through Jesus's sacrifice, God offers a way to be reconciled to Him, demonstrating His righteousness by providing a substitute for our deserved punishment.*

### **3. How can Christians use death as a motivator for life now?**

*Christians can use the reality of death as a powerful motivator for living a more purposeful and fulfilling life by focusing on the hope of resurrection and eternal life with Christ. This understanding can shift priorities, encouraging believers to live in a way that reflects their faith, pursue spiritual growth, and share their faith with others, all while recognizing the brevity of earthly life.*



*All Is Vanity*

## Discussion Questions

### **4. What questions or fears do you personally have about death?**

*As a believing Christian, while the promise of eternal life in heaven offers comfort, the fear of the unknown transition of death and the potential for lingering earthly regrets can be sources of anxiety. Specifically, questions about the experience of dying and the nature of the afterlife, as well as the potential for judgment or separation from loved ones.*

### **5. How does the Bible use death as a motivation for salvation/evangelism, and how can we put that into practice this week?**

*The Bible uses death as a powerful motivation for both salvation and evangelism by highlighting its consequences (separation from God) and the hope of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. Christians are motivated to share the gospel because they recognize that death is not the end for believers but the beginning of eternal life with God, while non-believers face eternal separation. This week, Christians can practically apply this by sharing their faith, focusing on the hope of salvation and the reality of death as a separation from God for those who do not believe.*





*All Is Vanity*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports



# STUDY GUIDE

July 13

# Navigating Worldviews

## ECCLESIASTES 10



NIHILISM:  
WHO CARES!

# Nihilism: Who Cares!

Ecclesiastes 10 exposes the danger of "a little folly"—those small, thoughtless choices that slowly steer us toward a life of empty chaos. From reckless words to careless habits, this chapter warns: Everything matters. Whether in actions, relationships, or secret thoughts, we're called to live with purpose, not nihilistic drift. In the end we find, Christ redeems our folly, sharpens our dull axes, and turns our wandering into worship.

Making life matter with you,

Pastor TJ Johnson

# Nihilism: Who Cares!

Ecclesiastes 10

1 Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench;  
so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

2 A wise man's heart inclines him to the right,  
but a fool's heart to the left.

3 Even when the fool walks on the road, he lacks sense,  
and he says to everyone that he is a fool.

4 If the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your place,  
for calmness[a] will lay great offenses to rest.

5 There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler: 6 folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. 7 I have seen slaves on horses, and princes walking on the ground like slaves.

8 He who digs a pit will fall into it,  
and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall.

9 He who quarries stones is hurt by them,  
and he who splits logs is endangered by them.

10 If the iron is blunt, and one does not sharpen the edge,  
he must use more strength,  
but wisdom helps one to succeed.

11 If the serpent bites before it is charmed,  
there is no advantage to the charmer.

12 The words of a wise man's mouth win him favor,[c]  
but the lips of a fool consume him.

13 The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness,  
and the end of his talk is evil madness.

14 A fool multiplies words,  
though no man knows what is to be,  
and who can tell him what will be after him?

15 The toil of a fool wearies him,  
for he does not know the way to the city.

# Nihilism: Who Cares!

16 Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child,  
and your princes feast in the morning!

17 Happy are you, O land, when your king is the son of the nobility,  
and your princes feast at the proper time,  
for strength, and not for drunkenness!

18 Through sloth the roof sinks in,  
and through indolence the house leaks.

19 Bread is made for laughter,  
and wine gladdens life,  
and money answers everything.

20 Even in your thoughts, do not curse the king,  
nor in your bedroom curse the rich,  
for a bird of the air will carry your voice,  
or some winged creature tell the matter.



*All Is Vanity*

## Sermon Outline

Fill out the points as you listen to the sermon.

1.

2.

3.

## Sermon Notes

## Sermon Applications



*All Is Vanity*

## Discussion Questions

**1. What "little follies" (habits, attitudes, or neglect) do you see in your own life or culture that subtly pull people away from wisdom?**

*We live in a social media age that promotes habits and attitudes masquerading as wisdom, but they actually promote little follies that can cause harm. For example, we value youth and beauty over wisdom. We love people who become rich and successful by the time they are twenty-five. We are captivated and obsessed by beauty. The young often lack wisdom and beauty, which can fade quickly. Meanwhile, those who have lived many years and carry some scars have deep wisdom to share if we would only listen.*

**2. Share a time when you or someone else faced unintended consequences because of careless actions. How could wisdom have changed the outcome?**

*One example could be sharing confidential information at the workplace outside of the company's working group. While thinking it won't be a big deal, it could create a situation of mistrust and tension among team members. What is intended to be a casual comment could end up damaging the professional environment. Wisdom would help by stopping and considering potential outcomes to protect trust and unity in the team.*

**3. Where do you see reckless speech causing harm in your workplace, friendships, or online? How can we speak with more intention?**

Harmful and destructive words said to a friend, colleague, or spouse can cause deep emotional pain. A broken leg often heals faster than someone who has been hurt emotionally and psychologically by careless and thoughtless speech. It would be wise for us all to heed the words of James: "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires" (James 19-20).





*All Is Vanity*

## Discussion Questions

### **4. In what areas of life (career, relationships, faith) do you feel tempted to drift without purpose? What practical steps can keep us anchored?**

*If you believe that God has failed you, that He was not there when you needed Him, you tend to drift and go through the motions of faith. You may pray but not believe God will answer you. You may attend church faithfully but feel you do not belong. The best advice is that you have to return to God's Word, His promise that He will never leave you nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:8).*

*Many times, God will send trials to test one's faith: "These have come so that your faith of greater worth than which perishes even though refined by fire may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Peter 1:8).*

### **5. What sinful thought patterns (e.g., resentment, envy, complacency) do you need to confront and how?**

*Part of confronting sinful patterns is realizing that this is a process of sanctification that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and available to every believer. The step-by-step process would involve:*

- 1. Recognizing and naming sinful thoughts (Psalm 139:23).*
- 2. Bringing the thoughts to God in prayer (1 John 1:9).*
- 3. Replacing sinful thoughts with God's truth.*
- 4. Giving yourself to accountability (James 5:16).*
- 5. Taking every thought captive (2 Corinthians 10:5).*
- 6. Fill your mind with what is good (Philippians 4:8).*

### **6. What does this chapter/theme teach us about Christ?**

*Ecclesiastes 10 emphasizes the unpredictability of life and the importance of wisdom in navigating it. The chapter reflects on human behavior and the consequences of folly, illustrating how these elements relate to God's sovereignty.*



*All Is Vanity*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports

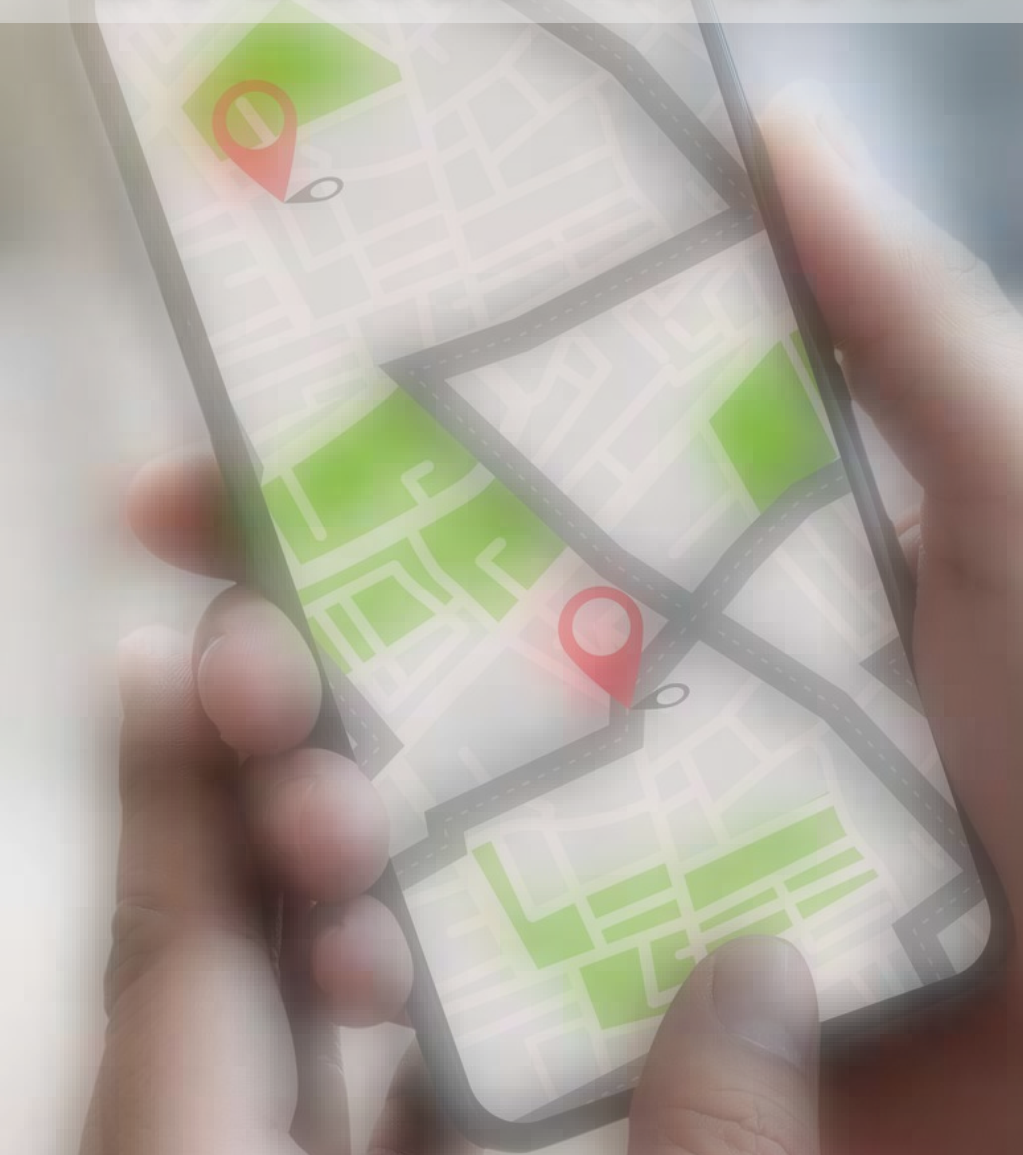


# STUDY GUIDE

July 20

# Navigating Worldviews

## ECCLESIASTES 11



# CONTROL

# Control

Church Family,

As we approach the end of Ecclesiastes the author begins to drive home a sobering reality: While here on this earth we are guaranteed life, death, and judgment. Each phase of that reality is clouded with uncertainties and things we cannot know.

Where should we focus our efforts and energies without knowing everything? Should we pursue what God's call us to, even though previous attempts have failed? So much of our daily lives are filled with the reminder that we don't have full control, we cannot predict the future, and we don't know all of God's purposes. And yet, the wisdom of and example of our Lord calls us to be diligent in our labors, to be generous, to look ahead, and to mortify our flesh.

You're called this Lord's Day to hear from God's Word in Ecclesiastes 11. I hope you will join.

Sincerely,

Grant Jones

# Control

## Ecclesiastes 11

Cast your bread upon the waters,

for you will find it after many days.

<sup>2</sup> Give a portion to seven, or even to eight,

for you know not what disaster may happen on earth.

<sup>3</sup> If the clouds are full of rain,

they empty themselves on the earth,

and if a tree falls to the south or to the north,

in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.

<sup>4</sup> He who observes the wind will not sow,

and he who regards the clouds will not reap.

<sup>5</sup> As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

<sup>6</sup> In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

<sup>7</sup> Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.

<sup>8</sup> So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.

<sup>9</sup> Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

<sup>10</sup> Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.



*All Is Vanity*

## Sermon Outline

Fill out the points as you listen to the sermon.

1. Perseverance through the \_\_\_\_\_. V. 1-6
2. Rejoicing in the \_\_\_\_\_ (Life, Death, and Judgement). V. 7-9
3. Putting Away \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_. V. 10

## Sermon Notes

## Sermon

Applications



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## Discussion Questions

**1. Read v. 6: Are there any areas you've laid aside your duty, because you can't control the outcomes or because you think you "know" the outcome?**

*Ex.: Vocation, duties to the church, marriage, parenting, or school studies? For example, if I think I will not do good on a test, I might just refuse to study. If I think my marriage is going to fail, then I am tempted to stop loving my spouse and stop fighting for a healthy marriage.*

**2. Read v. 1 - 5: How has your observation of nature, or lack thereof, influenced your faith and understanding of life?**

*Ecclesiastes 11 draws our attention to lessons from nature—clouds, wind, trees, and even the mystery of life forming in the womb (v. 5). Throughout Scripture, God reveals Himself not only through His Word but also through His creation (Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:20). Some theologians refer to these as "Two Books" of divine revelation:*

- *The Book of Scripture (The Bible) – God's clear, authoritative Word.*
- *The Book of Nature – God's general revelation through creation, pointing to His wisdom, power, and care.*

*While nature does not replace Scripture, it can deepen our awe, trust, and humility before God.*

*This question invites people to reflect on how nature—or the absence of engaging with it—has shaped their faith. Some may readily share moments where creation deepened their awe of God, while others might struggle to connect nature with spirituality. Gently draw out both perspectives. If responses are shallow, ask follow-ups like, "How might regularly observing nature change the way you view God's faithfulness or creativity?" If someone dismisses the idea, acknowledge their view but highlight how even Jesus used nature (e.g., lilies, sparrows, storms) to teach about trust and God's care (Matthew 6:26-30). Aim for a discussion that doesn't elevate nature above Scripture but shows how it complements our understanding of God's character and sovereignty.*





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## Discussion Questions

### 2. (Continued)

*Answers might include walking in the woods to remember the beauty of God, studying science to remember the complexity of God, watching a sunrise to remember God's faithfulness and new mercies, etc.*

*A simple formula for answering this question could be:*

*Connects a **tangible experience** (walking in the woods) to a **spiritual truth** (God's beauty).*

### **3. Read v. 10: What are practical ways we can strive to put away evil from our flesh in a society that generally gives us more free-time and often idolizes entertainment?**

*In our more modern age, not as many of us think in terms as one would who is in a agrarian (or farming) culture. One of the natural side effects of this is that people today have more "free-time", which has given a larger platform to things such as entertainment (plays, movies, music, social media, concerts, and sports). Free time can be a good thing, but it can also be a distraction from duty to God and neighbor. Here are some possible answers: setting screen-time limits, avoiding media that isn't edifying, be intentional to use your free time to be with other Christians or share the gospel, write down your daily schedule and share it with an accountability partner to ensure you are "making the most of the time", etc*

### **4. Read v. 7 - 8 & v. 10): How can we push back against worldliness in how we raise our children? How can we gradually train them about not just Life, but also the other 2 less popular subjects of Death and Judgment?**

*We often want our kids to lead well accomplished lives. If our kids succeed, then we take comfort that we (as parents or grandparents) did our job. Equally, if our kids fail, we can blame ourselves. On the surface, these are reasonable and often healthy reflections. However, the whisperings of Satan and the choking nature of this world can warp and twist our definition of "success" and "failure".*



## *All Is Vanity*

### Discussion Questions

#### 4. (Continued)

*Regular communion with other Christian parents can help us value the right things in our parenting. Monthly reading Deut. 6, Eph. 6, etc gives us clarity on what God expects from parents.*

*A few things that our family did (TJ and Jenni) to teach our children about death is: buy a pet with a short lifespan (hamster, fish, grasshopper, etc). The death of the pet helps them to grieve loss and consider their of mortality. Take them to cemeteries and funerals and talk to them about what happens after death.*

*To teach on the Judgment seat of Christ, use examples from everyday life to remind them of the greater judgment to come. For example, a famous court case in the news, injustices that take place in their school (as a reminder that nothing escapes God's ultimate judgment), before you disciple your child for disobedience remind them that just as you have authority to judge their sin, so too God has authority to judge all the sins of the world.*

**5. (for children) Read v. 9-10: How should the command to enjoy life while remembering the coming judgment shape your mindset as you interact with your parents, teachers (Church & School), and your friends? How should the mindset of a Young Christian be different from many of your peers who may not believe in Christ as Savior and rather believe that all things end in death?**

*A strong desire when we are young is to “walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes” (v.9 NKJV). There is great danger in that mindset if we stop reading at the word “eyes” in v. 9. However, there is great wisdom if we keep reading and hear the call when we are young to rejoice in the blessings of youth AND to remember there is no exemption from God's judgement just because you are young. Ecclesiastes 11: 9 - 10 reminds us to rejoice in the good things in this life while, keeping our eyes on the life which is to come.*

*We should truly enjoy all things that God gives us, but we must enjoy them in ways that Honor God and show love to our neighbor.*



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## Discussion Questions

### 5. (Continued)

*For example, if my parents buy me a new toy, then I should enjoy playing with it. But I must not be selfish and refuse to let my sibling or friend play with it, I must not be a bad steward and mistreat the toy so that it breaks, etc.*

*The way a Christian is to enjoy “all good gifts” is vastly different from a non-Christian. We are to enjoy those gifts within their proper limits, to enjoy them without sinning against God or neighbor.*



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## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports



# STUDY GUIDE

July 27

# Navigating Worldviews

## ECCLESIASTES 12



# FEAR GOD

# Fear God

For the past 12 weeks we have been poked, prodded, and goaded by the words of the Preacher in Ecclesiastes. The things that we treasure in this life - education, career, creativity, affluence, power, pleasure, relationships, knowledge, etc. - he has systematically dismantled and pronounced as “Meaningless: a chasing after the wind.”

This leaves us with the question: is there anything meaningful in life? At the very end of the book we read these words:

“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

The fear of God is the key to the book of Ecclesiastes. The fear of God allows us to excel in education, career and relationships without idolizing them. The fear of God allows us to enjoy affluence and pleasure without stumbling into sinful excess. The fear of God allows us to wisely steward our power and knowledge.

But what is the fear God? Doesn't the Bible also say that there is no fear in love? This week we will look not only at Ecclesiastes 12, but all of Scripture to get a picture of what the Fear of God is and how to cultivate it in our lives.

Walking in the fear of the Lord with you,

-Pastor Ben

# Fear God

## Ecclesiastes 12

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”; <sup>2</sup> before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, <sup>3</sup> in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed, <sup>4</sup> and the doors on the street are shut—when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low— <sup>5</sup> they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets— <sup>6</sup> before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, <sup>7</sup> and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. <sup>8</sup> Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.

### Fear God and Keep His Commandments

<sup>9</sup> Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. <sup>10</sup> The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

<sup>11</sup> The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. <sup>12</sup> My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

<sup>13</sup> The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. <sup>14</sup> For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.





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## Sermon Outline

Fill out the points as you listen to the sermon.

### Sermon Notes

### Sermon Applications



*All Is Vanity*

## Discussion Questions

**1. How does chapter 12:9-11 describe Ecclesiastes, in what ways does that mirror the rest of the Bible (give verses), and how should such a view of scripture impact our relationship with it?**

*Ecclesiastes 12:9-11 provides a unique perspective on the nature and purpose of the book itself, which, in turn, reflects how the entire Bible functions as divinely inspired text. Here are a few key truths to emphasize:*

*Knowledgeable (v. 9), Thoughtful (v. 9), Orderly (v. 9), Joyful/Captivating (v. 10), Truthful (v. 10), Corrective (v. 11), Eternally Secure [nails firmly fixed] (v. 11), God breathed [one Shepherd...see John 10:11, Ezekiel 34:23-24] (v. 11), Authoritative [beware of anything beyond these] (v. 12)*

### ***Mirroring the rest of the Bible***

*These aspects align with how the rest of the Bible is presented. Scripture is depicted as a source of divine wisdom and truth (Psalm 19:7-11) and provides guidance (Psalm 119:105). It is also presented as a steadfast foundation (Matthew 7:24-27) and claims divine inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16).*

### ***Impact on our relationship with Scripture***

*Ecclesiastes 12:9-11 encourages viewing the Bible as a living, guiding, and truthful word. The imagery of "goads" suggests it will challenge for growth, while "nails" highlight its role as a stable anchor. Recognizing its divine origin calls for a humble approach and a desire to read and obey. The Word of God should be embraced as a gift.*



*All Is Vanity*

## Discussion Questions

**2. As a group, define the Fear of the Lord, using scripture to explain what it is and what it is not, then give some practical examples of what fearing God looks like in your own life.**

*The fear of the Lord is not terror that keeps us from God, but rather a profound reverence and awe for God's power, holiness, and authority, leading to a life of obedience and love. It involves recognizing God's sovereignty, acknowledging His wisdom, and actively choosing to align one's life with His will. Examples include choosing to be honest even when it's difficult, resisting temptation, and actively seeking to understand and follow God's commands.*

*What the Fear of the Lord is:*

### **Reverence and Awe:**

*It's a deep respect for God's power and holiness, recognizing His absolute authority over all of creation.*

### **Obedience and Submission:**

*It involves a willingness to follow God's commands and live according to His will. Compare the example of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5) and Peter (Luke 5:8) and how godly fear lead them ultimately to follow and serve God vs Adam's fear that caused Him to hide from God.*

### **Wisdom and Understanding:**

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom, guiding us to make wise choices.*

### **Love and Trust:**

*It fosters a relationship with God that is based on love, trust, and a desire to please Him.*



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## Discussion Questions

**2. As a group, define the Fear of the Lord, using scripture to explain what it is and what it is not, then give some practical examples of what fearing God looks like in your own life. (CONTINUED)**

***Focus on God's Glory:***

*A heart that fears the Lord seeks to honor God in all aspects of life.*

***What the Fear of the Lord is NOT:***

- *It's not a fear that keeps us away from God.*
- *It is not a fear that keeps us from believing that God will forgive us.*
- *It is not a fear that makes us angry or bitter at God.*

***Practical Examples in Daily Life:***

- *Honesty and Integrity:*
- *Resisting Temptation:*
- *Seeking God's Will:*
- *Treating Others with Respect:*
- *Living with Humility:*
- *Choosing Forgiveness:*
- *Prioritizing God's Kingdom:*
- *ETC*

**3. Locate every reference to “fear of God” in Ecclesiastes. What patterns emerge? What unique insight does each passage offer?**

*The phrase, “Fear of God” appears seven times in Ecclesiastes: 3:14, 5:7, 7:18, 8:12 (twice), 8:13, 12:13. This is most likely no accident, for we are told the book is “arranged with great care”. Ecclesiastes is a highly structured book. Referencing “fear of God” seven times a key points throughout the book is a reminder of the key theme of the book. It is also hint a how vanity in life can be meaningful (seven often represents wholeness or perfection).*



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## Discussion Questions

### 3. Locate every reference to “fear of God” in Ecclesiastes. What patterns emerge? What unique insight does each passage offer? (CONTINUED)

*Ecclesiastes, with its often somber tone about the fleeting nature of life (“vanity”), consistently presents the fear of God as the essential foundation for finding meaning and purpose in a world filled with confusion and frustration. The fear of God helps avoid extremes, encouraging a balanced approach to life, neither excessively righteous nor excessively wicked.*

*Trust and obedience: Fearing God is intrinsically linked to trusting Him and obeying His commands, even when His ways are difficult to understand.*

*Eternal perspective: While life on earth is filled with uncertainties, the fear of God grounds individuals in the ultimate reality of God's sovereignty and coming judgment, offering a long-term perspective that transcends earthly frustrations.*

*Unique insights from each passage*

- *Ecclesiastes 3:14 suggests that God's eternal actions inspire reverence.*
- *Ecclesiastes 5:7 contrasts the futility of human endeavors with the importance of fearing God, which offers stability.*
- *Ecclesiastes 7:18 presents fearing God as a way to avoid extremes and live a balanced life.*
- *Ecclesiastes 8:12-13 indicates that fearing God ultimately leads to a better outcome than wickedness.*
- *Ecclesiastes 12:13 concludes the book by stating that the primary duty of humanity is to fear God and obey His commands.*

*Overall, Ecclesiastes emphasizes the “fear of God” as foundational for living a life of reverence, trust, and obedience, offering stability and meaning amidst life's uncertainties.*

### 4. According to Ecclesiastes, why should we fear God, and what blessings accompany it? What tangible marks distinguish genuine fear of God?

*According to the book of Ecclesiastes, the primary reason to fear God is that He is the ultimate judge of all actions, both seen and hidden. Everyone will stand before God as judge, therefore a proper fear of God's judgment will help us to live meaningfully.*



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## Discussion Questions

### 4. According to Ecclesiastes, why should we fear God, and what blessings accompany it? What tangible marks distinguish genuine fear of God? (CONTINUED)

*The author, Qoheleth, after reflecting on the fleeting nature of life and the futility of worldly pursuits ("vanity of vanities"), concludes that fearing God and keeping His commandments is the "whole duty of man". The Hebrew does not contain the word "duty," literally it tells us that fearing God is the whole of man. Fear of God is what it means to be human. It is the purpose of life...to live with a constant reference/worship of God.*

#### *Blessings of fearing God*

- *Wisdom and understanding: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts gain rich understanding".*
- *Guidance and direction: Fearing God guides individuals in navigating life's challenges and finding inner peace amidst difficult circumstances.*
- *Well-being in the long run: While the wicked may appear to prosper for a time, those who fear God will ultimately be well, according to Ecclesiastes 8:12.*
- *Righteousness and obedience: Fear of God leads to a desire to obey His commands and walk in His ways.*
- *Reverence and awe: Fearing God signifies a deep respect and recognition of His greatness and sovereignty.*
- *Eternal perspective: Recognizing God's role as judge of all deeds helps us prioritize eternal values over worldly concerns.*
- *Strength and resilience: Trust in God and obedience to His ways enable individuals to find balance, resilience, and inner peace in the face of life's storms.*

#### **Tangible marks of genuine fear of God**

- *Obedience to God's commandments:*
- *Acting justly and loving mercy:*
- *Walking humbly with God:*
- *Putting faith in God's promises:*



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## Discussion Questions

### 5. How would you counsel someone who believed the fear of the Lord is only an Old Testament concept?

- *Clarify the Definition:* First make sure you are both using the phrase the same way the Bible uses the phrase. Do they have a misunderstanding about Biblical fear of God?
- *Go through the New Testament Examples:* Matthew 10:28, Luke 12:5, Acts 10:34-35, 2 Corinthians 5:11, 1 Peter 2:17, Revelation 14:7, Acts 9:31, Romans 3:18, Philippians 2:12-13, Hebrews 12:28-29, 1 Peter 1:17.
- *Highlight the Benefits:* Explain how the fear of the Lord is a source of wisdom, guidance, and protection. It leads to a life of obedience and blessings, as Proverbs 14:26-27 states, "Whoever fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for their children, it will be a refuge. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death".

### 6. How can we grow in our fear of God?

*Growing in the fear of God involves cultivating a deep reverence and awe for His person and authority. This is achieved through actively engaging with God's word, reflecting on His character and works, and consistently seeking to obey His commands. It also involves recognizing God's sovereignty and power, while simultaneously experiencing His love and grace.*

### Here's a more detailed look at how to grow in the fear of God:

- *Systematically study God's nature.*
- *Daily read God's Word.*
- *Daily set aside time to worship God.*
- *Engage with God in prayer.*
- *Reflect on God's Works.*
- *Etc.*





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## Discussion Questions

### Series Conclusion:

**7. How has your understanding of Ecclesiastes changed over the past 13 weeks?**

*Various*

**8. What practical encouragements have you received from Ecclesiastes?**

*Various*

**9. What further questions do you have about the book?**

*Various*



*All Is Vanity*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports