WNBS: Foundations & Formation

The Book of Ecclesiastes Study Guide

Key passages: Ecclesiastes 1:2–3; 3:1–11; 4:9–10; 5:10; 11:4; 12:1, 13–14 (KJV)

Study Focus: Understand the message of Ecclesiastes, explore its major themes, and identify practical ways to live with wisdom, gratitude, reverence, and faithfulness before God.

I. What Is Ecclesiastes?

Ecclesiastes is an Old Testament book of Wisdom Literature. Its Hebrew title, Qoheleth, refers to a teacher or speaker addressing an assembly; the Greek-derived English title is Ecclesiastes.

The book wrestles with life's brevity, work, wealth, suffering, injustice, relationships, joy, and the limits of human knowledge.

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." — Ecclesiastes 1:2 (KJV)

"Vanity" translates the Hebrew hebel ("breath" or "vapor"), expressing how temporary and difficult to grasp life can be. It does not simply mean that nothing matters.

II. Who Wrote Ecclesiastes?

The book introduces its speaker as "the son of David, king in Jerusalem" (1:1). Traditionally, the Preacher is identified with King Solomon, known for wisdom, wealth, and influence (1 Kings 3:5–12; 10:23). The book does not explicitly name Solomon, and scholars debate its precise authorship.

Consider: Why might a speaker who has experienced success and abundance question whether they bring lasting satisfaction?

III. Why Was Ecclesiastes Written?

To remind us that life is brief and often unpredictable (1:2–4).
To expose the limits of pleasure, wealth, and achievement (2:1–11; 5:10).
To acknowledge that we cannot fully understand God's work (3:11; 8:16–17).
To encourage enjoyment of God's everyday gifts (3:12–13; 5:18–20).
To call us to reverence, obedience, and accountability before God (12:13–14).

IV. Chapter-by-Chapter Overview

Chapter	Focus
1	Searching for meaning
2	Pleasure, achievement, and their limits
3	Times and seasons

4	Oppression and companionship
5	Worship, vows, and wealth
6	The limits of satisfaction
7	Wisdom through adversity
8	Authority, injustice, and mystery
9	Mortality and intentional living
10	Wisdom versus foolishness
11	Diligence despite uncertainty
12	Remember your Creator; fear God

V. Nine Lessons for Our Faith Journey

1. Embrace changing seasons

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1 | Application: We cannot choose every season, but we can respond with patience and faith.

Reflect: What season am I in, and how can I respond wisely?

Notes: _____

2. Keep achievement in perspective

Read: Ecclesiastes 2:10–11 | Application: Goals and accomplishments have value, but they cannot guarantee lasting fulfillment.

Reflect: What achievement have I expected to make me completely happy?

Notes: _____

3. Trust God without having every answer

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:11 | Application: Our understanding is limited; we can remain faithful amid uncertainty.

Reflect: What unanswered question do I need to entrust to God?

Notes: _____

4. Strengthen relationships

Read: Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 | Application: Offer and receive support; do not isolate yourself.

Reflect: Who can I encourage or ask for help this week?

Notes: _____

5. Practice contentment and stewardship

Read: Ecclesiastes 5:10 | Application: Money is a resource, not a measure of personal worth.

Reflect: How can I steward my resources more faithfully?

Notes: _____

6. Learn through adversity

Read: Ecclesiastes 7:2–4 | Application: Hard experiences can deepen reflection and wisdom.

Reflect: What lesson has a difficult season taught me?

Notes: _____

7. Live intentionally today

Read: Ecclesiastes 9:10 | Application: Give appropriate energy to meaningful responsibilities and relationships.

Reflect: What meaningful action have I postponed?

Notes: _____

8. Act despite uncertainty

Read: Ecclesiastes 11:4 | Application: Waiting for perfect conditions can prevent us from doing good.

Reflect: What responsible first step can I take?

Notes: _____

9. Remember your Creator

Read: Ecclesiastes 12:1 | Application: Make faith part of everyday life, not only difficult moments.

Reflect: How will I make room for God this week?

Notes: _____

VI. The Conclusion of the Whole Matter

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." — Ecclesiastes 12:13 (KJV)

To "fear God" means to live with reverence, humility, and accountability. Obedience is more than knowing Scripture; it is allowing God's Word to shape our decisions and relationships.

VII. Reflection

1. How should life's brevity change our priorities?

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2. What is the difference between pursuing success and making success our identity?

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3. How do I remain faithful when life seems unfair?

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4. What does contentment look like in daily practice?

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5. How can our church community help people through difficult seasons?

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6. What does it mean to fear God in our homes, workplaces, and relationships?

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VIII. This Week's Personal Faith Application

- Identify one temporary thing that has taken too much of my attention.
- Thank God for three specific blessings.
- Encourage or support one person.
- Take one meaningful step I have been postponing.
- Choose one biblical principle to practice intentionally.

My one action step: _____

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