

September  
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# God Gives Our Lives Meaning!

## The Book of Ecclesiastes

### A Family Study from Today in the Word

This Family Study is a companion to the *Today in the Word* devotional *What Are We Here For? The Book of Ecclesiastes* (September 2024). The whole family can learn from God's Word together. In each of the four lessons, you will:



#### Read

Read a passage  
in the Bible



#### Understand

Understand the biblical  
text in a deeper way



#### Imagine

Imagine the lesson  
with hands-on activities

### About Ecclesiastes

The book of Ecclesiastes is a book of wisdom that teaches how we can live in a world broken by sin. Without God, it is difficult to understand the meaning or purpose of life. Written by "the Teacher" (who many believe to be Solomon), Ecclesiastes teaches how important it is to go through life with God. Meaning and wisdom and life's purpose all come from following God. We also learn that God is more powerful than anything in this world. When we follow God and obey His Word, our lives have purpose.



This *Today in the Word* family study was written by Moody Bible Institute students Haylee Grindal, Ashleigh Hildebrandt, and Abigail Peterson under the direction of Elizabeth Smith, Program Head and Associate Professor of Moody's Children and Family Ministry program. Please visit [www.moody.edu/academics/programs/children-family-ministry](http://www.moody.edu/academics/programs/children-family-ministry) for more information.

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# 10 Things to Know

## About the Book of Ecclesiastes

1

Ecclesiastes is authored by “the Teacher” who many think was King Solomon, the Son of David (Ecclesiastes 1:1).

2

King Solomon also wrote the books of Proverbs and Song of Songs.

3

Ecclesiastes was likely written at the end of Solomon’s life, around 935 BC.

4

Ecclesiastes is part of the category called “wisdom literature” in the Bible, along with Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Song of Songs.

5

Ecclesiastes is the fourth book of poetry in the Bible.

6

Ecclesiastes was originally written in Hebrew.

7

The word Ecclesiastes means “speaker before an assembly” or “preacher.”

8

The word “meaningless” that occurs nearly 40 times in Ecclesiastes is from the Hebrew word *hebel*. It means “vapor” or “mist.”

9

Ecclesiastes ends by telling believers to fear God and to keep His commands (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

10

Ecclesiastes teaches us that our meaning comes from God!

# What Does Life Mean?

## Memory Verse

*“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.  
“Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless!—Ecclesiastes 1:2*



## Read Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

The Teacher (who many think was King Solomon) opens the book of Ecclesiastes with an interesting statement. It may seem strange to read in the Bible that life is meaningless! (Eccl. 1:2). He uses the Hebrew word *hebel* which compares life without God to a mist or vapor. Sometimes life can feel like an endless cycle, as if we are chasing the wind. Even when we do something new, something we really enjoy, we can still feel let down. That feeling points to our need for God. He alone gives us purpose!



## Understand

1. Who was the Teacher? (see verse 1)
2. What does the Teacher mean when he says, “Everything is meaningless!” (Or, in Hebrew, *hebel*)? (verse 2)
3. Why is it impossible to “chase the wind”?
4. How do you feel when you get a new toy or game? Why do we sometimes get bored right afterwards?
5. What does the Teacher say gives meaning to life?



## Imagine

Parents, to illustrate the meaning of *hebel*, that life is “like a vapor,” use a simple object lesson. Find a candle and light it. Have your children take turns blowing out the candle and then challenge them to try to catch the smoke in their hands. They will soon agree that it’s not possible! Spend some time talking with them about how we sometimes try to find meaning in different parts of life. We chase after new things, but our happiness disappears. The only One who can really satisfy our hearts is God. Finding meaning in life on our own is impossible. Thankfully, with God, we can have meaningful lives!



## Prayer

*As a family, thank God for giving our lives meaning. Pray that you will always turn to God and His Word to understand every event that happens in your life.*

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# A Time for Everything

## Memory Verse

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.—Ecclesiastes 3:1*



## Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

The Teacher in chapter 3 is talking about time. Have you ever wondered why we do certain things at certain times? When it is daytime, you can play with your friends or toys. But at night, you must put them away and go to sleep. When the weather is hot, we can go outside and swim, but in winter we must stay inside and keep warm. Life can feel like a never-ending clock, going around and around again. We get up, and then go to bed. We clean our room and then it gets messy again. This was a puzzle to the Teacher, who asked (again), “What is life’s purpose?” The answer is in today’s reading.



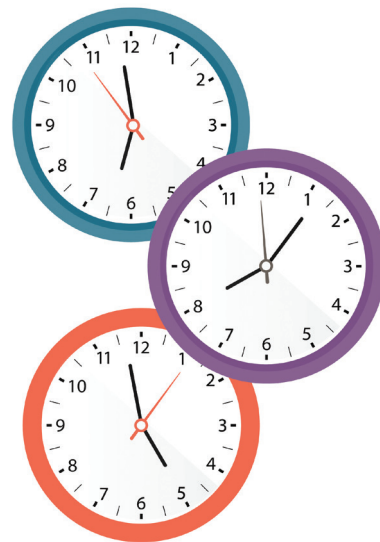
## Understand

1. Why do we do certain things at certain times?
2. What would happen if we did the opposite? (Give an example of doing something at the wrong time, like laughing when a friend gets hurt.)
3. Read verses 2–8 slowly and ask your children to listen for opposites. What opposites do you hear?
4. Who controls time? Read Colossians 1:17. We believe that God is eternal; He is in the past, present, and future. There has never been a time when God is not.
5. What is eternity? What does our memory verse say about eternity?
6. If God is with us all the time, how does that change our behavior?



## Imagine

Using the printable clockface, have your children write what they do on each hour of the day. They can color it and add drawings to illustrate their activities. One of the Teacher’s lessons is that life is like the round pattern of this clock. The same things happen repeatedly. Have everyone share their clocks. What do you do every day, such as eating dinner, waking up in the morning, or doing your chores? By themselves, these routine activities could get boring. But what if we do everything—even the boring things—for God? Before doing that activity this week, recite your memory verse as a reminder that what is done for God lasts forever!



## Prayer

*As a family, pray that God will help us use our time wisely. Ask Him to help you know when you should or should not do something and how to honor Him with everything you do!*

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# God Holds Our Future

## Memory Verse

*When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider this: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, no one can discover anything about their future.—Ecclesiastes 7:14*



## Read Ecclesiastes 7:13-14

When bad things happen, we might wonder if anyone is in control! For example, when we get a bad grade, or someone in our family gets sick, we might wonder why those hard things happen. It is also easy to worry about what will happen next! But in Ecclesiastes we learn that through good times and bad times, God is in control. Our future is safe in His hands because He knows everything, and we can trust Him.



## Understand

1. What is something in your life that has been hard?
2. What does today's Bible verse say about the future?
3. When we go through hard things, who should we ask for help?  
(If they say parents or teachers, push them to think a bit more, leading to God.)
4. What is wisdom? How is wisdom different than being smart?
5. Who gives us wisdom? Why does God's gift of wisdom help us not to worry about the future?



## Imagine

Parents, let's make paper airplanes with your children. Make any type of paper airplane, and then set up a target (maybe a small bin or a wastebasket). You and your kids take turns throwing your paper airplanes at the target and trying to get them through the hole. You can make changes to your planes to try to make them fly better. Point out that it is hard to be in control of something like that, isn't it? Remind your children that just like it is hard to control where these paper planes go, it is impossible for us to control our future. We can rest assured though that God is in control of everything; He will guide us to our proper destination!



## Prayer

*As a family, thank God that He knows everything and that He holds our future in His hands. Pray for wisdom when life is hard and ask God to remind you that He is in control.*

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# Enjoy and Obey

## Memory Verse

*Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.—Ecclesiastes 11:9*



## Read Ecclesiastes 11:9–10; 12:1

There is so much joy we can experience in our lives! God has given us many gifts to enjoy. In Ecclesiastes, the Teacher says we should enjoy life when we are young. But he also warns that we must enjoy life wisely by following the commands of God and walking in His ways. God wants us to be able to have fun, but we should do so in a way that still honors and glorifies Him.



## Understand

1. Name some things that make you happy.
2. What are some things God has given us to enjoy?
3. Read verse 9. What are the ways we are to follow?
4. Right after this, the Teacher gives a warning (after the word “but”). What is the warning about?
5. Read John 14:15. What does it say we will do if we love God?
6. How do you think you can enjoy life wisely? Think of a couple of ways!



## Imagine

Parents, Ecclesiastes teaches that joy is an important part of the life God has given us. Set aside one night for family fun with a board game! Choose a game to play together. Talk to your kids about the game rules, and why they are important. As you enjoy the game, have this discussion: What if no one obeyed the rules? How would the game go? Who set up the rules? Why did they make them? In Ecclesiastes, we learned to enjoy life within the boundaries God has given us. Have your children name some of those rules. Talk about why it is wise, and it brings joy, to follow the commands of God!



## Prayer

*As a family, thank God for the joyous moments in your lives. Pray you will learn to enjoy life, but also obey the rules He has given for our safety and protection.*

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