

WHEN THE
GODLY
LIVE
God-less
LIVES

LIFE LESSONS
FROM THE PAGES OF
ECCLESIASTES

BAND OF **BROTHERS**
Called. Equipped. Committed.

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**BAND of BROTHERS
Summer Study 2018**

WEEK 1: Introduction – Ecclesiastes 1

WEEK 2: Solomon: The Don Quixote of the Bible – Ecclesiastes 2-3

WEEK 3: It's Lonely at the Top – Ecclesiastes 4-6

WEEK 4: God Gives – Ecclesiastes 7-8

WEEK 5: The Weakness and Worth of Wisdom – Ecclesiastes 9-10

WEEK 6: When the Afterlife Becomes an Afterthought – Ecclesiastes 11-12



Success. Significance. Satisfaction.

These three things seem to dominate the thoughts of each and every one of us as men. We either desire them, as yet-unreached goals; or desperately cling to them, like our very lives depend upon them. But, if we're honest, most of us spend our lives in search of them. But they tend to remain illusory and frustratingly unattainable. And even if we somehow manage to get our hands on them, we never seem to get enough. They're addictive in nature and habit forming. Let's face it, even satisfaction never seems to satisfy, because it tends to fade with time or with the recognition that something is missing that we didn't even know we needed.

This epic quest for success, significance and satisfaction has been going on since God made Adam and Eve. And the entrance of sin into the equation played a significant role in turning man's contentment with God into a never-ending search for something to fill the void our rejection of Him created.

This brings us to our summer series in BAND of BROTHERS. We're about to unpack the book of Ecclesiastes, written by King Solomon, the wisest man who has ever lived. It's called **WHEN GODLY PEOPLE LIVE GOD-LESS LIVES: Timeless lessons from the pages of Ecclesiastes**, and it's going to be an eye-opening look at what happens when godly men leave God out of their lives. The book of Ecclesiastes is a no-holds-barred, in-your-face wake-up call for those who consider themselves sons of God, but who live their lives as if God doesn't really exist. In six short weeks, we're going to cover 12 jam-packed chapters that deal with everything from materialism and nihilism to hedonism and cultural relativism. Solomon pulls no punches. He calls things just like he sees them. And he provides us with some incredible words of wisdom, spoken by a man who has had it all, tried it all, and discovered that it all doesn't add up in the end.

Let me encourage you to do the attached Devotional™ readings and the homework. It will really help each week's lesson come alive and give you a more well-rounded understanding of the message of this incredible book.

In Him


Ken Miller
Minister to Men
Christ Chapel Bible Church

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**LIFE LESSONS
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WEEK 1: Introduction

- **Who was Solomon?**

- Reigned from 971-931 B.C.
 - 2 Samuel 12:24-25 – Solomon’s birth
 - 1 Kings 2:1-4 – David’s charge to Solomon
 - 1 Kings 2:10-12 – Solomon’s reign begins
 - 1 Kings 3:3-14 – Solomon’s prayer for wisdom
 - 1 Kings 3:28 – His reputation for wisdom
 - 1 Kings 4:20-21 – The success of his kingdom
 - 1 Kings 4:29-34 – His unsurpassed wisdom
 - 1 Kings 10:1-9 – The Queen of Sheba
 - 1 Kings 11:1-8 – His fall
- Wrote Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and Proverbs (1 Kings 4:32-33)
- He was the son of King David
- He was the second king of Israel
- His name was Jedidiah, which means “loved by the Lord”

- **A good start**

Be strong, and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn.
 – 1 Kings 2:3-4 ESV

- David dies and Solomon assumes the throne
- And he started off well

Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places. – 1 Kings 3:3 ESV

- Why was he offering sacrifices on the high places?

The people were sacrificing at the high places, however, because no house had yet been built for the name of the LORD. – 1 Kings 3:2 ESV

- A blank check from God
 - o God offers Solomon a chance to ask Him for anything

“Ask what I shall give you.” – 1 Kings 3:5 ESV

- o And Solomon asks for wisdom

“Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?” – 1 Kings 3:9 ESV

- o God was pleased with his request and answered it

“I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you.” – 1 Kings 3:12 ESV

“I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days.” – 1 Kings 3:13 ESV

- o But God’s gift came with conditions

*“...if you will walk in my ways...**then** I will lengthen your days.” – 1 Kings 3:14 ESV*

- Solomon enjoyed a prosperous and peace-filled reign

Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy. Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life. – 1 Kings 4:20-21 ESV

- o God gave him wisdom and understanding
- o God gave him wealth beyond measure
- o God blessed his kingdom with peace and tranquility

- **A bad ending**

- His idyllic kingdom had a flaw: Him

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. – 1 Kings 11:1-2 ESV

- o He ended up with 700 wives and 300 concubines

- All in violation of God's law (Deuteronomy 17:17)
- These foreign and pagan women influenced Solomon negatively

And his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. – 1 Kings 4:3-4 ESV

- Solomon failed to worship God alone
- He developed other affections

- **A distorted view of life**

- He is an old man
 - He's lived a long life
 - He is wise, but also worldly-wise
 - He is weary and jaded by all he has experienced
 - He's made many mistakes
 - And he has many regrets
 - He is filled with futility
 - He has failed his God
 - And he fears death
- He had been on a life-long quest
...the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. – 1:8

***I have acquired** great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me. – 1:16*

***I searched** with my heart how to cheer my body with wine. – 2:3*

***I made** great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. – 2:4*

***I made** myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. – 2:4*

***I bought** male and female slaves... – 2:7*

***I had** also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me. – 2:7*

***I also gathered** for myself silver and gold... – 2:8*

- But his view of life was distorted

...the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life... – 1 John 2:16 ESV

The desires of **the flesh** – self-gratification
“A craving for physical pleasure” – NLT

- Wanting what you **can't** have

I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." – 2:1

The desires of **the eyes** – self-indulgence

"A craving for everything we see" – NLT

- Wanting what you **don't** have

And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. – 2:10

The **pride of life** – self-glorification

"Pride in our achievements and possessions" – NLT

- Wanting what only **God** should have

So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. – 2:9

- Worldliness

What happens when Satan takes what God has created and causes us to abuse it, misuse it, or worship it

- The love of the world is idolatry
- Expecting from temporal, material things what we should only expect from God

- Worldliness in 3-D – Ecclesiastes 2:4-9

- A self-made man

I made great works...

I built houses...

and planted vineyard...

I made myself gardens and parks...

I made myself pools...

I bought male and female slaves...

I had also great possessions of herds and flocks...

I also gathered for myself silver and gold...

I got singers...

I became great...

- A self-fulfilling prophecy

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. – Ecclesiastes 1:2
ESV

The Preacher

qoholeth – (Hebrew) "speaker in the assembly"

ecclesiastes – the Greek translation of *qoholeth*

- As king, Solomon was a "speaker in the assembly"

- He acted as a kind of preacher or minister
- He as the shepherd of the people of Israel

Vanity

hebel – (Hebrew) – lacking in real substance

- Devoid of value, permanence or significance
- Empty, transitory, unsatisfactory
- Like a vapor or mist, breath-like

Striving after wind

Literally: vexation of spirit – *rehuth ruwach*

- Longing for breath
- Grasping for air

A great evil

Literally: many evil – *rab rá*

- Very wicked
- Very unpleasant or disagreeable
- Abundant misery

An unhappy business

Literally: an evil travail – *rá inyan*

- A bad business
- A lousy way to occupy yourself
- Harmful employment

- **A wrong perspective**

*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. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it... – Ecclesiastes 2:10-11 ESV*

- My eyes
- My heart
- My toil
- My reward

What would Jesus say?

How would the Savior contradict “the Preacher”?

*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be **satisfied.**”* –
Matthew 5:6 NLT

“Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink – even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk – it’s all free!

Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen to me, and you will eat what is good. You will enjoy the finest food.” –
Isaiah 55:1-2 NLT

- Solomon had it all, but he never had enough
- Solomon made gods out of the good gifts of God
- Solomon’s accomplishments and accumulated wealth left him feeling empty and unfulfilled



Week 2 Homework

- Sometime this week, read pages 11-18 of the Devotional™ study on Ecclesiastes.
- Read Ecclesiastes 2-3.
- Ecclesiastes 1:2 provides us with the theme for Solomon’s letter. Read it over several times, then put it in your own words.
Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. – Ecclesiastes 1:2 ESV

- Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-8. Make a list of significant accomplishments in your life (marriage, starting a business, career, portfolio, etc.). Include anything of value you may have acquired or accumulated over the course of your life (house, awards, degrees, etc.).

- Read Ecclesiastes 2:18-23. What does Solomon give as his reason for hating all his toil under the sun?

What are some things you have experienced concerning work that have led you to the same or similar conclusions?

- According to verses 24-26, Solomon seems to conclude that the best we can do in this life, based on the vanity that comes with work, is to eat, drink and be merry. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain your answer.

- Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Solomon uses the word “time” 29 times in these eight verses so, obviously, time is an important part of what he is trying to say. But what do you think his point is in these verses?

- Now look at verses 9-13. What do you think he means when he says God has put eternity into man’s heart? How does that show up in your own life?

It seems as if Solomon views the idea of eternity as too difficult for man to grasp, so he concludes that men are better off to “be joyful and to do good as long as they live.” On top of that, he each man to “eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil.” How do Solomon’s conclusions strike you? Do you agree or disagree with his assessment?

- Finally, read Ecclesiastes 3:19-22. Write out in your own words what you think Solomon is attempting to say.
