



## “Control is an Illusion”

The Good Life: A Study in Ecclesiastes  
Week 3 | April 30th, 2023  
Community Group Discussion Guide

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### Formation Class - Habits of the Household

*Saturday, May 20 | 9am-12pm*

Do you ever feel just a bit stressed out as a parent? Do you ever experience the desire to disciple your kid to love Jesus, but you're just not sure how to fit that in on a regular Tuesday? How can we build lives that not only express the gospel, but embody the gospel in the habits and routines of our families?

Join us on Saturday, May 20th as we learn together about developing the "habits of the household". This will be an intentional time of learning and applying how to build a robust Rule of Life for our families.

Breakfast and childcare are provided. Cost is \$10/adult and kids are free! Scholarships are available if needed. Please contact Brooke Swift for more information at [bswift@citizenscharlotte.com](mailto:bswift@citizenscharlotte.com).

#### [SIGN UP HERE](#)

#### Church-Wide Family Meeting + Potluck

*Saturday, June 3 | 4pm-7pm*

On Saturday, June 3rd we will hold our semi-annual Family Meeting. This is a chance for us as a church to celebrate God's faithfulness, to commemorate what He is doing in our church, to worship together, and to look for what God might do in the months ahead.

This year, we are doing it church potluck style! Citizens will be providing pulled pork for dinner. If your last name starts with A-N bring a side, if O-Z bring a dessert to share! We will worship and hear church-wide updates from 4:00pm-5:00pm then spend the rest of the evening eating and hanging out together.

This meeting is open to any current Citizens Member or Member-in-Progress. Childcare will be provided.

#### [MORE INFO](#)

#### Community Group Member Updates

Use the remaining time to let group members share any big life updates they have for the group. Examples could be Missional updates/people to pray for, life updates such as moving, job changes, or big prayer requests.

## **PRAYER + SCRIPTURE**

The most vital component of our time together tonight is the Spirit of God making alive to us the Word of God. So we will start with prayer. We will open with a short prayer, take a minute or two of silent reflection, read the Scripture from Sunday, take one more minute of silent reflection, then close in prayer.”

**Open with a brief word of prayer:** “God, we thank you for this time together. We open our hearts to how you might want to meet with us. Allow us to hear your voice and experience your spirit at work. Come Holy Spirit.”

**1-2 minutes of silent reflection.**

**Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-14.**

*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. 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.*

**1-2 minutes of silent reflection.**

**Close with this short prayer:** “Father, we confess that we wish to control our lives and our seasons. We long for your wisdom and to know your plans in this life. Help us to trust you with your plans for our seasons at your appointed times, and to believe that we will see you work all things for your glory, either under the sun or under heaven. Come Holy Spirit, help us in our discussion, to be honest about our desire for control, to be content with the seasons of our life, and to have joy in your providence over all things.

**As you reflect on Ecclesiastes 3:1-14, what is the Holy Spirit showing or teaching you?**

## **SERIES OVERVIEW**

Ecclesiastes is a raw and honest look at life “under the sun”, that is – without God on this side of eternity. As “The Preacher” will note, it is all vanity, a vapor, a striving after the wind. We can accomplish great things, obtain all the money our hearts desire, chase after every pleasure and yet the same fate happens to us all – we die and are forgotten.

So therefore, how do we learn to live with great joy? How do we receive a life well lived? How do we learn to live “the good life” with God? That’s the goal of this series – an honest exploration at one man’s search for the good life, our own search, and how to find God on the other side.

## **SERMON DISCUSSION**

*Let’s have a discussion around these main points from Sunday’s teaching:*

### **1. The desire for control**

In the third chapter of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher walks through all the seasons that are in this life. To name a few, there are seasons for: Birth and death, breaking down and building up, weeping and laughing, speaking and staying silent.

We tend to want to control our seasons, know how they will turn out, and have them work out for us soon.

***How do you tend to fight for control in the various seasons of your life?***

### **2. The Preacher’s Wisdom**

The Preacher points out the reality that our seasons in life come at their appointed time, that God wants to grow our fear and trust of Him during these seasons, and we may not see His goodness realized until we are in eternity with Jesus.

***How is this wisdom hard for you to live by?***

### **3. The invitations of Ecclesiastes**

James 1:22 challenges followers of Jesus to “be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” The goal of our CG discussion times is not to simply recap what we “liked” about the sermon, although that is helpful, the goal is to work truth into our lives, to talk about how we might apply God’s Word, and to make plans for the upcoming week as a community seeking to follow Jesus together.

In light of the gospel, Ecclesiastes invites us to practice three things:

- Sacred Honesty – we are honest about the season we are in and live in accordance with it.
- Sacred Mundanity – we learn to be content with trusting God in His wisdom and provision, stepping into the things we know to do in the difficult seasons.
- Sacred Joy – we find deep joy in Jesus, who lived our seasons and reigns over our seasons.

***What would more sacred honesty, sacred contentment in the mundane, and sacred joy look like for you this week and during this series in light of this scripture and sermon?***

## **SERIES PRACTICE**

One of our key discipleship values as a church is that of practice. Moving forward, we are going to begin emphasizing one of our key spiritual practices during each sermon series. This practice is meant to coincide with the theme of the series, and something we invite our church to practice as a part of their spiritual formation.

During The Good Life Series, we will be focusing together on the spiritual practice of Sabbath. Sabbath is a 24-hour period of rest and refraining from work to be with God and His people. Sabbath is a perfect practice for this series, as Sabbath is a crucial part of learning to find joy in our everyday life.

For more on the practice of sabbath, you can head to <https://www.citizenscharlotte.com/sabbath>.

*This week, we encourage you to take time during your Sabbath to reflect on your life and your relationship with God, being honest about where you try to control your life, and in spending time in a prayer of surrender and trust in God.*

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Pray over what was shared in the discussion, for your group to be united in the gospel, and for help from the Holy Spirit to be shaped to be more like Jesus as we put God's ways into practice.