



“Relationships are Messy”

The Good Life: A Study in Ecclesiastes

Week 4 | May 7th, 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.

[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 4:1-16.

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.

1-2 minutes of silent reflection.

Close with this short prayer: “Father, you have made us for community with one another. We were not designed to be alone but to be strengthened by our brothers and sisters. But being in close relationships is hard and challenging. Come Holy Spirit, help us in our discussion, to show us that these relationships are not vanity but a gift from God to help us in our faith and in life under the sun.

As you reflect on Ecclesiastes 4:1-16, 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:

DESIGNED FOR COMMUNITY

In the fourth chapter of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher shows us the blessings and benefits of community (“two is better than one”). This is a theme we see throughout the Scriptures – we are wired at a soul level to be in relationship with others.

How have you experienced (good or bad) being in community with other Christians?

COMMUNITY KILLERS

The Preacher points out the reality that there are various pulls within us that can kill community in our lives. These “community killers” include:

- Objectification - People exist for your benefit alone
- Jealousy - People have what you deserve
- Laziness - People require too much effort
- Busyness - People require too much time
- Pride - People cannot speak in to my life

How do you see these community killers in your own heart and life?

THE INVITATIONS OF ECCLESIASTES

James 1:22 challenges followers of Jesus to “be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

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

- Sacred Honesty – We ask God and others to show us how we kill community in our lives.
- Sacred Mundanity – we learn to embrace the people God has put into our lives.
- Sacred Joy – we find deep encouragement in Jesus, who shows us how to love and serve others beyond what they deserve, and empowers us to love others in response.

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 this week to spend part of your Sabbath with God's people, enjoying the relationships He's given you as a part His design for the Good Life.

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.