



“Life is Unfair”

The Good Life: A Study in Ecclesiastes
Week 5 | May 14th, 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 8:10-17

10 Then I saw the wicked buried. They used to go in and out of the holy place and were praised in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity. 11 Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil. 12 Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. 13 But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God. 14 There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. 15 And I commend joy, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun. 16 When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, 17 then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.

1-2 minutes of silent reflection.

Close with this short prayer: “Father, we struggle with the unfairness of life. In our best efforts to love you and love others, we feel like we deserve good things, and we also see those who reject you and sin against others prospering. Come Holy Spirit, help us in our discussion, to understand your Word, to trust your Wisdom, and to not be shaken by unfairness in the world, but instead draw nearer to you.

As you reflect on Ecclesiastes 8, 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:

LIFE IS UNFAIR

In the eighth chapter of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher wrestles with how the people of God, the righteous, are seen struggling, while the people who reject God, the unrighteous, are prospering. He sees this as vanity and ultimately a pointless part of life under the sun. We often wrestle with this too – we have a core belief that life should get better when we start following Jesus, but it often doesn’t and that seems (and sometimes truly is) unfair.

How are you wrestling right now with the unfairness of life?

WAYS WE RESPOND

We tend to respond to the unfairness of life by giving up on following Jesus. For some of us this is compromising on holiness, for others a lasting cynicism and bitterness that makes us unable to enjoy God or His good gifts to us. Still for others, this leads all the way to walking away from our faith. All in all, it’s a response to life being hard as a Christian that says – “maybe it’s just not worth it.”

How do you see these tendencies in yourself?

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 – Confess to God and others how your response to the unfairness of life is revealing what you value and treasure more than God
- Sacred Mundanity – Know that God is presently active in the world, even when it seems unfair
- Sacred Joy – Rejoice that we do receive joys we do not deserve, and that ultimate judgment and justice is coming when Christ returns

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 reflecting on the goodness of God. How has He shown Himself as kind to you in the midst of life's unfairness.

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.