



“Everything is Meaningless”

The Good Life: A Study in Ecclesiastes

Week 1 | April 16th, 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.

[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.

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.

PRAY

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 1:1-14.**
- **1-2 minutes of silent reflection.**
- **Close with this short prayer:** "Father, we see that life is vanity under the sun. Time passes, things and people fade, it is repetitive, and there is nothing that we can ultimately control. But Jesus entered into this vain life with us, not to free us from this life, but to show us what truly matters so we can live life around with you in your presence and in your Kingdom. Come Holy Spirit, help us in our discussion, and lead our thoughts and deeds into life with God, one another, and the world. In Christ's name, Amen.

As you reflect on Ecclesiastes 1:1-14, 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 3 main points from Sunday's teaching:

1. The vanity of life

In the opening poem of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher gives us his main thesis – life under the sun (without God) is vanity. He then shows us the three main reasons why he says "all is vanity":

- All is vanity because life is a mundane cycle.
- All is vanity because life is elusive and uncontrollable.
- All is vanity because we will all die and be forgotten.

How have you experienced and how do you respond to the vanity of life?

2. The hope of the gospel

But here's the gospel good news – Jesus entered this vain life. He was outside the sun, took on flesh and entered into this vanity of life under the sun. As Tim said on Sunday - "The good news of the gospel is not that we magically escape the vanity of life under the sun. The beauty of the gospel is that God has entered that vanity with us, living, dying, and rising again so that our toil is not actually in vain in our life with God."

How does the hope of the resurrection and eternity with God give new meaning to life 'under the sun'?

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 learn to stop pretending about the frailty and futility of life.
- Sacred Mundanity – we learn to embrace work to do, a people to love, a place to be – all in the presence of God.
- Sacred Joy – we receive the gift of joy God alone can give to our lives under the sun.

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 find life apart from Him, and seeking more joy in mundane life with God and His people.

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.