

READING PLAN + STUDY QUESTIONS

Ecclesiastes

READING PLAN OVERVIEW

- **SESSION 1:** ECCLESIASTES 1-3
 - THE FLEETING NATURE OF LIFE
- **SESSION 2:** ECCLESIASTES 4-7
 - WISDOM + FOOLISHNESS
- **SESSION 3:** ECCLESIASTES 8-12
 - DEATH AWAITS ALL

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

- 1. READ THE GENRE + BOOK OVERVIEW ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES**
- 2. READ THE CHAPTERS IN THE BIBLE FOR EACH SESSION**
- 3. READ THE CHAPTER SUMMARIES ON [EVERYDAYSCRIPTURE.ORG](https://everydayscripture.org)**
- 4. ANSWER THE QUESTIONS + REFLECT ON THE READING**

This study encourages going at your own pace, allowing each session to be a day, a week, or however long you need. Each session contains questions to be used for individual reflection or small group discussion.

This study was made to be used alongside Bible reading. Although we have created chapter summaries, there is no substitute for reading God's Word.

QUESTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED

- What type of literature is this book of the Bible? Does that affect the interpretation?
- Who is the intended audience of this book? What purpose does it serve?
- What does this passage of Scripture reveal about God's character?
- What can I learn from this Scripture passage? How does it apply today?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Everyday Scripture: Ecclesiastes](#)
- [Everyday Scripture: Old Testament Poetry](#)
- [The Bible Project: Ecclesiastes Overview Video](#)

GENRE OVERVIEW: OLD TESTAMENT POETRY

The five books of Old Testament poetry each capture an artistic and unique perspective of the human experience. Three of the books – Job, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs – are known as the books of wisdom literature, while Psalms and Song of Solomon are best known for presenting a wide range of emotions and beautiful imagery.

Each of the wisdom books shares a different mindset regarding the pursuit of wisdom. Proverbs, primarily written by King Solomon, argues that wisdom leads to a fruitful and successful life and that the righteous will prevail while the evil will perish. Solomon was David's son and the Israelite king who built the first temple in Jerusalem. He was known for his great wisdom.

In contrast, the story of Job serves as an exception to the “rules” of Proverbs, proving that life is not always fair; sometimes bad things happen to good people. Ecclesiastes, also written by King Solomon (but toward the end of his life), offers a more nuanced view, saying that we cannot control what happens to us in this short, fleeting life, so we might as well enjoy what we can while we're still alive. Because of the different perspectives on wisdom, these books are best read together as a collective library of wisdom literature.

The book of Psalms contains 150 poems and songs, most of which were written by David. David was the second ruler of Israel who united all the tribes of Israel under a single monarch. These psalms vary in emotion, context, and purpose, and they are best read alongside 1 + 2 Samuel, which provide context surrounding the events of David's life that prompted these poems and songs.

Song of Solomon (also known as Song of Songs) is an epic love story written about a passionate young couple about to be married. The content of this book has sparked debates that revolve around whether it portrays a human couple deeply in love or symbolizes God's relentless pursuit of humanity. Either way, there is beauty and wisdom in both earthly relationships and our individual relationships with God.

BOOK OVERVIEW: ECCLESIASTES

At first glance, Ecclesiastes can appear pessimistic or depressing, but the book offers wisdom and reveals aspects of God's character. The speaker in Ecclesiastes, referred to as "the Teacher," has experienced all the best things in life – wealth, power, riches, and influence – but recounts them all as fleeting and meaningless. Serving as a counter perspective to the book of Proverbs (which teaches that living wisely leads to success in life), Ecclesiastes points out the somewhat random nature of life and how bad things often happen to wise and righteous people.

Although the tone of Ecclesiastes is somewhat skeptical, hope and peace can be found in the book's pages. The speaker asserts that even though the best things in life are temporary, life is still worth living to the fullest. Besides, what else is there to do? While Ecclesiastes may seem dismissive of some aspects of life and success, the book does affirm the importance of fearing God and living in His commandments.

SESSION ONE: ECCLESIASTES 1–3

THE FLEETING NATURE OF LIFE

- Using a study Bible or internet search, look up the meaning of the Hebrew word “Hebel” (הֶבֶל). What different meanings can you find? Does this affect your interpretation or understanding of the text?
- How does the Teacher compare humanity and nature? Which does he view as permanent and lasting? What does it mean that there is “nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9)?
- In Ecclesiastes 1, how does the Teacher view the pursuit of wisdom?
- Ecclesiastes 2:1–11 describes the acquisition of pleasure and earthly possessions. How does the Teacher view these pursuits?
- Have you heard the expression that there is “a season and a time for everything”? Read Ecclesiastes 3:1–8. Does anything on this list surprise you?
- What does it mean that God has put eternity into the hearts of humanity?
- Compare Genesis 2:7 and Ecclesiastes 3:20. What similarities do you find?

SESSION TWO: ECCLESIASTES 4–7

WISDOM + FOOLISHNESS

- Why does the author consider two to be better than one (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12)?
- In Ecclesiastes 5, what does the author advise regarding words and language?
- Read Ecclesiastes 5:10. How does this message oppose the message of culture?
- The author encourages delighting in good things and considering them as gifts from God. How can you continually thank and praise God for the good gifts in your life?
- Have you ever reached a goal or accomplishment that left you unfulfilled? Why is it easy to fall into the trap of wanting the next best thing?
- Read Ecclesiastes 7:5. How is the rebuke of a wise person better than the praise of a foolish person?
- Why would the author recommend not becoming “overly righteous”? At what point does seeking wisdom no longer become wise?
- Read Ecclesiastes 7:20. How was the author unknowingly reflecting on the perfect sinlessness of Christ?

SESSION THREE: ECCLESIASTES 8-12

DEATH AWAITS ALL

- In Ecclesiastes 8:10-13, what advice does the author give for a successful life?
- According to Ecclesiastes 8:14-17, humanity cannot fully know God's ways. Do you find this to be concerning or comforting?
- The author ponders the concept that all people will end up with the same fate regardless of their status or righteousness. How does the author provide comfort while wrestling with mortality?
- In Ecclesiastes 9, how does the author contrast wisdom and folly? What is the meaning of Ecclesiastes 9:17-18?
- How does Ecclesiastes 10:10-11 speak to the value of being prepared?
- Compare and contrast the overarching theme of Ecclesiastes to the messages of Job and Proverbs. To which perspective do you feel most naturally inclined?
- In Ecclesiastes 11:9-10, how does the author both encourage enjoyment in life and provide caution about God's judgment?
- How would you summarize the overall message of Ecclesiastes? Do you find it to be depressing or encouraging?