

SOLOMON THOUGHT ABOUT LIFE

Ecclesiastes 1



PREPARE

FOR THE SESSION

PLAN the Session

- Pray, asking God to prepare your heart to teach and the hearts of kids to receive His Word.
- Read the Leader Bible Study and review the session plan.
- Familiarize yourself with the Learn section enough to teach naturally.
- Double Check that you have all the supplies you need.

LEADER Bible Study

Bible study: reading and studying the truths of the Bible and then applying them to our lives.

Over the past two weeks, we have asked the questions: *Why do we study the Bible?* and *Who can help us study the Bible?* Now that we have asked the why and how, we will continue our study over the next three weeks by asking *what?* This week we will ask the question, *What does the Bible teach us about God?* Kids will learn that the Bible reveals to us who God is. If we don't know who wrote the Bible and why He wrote it for us, we're missing out on some crucial reasons to dive into this amazing book.

It can be easy to feel separated from the Bible when you are not familiar with God and His characteristics. Some kids may not even realize that you can learn about God from reading stories that have to do with other people besides Jesus. We will take a look at some parables and stories in the Bible and learn what they teach us about the character of God.

Remind kids that Bible study is a discipline and won't always look perfect; spiritual disciplines are a practice. Encourage them to continue practicing throughout the week and not just the days that we go to church. This session is a good one to emphasize that we can see God working in every passage of the Bible, so when we are studying the Bible we are continually learning about the characteristics of God.

The verses we'll focus on this week come from Hebrews 1:1-3. These verses say that God was revealed through prophets and then through Jesus, as Jesus is the exact nature of God. All of these prophecies and stories of Jesus are found in the Bible now, and when we study the Bible and stories of Jesus, we are studying the exact character of God. Take some time to focus on God and who He is to you. Write out words that describe Him and how He has shown up in your life. Be prepared to share your favorite characteristics of God and how those are reflected in your life. Take a moment to pray that God would help the kids this week gain a deeper understanding of who God is through the Bible and the place He has in their life.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach



WELCOME

5-10 MINUTES

Welcome kids to the session



LEARN

15-20 MINUTES

Learn how to practice spiritual disciplines



LOVE

10-15 MINUTES

Love God by practicing a spiritual discipline



LIVE

20-30 MINUTES

Live for God through discipleship

SOLOMON THOUGHT ABOUT LIFE

Ecclesiastes 1



Solomon was the richest man in the world. He was famous. He was wiser than any man who had ever lived. He was the most powerful person in all of Israel. Yet, Solomon realized that having all these gifts could never give his life meaning and purpose.

Solomon wrote a book called Ecclesiastes to teach this truth to other people. The book begins this way:

“‘Absolutely worthless,’ says the Teacher.
‘Everything is absolutely worthless.’

What does a person gain for all his hard work?

All his sweat and effort that he gives under the sun?

A generation of people dies, and another is born,

But the earth is pretty much the same as it has always been.

The sun rises and sets over and over, the same as it always has.

The wind rushes to the south, then to the north, and it’s always turning in cycles.

The streams all flow to the sea, but the sea is never full, and the streams keep flowing.

Everything is so tiring, more than anyone wants to say out loud.

No matter what you see, you always want to see more.

No matter what you hear, you always want to hear more.

What has been before will be again.

What you do today, you’ll have to do again tomorrow.

There is nothing new anywhere under the sun.

No one remembers the people who came before them.

And no one who will be born in the future will be remembered either.”

Solomon wanted people to realize that no matter what we do on earth, none of it really matters unless we are living for God’s glory. Knowing and serving God is what truly matters (Eccl. 8:12).

Christ Connection: People spend their lives trying to get riches, power, and fame, but none of it lasts. Only a life spent trusting in Jesus as Savior and following Him will matter in the end. Jesus lived, died, and rose again so we could find purpose in Him and be with God forever.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

The learner guide has extra questions the students answer once completing this section. In the next section you can read the questions and they can follow along in the guide.

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today, we are going to hear how Solomon thought about life. Through our Bible story, we will learn that **SOLOMON TAUGHT THAT LIFE HAS NO MEANING APART FROM GOD**. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read from Ecclesiastes 1:1-11.

•What does this story teach us about God?

Solomon's words help us understand that everything we do apart from God has no true meaning or purpose in light of eternity. **God created people to trust in His Son, Jesus, and follow Him, so that we would experience everlasting life and true meaning in Him alone.** We were created to seek Him above the things of this world.

•What does Solomon say about people who fear or love God? Look at Ecclesiastes 8:12-13.

Solomon wrote that ultimately it will go well for those who fear God. They will experience God's goodness toward them. People spend their lives trying to get riches, power, and fame, but none of it lasts. Only a life spent trusting in Jesus as Savior and following Him will matter in the end. Jesus lived, died, and rose again so we could find purpose in Him and be with God forever.

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

We can only experience our true purpose—to love God and be loved by Him—by placing our trust in His Son, Jesus. We were made to know God and enjoy Him forever. Only faith in Jesus can bring us to God. Have you put your faith in Jesus?

4 PRAY

God, we thank You for creating us to be people who know You and find our purpose through following Jesus. Help us seek You above the things of the world because only You can give meaning to our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.



THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

1 THINK ABOUT THE STORY

- How can we remember to serve the Lord as we go about our days?
- How does following Jesus give our lives purpose?

2 GROUP DISCUSSION

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Ecclesiastes 1. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ecclesiastes 1:2. Remind preteens that Solomon says that everything is futile or worthless or empty without God. Think of a pile of ashes left after a fire has burned the wood. When a strong wind comes along, the pile of ashes will be blown by the wind, scattered and remembered no more. Solomon helps us understand that this is what people's lives are like when they live apart from God. But Solomon also offers us wisdom and hope: a life centered around following the Lord is always meaningful. Solomon shared how people should fear God and trust in Him. Even when hard times come or we are disappointed, nothing is wasted or meaningless for those who have trusted in Jesus.

Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. Where are people most tempted to place their value, worth, and time? Why?

Discuss how people may place their worth, time, and attention on the things of this world—money, good grades, reputation, and success. We often believe we will experience greater joy by gaining the things of the world. However, King Solomon gained all that the world had to offer yet realized that only God could satisfy and provide him with meaning and purpose. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eccl. 2:4-11.)

2. How does faith in Jesus give us purpose?

Tell kids that this world and its values are temporary, but God is eternal. The gospel frees us from chasing after temporary and empty things and transforms our hearts to love and serve God over the ways of the world. Christ came that we may have life and have it in abundance. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eph. 3:7-11.)

3. Why should we trust God and His Word over the ways of the world?

Remind kids that because God is our Creator, all authority and truth come from Him. God holds all wisdom and has promised that those who fear Him and trust in Jesus will have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eccl. 12:13-14.)

BIG PICTURE QUESTION

What does God know?

God knows everything about the past, present, and future.



THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

1 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to Proverbs 3:7. Lead them in reading the key passage aloud together. Invite kids to stand in a large circle. Begin by passing the ball to a kid, instructing him or her to quickly recite the first word of the key passage. Then direct him to pass the ball around the circle. Whoever has the ball in hand for the last word of the key passage will be eliminated. Continue until one kid remains.

2 PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, praising God for giving believers purpose and meaning in following Jesus.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

SUN, WIND, AND STREAM

Challenge kids to perform a specific motion associated with a word. Explain the following motions associated with each word: sun (place both arms above your head in a circle), wind (wave both arms back and forth above your head), stream (move one arm in a wave-like motion). Call out the words in random order. Increase the speed at which you call out the words. Any kid who performs the incorrect motion is out. Play as many rounds as time allows, inviting volunteers to call out the words as well.

Remind kids that in Ecclesiastes 1, Solomon wrote how the sun, wind, and streams repeat the same actions over and over every day. And yet, the sun, wind, and streams are doing what God created them to do. They have purpose in glorifying God by obeying Him and helping life to exist on earth. Even when life seems dull, repetitive, uncertain, unfair, or even meaningless, we can trust that God has a purpose for everything.



Use these activities at the end of the lesson if there is time, once you have completed the rest of the lesson.

1 WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

- What comes to mind when you hear the word “valuable”?
- What is something valuable you own or that you’d like to own?

2 SESSION STARTER

OPTION 1: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



On individual slips of paper, write down a common idiom for each group of two or three kids. For example, “piece of cake” (describes something easy), “break a leg” (good luck), “under the weather” (feeling sick), “raining cats and dogs” (stormy weather), “bull in a China shop” (to be clumsy or to not be careful), “apple of my eye” (something or someone who is cherished above all others), “fish out of water” (in a strange or uncomfortable situation). Then invite groups to guess the meaning of their phrase. Offer assistance for phrases that may be too difficult or consider writing the meanings on a dry erase board for groups to guess from.

SAY “ These phrases have meanings that are different from the actual words. Sometimes our world gives us messages that are different from the truth of God’s words. We can be tempted to gain meaning from the world rather than God. Today, we will learn how the true meaning of life can only be found in Jesus. ”

OPTION 2: A SOLID FOUNDATION

Perform an object lesson to demonstrate how a life built on the firm foundation of Jesus matters. In a plastic bin, place a brick. On the brick, place a small wooden block or plastic block to represent a “house.” Place wet sand in a square mold, such as a plastic container. In a separate plastic bin, gently pour out the sand so it keeps the shape of the square mold. On the sand, place another “house.” Pour the same amount of water over the house on the sand as you do with the house on the brick. Watch as the house built on sand falls down.

SAY “ The house built on sand did not have a strong, solid foundation, and it collapsed. The world is like shifting sand; it will not last, and it will not keep you safe. Today, we will see that **SOLOMON TAUGHT THAT LIFE HAS NO MEANING APART FROM GOD**. Only a life built on Jesus will matter in the end. Jesus taught that those who hear His words and obey them will be like the house built on the rock (Matthew 7:24-27). Following Jesus gives us confidence in knowing that no matter what comes our way, Jesus gives our lives meaning and He will be our place of security. ”