

SOLOMON THOUGHT ABOUT LIFE

ECCLESIASTES 1



KEY PASSAGE: Proverbs 3:7

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What does God know? God knows everything about the past, present, and future.

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.

STORY POINT: Solomon taught that life has no meaning apart from God.



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

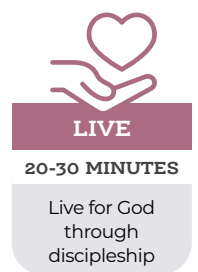
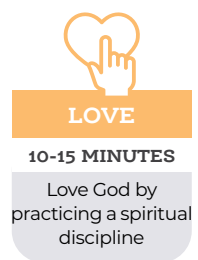
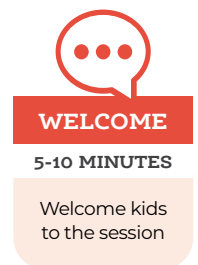
Bible study: reading and studying the truths of the Bible and then applying them to our lives.

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

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The book of Ecclesiastes is part of the Old Testament poetry and wisdom division. Ecclesiastes was written by King Solomon toward the end of his life as he reflected on his legacy and leadership. Though he had all the riches and wisdom life had to offer, he relayed in this writing that nothing matters apart from fearing the Lord and walking in His ways.

If everything is worthless, how are we to live meaningful lives as Christ followers? How is Jesus able to redeem our purpose in life?

The overall tone of Ecclesiastes seems pretty dreary. Solomon spoke of the meaninglessness of all our hard work and effort as people in a fallen world. These ideas seem to be in stark contrast to the ideas of God's beautiful, wonderful creation that we find throughout Scripture. A deeper look reveals that Solomon wasn't commanding his readers to stop caring about working hard, investing in the next generation, or experiencing what life has to offer. Instead, he poetically explained how lives spent on pursuing only the things of this world have no eternal meaning and will not be remembered.

The pursuits of this life are done in vain when we place them above our pursuit of the Lord and the wisdom He provides. Everything loses its meaning when held up against the cross of Jesus Christ. Only a life built on faith in Jesus will matter in the end.

When we order our lives with Jesus as our main pursuit, we experience the purpose and meaning that Christ died for us to receive; we experience life everlasting here and now. The gospel frees us from chasing after temporary, empty things and transforms our hearts to love and serve God. Christ died so that we may have life and have it in abundance (John 10:10).

Lead boys and girls to see the beauty of a life spent pursuing Christ! When all else seems meaningless, in Him we find our meaning as creations lovingly fashioned by a good Creator. Pray that they would turn from their sins and receive the gift of abundant life.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid 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.

| **SAY** “What is the most special item you own? What makes it so special to you?”

Be prepared to help the large group leader with one of the following activities as well as help children to answer any questions asked during large group.

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: MAKE IT MATTER!

Before the session, wrap tape around the first 5-6 inches of a 8–10 foot-long rope. Guide two leaders to hold the rope while the kids place stickers on the taped portion, trying to cover as much of the tape as possible. Tell kids to not place any stickers outside of the taped portion. Prompt kids to think about how the taped portion of the rope represents our life on earth, and the rest represents our eternity.

| **SAY** “The taped portion of the rope could only hold so many stickers. We could live trying to gain money, get the most friends, make the best grades, or be the best athlete—but none of it lasts. How we live our life now affects how we will spend eternity. Today, we will learn how **SOLOMON TAUGHT THAT LIFE HAS NO MEANING APART FROM GOD.**”

OPTION 2: 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.

| **SAY** “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.”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

HAND OUT THE ACTIVITY PAGE TO BEGIN SMALL GROUP –

If you choose not to use the activity page during small group, PLEASE hand it out BEFORE parent pick-up as it has the parent information sheet attached to the coloring sheet so parents know what the children studied today.

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Follow Jesus” activity page.

SAY “ We can follow many different paths in life, but only a life spent trusting in Jesus as Savior and following Him will matter in the end. ”

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ God gave Solomon riches, fame, and wisdom. But Solomon wanted to remind people that all of these things would never be as important or as wonderful as God. What book did Solomon write to help people understand this truth? [Allow responses.] Through the book of Ecclesiastes, **SOLOMON TAUGHT THAT LIFE HAS NO MEANING APART FROM GOD.** ”

Solomon understood that everything on the earth is the same as it has always been. What are some things that happen in your life every day? [Allow responses.] The sun rises in the morning, and we wake up. The sun sets, and we go to bed. We eat, we play, and we do chores. Doing these activities without honoring God through them won’t matter in the end. But when we do these activities for God, we know they will matter because they glorify Him.

What did Solomon say matters in life? [Allow responses.] Solomon said what matters most is knowing God and living for Him. Even though people are sinful, those who trust in Jesus will be forgiven of their sin and can live for God. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ 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. Have you trusted in Jesus? Do you follow Jesus and live for Him? ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Prompt kids to discuss:

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



THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Ecclesiastes 1. Share how the book of Ecclesiastes is in the Old Testament poetry and wisdom division. Discuss how Ecclesiastes shares two perspectives: a life lived without God and a life lived trusting God.

Consider pointing out Jerusalem (H5) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ecclesiastes 1:8, or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verse aloud.

SAY “ Have you ever had a toy, but then it broke and you couldn’t play with it anymore? [Allow responses.] Or maybe you’ve had a toy, but then didn’t want to play with it anymore. Toys don’t last, and no matter how many toys or treasures we have, we eventually get tired of them and want something new. Everything on earth fades away. But a life lived for God will never fade away. God gives our lives purpose, and those who trust in Jesus will live with Him forever. ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “ How does God give us purpose? ”

Tell kids that everything God does is for His glory. This means that God is most important and most valuable because He is Creator and King. God made us to bring Him glory. When we live in ways that help others see how wonderful, valuable, and great God is, we bring Him glory. Encourage kids to think about how they are living with purpose to glorify God.

SAY “ Why does following Jesus matter? ”

Tell kids that this world and everything in it will not last, but God is eternal. Jesus came to forgive our sin so we can have life with God forever. But life with God forever starts now. We follow Jesus to show how God has saved us from sin and changed us to love Him most. Following Jesus brings God glory. Encourage kids to remember that others can see how we follow Jesus and want to follow Him too.

SAY “ How can you help others live for what matters most? ”

Prompt kids to think about people they know or see every day who may not know Jesus. Encourage them to share the gospel with those people. Remind kids that we glorify God when we share the gospel with others. Tell kids that we love people when we help them see how Jesus came to save them from sin.

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: LEARNING FROM LEAVES



Before the session, gather a variety of different leaves from the trees around your house or church. Provide each kid with a piece of paper and a crayon. Show them the leaves you gathered, and invite them to pick one leaf each. Demonstrate how to cover their leaf with a sheet of paper and color over the paper with a crayon. This will pick up all the grooves and lines, leaving the kids with an imprint of their leaves. Encourage them to hang on to their leaf drawing as a reminder of what they will be learning.

SAY “Leaves grow, change color, and soon die. But God designed the leaves with good purposes. Did you know that the leaves help make food for the tree or plant? They do! They make sugar for the plant. Leaves also produce oxygen for our planet. Big trees with lots of leaves provide shade. And we experience their beauty when they change colors. God controls the seasons and the changing of the leaves, just as He is in control of our lives. Even though the leaves may only be alive for a short time, God has given them purpose. Today, we’ll learn how we find meaning and purpose when we follow Jesus.”

OPTION 2: PAINT WITH PURPOSE



Provide kids with a piece of construction paper, washable ink pads, watercolor paints, and paint brushes. Lead kids to take their thumb and press it onto the ink pad. Then tell kids to make several thumbprints on their paper. Next, challenge kids to turn their thumbprints into a picture using the watercolor paints. Then invite kids to share their pictures with the group, showing how they gave each thumbprint a purpose in their painting.

SAY “Every one of you has a thumbprint unique to you. No one else has a thumbprint just like you. God created you with a special purpose: to glorify Him! Like you created your thumbprints to have a purpose, God made you to live for Him. We all have special ways God has gifted us to make Jesus known. Whether we obey our parents or score a soccer goal, we all can show that Jesus is most special to us and live for Him.”

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

Do the Key Passage activity only if you feel you have time.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Proverbs 3:7 together.

SAY “Solomon taught that earthly things don’t last. We know how to live with purpose when we turn away from sin and turn to Jesus. Now let’s explore this truth more in our key passage.”

Write a word or two of the key passage on sticky notes. Place one sticky note on each kid’s forehead. Encourage them to work together to find out which word each person has. Instruct them to arrange themselves in the correct order of the key passage. Once the kids are lined up, help them recite the key passage from memory along with you.

Lead kids to sing “Fear the LORD (Proverbs 3:7).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “God, thank You for providing us with what is lasting through your Son, Jesus. Help us be light in a dark world and share the meaning and purpose You offer with those around us. Amen.”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**

