



[Title Slide] Any *Winnie the Pooh* fans here? Apparently, Pooh is super cute. Tigger is a little too wired. Piglet might be the smartest one in the group. The strangest character in the Poohverse, though, is Eeyore. When the author came up with this group of children’s characters, for some reason they thought what every small child needs is a super depressed and hopeless character. If you’re not familiar, here’s a scene from the Christopher Robin movie that came out a few years ago to refresh your memories:

[Video Clip] Christopher Robin "Eeyore Rescue" Clip (1:04)
https://youtu.be/IQSWJbqkVws?si=_7_XJPZZNCnVRCAg

[Slide] The author of Ecclesiastes, the book we’re going to be taking a closer look at over the next few weeks, is the Eeyore of the biblical authors. Everything he wrote was a bummer. He looked around at the world around him and concluded that it’s all pointless – a message that resulted in a lot of debate a couple thousand years ago over whether it should even be included in the Bible.¹

[Slide] *Ecclesiastes 1:1-2 (NLT) ¹ These are the words of the Teacher, King David’s son, who ruled in Jerusalem.*

Tradition has claimed Solomon as the author, but the reality is that we don’t know who wrote it. The author never identified himself, simply claiming to be writing down the words of David’s son, but that could refer to any of David’s descendants.² Because we don’t know who wrote it, we’re not sure when it was written, only that it was somewhere between 2400 and 3000 years ago.³ The next ten verses, which are our focus for today, are essentially a summary of the rest of the book. It’s kind of an introduction to let readers know where these twelve chapters are headed.

² *“Everything is meaningless,” says the Teacher, “completely meaningless!”*

¹ Lisa Michele Wolfe, *Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes)* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2020), Kindle location 1404.

² Justin S. Holcomb, *Knowing the Bible: Ecclesiastes* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 8.

³ August H. Konkel and Tremper Longman III, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Job, Ecclesiastes & Song of Songs*, ed. Philip W Comfort (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006), 254.

The author used the word, “meaningless” 35 times over the course of this short book.⁴ 35 times! The ancient Hebrew word translated meaningless here is “*hebel*,” which has been difficult for scholars to translate exactly. It communicates more than just meaninglessness; several of my commentaries have suggested a better translation would be “absurd.”⁵ In other words, this verse could be translated “Absolutely absurd. Everything is absurd.” The point? Hw experienced complete frustration, hopelessness, and disillusionment with the world around him.

Which, if we’re honest with each other, I believe a number of us have felt this way at one time or another or maybe feel this way right now. I know I have had moments where this has been true of me.

[Slide] *Ecclesiastes 1:3-7 (NLT)* ³ *What do people get for all their hard work under the sun?*

This is one of our own big questions isn’t it? What does it all mean? What is my purpose? Why am I living this life? What is the answer to life, the universe, and everything?

For Ecclesiastes, the answer is nothing. We get nothing. It’s all absurdly meaningless.

⁴ *Generations come and generations go, but the earth never changes.*

The work and lives of all these countless generations, but nothing changes. History just repeats itself over and over.

⁵ *The sun rises and the sun sets, then hurries around to rise again.*

The word for “hurries” here literally means “pants,” as in the sun can barely keep up with its daily cycle, running and panting, out of breath to do the same thing over and over.⁶

⁶ *The wind blows south, and then turns north. Around and around it goes, blowing in circles.*

The wind looks like it’s doing something, but it’s just going in circles, which gets it nowhere. The same thing happens with water:

⁴ Ibid, 264.

⁵ Peter Enns, *Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), Kindle location 439.

⁶ Konkel and Longman III, *Job, Ecclesiastes & Song of Songs*, 264.

7 Rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows out again to the sea.

[Slide] ***Ecclesiastes 1:8-11 (NLT) 8 Everything is wearisome beyond description.***

It's exhausting. It's boring. There's no point to it.

No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content.

There are no words that can make it mean something.

9 History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new.

The Lion King made the “circle of life” famous as a good thing, but for the author of Ecclesiastes, this circle of life is just another “expression of the absurdity of life” since nothing comes out of this cycle.⁷

10 Sometimes people say, “Here is something new!” But actually it is old; nothing is ever truly new. 11 We don't remember what happened in the past, and in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now.

We will all die, and no one will remember us. I mean, think about it, I know almost nothing about my great grandparents. [Leader tip: edit this to fit your own story.] One of my grandfathers died a couple years before I was born, so I know little about him. My sons know less. Our memories barely last more than a couple generations.

This is the summary of Ecclesiastes. The rest of the book will dive deeper into just how meaningless it all is. What brings someone to this kind of hopelessness?

Because our world, in and of itself, cannot give us meaning.

I love how C.S. Lewis puts it in his book, *Mere Christianity*:

[Slide] ***“If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”***⁸

⁷ Enns, *Ecclesiastes*, Kindle location 490.

⁸ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2021) Kindle location 1768.



ECCLESIASTES

everything is meaningless

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

- What stands out to you from today's lesson?
What was something you heard today you hadn't thought about before?
- Is the attitude "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die," healthy? Why or why not?
- Why do we want to be the ones in control of our lives? Should we be?
- Read Romans 8:28; what does it tell you about God's control?
- Read Ephesians 2:10; why does God call you His masterpiece?
- Why does God plan good things for you to do?
- The author of Ecclesiastes thought everything was meaningless; how did his view of control shape that belief? What would a healthy view look like?
- What good things is God calling you to do this week?
- In what ways would doing those good things give meaning to life?



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Ecclesiastes | Remember God Now

Ecclesiastes 12:1, 8-14 (NLT)

¹ Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor him in your youth before you grow old and say, "Life is not pleasant anymore."

⁸ "Everything is meaningless," says the Teacher, "completely meaningless."

⁹ Keep this in mind: The Teacher was considered wise, and he taught the people everything he knew. He listened carefully to many proverbs, studying and classifying them. ¹⁰ The Teacher sought to find just the right words to express truths clearly.

¹¹ The words of the wise are like cattle prods—painful but helpful. Their collected sayings are like a nail-studded stick with which a shepherd drives the sheep.

¹² But, my child, let me give you some further advice: Be careful, for writing books is endless, and much study wears you out.

¹³ That's the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty. ¹⁴ God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.



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John 10:11 (NLT)

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.”

James 1:22-25 (NLT)

²² But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. ²³ For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. ²⁴ You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. ²⁵ But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

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HOW WILL I HONOR GOD THIS WEEK?

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