

DAY 1 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

Is the season you are currently in, the “happiest” season you have ever had in your life? Why or why not?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

I said to myself, “Come on, let’s try pleasure. Let’s look for the ‘good things’ in life.” But I found that this, too, was meaningless. So I said, “Laughter is silly. What good does it do to seek pleasure?” After much thought, I decided to cheer myself with wine. And while still seeking wisdom, I clutched at foolishness. In this way, I tried to experience the only happiness most people find during their brief life in this world.

I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards. I made gardens and parks, filling them with all kinds of fruit trees. I built reservoirs to collect the water to irrigate my many flourishing groves. I bought slaves, both men and women, and others were born into my household. I also owned large herds and flocks, more than any of the kings who had lived in Jerusalem before me. I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both men and women, and had many beautiful concubines. I had everything a man could desire!

So I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom never failed me. Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure. I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors. But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere. **Ecclesiastes 2:1–11 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Are you surprised that even the wisest king struggled to find lasting happiness?

What do you believe is worthwhile and worthless in your life right now?

When you have “everything” you could desire and you are not happy or fulfilled, what do you do next?

We are eternal beings on a broken and cursed world. Is it any wonder that we are built for more than what we can find or experience during this life? What should be our focus?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for coming to bring us from darkness to light, from death to life, from meaningless pursuits to genuine love for you and other eternal people. Help me be fulfilled as I long to be with you for eternity.

DAY 2 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

If you could relive any season of your life, what would it be and why?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

So I decided to compare wisdom with foolishness and madness (for who can do this better than I, the king?). I thought, “Wisdom is better than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness. For the wise can see where they are going, but fools walk in the dark.” Yet I saw that the wise and the foolish share the same fate. Both will die. So I said to myself, “Since I will end up the same as the fool, what’s the value of all my wisdom? This is all so meaningless!” For the wise and the foolish both die. The wise will not be remembered any longer than the fool. In the days to come, both will be forgotten.

So I came to hate life because everything done here under the sun is so troubling. Everything is meaningless—like chasing the wind.

I came to hate all my hard work here on earth, for I must leave to others everything I have earned. And who can tell whether my successors will be wise or foolish? Yet they will control everything I have gained by my skill and hard work under the sun. How meaningless! So I gave up in despair, questioning the value of all my hard work in this world.

Some people work wisely with knowledge and skill, then must leave the fruit of their efforts to someone who hasn’t worked for it. This, too, is meaningless, a great tragedy. So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety? Their days of labor are filled with pain and grief; even at night their minds cannot rest. It is all meaningless.

So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that these pleasures are from the hand of God. For who can eat or enjoy anything apart from him? God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him. But if a sinner becomes wealthy, God takes the wealth away and gives it to those who please him. This, too, is meaningless—like chasing the wind. **Ecclesiastes 2:12–26 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Solomon had considered what life was like. Now he was considering what would happen to his work after his death. He concluded that God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to those who please him. How does the Bible teach us we can “please God”?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for forgiving me of my sins through the blood of Jesus. Thank you for giving me new life through your Holy Spirit. Make me pleasing in your sight so I can experience your gifts of wisdom, knowledge and joy!

DAY 3 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

Were you close with, or distant from, your father? How has that affected how you relate to God as your Father?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up.

A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn away.

A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace.

What do people really get for all their hard work? I have seen the burden God has placed on us all. Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God’s work from beginning to end.

So I concluded there is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we can. And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God. And I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God’s purpose is that people should fear him.

What is happening now has happened before, and what will happen in the future has happened before, because God makes the same things happen over and over again.

Ecclesiastes 3:1–15 NLT

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Do you receive the good gifts of God and enjoy them?

Do you accept that what God does is final?

Do you fear God?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, teach me to number my days so that I can love, appreciate, and fear you. Thank you for your good gifts!

DAY 4 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

In what area do you consider yourself wise? In what area of your life do you feel inadequate?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Send your grain across the seas, and in time, profits will flow back to you. But divide your investments among many places, for you do not know what risks might lie ahead.

When clouds are heavy, the rains come down. Whether a tree falls north or south, it stays where it falls. Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest.

Just as you cannot understand the path of the wind or the mystery of a tiny baby growing in its mother’s womb, so you cannot understand the activity of God, who does all things.

Plant your seed in the morning and keep busy all afternoon, for you don’t know if profit will come from one activity or another—or maybe both.

Light is sweet; how pleasant to see a new day dawning. When people live to be very old, let them rejoice in every day of life. But let them also remember there will be many dark days. Everything still to come is meaningless.

Young people, it’s wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do. So refuse to worry, and keep your body healthy. But remember that youth, with a whole life before you, is meaningless. 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.”

Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:1 NLT

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Is there any action or attitude or change that this Scripture challenges you to start or stop?

Do you refuse to worry?

Do you keep your body healthy?

Are you taking full advantage of this season in your life?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for allowing me to benefit from the very wisdom you gave King Solomon. Thank you for illustrating your heart, wisdom, and will through his teachings. May my life be marked by your love and wisdom, and may many people benefit from your influence through me.

DAY 5 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER (“SOAP”)

CONVERSATION STARTER

If you could be known for one thing in 100 years, what would it be and why?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION

Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.

But not the wicked! They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind. They will be condemned at the time of judgment. Sinners will have no place among the godly. For the LORD watches over the path of the godly, but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

Psalm 1:1–6 NLT

On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, “Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.’” (When he said “living water,” he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.) **John 7:37–39 NLT**

For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. **Romans 6:4–8 NLT**

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

Are you able to discern who in your life are “wicked,” “sinners,” “mockers,” and “godly”?

Do “rivers of living water” flow from your heart the way Jesus said would happen to everyone believing in Him?

If you died with Christ, you have been SET FREE from the POWER of sin. On this earth, you are not set free from the presence or the pull of sin, but the POWER of sin (guilt, shame, isolation). You are forgiven and connected forever to God and God’s people. Celebrate that today!

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

Lord, thank you for saving me from sin and shame and filling me with “rivers of living water!” May you be glorified in and through me, and may people know you better because of me.