

Simply

ECCLESIASTES

Finding Hope When All
Seems Meaningless



Bible Study Guide

simplifying life
re-prioritizing life
cultivating a deeper walk with God

All Bible verses are taken from the New Living Translation unless otherwise indicated.

The following people contributed to this study guide.

W. Milton Adams
Carolyn Byers
John Metrisko
Cynthia Stigora

You may copy this resource or any part of it to build up God's Kingdom.
Please include the following reference information:

More studies available at
www.SimpleChurchAtHome.com

the WORD among us
simply ECCLESIASTES

Outline

[the WORD among us](#)
[How to use this leader's guide](#)

the teacher's lecture

1. [Meaninglessness](#), 1:1-11
2. [Chasing the Wind](#), 1:12-18
3. [Mid-life Crisis](#), 2:1-11
4. [Conclusion #1](#), 2:11-26
5. [Conclusion #2](#), 3:1-15
6. [Conclusion #3](#), 3:16-22
7. [Secret](#), 4:1-16
8. [Talk is Cheap](#), 5:1-7
9. [Conclusion #4](#), 5:8-20
10. [Six Questions](#), 6:1-12
11. [Wisdom for Life](#), 7:1-14
12. [Wisdom's Limitations](#), 7:15-29
13. [Conclusion #5](#), 8:1-17
14. [Death](#), 9:1-12
15. [A Quiet Spirit](#), 9:13-10:4
16. [Wisdom](#), 10:5-20
17. [Hopeful Meaninglessness](#), 11:1-10
18. [The Final Conclusion](#), 12:1-14

the **WORD** among us

the WORD among us series is different. These leader's guides capture real group life, where secular and unchurched people's lives are being changed.

People need the Everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ.

People also need safe and authentic friendship with Christians. Most unchurched people will not seek you or your group's friendship. You will have to intentionally seek their friendship.

May God bless you as you simplify and re-prioritize your life, creating time to "spend" with unchurched people.

how to use this leader's guide

This leaders' guide assumes you have:

1. read through the www.SimpleChurchAtHome.com web page.
2. completed the online Phase One and Phase Two Simple Church training.

Simple Church Start-up Guidelines: Download and print this guide to help you start a successful Simple Church. It can be downloaded from the DropBOX found on the Simple Church training web page.

title

[outline](#)

Bible story reference

Message of Hope: Have this idea crystal-clear in your mind. This is what you want people to remember for the rest of the week.

Leader's Tip: These tips show up here and there.

Planning Ahead: These include items coming in future weeks that you may need to plan for ahead of time.

Needed for Today: Additional items that you will need.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We are glad you are here. During this gathering, we hope you will connect with God and with each other. And, we hope you will be inspired to be of service to someone during this next week. Before we introduce ourselves, let's remember:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people—new Christians, long-time Christians, and people who are thinking about becoming Christians. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We do not try to impress people with how much Bible quoting we can do. We are common people.
- Please be sensitive so that everyone has opportunity to share and contribute.
- Please turn cell phones off, or on “vibrate.”

Check-In:

Visit www.SimpleChurchAtHome.com for more study guides.

page 5

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Rotation Questions: Rotate through the following three questions: (Check-In is not used in Growth Groups)

Week 1: How are you simplifying your life?

Week 2: How are you re-prioritizing your life?

Week 3: What would it take to cultivate a deeper relationship with God.

Week 4: How are you simplifying your life?

Week 5: etc.

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments: *(This part is hard for church people. They will have to learn how to be comfortable with “quiet space.” People will need time to think and encouragement to share. Learn to let Jesus be the leader of your group and see how and where He leads. This time is often a mixture of sharing, singing, praying. It is a time when people share prayer requests, reflection, praise, joy, and thankfulness to God. This is body-life.)*

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses; rejoice in God's goodness
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first) text*

page 2 of a typical leaders guide for a given week

Bridge: The one sentence transitions the group from the Kick-Off Question to opening their Bibles.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Bible story reference

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible during our discussion.)

Listening & Learning Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

Some helpful pointers

1. Remember, there are no "right answers" to relational Bible study questions.
2. You DO NOT have to "accomplish" all the the questions listed. Use them as a resource from which to select during your discussion.
3. Spend a maximum of 50% of your Bible study time on Listening & Learning Questions.
4. Affirm each answer, no matter what is said, by saying something like, "Excellent, someone else;" "Thanks for sharing, someone else;" "Good, someone else;" "How about the rest of you,

- what do you think?"
5. Did you catch the common denominator, "someone else"? You are always affirming and always inviting others to give input.
 6. If someone gets off-focus, I will say (after they have stopped talking), "Thanks. How about someone else?" then restate the question to refocus the discussion.

Heart & Healing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

Some helpful pointers

1. Spend a minimum of 50% of your time on Heart Questions.
2. These questions are designed to invite people to share portions of their life story as it engages with the Bible study.
3. This is not a doctrinal study. This is not a life application study. It is a relational Bible study. There is a big difference.
4. At appropriate times, affirm confidentiality and offer reassurance that this is a safe place to share and grow spiritually.

Wrap Up:

1. "This group does not exist for us." Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

1. Keep it simple.
2. Taco Salad (Mexican Haystack).
3. Hostess (one of the CORE4) provides the beans.
4. During lunch have Taco Salad sign-up sheet available.

meaninglessness

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

Message of Hope: Meaninglessness can turn into meaningfulness.

Leader's Tip: Most people do not need to be told that life on this earth is rather grim. But people need hope. Ecclesiastes begins with a lot of disparity. It might be tempting to try to make this story a "be happy" story. Avoid this temptation. Later Ecclesiastes will teach us the secret to finding meaning in a meaningless world.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language. We are common people.
- We do not try to impress people with how much Bible quoting we can do.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a "lowlight" in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
What is one of the most meaningful things that has happened to you?

Bridge: Everyone is looking for hope and meaning in life. Today we start a new study in the Old Testament book of the Bible called Ecclesiastes where the word “meaningless” is used some 30 times. As we read today's story you might conclude that this study is going to be a waste of time. But hold on and stay plugged in. If you are looking for the real secrets of life that will give you hope and meaning, then you will not be disappointed. So let's get started.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 1:1-11
(*Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.*)

Listening & Learning Questions: (*50% of your study time*)

1. Having only read the first 11 verses, one might think that this king, Solomon, has a real attitude problem. If everything in life is so meaningless, why do you think he takes the time and effort to write this book of Ecclesiastes?
2. How do you think Solomon would answer his own question in verse 3?
3. Why, in verse 8, do you think Solomon has decided that people are never satisfied nor content?
4. It seems in verse 10 that Solomon thinks that something has to be “new” for it to have meaning. Why do you think he makes this statement?

Heart & Healing Questions: (*50% of your study time*)

1. Two people watch a spectacular sunset. One person thinks it is “beautiful beyond description,” and the other person thinks it is “wearisome beyond description” (verse 8). What are the differences between these two people? What makes this difference?
2. Verse 3 seems to suggest that the purpose of work is to gain/get something – which seems like a rather selfish approach to life. What are the different ways that work refines our character?
3. In what ways has our culture subscribed to the same idea that something has to be “new” for it to be exciting and meaningful?
4. How do you find meaning in the mundane?
5. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being “meaningless” and 10 being “meaningful,” where would you score your current life experience?
6. What would it take for you to move your score up one notch?
7. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
8. Remember, **Meaninglessness can turn into meaningfulness.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. “This group does not exist for us.” Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

chasing the wind

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

Message of Hope: Great wisdom brings grief, so be willing to look somewhere else for life's meaning.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We do not try to impress people with how much Bible quoting we can do. We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
In what subjects did you (or do you) get the best grades?

Bridge: It has been said, “If you wanted someone who knew everything, you should have hired me right out of 8th grade.” Today's story is about someone who was wise and possessed knowledge, but as you will see, his life was full of grief and sorrow. Why do wisdom and grief often go together? Open your Bible and let's continue to explore where life's meaning comes from.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 1:12-18
(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Even in today's world, knowledge is used as power and a knowledgeable person is sometimes seen as a superior person. So then, why does Solomon conclude that gaining knowledge is like “chasing the wind”?
2. Knowledge comes in all shapes and sizes: spiritual, biblical, philosophical, legal, medical, etc.. What advice does Solomon have for someone whose personal identity and self-worth is based on how much knowledge he possesses?
3. Why, in verse 13, has God been accused of dealing a tragic existence to the human race? What makes it tragic?
4. Explain how, in verse 18, greater wisdom and knowledge increase a person's grief and sorrow?
5. When does too much wisdom and knowledge cross the line and become “chasing the wind”?

Heart & Healing Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Where “under heaven” have you searched for life's meaning?
2. Where have you found it?
3. With what kinds of grief and sorrow do you live as a result of your wisdom and knowledge?
4. Solomon is right. This world is full of tragedy. What is a “significant tragedy” that you have experienced in your life?
5. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
6. Remember, **great wisdom brings grief, so be willing to look somewhere else for life's meaning.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. “This group does not exist for us.” Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

mid-life crisis

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

Message of Hope: Pleasure and wisdom are meaningless, so be willing to look somewhere else for meaning in life.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We do not try to impress people with how much Bible quoting we can do. We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*

When growing up, what was modeled or communicated to you as giving a person value and worth in life?

Bridge: You may be tempted to think that the author of today's story, King Solomon, is in a mid-life crisis. But you will notice that Solomon is systematically trying to destroy all the common areas that people search for meaning in life. The bottom line is that people would not be willing to listen to his conclusion if they thought there was still hope of finding meaning in all the popular places. So hang in there; starting next week he will begin to give us clues as to where true meaning can be found. Let's open our Bible and read

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11
(*Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.*)

Listening & Learning Questions: (*50% of your study time*)

1. What different forms of pleasure, good or bad, do people use today to try to find meaning in life?
2. Hard work, listed in verse 10, is usually thought of as a good thing. Why does it end up on the “meaningless” list?
3. What is wisdom? What is foolishness?
4. What value is there to gaining wisdom if it is not found in comparing one's self to someone else?
5. Why is Solomon so unhappy with what most people would consider great success?

Heart & Healing Questions: (*50% of your study time*)

1. In verses 4-8 Solomon lists all the accomplishments he used to seek after meaning. What are some of the different accomplishments you have used to find meaning in life?
2. We know what Solomon's conclusion is, “There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.” At this stage of your life, how is your conclusion the same as, or different, than Solomon's?
3. What areas in life do you feel like you are chasing the wind?
4. When people die they are remembered for a little while. For what do you hope to be remembered?
5. How does this story help you focus on the truly important things in life? What would you say they are?
6. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
7. Remember, **pleasure and wisdom are meaningless, so be willing to look somewhere else for meaning in life.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. “This group does not exist for us.” Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

conclusion #1

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 2:12-26

Message of Hope: The ability to enjoy this life only comes from God, so ask Him for the gift.

Leader's Tip: Take a look ahead of time at Dr. Neil Nedley's [Depression Recovery](#) resources. It is one of the best available. Share this information with your group for anyone who might benefit from this material.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language. We are common people.
- We do not try to impress people with how much Bible quoting we can do.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*

What is one of your most valued possessions? To whom would you like it to go when you die?

Bridge: Today's story takes a candid look at what happens to our possessions, wealth, and valuables when we die. Today's story also gives the first secret for finding life's meaning in a meaningless world.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 2:12-26.
(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. What are some good motives and what are some bad motives for gaining wisdom?
2. If Solomon hated life and everything was so meaningless, what kept him from ending his life and being done with it all?
3. It almost seems that Solomon's motives for what he does are very self-centered and selfish. What evidence of this do you find in this story?
4. Solomon concludes that enjoying life and finding satisfaction in his work is a choice that he is not able to make. Where does this ability come from?
5. Twice verse 26 talks about pleasing God. This is important, because God gives the ability to enjoy life to those who please him. As of yet, Solomon has not told us how we are to please God. What do you think Solomon would say if we could ask him?

Heart & Healing Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. How do you resonate with Solomon's conclusion that gaining wisdom and working hard – in and of themselves – do not bring meaning or satisfaction?
2. So then, what has honestly motivated you to do a day's work and along the way learn as much as you can?
3. How does this story help you focus on the important things in your life? What are they?
4. Now let's be honest with ourselves, what in your life pleases and displeases God? What is one thing you need to surrender to God?
5. How does depression play into all of this?
Leader's Tip: Dr. Neil Nedley's [Depression Recovery](#) is one of the best available. Share this information with your group for anyone who might benefit from this material.
6. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
7. Remember, **the ability to enjoy this life only comes from God, so ask him for the gift.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. “This group does not exist for us.” Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

conclusion #2

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

Message of Hope: If you would like the ability to enjoy your life, ask God for this special gift.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We do not try to impress people with how much Bible quoting we can do. We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)* How would you describe the “phase of life” you are currently in?

Bridge: Today's story gives you the secret for finding meaning when life seems meaningless. Enough said, so let's read the story.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 3:1-15
(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Why do you think verses 1-8 were included, and what is their purpose?
2. Verse 9 asks an excellent question, “What do people really get for all their hard work?”
3. Verse 9 seems to ask a very selfish question that would indeed fit well in today's society, “Is life all about what I get?”
4. What keeps people from enjoying life in today's culture?
5. How would you agree or disagree with verse 11, “He [God] has made everything beautiful for its own time”?
6. What does Solomon mean, and what are the inescapable implications for every human, when he says, “He [God] has planted eternity in the human heart”?
7. How do you make sense of verse 14, “God's purpose is that people should fear him”?

Heart & Healing Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. How would you describe what “time” it is for you right now (verses 1-8)?
2. When is a time in your life when a bad situation turned into a beautiful situation? What role did God play in the turn-around?
3. Where do you see the “eternity seed” that Solomon talks about in verse 11, growing in your heart?
4. There are lots of people who have plenty, but they have not received God's gift of being able to enjoy what they have. How would you help these people? What practical advice would you give them?
5. If you applied Solomon's conclusion in verses 12-13 to your life, how would your life be different?
6. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
7. Remember, **if you would like the ability to enjoy your life, ask God for this special gift.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. “This group does not exist for us.” Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

conclusion #3

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 3:16-22

Message of Hope: Enjoy life and make the best of it.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We do not try to impress people with how much Bible quoting we can do. We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
What was the last thing you complained about?

Bridge: Today's story gets right to the point when it comes to complaining. Let's face it, all of us have hard times. The questions to ask are, "On what will we focus? What legacy will we leave in this life?" So ready or not, let's read the story.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 3:16-22
(*Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.*)

Listening & Learning Questions: (*50% of your study time*)

1. What does verse 17 tell us about Solomon's belief about God?
2. If this belief is true, how does this help a person turn life's meaninglessness into meaning?
3. Why does Solomon even bother to compare humans to animals?
4. What does verse 21 teach us about death? Does Ecclesiastes 12:7 add any helpful information?
5. If people are to be happy in their work, what keeps so many from being happy?
6. How does one make sense of verse 17 and the last sentence of verse 22 (in the New Living Translation)? Why would God have a judgement if a person's death is his end forever?

Heart & Healing Questions: (*50% of your study time*)

1. Everyone eventually dies, and we all leave a legacy. What do you hope people will remember about you and your life?
2. We all live in a messed up and unfair world, so what do you think makes the difference between happy and unhappy people?
3. When facing a negative spiral, what helps you put life into a proper perspective?
4. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
5. Remember, **enjoy life and make the best of it.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. "This group does not exist for us." Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

secret

outline

Ecclesiastes 4:1-16

Message of Hope: Meaningful friendships are essential to a meaningful life.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*

When was a time in your life that a friend was there for you during a difficult time?

Bridge: You may have heard the saying, “There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.” Today’s story shares one of the secrets to living a meaningful life. But this secret requires risk-taking. Let’s read

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 4:1-16
(*Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.*)

Listening & Learning Questions: (*50% of your study time*)

1. If one is never born again, do you think it is possible for them to live forever with God?
2. Why is envy such a successful motivator in people’s lives?
3. Why do so many people search for happiness and meaning in acquiring material wealth? Does wealth satisfy man’s need for meaning, or does it, too, leave one feeling empty?
4. Four times in this chapter Solomon refers to life as meaningless. Are there any common themes surrounding the use of this word?
5. What are the deeper differences in verses 13-16 between aspiring to power and accepting the invitations God gives you to join Him in His Kingdom work?

Heart & Healing Questions: (*50% of your study time*)

1. Let’s read verses 1 and 13-16 again. This story begins and ends with observations about power. When in your life have you seen good examples of people who used their power and influence to glorify God?
2. How have you been tempted to use your power and influence in destructive ways?
3. Let’s go back to verse 4 and honestly ask ourselves, “What are some good motives and some poor motives we have used to motivate ourselves in life?”
4. Sadly, the American dream says, “Be independent; do life alone; and do not get close to anybody.” Why do you think lots of people have lived out this American dream in their personal lives?
5. Living life according to verses 9-12 is risky. How have you gone against the current to turn meaningless independence into meaningful “interdependence”?
6. What are the benefits you would like to receive from living a life in close relationships that goes beyond endless, superficial joking?
7. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
8. Remember, **meaningful friendships are essential to a meaningful life.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. “This group does not exist for us.” Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

talk is cheap

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

Message of Hope: Sometimes humble silence before God is better than talking.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*

On a scale of 0 to 10, with “0” being a quiet person who does not like to talk much, and “10” being a person who is the life of the party and likes to talk a lot, where would you place yourself?

Bridge: Words are powerful. People use, or do not use, words in a number of ways: for control, manipulation, persuasion, love, kindness, and to bless others. Today's story is quite sobering because, as we will see in a few minutes, God takes our words very seriously.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 5:1-7
(*Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.*)

Listening & Learning Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. In Solomon's day people went to a temple to worship. In verse 1 and 2, what is his main point? What are the principles that would apply to a Simple Church context?
2. Let's read verse 3 in all the Bible translations that are represented here. When would Solomon say that activity crosses the line and becomes "too much activity"?
3. How is it possible that too many words reveal foolishness?
4. Read verse 6 again. In today's world how do our mouths make us sin?
5. Verse 7 records the second time that Solomon says, "Fear God." The first time was in 3:15. What are the similarities and/or differences between these two verses?
6. If you were to summarize this story for a five-year-old child, what would you say?

Heart & Healing Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Words, or the lack of words, are powerful. How do people use, or not use, their words to manipulate and control others?
2. If we are honest with ourselves, how do we hide behind our words today?
3. When was a low or desperate time in your life where you made promises to God? What were the promises, and how did you follow through (or not follow through) on your promises?
4. Explain how you have, if any, a healthy fear of God?
5. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
6. Remember, **humble silence before God is sometimes better than talking.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. "This group does not exist for us." Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

conclusion #4

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 5:8-20

Message of Hope: The ability to enjoy this life only comes from God, so ask him for the gift.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowligh” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
For what pleasures in life do you not find enough time?

Bridge: Today's story talks about money and identifies the secret for enjoying life. So if you find yourself frustrated with life, or discouraged, or angry, or just confused and you are looking for meaning in life, take this story seriously. If put it into practice, it has the ability to change your life.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 5:8-20
(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Let's define the word "wealth." What does it mean and what does it include?
2. Why do you think that Solomon says, "Matters of justice get lost in red tape and bureaucracy"?
3. Read verse 9 again. If this is true, what is at the root of people's thinking that leads them to believe that more money will bring more happiness?
4. Solomon, in verse 11, gives one rather sarcastic reason to build wealth. What is it? How might we build and use our wealth to God's glory?
5. Solomon states, in verse 13, "Hoarding riches harms the saver." How does a person know when saving money becomes hoarding money?
6. Reread the following verses: 1:23-25; 3:12-13; 3:22; and 5:18-19. What are the common themes?
7. How do you reconcile verse 17 with verse 20?

Heart & Healing Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. How have you used your wealth to help and benefit others?
2. How has the illusion of money and wealth let you down?
3. Now let's be honest with ourselves. People are watching how we live our life. Can they quite accurately identify our priorities in life? What priority would they say the pursuit of wealth (be it money, social status, or living the "American dream") has in your life?
4. When in your life have you lived under the cloud of frustration, discouragement, and anger as described in verse 17?
5. If you were to really apply verse 20 to your life, describe the difference it would make in your life.
6. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
7. Remember, **the ability to enjoy this life only comes from God, so ask him for the gift.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. "This group does not exist for us." Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

six questions

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

Message of Hope: Enjoy life, there are few happier options.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*

Dream a bit – if all goes well, what will happen in your life over the next twelve months?

Bridge: Today's story is rather gloomy. So, we are going to shift gears for a few moments and talk about the gloomy parts of life. Everybody faces good and bad times in life – that is just the way life is. But no matter what we face in life, we must decide how we will respond. This is hard, as you will see in this story. Even Solomon had a hard time practicing his own advice. But it is still good advice. So let's get started.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 6:1-12
(*Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.*)

Listening & Learning Questions: (*50% of your study time*)

1. Solomon asks at least six questions in this story. It may be tempting to answer these questions with all negative or all positive answers. Let's consider well our reflections, and challenge ourselves to give balanced answers. Dig into these six questions (verses 6, 8, 11, and 12) and get to the deeper issues. How would you answer each of Solomon's questions from both a negative and positive view point?
2. Solomon is one of the wisest and wealthiest people who ever lived. Why do you think he is so down on so many things?
3. How do you think Solomon's life would have been different if he had practiced his own advice in verse 9?

Heart & Healing Questions: (*50% of your study time*)

1. What parts of life do you enjoy the most, and what parts of life are not enjoyable?
2. How do you make the best of the not-so-enjoyable parts of life?
3. When you are experiencing a hard time in life, how do you go about regaining focus, encouragement, and support?
4. Imagine that a five-year-old old girl walks up to you and asks you the question, “What is the purpose of your life?” What you don't know, is that your answer *will be the deciding factor* as to the attitude she will take with her through the rest of the her life. How would you answer her question?
5. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
6. Remember, **enjoy life, there are few happier options.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. “This group does not exist for us.” Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

wisdom for life

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 7:1-14

Message of Hope: Wisdom will benefit those who follow it.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*

Who is someone you admire as a wise person with a good reputation? Why?

Bridge: Today's story is about wisdom. Now wisdom is an odd thing because people who follow it benefit from it even if they do not understand it or believe in it. You might say that wisdom is an “equal opportunity provider.”

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 7:1-14
(*Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.*)

Listening & Learning Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. When one digs down to the foundation, what determines the strength or weakness of a person's reputation?
2. Take another look at verses 1, 2 and 4. What do you think motivates Solomon to say these things about death?
3. In verses 2, 3, and 4 Solomon is quite hard on the person who is out to party, laugh, and have a good time. Solomon is addressing some deeper issues that are often covered over by these kind of activities. How is it that “surface” activities usually cover up the deeper issues of life?
4. Let's identify as many of the characteristics of foolish and wise people in this story as we can.
5. Why is it unwise to long for “the good old days” in verse 10?
6. Having spent time thinking and talking about this story, how would you now define wisdom?

Heart & Healing Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Going back to our kick-off question, who is someone you admire as a wise person with a good reputation? What wisdom qualities do you admire in this person?
2. Funerals are often difficult times for many reasons. But, when attending a funeral, about what deeper issues of life does it prompt you to think?
3. How are you tempted to joke and laugh as a way to avoid deeper and more meaningful conversations with people.
4. We all enjoy prosperity, but at times in life we experience hard times. How do you work through your harder times in life?
5. Only the last two verses in today's story mention God. Explain how one of these verses is meaningful to your current life situation?
6. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
7. Remember, **wisdom will benefit those who follow it.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. “This group does not exist for us.” Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

wisdom's limitation

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 7:15- 29

Message of Hope: Living a God-fearing life is our only hope.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
What is a piece of wisdom that has served you well in life?

Bridge: In today's world, there is a lot of emphasis on getting educated and learning good thinking skills. In fact, some people pride themselves on how “wise” they are. Well, today's story has both good and bad news about wisdom. Some say that Solomon, who wrote today's story, was the wisest man who ever lived. Let's see what conclusions he makes about wisdom.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 7:15-29
(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Is intellect and wisdom the same? How are they the same or different?
2. Back in verse 15, why do you think Solomon gives the advice “Don't be too good or too wise On the other hand, don't be too wicked either.”? Is the Bible encouraging one to sin a little bit? How do you make sense of this?
3. To complicate things, Solomon says, “Anyone who fears God will avoid both extremes.” Is he talking about the extremes of being too good and being too wicked, or is there something else going on in these verses?
4. Verse 18 records the third time that Solomon uses the words “fear God.” Compare the previous times, 3:14 and 5:7, with 7:18. What do you observe or notice as Solomon develops this theme?
5. Why is Solomon obsessed with gaining wisdom?
6. Read verse 26 again. How do you think Solomon would describe a Godly woman and a Godly man?
7. Do you agree with Solomon's conclusion in verse 29? Why or why not?

Heart & Healing Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. As you walk life's road, into what two ditches are you most tempted to fall?
2. What practical advice would you give someone who wanted to live a God-fearing life?
3. When was a time you fell into one of life's ditches. How did you get out?
4. If you were to choose one gem of wisdom that you wished you had learned early on in life, what would it be?
5. If you had written this story, what would you have described as the limitation's of wisdom?
6. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
7. Remember, **living a God-fearing life is our only hope**. How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. “This group does not exist for us.” Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

conclusion #5

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 8:1-17

Message of Hope: You are better off by fearing God during your life.

Planning Ahead for next week's study: Order enough copies so that each adult can have "A Love Stronger Than Death: Mysteries of the Great Beyond" To order call 1-800-777-2848 These magazines are less than \$1.00 each.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a "lowlight" in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
What is one of the most important choices you have made in life?

Bridge: Today's story recognizes that very little in life is fair. In fact, life is full of injustices, but this does not mean that you have to face a horrible life. Today's story will give you the secret for finding life's meaning, but it is a choice you must make every day.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 8:1-17
(*Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.*)

Listening & Learning Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. In verses 2-5, what reasons are listed for obeying?
2. According to verses 5-6, is it fair to say that you will know a wise person by their obedient actions?
3. Given all the problems and injustices of life, how is it that Solomon can say in verse 12, “Those who fear God will be better off”?
4. Why is it, in verse 14, that wicked people are treated as good people, and good people are treated as wicked people?
5. How would you explain the connection between verse 14 and verse 15?
6. What advice would Solomon give on having “fun” and “enjoyment of life” when someone is facing difficult circumstances?

Heart & Healing Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. When did you feel you were made out to be the "bad guy" when you really trying to do something good?
2. were trying to do something good?
3. What types of injustices motivate you into action?
4. How, like in verse 1, has wisdom lightened up your face and softened its harshness?
5. How has your life been better just because you fear God?
6. When life is hard and unfair, how do you go about choosing to enjoy life and actually have some fun?
7. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
8. Remember, **you are better off by fearing God during your life.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. “This group does not exist for us.” Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

death

outline

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

Message of Hope: Being in God's hands is better than the alternative.

***Needed for Today:** Hopefully you ordered the magazine last week called, "A Love Stronger Than Death: Mysteries of the Great Beyond." If they were not ordered, call 1-800-777-2848 and order a copy for every adult.*

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a "lowlight" in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
During the hard times of life, what gives you hope?

Bridge: Today's story will challenge us to look at death. And, it may seem quite hopeless as we read this story. But keep in mind, that Solomon is on a search to find out what it is about life that is worthwhile. So, continue to search with him as we read today's story.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 9:1-12.

(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. After reading verse 2, why would anyone choose to follow God and be a Godly person?
2. If death is inevitable for everyone, what makes the difference between people who enjoy life and those who do not?
3. Solomon seems to be at one of his lowest points. Can you find any hint in this story that there could be hope beyond death?
4. Verse 11 sounds like there is no value in being fast, strong, wise, skillful, or educated. How would you agree or disagree?
5. How does “chance” (the last part of verse 11 and verse 12) and “being in God's hand” (verse 1) coexist in this same story?
6. Based on verses 5 and 10, what is the mental and thinking capacity of people who have died?

Leader's Tip: If someone expresses more interest in exploring death and what happens to a person after they die, tell them you have a really good magazine that addresses that topic to give them. At the end of the study give them a copy of “A Love Stronger Than Death: Mysteries of the Great Beyond.”

Heart & Healing Questions: *(50% of your study time)*

1. What kind of “hope” would make it worthwhile for a person to follow God?
2. When have you seen God's favor in your life?
3. What are some of the “mad courses/madness” (verse 3) you have taken in life?
4. What motivates you to, “In whatever you do, do well”? (verse 10)
5. One thing is for sure, we will die. What thoughts and feelings do you have about death?
6. How have you benefited and been hurt by “chance”? (verse 11)
7. How have you benefited or been hurt by “being in God's hand”? (verse 1)
8. Remember, **being in God's hands is better than the alternative.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. “This group does not exist for us.” Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

a quiet spirit

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 9:13-10:4

Message of Hope: Quiet wisdom will serve you well in life.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
Who is someone you admire? Why do you admire them?

Bridge: Today's story turns the world's values system upside down. It might be challenging, but consider being willing to go deeper.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 9:13-10:4
(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Why do you think Solomon finds this bit of wisdom “impressive”?
2. What are the two morals Solomon concludes from the story in verses 13-16?
3. It seems that money might be more important than wisdom. How do you make sense of this?
4. Read 10:1 again. What are other things that might be similar to foolishness that also spoil great wisdom and honor in a person?
5. What is Solomon getting at in verse 3, although he does not specifically identify it?
6. What are the characteristics of a quiet spirit?

Heart & Healing Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Who is a wise person that you admire who has a quiet spirit, and why did you choose them?
2. Let's be honest with ourselves while we share a positive and negative example of how someone's economical status affected our opinion of his wisdom in life?
3. What characteristics of a quiet spirit do you see in that person? (Take some time and go around your circle highlighting each person and giving the rest of the group a chance to share.)
4. In what areas of a quiet spirit do you need to develop better skills? How can this best be done, and how can this group help you in this process?
5. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
6. Remember, **quiet wisdom will serve you well in life.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. “This group does not exist for us.” Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

wisdom

outline

Ecclesiastes 10:5-20

Message of Hope: It is never too late to gain wisdom.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give an opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
Who is someone you admire for their life of wisdom?

Bridge: Today's story is about the wise and the foolish. But better yet, it gives principles that anyone can use to increase their wisdom quotient. So, give this story some consideration as we explore it.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 10:5-20
(*Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.*)

Listening & Learning Questions: (*50% of your study time*)

1. What in verses 5 and 6 is considered a mistake? Why?
2. What are the differences contrasted in this story between how the wise and foolish live their lives?
3. Why do you think King Solomon included verse 20?
4. If verse 14 is really true that “No one can predict the future,” what wisdom would Solomon give us in regards to palm readers, psychics, and horoscopes?

Heart & Healing Questions: (*50% of your study time*)

1. The last part of verse 10 says, “That's the value of wisdom; it helps you succeed.” As you reflect on your life, what are the pieces of wisdom you can identify that have helped you succeed? How have they helped you?
2. When is a time in your life that you experienced both the wise part and the foolish part of verse 12?
3. If you were to make one change toward living a life based on wisdom, what you change?
4. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
5. Remember, **it is never to late to gain wisdom.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. “This group does not exist for us.” Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

hopeful meaninglessness

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 11:1-10

Message of Hope: Meaninglessness makes hope possible.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
When you have been discouraged, what gave you hope?

Bridge: Today's story will challenge us to search for hopeful meaninglessness. Can we find enjoyment in the midst of meaninglessness. Is this even possible? Some may say “yes,” and others may say “no.” But it is up to every person to decide for himself, because everyone makes the final decision for himself.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 11:1-6
(*Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.*)

Listening & Learning Questions: (*50% of your study time*)

1. What principles of business does Solomon offer in this story?
2. In this story Solomon does not use the word “risk,” but what kind of council or advice do you think he would give regarding risk-taking?
3. Verse 5 makes it plain, we can not understand God's activity. But imagine for a moment that we could understand all of God's activity. What would we really gain from this, and to what risks would we be subject because of this knowledge?
4. How would Solomon say that hard work, risk, results, and God are related?

Now read verses 7-10.

5. Why do you think Solomon, in verse 9, says to “enjoy life” and to “remember . . .”?
6. Solomon uses the word “meaningless” approximately 30 times in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Yet in these few verses there is a command in verse 9 to enjoy every minute of life. At its deepest level, what makes life so meaningless? How is it possible to enjoy life and all that it brings – both good and bad?

Heart & Healing Questions: (*50% of your study time*)

1. Verses 7-10 include everyone, young and old. If you were to choose one phrase, which one would you choose, and why did you choose it?
2. If you were to take Solomon's advice in verse 10 to not worry and to keep your body healthy, what would you change this week?
3. Where are you having to take some risks in your life?
4. How has God showed His faithfulness to you in life?
5. If you could better understand God's activity in your life, what would it be?
6. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
7. Remember, **meaninglessness makes hope possible**. How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. “This group does not exist for us.” Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch

the final conclusion

[outline](#)

Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

Message of Hope: Nothing else matters in life, except to fear God and keep his commandments.

The Basic 8: Oatmeal Can, Connection Card envelopes, Post card invitation cards, Taco Salad sign up sheet, extra New Living Translation Bibles, Child Safety Poster (to post), Blessing List, and Link to online Simple Church Weekly Report Form (This is the Details Coordinator's responsibility).

Welcome: We focus on three things: connecting with God, connecting with each other, and serving our world. This is a safe place for people to share and grow spiritually. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.

Setting the Context:

- This is a safe place to grow spiritually.
- We are a wide diversity of people. We are glad all of you are here.
- You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.
- We are common people.
- Encourage those who like to talk to give a opportunity for everyone to participate.

Check-In:

1. What is your first name?
2. What was a highlight or a “lowlight” in your week?
3. And...*[insert rotation question]*?

Children's Check-In: How did you help someone this week? (Or, they can answer the adult questions.)

Children go to Adventurers

God Moments:

- Where did you see God at work this past week?
- How did you recognize and accept God's invitation to join Him in His work this past week?
- How did God use you to show up in someone's life this past week?
- Sing, share meaningful Bible verses, rejoice in God's goodness.
- Prayer comes naturally and spontaneously during this time.

Kick-off Question: *(short answers, go around the circle, a co-leader goes first)*
If you were asked to give one piece of wisdom, what would you say?

Bridge: Today's story is the last one in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is in this last story that Solomon reminds us that everything is meaningless, but he gives us his final conclusion to his search. This final conclusion is what gives a person's life purpose, meaning, and focus. So let's take a look.

Read the Bible Story from a modern translation: Ecclesiastes 12:1-14
(Encourage people to stick to this story instead of jumping all over the Bible.)

Listening & Learning Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. Why do you think Solomon begins verse 1 with this advice?
2. Why do you think so many people spend their best years, their young years, living for themselves; and then when they get old, they think about God?
3. Verse 5 talks about one's "everlasting home." What is this talking about?
4. Dig deep into this story. Do you find anything that suggests there is something after death?
Leader's Tip: See verse 14. If death in the grave is final, what would be the reason for God to judge us?
5. Let do a quick review of what Solomon has taught us about death. Read the following verses again: Ecclesiastes 3:21; 9:5-6, 10; 12:7. Based on these verses, what do we know about death?
6. In real practical terms, what does Solomon's conclusion mean? How would you explain it to an eight-year-old boy?

Heart & Healing Questions: (50% of your study time)

1. For those of you who are still youthful, how are you remembering your Creator in a meaningful way? For those of you who are "older," how are you remembering your Creator in the days you have left?
2. How has your faith in God shaped your outlook on aging, death, and dying?
3. Chapter 1:2 and chapter 12:8 are the same. How would you summarize this word, "meaningless"?
4. Having studied his book, how do you think Solomon would like you to live differently?
5. How do you think God would like you to live differently?
6. Choose one thing—a lesson, a promise, a command, or a warning—that you needed to hear from this story.
7. Remember, **nothing else matters in life, except to fear God and obey his commands.** How can this group pray for you this next week?

Wrap Up:

1. "This group does not exist for us." Put an Empty Chair in the middle of your prayer circle with a supply of invitation business cards on the chair for people to take and use.
2. When you talk with someone who needs hope and courage, tell them about this group and invite them to come with you next week.
3. Close by saying the Blessing List blessing together.

Lunch