THE SEARCH

Ecclesiastes

Integrated sermon, kids program
and bible study series

10 April – 15 May 2015
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our six weeks in Ecclesiastes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Groups</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our kids program for the series</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible study – week 1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible study – week 2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible study – week 3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible study – week 4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible study – week 5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible study – week 6</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OVERVIEW

The apostle Paul says in his second letter to Timothy, ‘All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.’ (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

But what of Ecclesiastes? That confusing book which opens with the refrain:

“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.
“Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.” (Ecclesiastes 1:2)

How can this book correct and train us in righteousness? What is it all about? Is it about the search for the meaning of life? Is it about the search for happiness?

Ecclesiastes is enigmatic and at times frustrating. But it is also a book that is worthy of our attention and our persistence. In it the wise teacher examines life from all angles looking for meaning and purpose. His conclusions may not seem satisfying, but they are real. This teacher knows how the world works. He knows and shares with us the frustrations of living in a fallen world. Ecclesiastes will help us confront and process the reality of living in a raw, gritty and sin-cursed world.

Ecclesiastes is also an evangelistic book. Michael Eaton in his Tyndale commentary summaries the purpose of Ecclesiastes in this way:
'It is an essay in apologetics. It defends the life of faith in a generous God by pointing to the grimness of the alternative.'

I hope that you benefit from our time looking at the book of Ecclesiastes. At times this book will challenge us, its words are like goads, prodding us (Ecclesiastes 12:11). But we will do well to sit under them as we wait and long for the return of Jesus and the redemption of this broken world.

Your brother in Christ,

Karl Forsyth
Associate Pastor
OUR SIX WEEKS IN ECCLESIASTES

As a church this is a fully integrated series which means the sermons, bible studies, kids talks and kids programs all work together to teach us as a church family. Here’s an overview of where we are going:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>READING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 April</td>
<td>Searching but not finding</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 1:1-11 &amp; 2:17-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 April</td>
<td>Unhappy solutions</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 3:1-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 April</td>
<td>Living with meaningless</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 4:1-5:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 May</td>
<td>Wisdom for the wise</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12, 8:1-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 May</td>
<td>Elusive meanings</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 7, 9:1-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 May</td>
<td>Ending the search</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INTEGRATED SERMON AND BIBLE STUDY SERIES

In this series the sermons and bible studies are on different topics and could be done stand alone. In our planning however we’ve planned a logical flow between the two and you’ll get the most out of the series if you listen to each sermon and do the bible studies too. Here’s an overview:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDY</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>BIBLE REFERENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study 1</td>
<td>An enigma</td>
<td>1 Kings, Ecclesiastes, Romans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 2</td>
<td>Living in an enigmatic world</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 3</td>
<td>Some things are better</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 4 and 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 4</td>
<td>Money and the teacher</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, 1 Corinth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 5</td>
<td>A closer look at wisdom</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes, Genesis, Romans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 6</td>
<td>The conclusion of the matter</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes, 1 Corinthians</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMMUNITY GROUPS

COMMUNITY GROUPS AT TRINITY INNER SOUTH
Regular Bible study in small groups is a great way to grow as a Christian. At Trinity Inner South (TIS) we call our groups Community Groups as we see them as more than a Bible study. We see three things as being really important in all of our Community Groups:

1. GROWING AS DISCIPLES OF JESUS
This is a central goal of all we do at TIS and God’s appointed way of doing so is through ministry of the word and through prayer.

2. GROWING IN LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER
God has called us to be in community with one another and there are many “one another” tasks in the Bible, which simply can’t be achieved at a big Sunday gathering and are better done in smaller groups.

3. SERVING THE GOSPEL TOGETHER
We’d love all our groups to be growing in their commitment to the gospel and how that works out practically at a local church level.

JOINING A COMMUNITY GROUP
If you are able to join one of our community groups and haven’t done so yet, please consider it in the next few weeks. The easiest way to get into a group is to go to our website at www.trinityinnersouth.org.au/#/connect and launch the form at the bottom of the “Community Groups” page. Karl Forsyth our Community Group co-ordinator will get in touch with you.
OUR KIDS PROGRAM FOR THIS SERIES

OUR KIDS ARE IMPORTANT MEMBERS OF OUR CHURCH
Our children’s programs at Trinity Inner South (TIS) are for children between the age of three up to year six at school. In our kids programs throughout the series the children will be studying the same key points as the adults are in the sermons in age appropriate ways. As such the kids talk, sermon and kids programs will all be on the same topic.

SUPPORTING THE KIDS IN THEIR SPIRITUAL GROWTH
If you know children at TIS (parents, grandparents, God parents, everyone) please talk to them about what they are learning at church. To help with this, grab a take-home card each week and use it as conversation starter. Why not collect the six cards over the series and review the key ideas.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE SERIES – ECCLESIASTES 12:13
“Now all has been heard: here is the conclusion of the matter: fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.”

Kids are great at remembering things (every song from “Frozen” for example) and helping them to remember passages from the Bible is a great way to help them grow. Take a fridge magnet too and use it to teach children the memory verse and encourage their enthusiasm for church.
OUR KIDS PROGRAM FOR THIS SERIES

TEACHING THE KIDS THE MAIN POINTS EACH WEEK

We put a lot of thought into how to teach the kids in age appropriate ways. Here’s an outline of the series:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>READING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 April</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 April</td>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 April</td>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 4:1-5:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 May</td>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 May</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 7, 9:1-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 May</td>
<td>The search is over</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TAKE HOME CARDS AND FRIDGE MAGNETS

We put together a fridge magnet and take home cards each week to encourage parents to keep the conversation about Ecclesiastes happening and different times throughout the week. Please see you kids leader for the fridge magnet and the weekly take home cards.

Memory verse

Ecclesiastes 12:13

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.
TOPIC: AN ENIGMA
If you have time, take it in turns to read the whole Ecclesiastes from start to finish. Expect this to take about 30 mins.

LAUNCH QUESTIONS:
1. Rumour has it that when Ned Kelly was hanged, he uttered three words, ‘such is life.’ To what extent do you resonate with this sentiment, especially when things don’t go your way?

2. How much thought have you given to the enigmatic, ambiguous, meaningless or vain nature of the world in which we live? How would you answer a question like: ‘How can you have faith in God, when so much of the world looks pointless, unfair or unjust?’

THE TEACHER
Ecclesiastes contains the words of the teacher. In some bibles, there is a footnote, suggesting another title for the teacher, something akin to leader of the assembly. A similar thing happens in 1 Kings 8:1 when Solomon gathers the people together. Some English translations use the title preacher, rather than teacher.

In verses 1:1 and 1:12 the teacher declares himself to be the king of Israel, in Jerusalem and the Son of David. While this does not necessarily mean the king must be Solomon it does at least allude to the wisdom of Solomon.
3. What do you know about King Solomon?

READ 1 KINGS 3: 7-14 and 1 KINGS 4: 29-34

4. What do these passages tell us about Solomon?

READ ECCLESIASTES 1: 1-14

5. What is the teacher’s purpose in his writing of Ecclesiastes?

6. How does this passage leave you feeling?

7. What do you think the term ‘under the sun’ means? (verse 3) In what way is the teacher limiting his investigation?

Some see the teacher’s negative attitude to be at odds with the ‘good news’.

8. Should we trust the teacher?

READ ECCLESIASTES 12:9-14

9. What does this tell us about the reputation of the teacher?

10. If the teacher is revered in this way what should we expect about the content, order and argument of the book of Ecclesiastes?
BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 1

STRETCH QUESTIONS

READ GENESIS CHAPTER 3
11. What does this tell us about the state of the world and the world’s relationship with God?

READ ROMANS 8:18-25
12. Is the world still fallen?

13. What does this imply for us?

One of the key words in Ecclesiastes is translated in the NIV as meaningless (see verse 2). This word, *hebel*, is difficult to translate and has many different potential meanings.

Some English words that are used to render the Hebrew word *hebel*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>meaningless</th>
<th>breath</th>
<th>emptiness</th>
<th>enigmatic</th>
<th>futile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>absurd</td>
<td>incomprehensible</td>
<td>ironic</td>
<td>mysterious</td>
<td>smoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vapour</td>
<td>transient</td>
<td>useless</td>
<td>vanity</td>
<td>wind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RE-READ ECCLESIASTES 1:1-11
But this time substitute the word meaningless for enigmatic.

---

14. To what extent does this change your perception about the passage?

APPLICATION - ECCLESIASTES AND OUR OUTLOOK ON LIFE
1. Do you consider yourself to be an optimist, a pessimist or somewhere in between? Do you read Ecclesiastes 1 positively or negatively? Can chapter 1 of Ecclesiastes be read positively?

2. Do you consider yourself to be frustrated, bored, satisfied, purpose driven, lost, or confused?

3. What do you think about the conclusions the teacher has reached in Ecclesiastes 1:1-11?

4. Do you feel comfortable knowing that you also may not be able to find the meaning of life?
TOPIC: LIVING IN AN ENIGMATIC WORLD
Most people would probably agree that the world is an enigmatic place. At times it feels exceedingly cruel, at others grace and mercy seem to be offered to those who least deserve it. Ecclesiastes famously tells us that ‘There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens (3:1).’ But, try as we might, we are unable to control these seasons. In this fallen world, life is enigmatic. For Christians, this often results in additional frustration as we try to maintain a brave face despite suffering hardship.

LAUNCH QUESTION
1. What things in life make you cry out to God in frustration?

READ ECCLESIASTES 3:1- 8
2. What do you notice about the realm that is on view here? Contrast 3:1 with 1:3.

3. Notice the breadth or span associated with the couplets. They encompass all of human life, birth to death, weeping to laughing, war to peace. Who is in control of these events?

4. At the end of each couplet has something been achieved?

5. Who or what is the driving force that controls the seasons and times?
6. Are you comfortable worshiping a God who not only builds up, but also tears down. Who not only heals, but also kills?

7. In verse 9 the teacher repeats the programmatic question from 1:3. What do workers gain from their toil? Having just read the poem on time what is the implied answer?

8. How does this bear up to your own experience and expectations?

Can you remember when Princess Diana was killed? Newspaper headlines round the world acknowledged that this was not right. She was taken before her time.
9. Why do you think we feel that way?

Think back at your life and your work. Has your life mattered? The message of Ecclesiastes to this point has been that our work is futile, that nothing lasts; yet implicitly we might feel that this is wrong. We feel that life is meant to amount to more than just being born and dying.

10. What do you think it means to have eternity set in our hearts?

11. How clearly do we see this notion of eternity?

12. How does God’s activity and ours compare in verse 13 and 14?
13. Why had God made things this way?

READ ECCLESIASTES 3:16-17

14. What does the preacher see under the sun with respect to judgement?

15. What does he know will happen?

16. Will justice be carried out?

17. How does that influence the way in which you toil?

READ ECCLESIASTES 3:18-22

18. Does the teacher think that humans and animals are equally important?

19. What other bible passages do you think the teacher is alluding to here?

20. What is the purpose of comparing humans to animals?
The message of Ecclesiastes 3 is that God is sovereign over time; he is the one in control. God has things mapped out, he knows what is going on. We on the other hand do not have access to that map. God has created in us the ability to comprehend time, to remember the past and to look towards the future, but this is a burden as it makes us aware of the inconsistency of life. The ambiguity. We know that we were created to live forever; we feel the pain when someone dies before his or her time, but we can do nothing to make sense of God’s map, his scheme. All that we can do is to enjoy the present day as a gift from God. Why had God made it this way? So that we will fear him. He wants us to be his people, while he is our God.

21. How do you respond to the good things that happen in life?

22. How do you respond to the bad things that happen in life?

23. What things impede your ability to live life for today?
TOPIC: SOME THINGS ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS
Some things are better than others. But even with this understanding, the world will still look enigmatic.

LAUNCH QUESTION
1. How do you set your priorities in life? In our world where so many things compete for our attention, how do you know what is the right thing to do each day?

So far we have seen in Ecclesiastes the futility and the enigmatic nature of life in a fallen world. The teacher has exclaimed ‘Meaningless! Meaningless! Utterly Meaningless! Everything is meaningless.’ So how do we live in this enigmatic life? The teacher has told us two things:
   • Enjoy today as a good gift from God; and
   • Fear God.

In Chapter 4 of Ecclesiastes, the teacher suggests that even in this vain, enigmatic, futile world, some things are better than others. Some ways of living are better than others. Some actions and responses will help us to enjoy today as God’s good gift.

READ ECCLESIASTES 4:1-3
2. Can you think of a present day example where we might see ‘the tears of the oppressed- and they have no comforter?’
3. How does this make you feel?

4. Australian’s live in relative luxury and freedom compared too much of the world. Despite this, many of us may have thought thoughts like we see in verse 3. What does this tell us about the writer’s understanding of the world?

5. Is it ok/appropriate to feel this way about the world in which we live?

READ ECCLESIASTES 4:4-12
In verses 4-6 the preacher returns to his favourite topic of toil.
6. What does he say is a primary motivation with respect to our toil? Does this resonate with you?

7. If toil is an expression of envy, should we then fold our hands and do nothing?

8. Can you summarise verse 6 in your own words? What is the emphasis here?

9. A little girl once misspoke when she recalled Psalm 23, ‘the Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Saying instead, ‘the Lord is my shepherd; that’s all I want.’ To what extend is this also all you want?
BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 3

In verses 7-12 the preacher speaks about the value and benefit of companionship.
10. What does the preacher suggest the benefits of companionship are?

11. Can you add any additional benefits?

12. What conclusions might we develop about living in this fallen world, with respect to companionship?

READ ECCLESIASTES 4: 13-16
13. How do these verses link with the rest of the chapter?

14. What does this passage have to say about wisdom? In light of 1:12-14 what do we think will happen with the teacher’s wisdom?
READ ECCLESIASTES 5: 1-7
In chapter 4, the teacher has provided a number of pointers about living in a fallen world: Oppression and toil are commonplace; wisdom is better than foolishness, moderation is better than greed and companionship is better than loneliness. In the first part of chapter 5 the teacher’s changes theme to examine how we may fear God.

15. How might you summarise the thrust of what the teacher is saying in verses 1-7?

16. What does the teacher suggest is our primary response to God, listening or speaking?

17. What is the implication for the way in which we worship God on Sunday? Has the church got things wrong today? You might like to compare this idea with that of Col 3:16-17.
TOPIC: MONEY AND THE TEACHER
The bible has a lot to say about money and our desire to have more of it. Perhaps the apostle Paul was reading Ecclesiastes in his quiet time when he wrote in 1 Tim 6 ‘For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.’

What role does money play in your life? Are you content with what you have? Ecclesiastes 5:10 says ‘Whoever loves money never has enough, whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.’ In our culture today, the world seems to be built around the constant need for more. Indeed, many economists suggest that ‘greed produces preferable economic outcomes most times and under most conditions’. Greed is they say the only consistent human motivation.

LAUNCH QUESTIONS
1. How easy do you find it to talk about money?

2. What is it about money that makes it so attractive? Why do so many of us always want more? Consider also the alternative, what is life like without enough money?

READ ECCLESIASTES 5:8-11
3. What does the teacher suggest is the general pattern for the accumulation of wealth?
4. Does the message of verses 10 and 11 still ring true today? Why is the love of money of meaningless?

5. Australia is a very wealthy country. This makes all of us among the wealthiest people in the world. Have you identified methods or ways of avoiding greed?

READ ECCLESIASTES 5:12-17
Here the teacher turns his attention back towards one of his favourite topics, toil.
6. What is the reality that is associated with all of our toil under the sun?

7. What differentiates those who are able to enjoy the fruits of their toil and those that are not? Compare verses 16 and 17 with verse 19.

READ ECCLESIASTES 6:1-12
8. Do the words of the preacher resonate with you? Can you think of examples of people who have been given much yet fail to enjoy their gifts?
9. This section highlights the powerlessness of humans to control their own destiny. What makes humanity so powerless? (see verse 10)

THINKING IT THROUGH
Consider how satisfied or content you are with life.
The teacher has shown us in chapters 5 and 6 that our toil produces wealth but not satisfaction or meaning in life.
10. How would you feel if tomorrow your job changed so that you no longer were able to derive any enjoyment from the activity of work?

11. How would you feel if your job was changed so that you no longer were able to receive a sense of status from what you do?

READ ECCLESIASTES 8:1-17
Chapter 8 seems to be a continuation of a progression that began in chapters 5 and 6. Toil leads to wealth and wealth leads to power. So the teacher turns his attention to power. Perhaps power will provide the ultimate meaning to life.

READ PROVERBS 26:4-5
These are interesting proverbs as at first glance they seem to be contradictory. However, rather than seeing these proverbs as contradictory we might conclude that true wisdom involves knowing what to do in a given situation, even if this means at times that we respond to similar events in different ways.
In 8:1 wisdom is esteemed. Yet those who are truly wise will know how to respond or behave in the presence of their superiors.

12. What advice does the teacher give concerning our superiors?

13. In the face of our superiors we can seem powerless, but what demonstrates our ultimate powerlessness?

14. In verses 9-15 the teacher returns to contemplating judgement. How do these verses compare and contrast with 3:16-17?

15. What conclusion does the teacher reach at the end of this section?

By now we have seen the idea of toil and its futility well and truly made clear. However, the teacher’s advice seems to be in contrast with what Paul says about our work in 1 Corinthians 15:58.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15: 50-58

16. What makes the emphasis of this passage different from the conclusions drawn by the teacher in Ecclesiastes?

17. Are the teacher’s conclusions about toil still relevant today?
TOPIC: A CLOSER LOOK AT WISDOM & WHY WE CAN'T FIND THE ANSWERS

The search for meaning continues as the book of Ecclesiastes unfolds. In chapters 5 and 6, we saw that looking for the meaning in wealth ultimately proves futile. In chapter 8 we saw that looking for meaning in power was likewise a wasted activity. Here in chapter 7 the teacher turns his attention to wisdom.

READ ECCLESIASTES 7: 1-29

1. The first verse of this section, hits hard. Why is the day of death better than the day of birth? What is the teacher getting at? Refer to verse 2 for the answer.

2. Birth signifies fresh starts, new beginnings, celebrations. Death on the other hand is a time for thoughtful reflection and sober contemplation. How does going to a funeral influence your outlook on life?

3. What is the ultimate reality of life presented in verses 1-8?

4. In verses 3-6 the teacher makes some comparisons between the fool and the wise person. What is he trying to say?
In verse 7-18 the teacher attempts to illustrate that rational wisdom is better that foolish neglect. Complete the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>The wise</th>
<th>The foolish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patience and self control v:7-9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nostalgia: v10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times of life: v14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationality: v16-18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wisdom is presented in chapter 7 as being of great value, especially when we are faced with the reality of life, but we already know that wisdom will not provide the meaning to life.

5. What are the limitations of wisdom (13-18)?

We already know that God has barred access to us understanding the meaning of life. In part this is so that we will fear God (3:14). But in the second half of chapter 7 a detailed section explains in further detail that the reason why God has barred access to us is due to our sinfulness. To understand this well we need to look back to how it all started.
BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 5

READ GENESIS 1:27, 2:7-9, 2:15-20
6. What was life like in the Garden?

7. Did the man and woman have purpose and meaning?

8. Did the man and woman express wisdom in the garden?

9. What did that wisdom encompass?

READ GENESIS 3:1-5
10. What does verse 5 have to say about the topics of wisdom, power and authority?

READ GENESIS 3: 10-19
11. What is the result of Adam and Eve’s disobedience?

12. What impact does this have on their ability to live and exist as people in the world?

The early chapters of Genesis and Ecclesiastes are woven together tightly. Death and our inability to comprehend the meaning of life are the direct result of trying to be what we cannot be; God. For Adam and Eve, their life in the garden was perfect. Their meaning and purpose was clear. Their relationship with God was uninhibited and was the foundation of their existence and purpose.
BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 5

As a result of the fall a number of curses are placed on humanity. These curses, including death, frustration, purposelessness, toil and pain are the subject of Ecclesiastes. The teachers aim in Ecclesiastes is to present us with the reality of life under the sun where these curses are part of reality.

Here is Ecclesiastes chapter 7 were are again reminded that the reason wisdom fails, the reason God has barred access to us understanding the meaning of life is because of our sin. ‘Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins.’ Ecc 7:20

The Apostle Paul picks up a similar idea in Romans 3:10-11.

READ ROMANS 3:10-11 and 3:21-26

13. What is Paul’s answer to the problem posed by Ecclesiastes 7:20?

14. If Jesus has done these things for us, why does so much of Ecclesiastes still ring true for us today?

READ ROMANS 8:20-21 and CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

15. In our broken world today, what is the place of wisdom? Is it something worth pursuing? To what lengths should we travel to gain wisdom?
BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 6

TOPIC: THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER
This is the last study in our Ecclesiastes series. As we reach the end of the book, the teacher recaps the full span of life, firstly providing some final advice to the young and then to the old. Having finished this, the teacher lays down his ‘conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments for this the duty of all mankind (Ecclesiastes 12:13).’

READ ECCLESIASTES 11:7-10
1. The teacher provides some specific instruction to those who are young. What themes do you see the teacher revisiting?

RE-READ ECCLESIASTES 11:9
Ask for readings of this verse in different versions if possible. In the NIV, some of the emphasis is lost in the command to ‘be happy’ or ‘to rejoice.’

2. What is the emphatic command from the teacher in 11:1-10?

3. What does it mean to ‘Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see’? How does the teacher moderate this phrase?

4. Are these verses generally positive or negative towards youth? What moderates the teacher’s attitude towards being young?
READ ECCLESIASTES 12:1-8

5. What do you think this poem is about?

Work with your group to unpack a number of the analogies used in the poem. It is generally thought that the poem is related to old age. For example, the grinders in verse 3 are most likely ‘teeth.’

6. We saw that in 11:7-10 the emphatic command was to enjoy or rejoice in life. What is the emphatic command in 12:1-7? How do these two commands fit with the book as a whole?

7. This poem essentially concludes the book. Contrast this poem with the one that opens the book in 1:1-11. What do you notice about the differences? The emphasis here is to see the ongoing nature of creation and the finality of human life.

8. How do verses 7 and 8 relate to each other? How does verse 8 fit within the book as a whole?

9. How might verse 8 prepare us for the final section of Ecclesiastes?
READ ECCLESIASTES 12:9-14
The temptation at the end of Ecclesiastes is to do what the teacher was unable, that is to find a solution to the meaning of life. We must be cautious at this point not to rush to where the teacher could not go, the New Testament. Remember that we, like the teacher live in a fallen and broken world. The reality of this needs to be appreciated.

The temptation is to think that further study, further thinking will lead us towards an answer. This is foolishness; the teacher was one of the wisest men that ever lived. His conclusion may irritate us, may goad us. But we must remember that God himself has blocked the pathway to us solving the problem. He has done this so that we will fear him.

10. As you read verses 9-14 did you notice and implied change in author?

11. What does the editor say about the teacher?

12. What is the editor’s final conclusion?

We live on a different side of the cross to the teacher. How does this impact our ability to explain the futility of life under the sun?
READ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-21 and 27-29
13. What does Paul say in these passages about wisdom and foolishness? Is his message consistent with Ecclesiastes?

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:9-12
14. What does this passage have to say about current ability to understand the world around us? When will we be able to see more clearly?

CONSIDER
15. Is it wrong for Christians to enjoy the pleasures and good things in life?

16. If we do the right thing, can we expect blessings and rewards from God that include wealth, health and success?

17. How has Ecclesiastes changed your view on who God is?

18. Has it altered the way in which you perceive the world?
FEEDBACK

We’d really appreciate feedback on the series, how helpful you found it and any suggestions for improvement. If you are able please send any feedback via email to: office@trinityinnersouth.org.au

Feedback on each aspect of the series would be helpful:

SERMONS
1. Do you think they were faithful to God’s word?
2. How engaging were they?
3. Did you feel they were applicable to your life?

BOOKLET
1. Were the studies helpful?
2. Would you use them again if they were produced in future?

OVERALL
1. Did the series help you grow in your relationship with God?
2. Do you think you’ve had your view of church changed for the better?
3. If you have kids in our programs how did you go teaching them at home with the take home cards?

Any other comments would be welcome.