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**Growth Group Studies Term 3 2018**

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**Sunday Sermon Passage Title**

29 July Proverbs 1 The beginning of wisdom

05 Aug Proverbs 31 Wise living

12 Aug Job 1-2 God’s hidden agenda

19 Aug Job 41-42 Trusting God in the storm

26 Aug Ecclesiastes 1-2 Life under the sun

02 Sept Ecclesiastes 3 God’s timing

09 Sept Ecclesiastes 4-6 ` Wealth

16 Sept Ecclesiastes 7-8 Wisdom under the sun

23 Sept Ecclesiastes 9-12 Findings of the search for meaning

**Studies Wisdom literature**

Intro Introducing Wisdom Literature

1 Introducing Proverbs

2 Introducing Job

3 Introducing Ecclesiastes

4 Ecclesiastes 1-2 Life under the sun

5 Ecclesiastes 3 God’s timing

6 Ecclesiastes 4-6 Wealth

7 Ecclesiastes 7-8 Wisdom under the sun

8 Ecclesiastes 9-10 Findings of the search for meaning - Living life to the full

9 Ecclesiastes 11-12 Findings of the search for meaning - Fear God

**Wisdom on Sundays How to Walk into church**

7 brief discussions Introduced: <https://vimeo.com/126570528>

**Intro Study - Introducing Wisdom Literature**

**What does it mean to be wise?**

To be wise, is to know our world as it is, so as to be able to make the best choices at the right time. But juggling life’s demands is complex. We have a sense and a longing for a “balanced life” but just how to determine the best mix of priorities is far from obvious. Rather our life seems to be more a mix of compromise and coping. Some people seem to work this out better than others and get ahead in various aspects of life, but even then there are no guarantees. Some crooks have a “good life”, while others can undeservedly face horrific persecution. How can we work out what it means to be wise, and thus how best to live?

**How do we account for the incredible wisdom of our world with its incredible limitations?**

To work out how best to live in our world, we need to have a firm grasp of reality, so we can know our place in creation, and if God has influence, we need to consider him too. Even without God in the picture, humanity can make many extraordinary discoveries, that we all benefit from, like technology and medical science. But for all these advances, the world’s wisdom is limited, like understanding cancer, or controlling the timing of our death. How are we to best account for the wisdom of our world with its severe limitations?

**What is Biblical wisdom literature?**

In the Old Testament there is a unique kind of writing that is identified as the “wisdom literature”.

* Most of the Old Testament tells the story of “salvation history”. It starts with Creation (Gen 1-2) and the Fall (Gen 3), and then reveals God’s deliberate plan to save his people. These plans are set out in various covenants (eg Gen 12:1-3) that are worked out in the Old Testament history of God’s people. When God’s people persist with their sin, God punishes them, but through the Old Testament prophets, God reassures them that he remains committed to fulfilling his promises.
* What’s unique about the wisdom literature is that it assumes salvation history is understood, and so details about God and his plans is noticeably absent. The wisdom books explore how best to understand what we observe and experience in life.

Most agree that Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes are “wisdom literature”, but it can be argued that Song of Songs, Psalms and even Lamentations fit this category too.

1. **Proverbs**

As we observe everyday life, it becomes apparent that there is an order in creation. Life is not chaotic. So Proverbs is a vast array of short sayings gleaned from observing the regularities in everyday life. To live wisely is to align our lives with God’s created order, rather than to foolishly try to go against it. However, we also realise that there are severe limits to our ability to understand and rule the world merely by observation.

1. **Ecclesiastes**

Even though humans are made in God’s image, our observations made “under the sun” (as distinct from God’s revelation) leave us utterly insignificant as generations come and go. No matter what we experience or achieve or accumulate, we die no different from the animals. Further, we observe so many irregularities and injustices in the created order. Ecclesiastes gives us a reality check as we explore the limits of our wisdom and inability to rely on ourselves. In the end, we need to fear God rather than expect to understand created order.

1. **Job**

The book of Job deals with one of the great topics of human existence – how to best live with suffering. From the start of the book, we realise that it’s beyond our human wisdom to work out God’s reasons for our suffering. To be wise, is to be like Job, who never found out why he suffered, but stops demanding an explanation and trusts God.

1. **Song of Songs**

Song of Songs/Solomon explores another powerful force in creation - human love. By the end of the book we discover that “love is as strong as death” (8:6).

1. **Psalms and Lamentations**

Given these books assume salvation history and from there observe life, they can also be considered as wisdom literature. Psalms explores the human response to God, canvasing a vast array of situations and emotions over 150 psalms, and Lamentations is made up of 5 lament psalms.

**How does the wisdom literature collectively teach us to be wise?**

* Via God’s general revelation, there is much we can gain from observing *life under the sun*, whether we are believers or not. However, it will also be limited and frustrating.
* Hence, the wisdom literature teaches us to “fear God”, and trust him with the bigger picture. No matter what is swirling around us, in orderliness or not, in suffering or love, in worship or lament, we know how best to live wisely now. Fearing God is the framework for us to live well - it’s the foundation and outcome of all true wisdom.

**Where does Jesus fit in?**

*Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1 Cor 1:24*

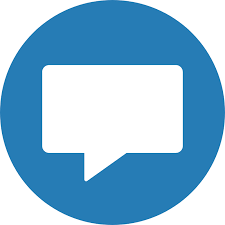
*Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Col 2:3*

Jesus fulfils wisdom literature because he always feared God, and he qualified his prayers: “Yet not what I will, but what you will.” (Mark 14:36).

The wisdom books help us understand Jesus better. He is God’s final wisdom of how to live in this world, because he became perfectly wise for us. They also help us grow and become wise and obedient like him.

**In our Growth Groups**

This term, we’ll do a taster of Job and Proverbs, and then spend time diving into Ecclesiastes. We’ll also discuss the short booklet “How to Walk into Church”, as it contains brilliant practical wisdom for us all concerning church. During the week, read a section of this booklet, and then have a short discussion on how it applies to us on Sundays.



**Discussion & Prayer**

1. How have you thought about wisdom literature in the past? What are you looking forward to?
2. What does it mean to fear the LORD (Prov. 1: 7)? How is it the beginning of knowledge/wisdom?

**Study 1 - Introducing Proverbs**

The book of Proverbs is made up of collections of short sayings. The sayings usually repeat, contrast, develop or compare two ideas, in order to highlight a regularity in everyday life, that we might not have otherwise noticed. We observe that there is order in God’s creation. However, fearing God is both the beginning (1:7) and end (2:5) of wisdom – that is, as we fear God we find wisdom, and as we seek wisdom we fear God.

**Outline**

To get a feel for Proverbs we need to appreciate the overall shape of the collections of sayings.

Read the opening verses of each main section to see the reason for it.

1:1-7 Prologue

1:8-9:18 Parental Instructions (1:8, 15, 2:1, 3:1, 11, 21, 4:1, 10, 5:1, 6:1, 20, 7:1, 8:32)

10:1-22:16 Assorted Proverbs of Solomon

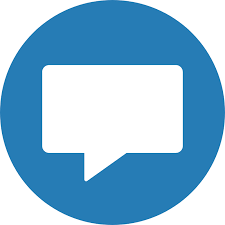
22:17-24:22 30 Sayings of the Wise

24:23-34 More Sayings of the Wise

25:1-29:27 Proverbs of Solomon (Collected by King Hezekiah 200 years after Solomon)

30:1-31:9 Parental Instructions (From Agur ch30 and King Lemuel ch31)

31:10-31 Epilogue



**Discussion & Prayer**

1. With Solomon featured in 1:1, how do we account for the sections not written by him? (1 Ki 3:3-14)
2. From 1:2-6 what is the goal of Proverbs? What attitude do we need as we read Proverbs?
3. How does “mother wisdom” (8:1, 9:1-12) oppose “madam folly” (9:13-18)? (Deut 6:4-9, Ps 78:5-8)
4. Focus on chapters 10-29. Pick some individual proverbs: what’s a theme you notice? How does the scattering of themes reflect our regular life?
5. Read the conclusion about “Mrs Wisdom” (31:10-31). Why does the book end here? In general, how can we be more like her? More specifically, what can wives, husbands and children learn from her?

*She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.*

*She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.*

*Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:*

*“Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.”*

*Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*

*Honour her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate****.*** (Proverbs 31:26-31)

**Study 2 - Introducing Job**

The simple question from God to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job?” (1:8a, 2:3) sets off a tsunami of dreadful personal suffering.

Job is a model of righteousness (1:8b) who fears God and shuns evil. However, through no fault of his own, Job is transformed from being richly blessed (1:10: healthy, wealthy and wise) to sitting among the ashes, scraping his festering skin with broken pottery (2:8). His children, wealth and health are dramatically removed. Job’s wife says to “curse God and die” (2:9) and his three friends are left stunned and silent for a week (2:13). God gives “terrible permissions” to Satan to test the genuineness of Job’s faith. Will Job remain blameless?

How should we respond to personal suffering? What wisdom can we glean from Job and his friends’ responses? After 40 chapters of debate, God responds (ch 40-41). We learn that his alone is the Almighty (40:2) and his plans are so much bigger than we can imagine (42:2), especially when we suffer. Can we trust God to be God, and for us, no matter what happens? Can we say ***“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away;*** ***may the name of the LORD be praised.” (1:21)*** By the end, Job proves he has something worth far more than any earthly blessing - wisdom to fear God and shun evil - just as Jesus did.

# Outline

To get a feel for the shape of Job, read the opening verses of each main section.

1:1-5 Opening introduction - Job blameless

1:6-22 Opening statement - God’s with Satan #1 (v6-12), Job’s loss (v13-19) & response (v20-22)

2:1-10 Opening statement - God’s with Satan #2 (v1-7a), Job’s loss (v7b-9) & response (v10)

2:11-13 Opening introductions - Job’s 3 friends

ch3 Opening statement - Job

ch4-27 Job’s 3 friends’ “wisdom”

Cycle: Eliphaz Job Bildad Job Zophar Job

#1: 4-5 6-7 8 9-10 11 12-14

#2: 15 16-17 18 19 20 21

#3: 22 23-24 25 26-27

ch28 Job’s interlude – where God’s wisdom is found [Cf Ecclesiastes]

ch29-31 Closing statement - Job

ch32-37 Closing statement - Elihu (4 parts ch32-33, ch34, ch35, ch36-37)

38:1-40:3 Closing statement - God’s interaction with Job #1 🡪 40:4-5 Job’s reply

40:6-41:34 Closing statement - God’s interaction with Job #2 🡪 42:1-6 Job’s reply

42:7-17 Epilogue - Job blameless (friends rebuked v7-9, Job restored v10-17)

**Biblical References to Job**

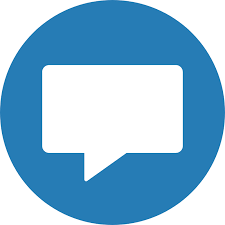
How do these references help us understand Job?

Ezekiel 14:12-14

*The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its people and their animals, even if these three men—Noah, Daniel and Job—were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign LORD.*

James 5:10-11

*As an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*



**Discussion & Prayer**

Read Job 1-2

1. What was Job like before he suffered? (1:1-5)
2. What happened? (1:6-2:10)
3. Why does a loving God allow terrible things to happen to innocent people?
4. Share a time when you suffered a loss? What helped you cope?
5. What is Satan like and how can we better include Satan in our worldview?
6. How did Job respond to such undeserved loss and suffering? (1:20-22, 2:8-10)

Read Job 40:2-5; 42:1-6

1. Does God need to explain himself?
2. God allows Job and his friends to question him. What does this reveal about his character?
3. How can we better cope with our own loss and suffering?
4. How do we better appreciate what Christ was going through when he was forsaken by God?

*Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Relent, LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble. (Psalm 90:12-15)*

**Study 3 - Introducing Ecclesiastes “Life under the sun”**

*In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, or any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference. DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music. (*Richard Dawkins)

*When men choose not to believe in God, they do not thereafter believe in nothing, they then become capable of believing in anything.* (G. K. Chesterton)

**Who wrote Ecclesiastes?**

The Teacher/Preacher/Convener/Qoheleth (Hebrew)/Son of David, King in Jerusalem is spoken about in the third person in the frame of the book (1:1-11, 12:9-14). So it seems the Narrator has collected the material of Solomon’s life and presents the findings of a king of legendary wisdom, resources and failings (1 Ki 3:3-14, 4:29-34, 10:23-25, 11:1-13, 1 Chron 29:25). Ecclesiastes is the book that the older Solomon wishes his younger self had read, and stuck with God’s wisdom rather than human wisdom.

**The Exhaustive Quest**

*I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens. What a heavy burden God has laid on mankind! I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. (Ecc 1:12-14)*

*When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labor that is done on earth—people getting no sleep day or night— then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning. Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it. (Ecc 8:16-17)*

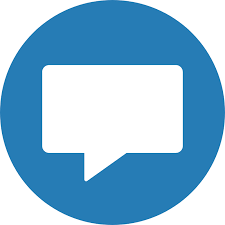
Ecclesiastes takes us on a definitive quest for meaning *under the sun* (human wisdom), and presents the Teacher’s research findings that it’s meaningless (vanity, a chasing after the wind). But scattered throughout this pessimism, are joyful summaries that God has everything in control. With incredible optimism, we’re encouraged to embrace each of life’s twists and turns as gifts from God, because “***We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.” (Rom 8:28)***

**The Conclusion**

*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. (Ecc 12:13)*

Ecclesiastes helps us to reconcile our belief in and satisfaction found in knowing God, with our confounding life experience.



**Discussion & Prayer**

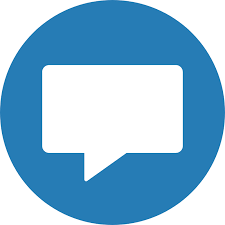
1. Why does God allow for so much so much meaninglessness in life. For example, frustration in work, regrets, suffering, injustice, setbacks, instability, no lasting satisfaction. What’s the point?
2. To what extent do you feel satisfied in your life? Why or why not?
3. When have you been confronted with the futility of life lately?
4. Give examples of some people you think to be wise. What makes them wise?

**Study 4 - Ecclesiastes 1-2 Life under the sun**

*The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results. (Albert Einstein)*

**Starter**

What’s an example of a mistake you keep making?



**Discussion & Prayer**

Read Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

1. How does God, creation and history combine to the conclusion in v2-3?
2. Do our neighbours agree with this conclusion? Do we agree with this conclusion?

Read Ecclesiastes 1:12-15

1. What’s the Teacher’s quest and what is “heavy” about it?
2. How does our world go about such a quest? Is there anything new under the sun?

Read Ecclesiastes 1:16-2:11

1. How comprehensively does the Teacher go about pursuing his search for meaning?
2. How do people try to do this search today, often with different conclusions?

Read Ecclesiastes 2:12-23

1. Now the Teacher turns to consider wisdom directly. How does he arrive at his conclusion? Is hatred a fair response? (v17-18; Gen 3:17-19)
2. What is so positive about 2:24-26? How is this different to pursuit under the sun?
3. How can we guard ourselves to better to see the emptiness of worldliness? Just how busy are we? Why exactly and to what gain? (if you have time: James 4:13-17, Matthew 6:19-34)
4. How does Romans 8:18-25, 1 Cor 15:58 fill out the bigger picture for us?
5. What practical steps can we take to find satisfaction and enjoyment this week?

**Prayer Ideas**

* Thank God for sustaining creation, with the gracious stability we so presume on.
* Pray for us to be upheld in the necessities of life, as meaningless as they are in themselves.
* Pray for wisdom to see the tasks before us as God’s gifts, and to find joy in just this.
* Pray for wisdom to avoid investing meaning in what doesn’t last.

**Study 5 - Ecclesiastes 3 God’s timing**

*To everything (turn, turn, turn)*

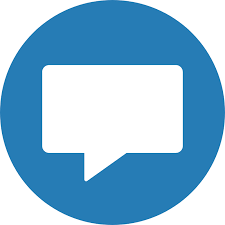
*There is a season (turn, turn, turn)*

*And a time for every purpose under heaven.*

*(Turn Turn Turn The Byrds 1965 sentimental cover of a Peter Seeger song)*

**Starter**

What “season of life” are you currently in?



**Discussion & Prayer**

Overall

1. To what extent do you feel in control of your life?
2. We cannot avoid bad times. When have you thought “Why God”? What helped you through?
3. As you’ve grown older, how has your perspective on time and the seasons of life changed?

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

1. The Teacher now does a case study of time. How does 3:1-8 ring true to your life experience?
2. How do we respond to 3:1-8, and why?

Read Ecclesiastes 3:9-15

1. In what sense are we both burdened and have eternity set in our hearts?
2. Why does God set up reality this way and why is it so vital for us? (2:14b). Where did we see “fearing God” in Proverbs and Job?
3. How can we winsomely express this way of life helpfully to those who aren’t Christians yet?

Read Ecclesiastes 3:16-22

1. From under the sun perspective, how are we no different from the animals? (cf Gal 4:4-5)
2. From 3:16 (and 4:1-4) how do we explain that God isn’t out of control? (3:15b, 17, Acts 17:31)
3. If our world is facing judgement, but most are oblivious, how should we live? (2 Peter 3:8-13)

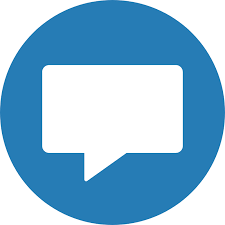
**Prayer Ideas**

* Pray that we will learn contentment, happiness and satisfaction with exactly where God has us, even in the set-backs. Pray that we don’t seek fulfilment in what will not last. Eg travel, sexual immorality, alcohol, escapism, envy, all things we justify and prioritise above God and our Christian growth.
* Pray for our world to acknowledge God is in complete control, not us.
* Pray for our world to acknowledge that God will right all the injustices, which includes our rejection of him.
* Pray for us to be ever seeking and ready to help people see the gift of God both now and in Jesus.

**Study 6 - Ecclesiastes 4-6 Wealth**

**Starter**

If you had more money, what would you do with it?



**Discussion & Prayer**

1. Do people believe “money is power, and can buy anything”? Why/why not?

Read Ecclesiastes 4-6

1. How does 4:1-16, 5:8-6:12 critique wealth?
2. How does the central section (5:1-7) critique wealth?
3. How do our attitudes to wealth fall short?
4. How are we to guard ourselves from the love of money?

1 Timothy 6:6-10

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Mark 4:19

Luke 12:13-21

Luke 12:27-34

1. How can we best use our money? Give practical examples of what Christians do.

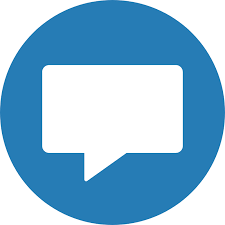
**Prayer Ideas**

* Confess sins about our attitude to wealth. Pray God would guard us from the love of money, and make us a generous people. Pray for God’s help to not be consumed by the pursuit of wealth.
* Thank God for what we have, including most of all the riches we have in Christ.
* Pray that we’re responsible with money for the best of investing in God’s Kingdom.
* Pray for our fear of God – to be all the more quick to listen and slow to speak.

**Study 7 - Ecclesiastes 7-8 Wisdom under the sun**

**Starter**

Would you prefer to go to a party or a funeral? Why?



**Discussion & Prayer**

Read Ecclesiastes 7:1-6

1. Why are these things so good for us: a good name, death, frustration and being rebuked?

Read Ecclesiastes 7:7-8:1

1. What do we learn about wisdom? (v7-12)
2. Why is human wisdom so limited? (v13-14)
3. How much can we rely on our wisdom? (v15-22)
4. Why else is human wisdom so limited? (v23-8:1)
5. If wisdom is clearly valuable (“better than ..”) but still so limited, how much are we to invest in it?

Read Ecclesiastes 8:2-17

1. We now turn from analysing wealth (ch4-6) to analysing power (ch8). How are we to treat those more powerful than us? (v2-5, 6:10b)
2. In the end, how limited is power? (v6-8, 16-17)
3. What matters most, no matter what power we have or are under? (v9-15, Rom 8:18-25)
4. Given the analysis of wisdom (ch7) and of power (ch8), how can we change?

Eph 5:15-17

Col 2:2-3

1 Cor 1:18, 24-25, 30

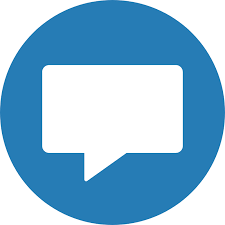
**Prayer Ideas**

* Pray for right attitude to the practical advantages of wisdom, making the most of every opportunity.
* Pray for our ability to appreciate wisdom’s & power’s limits, and our tendency to rely and boast about our wisdom and power, which in the end is meaningless and powerless.
* Pray that we better fear God and see in Christ the power and wisdom of God, for us to be saved & to obey him.

**Study 8 - Ecclesiastes 9-10 Findings of the search for meaning – Living life to the full**

**Starter**

“One sinner destroys much good (9:18).” Where have you seen this to be true?



**Discussion & Prayer**

Read Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

1. Even though we’re so limited, why is it still better to be alive than dead? (v1-6, 11-12; Phil 1:21-23)
2. In 9:7-10 we’re again told to “cease the day”. With life so fleeting, how can we do this better?

Read Ecclesiastes 9:13-18

1. If wisdom is so limited, how worthwhile is it still to pursue? (9:13-18)

Read Ecclesiastes 10:1-20

1. What are some of the most dramatic phrases in this section? Foolishness can be more powerful than wisdom, so how can we best caution against it?
2. How do we best show God’s wisdom?

1 Cor 1:17-18

2 Cor 4:6-11

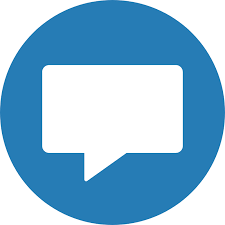
**Prayer Ideas**

* Thank God that we can see the foolish looking Cross is God’s wisdom.
* Pray that we are not foolish people who destroy much good.

**Study 9 - Ecclesiastes 11-12 Findings of the search for meaning – Fear God**

**Starter**

Have you ever had a near miss car accident? How did you feel afterwards? Did it last?



**Discussion & Prayer**

Overview

1. If you knew your days were numbered (say you were given 6 months), what would you do?

Read Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

1. Given the clear limitations we’ve see in Ecclesiastes, how are we to make the most of our lives? How might I be too cautious? How can we do this differently this week/year?

Read Ecclesiastes 11:7-10

1. How should “youthfulness” be viewed and used?
2. How does knowing that God will judge change us? (v9)

Read Ecclesiastes 12:1-8

1. How is old age like an old house? (v1-7)
2. What mustn’t we forget before we return to meaningless dust? (12:1, 6; Gen 2:7, 3:19)

Read Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

1. How does the narrator urge us to listen to the Teacher? (v9-12)
2. What is the final conclusion of the book? (v13-14; Rom 1:5, 16:25-27)
3. How does the fear of God, obedience and judgement change our priorities now & long term – like a goad or a firmly embedded nail? (Luke 12:4-5)

**Prayer Ideas**

* Pray we always head the Teacher’s findings, and never forget our Creator.
* Pray we invest boldly in this life, and support all the youthful investment we can.
* Pray we number our days well, enjoying each moment as it’s gifted to us.

See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him?

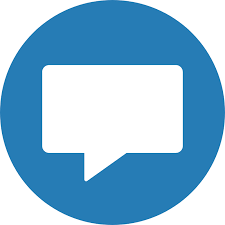
And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? (Deut 4:5-8)

**Wisdom on Sundays - How to Walk into church**

*Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly*

*as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. (Col 3:16)*

There is great practical wisdom in the booklet *How to Walk into church. A*s a supplement to the wisdom studies, each week read a chapter, and then be ready to discuss it with your group.



1. **How to Walk into church**

* What are different ways people walk into church? How can we best build up each of them? How can we especially look out for visitors?
* How does prayer about where to sit practically help, even if we’re not told exactly where?
  + concerning God
  + concerning us
  + concerning church
  + concerning others
* After praying, how can we walk into church differently?

1. **What is this thing called ‘church’?**

* How do we come to God’s presence? (Heb 10:19-22)
* What’s so great about this coming into God’s presence? (Heb 12:18-24)
* Do you readily see yourself in this grand heavenly church? Why/why not?
* How conscious of God’s purpose (to gather people into his church) am I?
* What has this heavenly church got to do with our local church?
* So what is it we’re walking into, when we walk into church each week? Finish this sentence “Church is …”

1. **Why am I walking into church?**

* What are some common reasons why Christians skip church?
* Why is being part of God’s family so important to why we go to church?
* How does considering Christianity as an endurance race, help us understand what church is about?
* 1 Cor 12 says we’re all needed at church. Is this how I feel? Why/why not?
* In considering how to spur one another on (Heb 10:24), how does 1 Cor 13 help us?
* From 1 Cor 13 what are the aspects of love that you find hardest when applied to our church?
* 1 Cor 14:1 identifies the greatest way to love is with God’s words? How is this possible for each one of us at church?

1. **Before I walk into church**

* In considering how to spur one another on (Heb 10:24), where do we start?
* Each week, when is the best time to decide whether you’ll make it to church?
* Why is so good about the “ministry of turning up”?
* Why is it so common to attend church 2/3s (or less) of the time?
* Each week in planning for church, what are good things to pray about?
* Each week in planning for church, what “homework” can I best do to prepare?

1. **After I walk into church**

* When I walk into church, what should I be looking for?
* How do we serve one another during the church service (the “horizontal” ministry of the pew), without distracting from the “vertical”? Exactly how is it “a constant interplay”?
* How can we think better about singing? (Eph 5:15-20, Col 3:15-17)
* How can we think better about listening? Which is your “go to” facial screen saver?
* “Love sees a need and tries to meet it”. How does this effect where and how we sit in church?

1. **When church finishes but doesn’t**

* Why should we invest concerted conscientious effort into the time after church?
* What are good reasons to skip church morning tea/supper?
* How do we make the most of this time? How can we all welcome visitors better?
* What do I do if I feel as if I never have anything worthwhile to say?
* How many people do you think really need encouragement as Christians?
* Is there anyone I’ve noticed hasn’t been at church recently. How could I encourage them this week?

1. **How to walk out of church**

* Do Christians need to go to church? Why/why not?
* Why have some people you know walked out of church and not come back?
* When is it right to grumble about church? (1 Cor 10:10, Phil 2:14, Jam 5:9, 1 Pet 4:9)
* How can we walk out of church in wisdom? (Col 3:12-17)
* How can we encourage each other to be best walking in & out of church each week?

**Prayer**

*“Father, help us to see our church at Engadine and Heathcote as part of the great assembly*

*around your throne in heaven.*

*Help each one of us to take our part in building your kingdom,*

*as we walk in and out of church each Sunday.”*

*Be very careful, then, how you live—*

*not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*

*Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. (Eph. 5:15-17)*