

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ find their meaning and purpose in Christ (1 Peter 2:9).

SCRIPTURE

ECCLESIASTES 2:1–11; 12:13–14

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

King Solomon is the author of Ecclesiastes but refers to himself as the “Preacher” and “son of David” (v. 1:1). In some regards, Solomon spends his time through this book examining the meaning of life. Considering Solomon was the wisest person ever to live (1 Kings 3:12; 4:29–30), his thoughts on such an epic topic would be highly valuable. But his words in Ecclesiastes aren’t merely theoretical. He was a king of great wealth and, therefore, experienced much of what he discusses. It would be hard to find a better teacher on the subject of the meaning of life.

Check out the *Teacher Prep Video* for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/1064810501>

FACILITATOR NOTE: We’re giving you a lot of teaching material. Don’t feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.



OPENING

PRAYER

1–2 minutes

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.

OPTIONAL: Give students an opportunity to lead the prayer.

OPENING QUESTIONS

3–5 minutes

- How was the week? What’s the best thing that’s happened? Anything major going on?
- What is something you have created or done that you are proud of?



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD’S WORD

3–5 minutes

In the book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon looked at all that he had accomplished and his pursuit of wealth and status and concluded that none of it pleased him. There was a pleasure-shaped hole in his heart that he couldn’t fill. When we try to find our identity or value in the pleasures of our lives, we will always be let down because they will eventually fade away. King Solomon called this longing for more and more “a striving after wind” (Ecc. 2:11).

Read Ecclesiastes 2:1–2 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- **What is one thing you wish you never had to do again?**
We all have things we have to do that we don't want to do. Help your students understand that being entertained 100% of the time is not a realistic goal.
- **What does the word “vanity” mean to you?**
The definition of vanity is either the pride of one's value and worth or something being worthless or of no value. Help your students connect their definitions to this passage.
- **When have you realized your work was in vain or not worth the effort you put into it?**
Answers will vary, but may include: a project you couldn't finish, busy work a boss made you do, practices that never ended, etc. Help your students connect their feelings with how King Solomon feels in Ecclesiastes 2:1–2.



Say something like: Often, we think the things we own or the work we do will bring us pleasure or joy. But if we are honest, we are often let down or left wanting more. King Solomon calls this “vanity,” or realizing that our work, stuff, and achievements are worthless apart from God.

Read Ecclesiastes 2:3–11 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- **What are the things that bring you the most joy or pleasure in your life?**
Answers will vary. God created us for joy and pleasure; what we do is often rooted in a God-given gift, talent, or ability. But when we seek pleasure outside of God, it gets warped by sin.
- **Why do you think we are never fully satisfied by entertainment or our pleasures?**
Regardless of your student's social or economic means, the joy from their “stuff” or hobbies eventually fades, and a desire for more creeps in. Nothing we have can make us happy forever except Jesus.
- **What do you think King Solomon meant by “a striving after wind” in Ecclesiastes 2:11?**
Pursuing pleasure will never satisfy us because we can never truly catch it, just like you cannot catch the wind.



Say something like: A problem we all can fall into is thinking pleasures, even good things, will fill that void in our lives. King Solomon calls it “a striving after wind,” but the problem is that you can never capture the wind. When not rooted in Jesus, pursuing pleasure is in vain.

FACILITATOR NOTE: If you have extra time, go through the next set of questions. If not, skip to the **Connection** section.

Read Ecclesiastes 12:12–14 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- **What does it mean to “fear God and keep his commandments” (Ecclesiastes 12:13)?**
We are called, like Israel, to make God the center of our lives, understand his power and authority, and trust him to lead and guide us. And then obey what he says!
- **What are some of the things you try to fill the pleasure-shaped hole in your heart with?**
Help your students think through the things in their lives that they turn to for pleasure or worth instead of God. It could be sports, awards, grades, reputation, dating relationships, or darker pleasures like drugs, alcohol, pornography, etc.



Say something like: King Solomon is clear that only God can fill the pleasure-shaped hole in our hearts because only God can give our lives true meaning and value. We work hard, we have stuff, and we achieve our goals as a response to God and for God.



CONNECT & APPLY

CONNECTION

5-7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story about spending time on something that eventually felt like chasing the wind.

Example: Jocelyn spent a lot of time online and on social media. She used most of her free time capturing videos, creating content, and trying to build an online presence. At first, this was a fun and exciting adventure, but as time passed, she would get stuck and caught up on what was “liked” or how many “views” she had. So, she spent more and more time perfecting each post and felt like a failure when they seemed to be ignored. Jocelyn was trapped because what had once been fun was taking life away from her. The more effort she put in, the less and less she seemed to get out of it, and the more hurt she became.



- Why do you think we spend so much time investing in things that ultimately aren't worth our time?
We chase after many different things in pursuit of meaning and fulfillment. Because we were all created with a deep desire for fulfillment and joy, that desire can only be made whole by our Creator. All other pleasure pursuits will eventually leave us wanting more. Only God satisfies fully and eternally.

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

Disciples of Christ find their meaning and purpose in Christ (1 Peter 2:9).

Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

Take time this week to think about where you seek pleasure in your life. Discuss those with a mentor or friend and evaluate whether they are rooted in God and worth pursuing.

Be specific:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



FACILITATOR NOTE: Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.



CLOSING

PRAYER

2–3 minutes

Take a moment to ask for prayer requests. Spend some time praying that the students will fix their eyes on Jesus and make him the center of their lives.

Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.

MEMORY VERSE

Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.

“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

Ecclesiastes 12:13 (ESV)

NOTES

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