



Wisdom and Whispers PT. V | Ecclesiastes | Mark Allen | 05.24.26

The Book of Ecclesiastes

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by asking God to open hearts and minds to His truth and to help group members apply what they learn.

Icebreaker

What's one thing you worked really hard to achieve or acquire, only to find it didn't bring the satisfaction you expected?

Sermon Summary (5 minutes)

This week's message explored Solomon's journey through Ecclesiastes as he searched for meaning and satisfaction in life. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, systematically examined various paths—scientific observation, hedonism, existentialism, capitalism, religion, materialism, stoicism, and common sense—only to conclude that apart from God, "all is vanity" (or "breath/vapor"). His ultimate conclusion: "Fear God and keep his commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. **Life is brief** - "Vanity of vanities" literally means "breath of breaths"—life passes quickly
2. **Worldly pursuits don't satisfy** - Pleasure, wealth, freedom, success, and even religion (works-based) leave us empty
3. **Generational wisdom fades** - Each generation forgets what the previous one knew
4. **Only God brings lasting meaning** - Fearing God and keeping His commandments is the purpose of life
5. **Grace, not works, saves us** - We cannot be "good enough" on our own; we need Jesus

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text (15 minutes)

1. Solomon's Scientific Observations (Ecclesiastes 1:3-11)

- What patterns did Solomon observe in nature (sun, wind, rivers)? How do these illustrate the repetitive, cyclical nature of life?
- Solomon wrote about scientific phenomena (jet streams, water cycle) thousands of years before modern discovery. What does this tell us about biblical wisdom?

2. The Pursuit of Satisfaction (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11)

- Solomon tried pleasure, projects, possessions, and accomplishments. Why do you think these things failed to satisfy him?
- Can you identify with any of Solomon's pursuits? Which ones resonate with your own experience?

3. The Final Answer (Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13-14)

- Why does Solomon emphasize remembering God "in the days of your youth"?
- What does it mean to "fear God" in practical terms?

Personal Application (20 minutes)

4. Modern Vanities

- Which of Solomon's pursuits is most tempting in our culture today? (hedonism, materialism, capitalism, existentialism, etc.)
- How have you seen these pursuits fail to deliver lasting happiness in your own life or in others?

5. The "Breath" of Life

- If life is but a "breath" or "vapor," how should that reality change the way we live day-to-day?
- What are you investing your time in that might be "vanity"? What should you be investing in instead?

6. Teaching the Next Generation

- Pastor Mark mentioned that children have nearly 100% chance of accepting Christ if introduced before age 13, but the number drops dramatically after. How does this challenge you as a parent, grandparent, aunt/uncle, or mentor?
- What practical steps can you take to prioritize spiritual formation over activities like club sports or screen time?

Going Deeper (15 minutes)

7. Religion vs. Relationship

- Pastor Make distinguished between "being religious" (doing good/being good) and having a relationship with Jesus. What's the difference?
- Have you ever caught yourself trying to earn God's favor through good works? How does grace change that perspective?

8. The Two Judgments

- Discuss the difference between the Great White Throne judgment and the judgment seat of Christ (for believers).
- How does knowing that Jesus "already paid the price" for believers affect how you view your future judgment?

9. Amazing Grace Connection

- Pastor Mark ended the sermon with the third verse of "Amazing Grace": "Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come. 'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."
 - How does this verse summarize the message of Ecclesiastes?
 - Share a "danger, toil, or snare" that God's grace has brought you through.
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of the following to implement this week:

Option 1: Vanity Audit

- Make a list of the top 5 things you spend your time, money, and energy on
- Prayerfully evaluate: Which of these will matter in eternity? Which are "vapor"?
- Identify one thing to reduce and one eternal investment to increase

Option 2: Next Generation Investment

- If you have children/grandchildren: Schedule three specific times this week for spiritual conversations or Bible reading (instead of screen time)
- If you don't have children: Reach out to a young person in your life and invest spiritually (invite them to church, share your testimony, pray with them)

Option 3: Grace Reflection

- Journal about areas where you've been trying to earn God's approval through good works
- Write out a prayer thanking Jesus for His finished work on the cross
- Memorize Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Option 4: Memorial Day Gratitude

- Write a thank-you note to a veteran or military family
 - Research a fallen soldier from your community and pray for their family
 - Reflect on both the blood shed by patriots for freedom AND the blood of Jesus shed for eternal freedom
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Prayer Focus (10 minutes)

Pray together for:

1. **New Believers** - Those who gave their lives to Christ during the service
 2. **Wisdom** - To recognize "vanity" in our own lives and pursue what matters eternally
 3. **Next Generation** - Children and youth in our church and families, that they would come to know Jesus early
 4. **Freedom Fest Volunteers** - That 500 people would sign up to serve (currently at 100)
 5. **Memorial Day** - Gratitude for veterans and fallen soldiers; pray for military families
 6. **Personal Requests** - Share and pray for specific needs in your group
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Looking Ahead

- **Next Week's Preparation:** Continue reading through wisdom literature (Proverbs, Psalms, or Job) and note where you see God's "whisper"—the underlying message beyond the surface wisdom.
 - **Freedom Fest Reminder:** Sign up to serve at least one 30-minute slot at Freedom Fest 2026. Go to the church app or website to register.
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Closing Prayer

"Lord, help us to remember that life is but a breath, and that only You bring lasting meaning and satisfaction. Thank You for Jesus, who paid our price so we don't have to face judgment alone. Empower us by Your Holy Spirit to live for what matters eternally, and to pass this faith to the next generation. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Additional Resources

- Read Ecclesiastes 1-12 in one sitting this week
 - Listen to "Amazing Grace" and meditate on verse 3
 - Recommended reading: "The Purpose Driven Life" by Rick Warren or "Don't Waste Your Life" by John Piper
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