

TO LIVE IS CHRIST**What Does It All Mean? Ecclesiastes 1:1—2:16**

What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun? Ecclesiastes 1:3

Day 1: Read Ecclesiastes 1:1—2:16* .

1. List several things that we find out about the author in this week's passage. Note: though the NIV calls the author "Teacher," the Hebrew word is more like "philosophy professor."
2. How does the Teacher prod his hearers to think and to question their assumptions about the meaning of life? What teaching technique does he employ? Note especially what questions he poses.

Day 2: Read Ecclesiastes 1:1—3.

3. How would you characterize the way the book opens (1:2)? Why do you think the writer opens his book as he does?
4. According to verse 2, what word describes the sum total of existence?
5. In a brief sentence state the theme of this week's passage, indeed, the theme of the entire book.
6. What does the phrase "under the sun" mean? Do the things "under the sun" constitute all of existence? Why or why not?

Day 3: Read Ecclesiastes 1:5—2:16.

7. How does observing nature support the Teacher's statement that everything is meaningless? (1:5–7)
8. One might think that wisdom leads to fulfillment, but according to the Teacher, what does wisdom lead to? (1:17, 18; 2:12–16)

* Questions in this Bible study are based on the New International Version of the Bible. If you don't have access to this version, inform your small group leader who may be able to locate a copy for you to use.

9. Where does the Teacher look for happiness and fulfillment next? (2:1–11) What activities does he engage in?

10. Why are the Teacher's achievements empty and meaningless? Why don't they bring him the meaning he's searching for?

Day 4: Read Ecclesiastes 1:4—2:16.

11. This week ask at least one friend what drives her to do the things she does. What gets her out of bed in the morning? Where does she find fulfillment? What is the most important issue that needs to be dealt with in this world?
 - a. She might say that her goal is to make the world a better place. What does the Teacher say about this reason for living? (1:4–11)

 - b. Or she might say that her goal is to become a better person. What does the Teacher say about this reason for living? (1:4, 11–18; 2:12–16)

 - c. Or she might say that her goal is to be successful or to be happy—or just to survive. What does the Teacher say about those reasons for living? (1:8; 2:1–11)

 - d. What other answer might she give and what does the Teacher say about it?

Day 5: Read Ecclesiastes 1:1—2:16.

12. Imagine sitting down and talking with the Teacher. In what ways do you agree that everything is meaningless? In what ways do you disagree? Is life “under the sun” all there is? Does everything end in nothing? From a Christian perspective, how can you refute the Teacher's argument? (See 1 Cor. 13:13; 15:12–28; Col. 1:16–17.)

13. Think of your most mundane daily task: how does knowing Jesus suffuse it with meaning and significance? Rather than searching for meaning “under the sun,” what comes “from above” that makes all the difference? (See Eph. 1:3–10; Jas. 1:17; 1 Pet. 1:3–4.)