



SHORELINE.CHURCH

FOCUS

MAY 2021

WOMEN'S DISCIPLESHIP
COMMUNITY



WHERE YOU FOCUS IS WHERE YOU'LL GO

In the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, there is a book that can seem disheartening and depressing if we read it quickly and neglect to focus. But, when we let the Holy Spirit speak to our heart through the book of Ecclesiastes and soak in this little book of hope, we see that all roads point to Jesus - the one who sacrificed everything for the sake of a relationship with us. We learn that we are not in control of the world! This truth is not an invitation to become discouraged, disillusioned, controlling, or jaded. Instead, it is an invitation to live our lives in complete dependence on Jesus Christ. He gives us all we need for each day. He is the source of our hope and trust. In Him, we have inexplicable freedom and access to lasting peace.

In the following pages, you will dive into four main focus shifts:

- From the pleasures of this world to the **Bread of Life**.
- From trust in self to **trust in God**.
- From condemnation, guilt, and shame to **divine forgiveness**.
- From worry and anxiety to the **Prince of Peace**.

We invite you to begin each section with prayer. Ask God to fill you with His wisdom and understanding. Next, read the selected chapters of Ecclesiastes slowly and marking any passages you want to revisit. If you come across anything you find confusing, do not hesitate to ask questions or turn to outside sources for help! Spend as much time on each focus shift as you find necessary. Avoid the temptation to rush through the book, but really sit in the message of its pages. This month, we encourage you to not miss this opportunity to **fix your eyes on Jesus**, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

CHECK OUT OUR PLAYLIST ON SPOTIFY!

Scan the code below in your Spotify App or search by the name of the playlist.



SHORELINE MONTEREY

"MAY 2021 - WOMEN'S DISCIPLESHIP COMMUNITY"





BEFORE YOU BEGIN

*This month, you will read the book of Ecclesiastes in its entirety.
But first, let's define some terms before you begin!*

THE TEACHER

Ecclesiastes 1:1 opens with these words: *The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem.* This introduction should signal us to pay attention! The son of David, king of Jerusalem was the Great King Solomon, famous for his wisdom and association with the book of Proverbs. Though the Teacher is not Solomon himself, he is someone representing Solomon, communicating wisdom from his perspective.

The Teacher's words are meant to be the "voice of reason" but at times seem bleak. However, his thoughts are meant to generate hope for Heaven. God is at work even when we do not understand our current circumstances.

UNDER THE SUN

The phrase "under the sun" is a poetic way of communicating life as we presently experience it in this fallen world. In this life, we experience pain and suffering. But one day, every tear will be wiped from our eyes and this world will be restored (Revelation 21:4).

MEANINGLESS! MEANINGLESS!

This word "meaningless" is an English translation of the Hebrew word *hevel*, meaning "smoke" or "vapor." The word is meant to convey that life is quick; here today and gone tomorrow.

The word is also used to describe something that turns out to be not what you thought or hoped it would be. For example, a cloud in the sky looks like something you could rest your head on. But in fact, when you reach out to grasp it, it slips from your fingers like smoke.

The point that the Teacher is trying to make is not that life is meaningless, but that life sometimes does not turn out the way we hope or think that it should. God controls the universe and all that is in it. Our job is to put our hope and trust in Him, even when we experience pain and suffering on this side of eternity.

Hevel appears 48 times in the Old Testament - 40 of those times occur in the book of Ecclesiastes!

THE RIGHTEOUS PERSON

Read the following passages and answer the questions below.

Leviticus 26:3-13

Joshua 1:7

Psalms 1:1-3

Deuteronomy 6:1-2

1 Kings 3:14

Proverbs 3:1-6

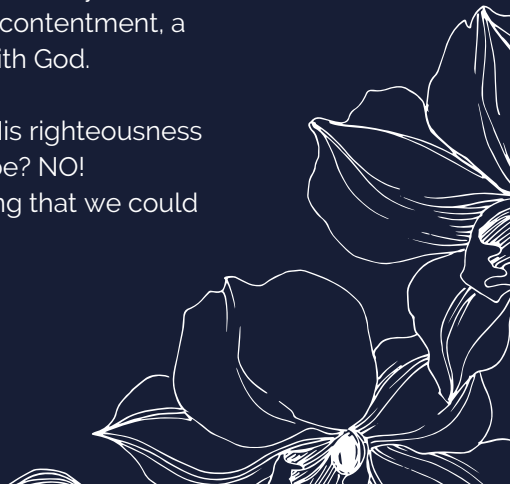
- 1** What do these passages from the wisdom writings of Psalms and Proverbs tell us will happen if we listen to God, obey Him, and do righteousness?

- 2** Describe a time when you felt that you were doing the right thing, and a situation still did not go the way you hoped that it would. How did you respond or how did this make you feel?

Sometimes, this success or blessing we are promised in Scripture may look different than we thought or imagined. It may look like a heart of contentment, a peaceful mind, unexplainable joy, or a rich relationship with God.

So where do we go from here? Do we give up pursuing God and His righteousness because the blessing wasn't what we thought it should be? NO!

We focus on Jesus. He is the blessing that far surpasses everything that we could have hoped or imagined.



FOCUS: THE BREAD OF LIFE

We shift our focus from seeking the fleeting pleasures of this world to seeking Jesus, the Bread of Life. He is the fulfillment for which our souls long.

READ ECCLESIASTES CHAPTERS 1 & 2

Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 *A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?*

Use the space below to rewrite Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 in your own words.

THE FOCUS SHIFT

It is easy to slip into the temptation of believing that earthly pleasures can satisfy the deep hunger of our hearts. Only in God does life have meaning and true pleasure. Without Him, nothing satisfies, but in Him we find true fulfillment for our souls.

Psalm 107:8-9 *Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.*

John 6:35 *Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."*

FOCUS CHALLENGE

This week, reflect on the truth that God alone can satisfy the longing of our hearts. Try reciting the **Lord's Prayer** (found in Matthew 6:9-13) a couple of times this week. Write it out on a card or sheet of paper and post the prayer somewhere you will see it every day. Let it remind you that God is the source of all that we need.





FOCUS: TRUST IN GOD

We shift our focus from seeking our own understanding of the world to trusting God's wisdom, sovereignty, and control of the universe.

READ ECCLESIASTES CHAPTERS 3, 4, & 5

Ecclesiastes 3:11, 14 *He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. [...] I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him.*

What do you think it means that God set eternity in our hearts? What might it look like to live on earth as people who eagerly wait for Heaven?

THE FOCUS SHIFT

Since we were made for eternity, we know that the world is not supposed to be this way. We eagerly await that the day the world is restored and pain and suffering will be no more. But while we experience hardship in this life, it is tempting to question or doubt God's goodness and sovereignty. God is at work even when we do not see it or understand our current circumstances! Our job is to trust that He is working in ways far greater than we can ask for or imagine.

Job 28:12-13, 23-24 *But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? No mortal comprehends its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living. [...] God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.*

Proverbs 3:5-6 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

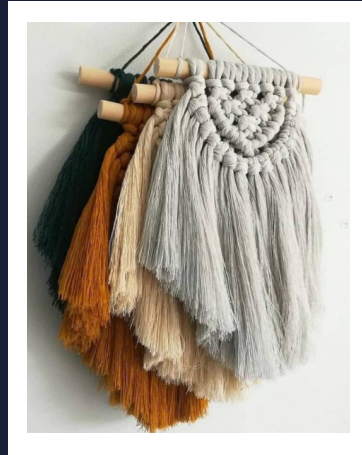
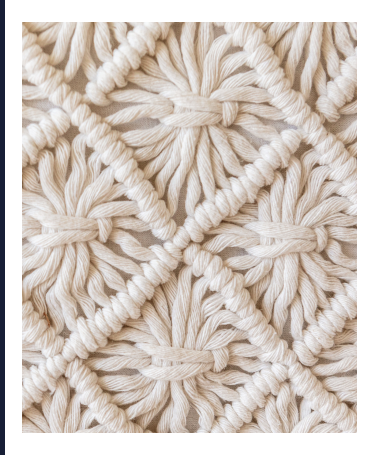
Ephesians 3:17-20 *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*

FOCUS CHALLENGE

Be still and dwell in the presence of God this week. **Take 5 minutes to escape to a quiet place**, turn off all distractions, and focus on your breathing. Try saying this simple prayer in your head or out loud: "God, you are in control. I put my trust in you."

DIY MACRAME WALL ART

Macrame is a technique that uses knots to create various textiles. Follow the directions to create a simple piece of wall decor. Beginner project - no previous experience required! As you complete this project, remember that God is weaving your life into a beautiful masterpiece - even when we do not yet see the finished result.



HIGHLIGHTS

- 10 in x 6 in
- Perfect pattern for the absolute beginner crafter!

SUPPLIES

- 45 ft of 3mm/4mm yarn or string (find at your local craft store)
- Small (about 8 inches) wooden dowel or stick

DIRECTIONS

- Set aside 6 lengths of 40 inches of your chosen yarn or string. Find the center of your first string and pass the center over the top of your dowel. Thread the string through the loop you have created and pull down firmly. Repeat for the remaining 5 strings.
- You will have 12 strings hanging from your dowel that will be grouped together into fours to form a square knot. To create the **square knot** - hold the 4 strings on the far right of your project. Take the 2 strings on the outside of that group. String 1 will pass over the top of the strings 2 and 3. String 4 goes over string one and passes behind strings 2 and 3. Insert string four into the loop between 1 and 2 and bring to the front. Pull firmly but not overly tight. For help with the square knot, watch this 2-minute tutorial on YouTube: www.youtube.be/WpTtYnObv_o.
- To finish the square knot, do the same action in reverse. Complete three square knots on the top row and continue the triangle shape so the second row has two square knots and the third row has one.
- The next knot is the **diagonal clove hitch knot**. Start on the left side of your project and pick up string 1. Keep this string in your hand for the duration of this knot. With your other hand, pick up the next string and bring it forward from underneath and then up through the gap between the two strings. Pull tight so the knot sits close to the square knot. Repeat this action with the same strings. This means each string on your left hand will wrap twice around the right-hand string. Let go of the string in your left hand and move to the next one. Complete with each string on the left side of your project. For help with the diagonal clove hitch knot, watch this 3-minute tutorial on YouTube: www.youtube.be/S8aqnKpltyA.
- Once you have formed a diagonal line on the left, repeat on the right side until you have joined the two lines. Brush out the bottom of your project with a metal bristle brush or hairbrush so the yarn or string frays at the ends. Trim the fringe to your desired style. Hang in your home or give it as a gift!

Pattern from Rocket & Pearl Shop on Etsy. For a more detailed set of directions with reference photos, click the link below to download the Full Instructions PDF tinyurl.com/macrame-instructions

FOCUS: DIVINE FORGIVENESS

We shift our focus from what we can do for God to what God has already done for us. We are sinners deeply loved by God and made completely whole through the blood of Jesus Christ.

READ ECCLESIASTES CHAPTERS 6, 7, & 8

Ecclesiastes 7:20, 29 *Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins. [...] This only have I found: God created mankind upright, but they have gone in search of many schemes.*

How might it be humbling to know that human beings, though we are made in the image of God, will try to do what is right but will sometimes fall into sin? What do you think is our proper response to this truth?



THE FOCUS SHIFT

Sin first entered the world in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. From that moment on, we find ourselves in this tension of wanting to do what is right, but at times, choose to sin. But we are not defined by our sin or past mistakes; we are made completely whole through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. For those who declare Him as Savior, their sins are remembered no more.

Psalm 103:11-13 *For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.*

Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

1 John 4:9-10 *This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

FOCUS CHALLENGE

Our sins are not forgiven based on what we do for God, but what God has already done for us. We are asked to simply confess and turn from that sin. This week, **practice confessing your sins** out loud, in your journal, or in the quietness of your heart. Allow God's divine forgiveness to permeate your heart and release any guilt or shame you might be holding on to.



FOCUS: THE PRINCE OF PEACE

We shift our focus from worry and anxiety to the Prince of Peace, the Creator of heaven and earth, who holds all things in His mighty hands.

READ ECCLESIASTES CHAPTERS 9, 10 & 11

Ecclesiastes 11:10a *So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body.*

Write out a prayer to God, listing all of the things you are worried about - big and small. Acknowledge that God holds the whole world in His hands. Ask Him to give you His perfect peace to replace your worry.



THE FOCUS SHIFT

From the beginning of time to now, God has been with His people and will continue to be with His people. We are called to cast our worries on Him because He cares for us. We offer our worried hearts to Him and dwell on what is true - God is in charge of the universe and all that is in it!

Deuteronomy 31:8 *The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."*

Isaiah 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Philippians 4:6-9 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

2 Timothy 1:7 *For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.*

FOCUS CHALLENGE

Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, instructs us to dwell on whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and praiseworthy to combat the anxiety in our hearts. Use the **Blessings Jar** activity on the following page to put this into practice.



BLESSINGS JAR

Philippians 4:8 says, "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things." In the jar below, write in all of the blessings you can think of - big and small - until you have filled the jar to the brim. To take this practice further, find a simple jar and fill it with scraps of paper.

Continue to add to it until it overflows with blessings!



THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

We shift our focus from worry and anxiety to the Prince of Peace, the Creator of heaven and earth, who holds all things in His mighty hands.

READ ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER 12

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.*

THE FOCUS SHIFTS

Use the space below to reflect on your study of Ecclesiastes. Summarize your main takeaways from each section of the book, each focus shift, and/or your experience with the focus challenges. How might your life look different in light of this study?

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

MORE RESOURCES

Interested in going deeper? Here are a few resources to help you continue to study the book of Ecclesiastes. The Bible study resources from RightNow Media require an account to access. Set-up your free account through Shoreline Church at www.shoreline.church/rightnow-media.

BOOKS & COMMENTARIES

Seismic Shifts: The Little Changes that Make a Big Difference in Your Life by Kevin G. Harney

Why Everything Matters: The Gospel in Ecclesiastes by Philip G. Ryken

Living Life Backward: How Ecclesiastes Teaches Us to Live in Light of the End by David Gibson

Old Testament for Everyone: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes & Song of Songs by John Goldingay

Searching for Spring: How God Makes All Things Beautiful in Time by Christine Hoover

BIBLE STUDIES

Ecclesiastes by Tommy Nelson on RightNow Media

Wisdom Series by Tim Mackie on RightNow Media

A Poetic Introduction to Wisdom by David Bowden on RightNow Media

Eternity by Waylon Sears on RightNow Media

Better by Tim Chaddick on RightNow Media

SERMONS & PODCASTS

What Matters Most (Ecclesiastes) Sermon Series with Kevin Harney, Shoreline Church

"Seismic Shifts: Transformation is One Small Decision Away" *Misc. Topics Sermon Series* with Kevin Harney, Shoreline Church

"Proverbs 3:1-6" *Ten Favorite Bible Passages Sermon Series* with Kevin Harney, Shoreline Church

"Ecclesiastes" Episode 20, *Old Testament Overviews* by the Bible Project

"Wisdom Series: Ecclesiastes" Episode 2, *Book Collections* by The Bible Project

