

# Ecclesiastes

20 Days

Enhanced Bible Reading Guide



DEEP ROOTED *Daily*



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## Get Ready To Grow

God has revealed Himself, His ways, and purposes to us in the Bible. If we want to know Him more fully and please Him with our lives, we must plant ourselves in His Word. Then, as our spiritual roots grow deep in Scripture, we will become healthy, vibrant, and fruitful disciples.

However, many Christians lack confidence when it comes to handling Scripture. We aren't sure where to read, how to understand what we read, or how to apply it. There are many devotionals and Bible studies available that will do much of the work for us. But there's no substitute for going to the Word for ourselves.

This resource is not a devotional or Bible study. It is an expanded Bible reading plan with questions and prompts designed to guide you to understand and apply what you read. Some readings have brief commentary that shares helpful information.

This *Deep Rooted Daily Enhanced Bible Reading Guide* provides a framework to help you read and study the Bible on your own. It is formatted around the 4 R Bible study method, which is an inductive study method simple enough to use every day. Each day you will **Read** the passage, **Record** your observations, **Reflect** on the meaning, and finally **Respond** to God's Word.

*Note: You will find more information about the 4 R Bible study method at the end of this guide that can help you take your daily reading to the next level.*

May God produce fruit in your life from your time in His Word!

Kathy





## How To Use This Guide

- **Gather your tools** – The only thing you must have is a Bible. (If you only use one translation, a word-for-word translation like the ESV, RSV, or NASB is best for study.) You may also want highlighters to observe the text, a pen to write with, and a journal or notebook to write in if you're using a digital version of this guide.
- **Read the introduction to the book** – Knowing the background of a Bible book greatly aids correct understanding of the book itself. The introduction – included in this guide – shares pertinent information like author, audience, setting, and purpose of the Bible book.
- **Read the daily Bible passage** – Before you read any of the commentary or questions, read the Bible text. If you have time, read it in more than one translation to enhance your understanding.
- **Read any commentary and answer the questions** – If you want to deepen your study beyond what's provided in the guide, see the "4 R Bible Study Method" appendix in the back for suggestions.



# Introduction to Ecclesiastes



One primary argument runs through the whole book of Ecclesiastes. The author, reflecting on the meaning and purpose of life, considers pessimistically from several angles. His main message is clear: Without God, human effort (1:12-6:9) and human wisdom (6:10-11:6) in this life are meaningless. (12:13-14)

## **AUTHORSHIP**

Technically, scholars consider Ecclesiastes to be anonymous. The author refers to himself as “Teacher” or “Preacher” and gives the impression that he writes from Jerusalem. He presents himself as an observer of life.

The traditional view is that the author is Solomon. The author even refers to himself as “son of David” (1:1). But some scholars, based on the nature of the Hebrew used in the text, argue for a later authorship, but there is no big consensus for this argument. There are also other items in the text inconsistent with Solomon’s life (see 1:16). Many conservative scholars still hold to Solomon as the author. Some think another anonymous author wrote using Solomon’s collected wisdom. For our purposes, we will refer to the author as “Teacher.”

## **PLACE OF ORIGIN**

The Teacher mentions Jerusalem in both 1:1 and 1:16. Without strong indication of any other point of origin most scholars accept Jerusalem as location.

## **TIPS FOR UNDERSTANDING**

- Focus on the whole message - Ecclesiastes is a difficult book to interpret. The Teacher constantly shifts between moods and viewpoints. But this can be understood as a simple reflection of the author grappling with the complexities of life over his lifetime. Like any of us going through life’s ups and downs. For the author in this book, it is a lifetime of observation. Which makes it all the more important for us to keep the whole message of the book in mind.
- Keep the literary genre in mind – Ecclesiastes is wisdom literature. It also utilizes multiple literary forms like proverbs and short stories with a moral. Wisdom literature provides wise, practical principles for living based on observation. It does not give promises from God. Watch for figurative language. Look for the practical principle that fosters wise, godly living.

## DAY ONE



### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 1:1-11**

Before we dive into this new book, let's talk perspective. Overall, on the surface, Ecclesiastes presents a cynical, pessimistic view of life. That's why it's so important to keep the big picture of the book in mind. The Teacher uses the term "under the sun" or "under the heavens" 29 times in this book. His observations are based on this physical life without God. The main theme is that life "under the sun" is meaningless and futile. The Teacher uses the word "vanity" more than 35 times throughout the book to highlight this theme!

So, as we read/study, let's keep that perspective in mind. It's good for us to remind ourselves how those who live life without God see the world and feel about life. The better we understand their need, the better we can share Jesus with them.

### **RECORD:**

*Underline or highlight repeated thoughts or ideas you see in today's passage. (For instance, the word translated as "vanity" in the ESV.)*

*Also underline or highlight and words or phrases that give insight to how the Teacher felt about life and his situation.*

*What one point did the Teacher make about the earth using similar examples in verses 4-7?*

*Summarize today's reading in one sentence.*

*According to verse 8, what does man fail to gain from hard work and toil?*



**REFLECT:**

*Based on the whole passage, how would you answer the rhetorical question found in verse 3?*

*What one main point is made in verses 9-11?*

*Summarize today's reading in 1-2 sentences.*

**RESPOND:**

*Do you ever feel like the Teacher? If so, express these feelings to God. He has meaning and a purpose for your life.*

*Since many people feel this way about life, how can you prepare yourself to address these feelings when you talk to others about Jesus?*



## DAY TWO

### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 1:12-18**

Today's passage begins with an introduction from the Teacher himself and his quest. As you read keep in mind that this passage reflects the outcome of pursuit apart from God.

### **RECORD:**

*What facts do you learn about the Teacher?*

*Describe the Teacher's "mission."*

*What conclusions did the Teacher make?*

*In what way did the Teacher blame God for the condition of the world?*



## DAY TWO

### REFLECT:

*How does verse 15 reflect the truth we know about our fallen world?*

*Summarize the Teacher's conclusion from his mission in one sentence.*

*Why did the Teacher's study cause him even more sorrow?*

*Is the Teacher's view of the world still the same for people today? What are some of the ways people respond when they can't find meaning within the world itself?*

So far Ecclesiastes feels pretty hopeless doesn't it? But let's keep the perspective in mind. Let's put ourselves in the place of the world who doesn't know God. My prayer for us is that it will increase our burden for the lost and better equip us to share Jesus.

### RESPOND:

*Have you ever felt like the Teacher? Have you ever looked for meaning in the world apart from God? What did you find?*

*Ask God to use today's passage to increase your burden for the lost world.*



## DAY THREE



### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 2:1-11**

Many in the world believe if they had money and influence to do whatever they desired that they would be happy. In this small section of Scripture, the Teacher decides to find out if that is true. He declares his endeavor, his goal, and his conclusion.

The Teacher emphasized that wisdom remained with him and guided him (vs 3 & 9) through this experiment. That shows he was purposeful in his pursuit of meaning. He wasn't merely living haphazardly but he was intentionally looking to find purpose and meaning in this physical life.

### **RECORD:**

*Make a list of all the areas of life the Teacher explored.*

*Make a list of all the possessions the Teacher accumulated.*

*What similar phrase, found in verses 7 and 9, did the Teacher use to describe himself?*



*What summary fact about his pursuits do you see in verse 10?*

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*In verse 11, what phrases did the Teacher use to describe the outcome of his pursuits?*

**REFLECT:**

*According to verse 3, what was the Teacher's goal?*

*How does the world feel about a man like this?*

*What principle do you learn from verse 10 that lays the foundation for people always seeking bigger and better and more?*

*What was his conclusion of his experiment? See verse 11.*

*Write a one-sentence summary statement for this passage.*



**RESPOND:**

*Are you caught in the cycle of pursuing bigger and better to find happiness and contentment?  
Based on this passage, what do you need to do?*

*How else does God want you to respond to His Word today?*



**READ: ECCLESIASTES 2:12-26**

In yesterday's passage, the teacher looked for meaning in pleasure. In today's passage, he looks for meaning in wisdom and work.

**RECORD:**

*Underline or highlight the key words in this passage. Look for: wisdom, vanity, work/toil.*

*Make a list of everything the Teacher discovered when he compared wisdom and folly?*

*What word picture did the Teacher use to describe wisdom and folly?*

*What conclusion did the Teacher reach in his comparison of wisdom and folly?*

*Make a list of the observations the Teacher made about hard work?*

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*What was his conclusion about hard work?*

*What feelings did the teacher struggle with during his search for meaning and why? (See vs 17, 18, 20, 23)*

Verses 24-26 is the first of similar refrains we will see throughout this book. After his reflections about wisdom, work, and life, the Teacher turns to reflect on God. In his searching, the Teacher realizes that life truly has no meaning apart from God. The Teacher's words are not a call to "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die." Rather they are a realization that if we stay focused on God even the small everyday things of life have meaning and give enjoyment. (Note: The "sinner" in verse 26 refers to one who lives apart from God, rejects Him, not just someone who sins. We are all sinners!)

*What do you learn about God from verses 24-26?*

### **REFLECT:**

*What do we learn about wisdom and folly from the Teacher's word picture?*

*What key principle do you learn here about trying to live life apart from god?*



**RESPOND:**

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*What good thing in your life can you thank God for today?!*

*How does God want you to respond to His Word today?*

## DAY FIVE



### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8**

Today's passage is probably the most well-known in Ecclesiastes - probably one of the most well-known in all the Bible. It was even made popular by the musical group the Byrds in the 1960s. Although most people may not have even realized it came from the Bible.

Verse 1 announces the theme of the following poem. This poem mentions 14 activities and their opposites, organizing them into 7 groups of 2. We can see the parallelism in the groupings, with the 2nd phrase of each grouping reflecting a similar idea to the first phrase. The grouping of verse 5 is the only one that scholars aren't clear on. "Cast away stones" and "gather stones" is not clear. It may refer to picking up stones from a field to plant. Casting stones into a field was an action to cause trouble to a farmer. But, "casting stones" also carried sexual connotations at some point in Jewish thought. That would make the grouping more natural.

### **RECORD:**

*What life boundaries are shown in verse 2?*

*What over-arching life events or themes do you see in this poem?*

**REFLECT:**

*Restate the main thought/principle of this poem in one sentence.*

*This poem emphasizes that as we move through life our circumstances change. With changing circumstances, our responses and actions may need to adjust. Our primary purpose may shift. How should this truth impact the way we relate to God?*

*What do you learn about seeking God's guidance and direction through the seasons of our lives?*

**RESPOND:**

*Looking back at your own life, in what ways do you see God's hand directing and guiding?*

*How does God want you to respond to His Word today?*





## **READ: ECCLESIASTES 3:9-15**

I think this is my favorite section so far that we've read. The teacher shares some spiritual truth that helps put life in the right perspective. Each individual lives for such a short time on earth compared to all of history. When we focus on just our small "slice" it is easy to miss the big picture. God is working out His plans and purposes in the big picture (vs 11b). He is working throughout all of human history - what has come before us, now, and what will come after us. When we look at just our moment in time, it is often hard to see the purpose in it. We can learn more about Him and His plans and ways when we step back and look at it all (vs 15).

## **RECORD:**

*Make a list of everything you see in this passage that God has given/provided for mankind.*

*What facts do you learn about God, His character, and the way He acts in the world?*

*What does God deserve from us?*

**REFLECT:**

*What does it mean that God has put eternity in our hearts? In what ways did you experience "eternity in your heart" before you came to Christ? Or even now?*

*Why might God give us different tasks at different times? Or different blessings at different times. And not necessarily OUR timing! ("He has made everything beautiful in its time.")*

*How should a "big picture" viewpoint adjust our perspective on the work God has given us to do?*

*Restate the truth about God in verse 14a.*

**RESPOND:**

*How should the truth about God you saw in 14a impact the way we live?*

*How does God want you to respond to His Word today?*



## **READ: ECCLESIASTES 3:16-22**

Today's passage opens with an observation that could have been made in our world today. Truly, not much changes under the sun! But the truths about God voiced here are ones we can also use to reassure ourselves that God will one day make everything right!

As you read verses 19-21, keep in mind that the Teacher was focusing on this physical life. The spirit he mentions is our breath of physical life, not our soul. When we consider all of the Teacher's book we know he believes in eternity (3:11) and God's final judgment (3:17). His focus in this passage is on our purpose in this physical life. If we fail to accomplish the work God has given us in this life we will not have another chance (vs 22).

## **RECORD:**

*What observation did the Teacher make in verse 16?*

*Write one sentence summarizing the Teacher's main point behind verses 19-21.*

## **REFLECT:**

*What two truths about God and how He deals with mankind do you see in verses 17-18?*



*Summarize the Teacher's advice for how we should pursue God's work in this life.*

**RESPOND:**

*How does God want you to respond to His Word today?*



## **READ: ECCLESIASTES 4:1-16**

*It's good to remind ourselves of some things periodically as we go through Ecclesiastes. Since we are reading small pieces at a time, it's easy to lose sight of the Teacher's overall conclusion: Life is indeed meaningless without God. This is a good example of why knowing the overall context and purpose of each book we read is important. If we read today's passage without that context we would conclude that the Teacher is very cynical about life! His observations are accurate if God is not considered. Sadly, this is the way so many in our world - those without the hope of God - see life.*

## **RECORD:**

*Underline or highlight the key word/phrases "vanity" and "striving after the wind."*

*What observations did the Teacher make about oppression in verse 1?*

*Based on these observations, what conclusions did he come to? (vs 2-3)*

*What observations did the Teacher make about work in verses 4-8?*



*What observations did the Teacher make about companionship in verses 9-12?*

*What contrast did the Teacher make between wisdom and foolishness?*

*What characteristic of foolishness do you see in verse 13?*

### **REFLECT:**

*What do you learn from today's passage about what motivates people in this life?*

*So, based on these wrong attitudes and motivations, what would be the proper motivations and attitudes towards work?*

*Summarize the truth principles taught in this passage about our need for community.*



**RESPOND:**

*Do you have community? Other people to do life and faith with? Do you rely on them? Do you encourage and help them?*

*How does God want you to respond to His Word today?*



## DAY NINE

### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 5:1-7**

In today's passage, the Teacher turns his thoughts toward God and how we should worship Him. He compares a fool's approach with the proper, thoughtful approach.

### **RECORD:**

*Make a list of all the characteristics you see of a "fool's" approach to worshipping God.*

*Make a list of all the characteristics you see of the proper approach to God in worship.*

*Make a list of all the directives the Teacher gives to a worshipper.*

*What truths do you see about God in this passage?*





**REFLECT:**

*Summarize our proper motivation and attitude for our prayer and worship.*

*What are the consequences of too much talk, hasty words?*

*Why is it better to listen to God more than we talk at Him?*

*Why does God deserve our fear and worship?*

**RESPOND:**

*Have you made any vows or promises to God that you didn't fulfill? Is this something you still need to do? Or do you need to repent a foolishly made promise?*

*Evaluate your worship. Is there anything you need to change?*

*How does God want you to respond to His Word today?*



## DAY TEN

### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 5:8-20**

In today's passage, the Teacher considers the vanity of wealth and the trouble it so often brings.

However, in verses 18-20, the Teacher gives some encouraging insight and shares observations of some things that are “good” in this life. Here is my summation from those last verses: When we recognize this life for what it is and don't try to find fulfillment and purpose outside of God, then we will find joy in God's small blessings in this life and in the work He has given us.

### **RECORD:**

*Use the entire passage to make a list of all the consequences or burdens of wealth.*

*What did the Teacher observe about a good night's sleep?*

*In what ways does the man who has enough to live on but not an abundance have an advantage over the rich man?*

*Make a list of the things the Teacher observed as “good” in verses 18-20.*

**REFLECT:**

*Summarize in one-two sentences the principle behind wealth and discontentment.*

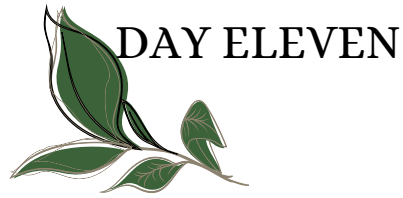
*Summarize in one sentence the Teacher's primary point found in verses 13-17.*

*What principles does this passage teach about the proper view of wealth/money?*

**RESPOND:**

*Do you hold any views about money that are unbiblical? What are some practical ways you can foster a biblical approach to money?*

*How does God want you to respond to His Word today?*



## **READ: ECCLESIASTES 6:1-12**

Discontent is a primary theme in today's passage. Contentment is not found in the amount of our possessions. Rich and poor alike can be content or discontent. Even when we don't constantly long for more material things, people struggle to find true contentment in this life if they look anywhere other than to God. Without God, people recognize that life is short, you live and soon die, so what really is the point to everything? Why even bother...

### **RECORD:**

*What examples of "good things" or God's blessings do you see in verses 1-6?*

*What examples of difficulties or bad things do you see in verses 1-6?*

*Summarize in one sentence each the two life situations described in verses 1-6.*

*What does the Teacher conclude is better than someone who lives many years but is not satisfied?*

*In verses 7-9, the Teacher shows that it's not the amount of possessions that brings contentment. What does?*



In verses 10-12, the Teacher once again presents a cynical view of life. "Since God has determined everything, why should we bother to try to do anything. We can't talk enough to change His mind. So, we might as well do whatever we want." Of course, this is not a biblical attitude. He is setting up the reader for some words of wisdom in chapter 7.

## **REFLECT:**

*What truths do you see in this passage about the fleeting nature of wealth and worldly status?*

*What truths do you see in this passage about the need for contentment?*

## **RESPOND:**

*Do you struggle with contentment? If so, what about your attitude needs to adjust to God?*

*How does God want you to respond to His Word today?*

## DAY TWELVE



### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 7:1-14**

This passage is a collection of practical proverbs for wise living. But not just mere worldly wisdom. The Teacher wants to live a God-guided life (vs 13). One repeated theme in these proverbs is that we should live with eternity in mind. That perspective provides better overall guidance for this life over frivolous "live for today."

### **RECORD:**

*Underline or highlight every word or phrase that emphasizes eternity in this passage.*

*According to verse 3, what is the benefit of trials in our lives?*

*Why is a wise rebuke better than foolish fun? (vs 5-6)*

*What are some of the consequences of greed (vs 7)?*

*Why is it easier to start things than to finish them? (see verse 8)*

*What characteristics of wisdom do you see in verse 9? In verse 10?*

**REFLECT:**

*What are some of the benefits of mourning and rebukes? (vs 4-5)*

*Why is wisdom better than wealth?*

*Summarize the principles about living with an eternal perspective that you see in this passage.*

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The Teacher ends his collection of practical proverbs by reminding us that we should join God in His way. It is foolish to try to chart our own path.

**RESPOND:**

*How much of what you start do you finish? If you leave a lot unfinished, why do you think that is? Do you start things you shouldn't or do you lack perseverance?*

*Do you live with an eternal perspective? In what way do you need to adjust?*





## DAY THIRTEEN

### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 7:15-29**

After the specific, practical proverbial wisdom we read yesterday, the Teacher returns to broad, sweeping observations about the world and wisdom.

We have all seen things similar to what the Teacher records in verses 15-17. Often the "righteous" man dies early and the wicked lives on and on! He also warns against "self-righteousness" in verse 16. He advises that neither self-righteousness nor self-gratification will lead to the best life.

### **RECORD:**

*According to verse 18, what is the one way to live a true life of wisdom?*

*What observation about wisdom do you see in verse 19?*

*Compare verse 20 with verses 27-29. What common theme do you see in these verses?*

*What warning does the Teacher give in verses 21-22?*



## DAY THIRTEEN

*What truth about wisdom did the Teacher discover? (vs 23-24)*

*Summarize the general warning the Teacher gave in verses 25-26.*

### **REFLECT:**

*In this passage, the Teacher observed that mankind is inherently sinful and even when we want to live wisely wisdom is hard to find. Summarize his advice for those who really want to live a wise life. What must we do?*

### **RESPOND:**

*How does God want you to respond to His Word today?*

## DAY FOURTEEN



### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 8:1-13**

Today's passage takes on a more positive tone than we've been seeing! The Teacher opens with a blanket positive observation about wisdom (vs 1). The second section focuses on how we should relate to the "king." For us, this applies to any person or entity that has authority over us (vs 2-5). The third section (vs 6-8) makes general observations about mankind's limitations. The final section gives some very helpful insight and advice about wicked people (vs 10-13). I found this section quite practical and relevant for life today.

### **RECORD:**

*What benefits of wisdom does the Teacher give in verse 1?*

*Make a list of every reason you see for why we should obey authorities.*

*What limitations does mankind face in this life? (vs 6-8)*

*What observations did the Teacher make about evil and evil people? (vs 9-13)*

*What contrast did the Teacher make in verses 12-13?*



**REFLECT:**

*Why does delayed justice only foster evil?*

*What foundational truth does this passage teach us about the ultimate end for evil?*

*What overall advice does the Teacher give for the best focus in this life?*

**RESPOND:**

*How does God want you to respond to His Word today? Change an attitude? Change the way you think about something to align with God's truth?*



## DAY FIFTEEN

### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 8:14-17**

This passage hits some of the Teacher's major themes. One thing that struck me as I read this passage, is that truly there is "nothing new under the sun." Although these words were written thousands of years ago, the realities of life and God's truth are the same.

### **RECORD:**

*What sad observation does the Teacher make about righteousness and evil in verse 14?*

*What does the Teacher conclude after his observation about righteousness and evil? (See vs 15.)*

*According to verse 16, no matter how wise one is, what will we never be able to accomplish?*

### **REFLECT:**

*According to verse 17, what is true about God, His world, and His ways?*



*How should Christians deal with the fact that we cannot understand why some things happen in the world?*

**RESPOND:**

*·Injustice does indeed run rampant in our world today. As a believer, what can you do to keep it in the right perspective; to look to God?*

*How does God want you to respond to His Word today?*

## DAY SIXTEEN



### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 9:1-10**

In this section, the Teacher speaks again about the surety of death. All people, no matter how we live in this life, will die. And all will experience trouble in this life. As I read this passage, I thought about how truly pointless life must feel for people who walk through this life without God and without any hope in a life after this one. Keep that in mind as you read and consider what thoughts must drive their actions in this life.

### **RECORD:**

*In what ways is life the same for the good and the evil?*

*What reasons does the Teacher give for it being better to be alive than dead?*

*What truth about God and the righteous do you see in verse 1?*

*Summarize in one sentence the Teacher's advice given in verses 7-10.*



**REFLECT:**

*Why might the inevitability of death cause some people in this world to simply live however they want?*

*What should we take to heart about the fleeting nature of life in regard to God's purposes for us here?*

*In what ways should hope in God and an eternity with Him shape our attitudes as we go through this life and face trials?*

**RESPOND:**

*Are you living each day to its full? In light of the brevity of life, are you purposefully living to fulfill God's purposes for you?*

*How does God want you to respond to His Word today?*





## DAY SEVENTEEN

### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 9:11-18**

In today's passage, the Teacher gives a few new observations from life that are a bit different than he's voiced before in the book. Keep in mind that what the Teacher refers to as "chance" is simply more the fact that we mere humans cannot predict or know what the future holds. God always knows and is always in control.

### **RECORD:**

*Restate the Teacher's main point from verse 11.*

*Restate the Teacher's main point from verse 12.*

*What point about wisdom does the Teacher make with his story of a small city and a powerful king?*

### **REFLECT:**

*How does the world usually treat wisdom?*



*Underline or highlight every appearance of “strength,” “touched,” and their variations.*

*According to verse 18, what is the truth about wisdom?*

**RESPOND:**

*Do you ever ignore the voice of wisdom in favor of the more popular ways of the world?*

*What can you do to purposefully tune in to God’s wisdom over the world’s foolishness?*

## DAY EIGHTEEN



### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 10:1-20**

After focusing on wisdom at the end of chapter 9, the Teacher turns to a collection of proverbs with a running theme of wisdom and folly. Some of them seem to be grouped into particular categories. For instance, wisdom in general (vs 1-7), wise planning (vs 8-11), wisdom/foolishness in speech (vs 12-15), wisdom/lack of it in leadership and work (vs 16-20).

Although the specific examples and leadership roles feel far removed from our world today, the underlying principles are very relevant and applicable. For instance, “king” can be applied to any person in leadership/authority/government.

### **RECORD:**

*What very wise warning do we see in verse 1?*

*According to verses 2-3, in what way will our lives reveal whether we are wise or foolish?*

*According to verse 4, how should we respond to anger against us - even unjust - from a ruler or boss?*

*Verses 5-7 together make one life observation. What is it?*



## DAY EIGHTEEN

*What overall observation about work/life do you see in verses 8-9?*

*What wise principle do you see in verses 10-11?*

*Use verses 12-14 to make a list of the characteristics of foolish speech.*

Verses 16-20 are insights about rulers and others with authority. Verse 19 may specifically reflect the attitude of the careless rulers we see in verses 16 & 18.

*In what ways does the quality of leadership impact the whole land?*

*What consequences come from lazy rulers?*

*What are the priorities of lazy, careless rulers?*

*What warning does the Teacher give us in verse 20?*

**REFLECT:**

*Summarize in one sentence the overall principle about the superiority of wisdom over folly.*

*Summarize in one sentence why wisdom is superior to folly.*

**RESPOND:**

*Reflect on your typical attitudes and actions that impact your relationships, your interaction with the culture and authorities, and your work. Ask God to show you where you might lack wisdom. Ask Him to help you correct your attitudes and actions and align them with His wisdom.*



## DAY NINETEEN

### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 11:1-10**

The Teacher is beginning to wrap up his observations on life. Much of what we see in this passage reflects some repeated themes we've seen throughout the book. Here, though he sums up and shares some very practical advice based on what he has learned. Although there is still a bit of a cynical tone, the Teacher clearly recognizes that God is control and He will hold all of us accountable for how we live this life. Yes, this life is filled with uncertainty and great mystery (vs 5). But we must not allow that uncertainty to keep us from acting, working, and living.

The Teacher's examples are from trade and agriculture. The specific examples may be far removed from our lives today, but the underlying principles are VERY applicable. NOTE: When asked to "restate" a principle, look for the clear advice behind the proverbial language. Try not to just reword what the Teacher wrote.

### **RECORD:**

*Restate the practical advice about giving and investing our time and resources the Teacher gives in verses 1-2.*

*Restate the practical advice about working/acting that the Teacher gives in verses 3-4.*

*Restate the practical advice given in verse 6.*



## DAY NINETEEN

Verses 7-10 is packed with advice for the young. Life is short. Growing old is inevitable. Here the Teacher records how we should live in light of those certainties.

*Make a list of all the practical advice the Teacher gave to those just starting out in life.*

### **REFLECT:**

*What truths about God are specifically pointed out in this passage?*

*How should these truths govern the way we live?*

### **RESPOND:**

*How does God want you to respond to His Word today?*

## DAY TWENTY



### **READ: ECCLESIASTES 12:1-14**

Today is our last days in the book of Ecclesiastes! I hope you have enjoyed it and learned from it. In this passage, the Teacher brings everything to a solid conclusion. We can't understand the main thought/purpose of the book without the end. Much of the book sounds very hopeless and cynical without the end. That is exactly the Teacher's point. So many people walk through life without God. They have no lasting purpose. And without God, life is truly meaningless, all vanity for them.

The voice/perspective changes in verse 9. Some scholars think there are two voices in Ecclesiastes - the Teacher (perhaps Solomon) and another (a disciple?) who intros, presents, and concludes the Teacher's thoughts. Others think perhaps the Teacher refers to himself in 3rd person. Doesn't really affect the truths in the book!

### **RECORD:**

*Make a list of all the effects of old age you see in verses 1-7.*

*Compare verse 1 with 7 & 8. What would make life meaningless?*

*Make a list of everything we learn about the Teacher and his activities from verses 9-10.*





*What effect do wise words have on others?*

*Why must we be cautious when pursuing wisdom?*

**REFLECT:**

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*Why do you think many people don't give God much thought while they are young?*

*Summarize in one sentence the Teacher's main point/advice from verses 1-8.*

*Restate in your own words the Teacher's final conclusion. After all his investigation, what did he discover?*

*Why must we live in the way he advised?*

**RESPOND:**

*What are your big take-aways from this book?*

## 4 R Bible Study Method



The 4 R Bible study method is a basic way to dig a little deeper into any biblical passage. This “inductive” method uses careful observation (record) to discover what the passage says. We start with observation, so we can more accurately interpret (reflect) God’s meaning. Personal application (respond) is our last step and end goal. You don’t need extra tools or resources. All you need is your Bible, a pen, a notebook or journal, and a humble, teachable attitude. The “R” repetition makes it memorable! You can take it anywhere!

**1. Read** - A reading plan will help with consistency and context. Choose one that is manageable with the time you have.

- Read prayerfully – Ask God to give you understanding and to help you be willing to apply His truth.
- Read multiple times – It’s easy to miss details and even deep truth with just one reading.
- Read in different translations - Reading in different translations will increase understanding.

**2. Record** (observation) - Before we can understand what a passage means we must know what it says. Our goal in this step is to carefully observe the passage and record what we find. See the next resource in this booklet: “10 Things to Observe in a Bible Passage” for specific help.

**3. Reflect** (Interpretation) – Look back over your recorded observations to help you understand God’s original meaning of the passage. Now identify the spiritual truths and principles. These will be eternal and timeless, relevant for all God’s people at any place in history and in every culture. Here are a few things to consider in this process:



## 4 R Bible Study Method

- Literary Genre – The specific literary style of a Bible book impacts how we should understand it.
- Literary Context - Keep each verse and passage within the context of the surrounding text and even the whole book.
- Historical/Cultural Context – Things like historical events, world powers, dominant religions, and cultural mores and practices all shaped the way the original audience understood.
- Meta–Narrative – All the individual books and stories of the Bible join together to tell us one big story: The rule, reign, and redemptive purposes of God. Ask, where does this passage fit in the Big Story?

**4. Respond** (application) - Knowledge of God's Word is never the end game. Application that leads to spiritual transformation is always our goal. So, once we've read and understood, let's ask God to show us how to apply these truths to our lives. God tells us some of the ways He wants to use His Word in our lives. In the following passage we see four broad categories for life application:

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV*

- Teaching (doctrine) – Correct our thinking. God wants us to hold correct beliefs about Him, salvation, His church, and His kingdom. Correct thinking leads to correct behavior.
- Reproof (rebuke) – Repent of any sin in our lives. God's Word reveals what's wrong and call us to stop wrong behavior.
- Correction (obedience) – God's Word also instills right behavior by giving us commands and principles to follow.
- Training (spiritual growth) – God uses Scripture to shape our character and underlying attitudes.

*For more on solid Bible study methods, visit [www.KathyHoward.org](http://www.KathyHoward.org)*

## Observation Tips



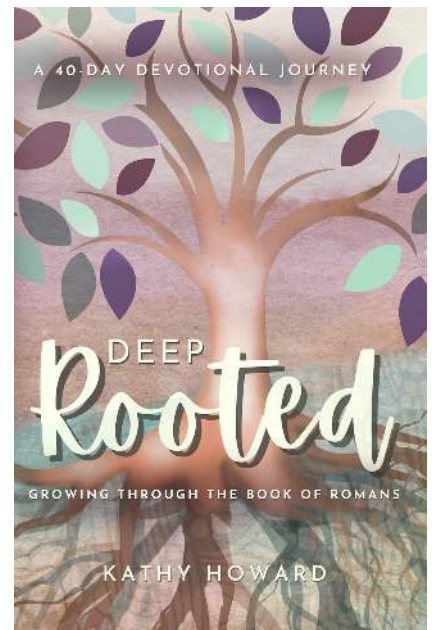
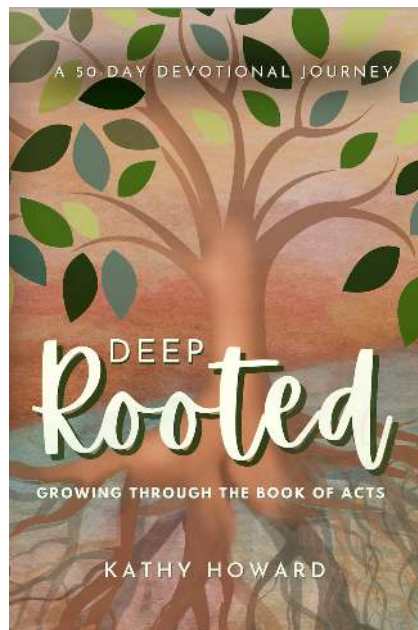
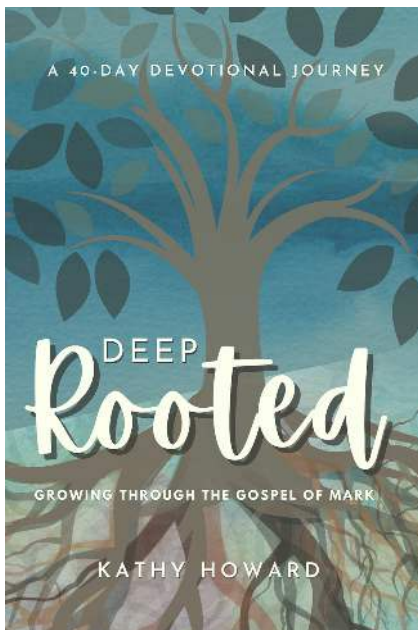
The goal of the RECORD (observation) step of Bible study is to discover what the passage says. As you read any Bible passage act like an investigative journalist. The list of observation tips below is not exhaustive, but it is a solid place to start. Record what you see in this Bible study resource, a notebook, or margin of your Bible. You won't spot everything in every passage. But in every passage your observation will help you do better Bible study.

1. Truths about God– The Bible is first and foremost a book about God. He is in every passage, on every page. It may be blatant or subtle, but He will be there. Look for truths about His nature, His character, His ways, and His purposes.
2. Key Words & Phrases– Repetition in God's Word is not accidental. If you see words and phrases repeated, take note. God is trying to point to something important.
3. Important facts – Mark any facts you see in the passage that will help you understand what's happening. Things like people, places, numbers can be key to comprehension.
4. Connecting or Transition Words – Words like “now, because, therefore, so, since, but” show a relationship, an explanation, or a cause and effect. When you see a connecting word, determine its purpose for being there.
5. Questions and answers – We find this powerful teaching tool throughout the Bible. Jesus often asked questions and then fleshed out His answer (see Matthew 6:25-34). The apostle Paul also used questions and answers in his letters (see Romans 6:1-14). When you see a question in Scripture, be sure to look for the answer.
6. Commands – The Bible is full of commands. Some are one-time commands for specific individuals at a specific time. Others are for all God's people for all time. For instance, “love one another” is applicable to us today!
7. Lists – Watch for lists and groups that will help you understand a spiritual truth or topic. Mark things like characteristics, qualities, and reasons.
8. Spiritual principles– Eternal principles impact our daily lives. These may be explicit or implicit in the text.
9. Contrasts and comparisons – The Bible often compares and contrasts to show how people or things are alike or different. These literary tools can more clearly show the reader the way that pleases God.
10. Word pictures – Similes and metaphors paints pictures that help us better understand spiritual truths. For instance, Jesus' description of Himself as “the true vine” in John 15 helps us understand what it means to constantly abide in Him.

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