

TO LIVE IS CHRIST**Oppression, Labor, and Loneliness Ecclesiastes 4:1—6:12**

“Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him—for this is his lot.”

Ecclesiastes 5:18

Day 1: Read Ecclesiastes 4:1–3.

1. Now the Teacher turns to consider another evil under the sun. What is it? (vss. 1–3)

2. He is describing life in the raw, the world as you can imagine it being if Jesus had not come. But what is the fuller, distinctively Christian perspective on the oppression in the world? (Luke 4:18–21)

3. In what sense, then, are the observations of the Teacher about life still true and valid, and in what sense are they not?

Day 2: Read Ecclesiastes 4:4–6.

4. As the Teacher looks around, what does he observe to be the impulse behind all our labor and achievements? (vs. 4) While we admit the truth in this, is there any hope for better motives in the woman ransomed and sanctified by Christ? (1 Thess. 1:3)

5. Verses 5 and 6 are two proverbs that seem contradictory on the surface: verse 5 says that laziness brings one to ruin; verse 6 suggests that rest is better than excessive toil. How do you think they both can be true?

Day 3: Read Ecclesiastes 4:7–16.

6. Who is a real sad sack, in the Teacher’s view? (vss. 7–8)

7. The man described above has no relationships. Though the Teacher finds life meaningless, what practical benefits does he find in relationships? (vss. 9–12)

8. What makes the king in verse 13 foolish? (See Prov. 11:14.) How can you apply this example to something going on in your own life right now?

9. A “rags to riches” story is described in verse 14. But apart from God, what is the final assessment of even this success story? (vs. 16)

Day 4: Read Ecclesiastes 5:1–20.

10. Verses 5:1–7 are all about the use of the mouth. Jot down some cautions the Teacher gives us. Is the Bible telling us we shouldn’t pray much? (See 1 Thess. 5:17.) Then what does the caution mean? And how does wordiness tend toward folly? (vs. 3)

11. Is there any hope for our speech? What difference does the Holy Spirit in us make? (1 Cor. 1:5)

12. What’s the problem with the love of money? (5:8–17)

13. In the midst of Ecclesiastes’ litany of evils and meaninglessness, what does the Teacher say is a “good” thing? (vs. 18) What does he call a gift from God? (vs. 19)

Day 5: Read Ecclesiastes 6:1–12.

14. Is there any automatic correlation between the amount of money and possessions you have and the ability to enjoy them? (vss. 1–2) What’s the only way you will enjoy these blessings? (vs. 2)

15. The teacher asks you a question: “Who knows what is good for a man in life, during the few and meaningless days he passes through like a shadow?” As a Christian woman, what’s your answer to him? (Consider Eph. 1:11–14; John 15:8, 15.)