

### 3. Loving Limitations

*Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 NLT - 18 Even so, I have noticed one thing, at least, that is good. It is good for people to eat, drink, and enjoy their work under the sun during the short life God has given them, and to accept their lot in life. 19 And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life--this is indeed a gift from God. 20 God keeps such people so busy enjoying life that they take no time to brood over the past.*

At last Solomon has found something good about money. When we view health and wealth as a gift from God, we can receive and enjoy them for the limited time we have. With our focus on God, we maintain the perspective that what we have is entrusted to us to do good in this lifetime. We trust that God is loving and wise in what He gives us. Solomon encourages us to embrace the present with gratitude. God has given us this day and these resources to enjoy and use wisely to bring Him glory.

*During this season of your life, what are the gifts God has given you? How can use them in a way that maximizes the good they produce?*

#### WRAP-UP

When we don't keep God in the center of our lives, we can find ourselves in pursuit of wisdom, pleasure, power and wealth attempting to find happiness. Instead, we should approach God in reverence, with ears open and mouth shut, to embrace His plan for us. He provides for us with loving limitations so that we might enjoy the gifts in life that He provides us.

#### MEMORY VERSE

And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life--this is indeed a gift from God. -Ecclesiastes 5:19 NLT

#### PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

*Challenge – Practice prayer this week with open hands ready to receive.*

### Open-Handed Living

Living Life Backwards #2

#### INTRODUCTION

How do we set the course of our lives? Do we follow our feelings and pursue our desires? That is what Solomon tried. Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, we learn that he chased after intellect, pleasure, work, power, and wealth. But none of these satisfied King Solomon. They were never enough. We may also be pursuing these things for our lives, allowing them to replace God for first place in our hearts. When you find yourself anxious and clutching desperately to hold on to those things that so easily slip away, it is time to stop and take an account of your priorities. Are your fists clenched on the vapor of life, or are you living open-handed, receiving from God, and offering back what He has given you?

#### Ice Breaker

Are there any items that you collect as a hobby?

#### Key Passage

***Ecclesiastes 5:10 NIV - 10 Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.***

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

##### 1. Looking Up and Listening In

Over time, we may let our communication and our relationship with God lapse into a routine. "Dear Lord, fill in the blank Amen", and off we go. We can lose the realization that this is the creator of the universe we are approaching, and He is the all-powerful God who holds our life in His hands. Solomon has some advice on how we should come before God.

*Ecclesiastes 5:1-2, 7 NLT - 1 As you enter the house of God, keep your ears open and your mouth shut. It is evil to make mindless offerings to God. 2 Don't make rash promises, and don't be hasty in bringing matters before God. After all, God is in heaven, and you are here on earth. So let your words be few. ... 7 Talk is cheap, like daydreams and other useless activities. Fear God instead.*

When we enter prayer, we should begin with open ears and closed mouth. This allows you to take in God's presence and hear Him more clearly.

*In your group, take one minute in silence to open your ears to God's voice. Let it be a time of receiving with open hands whatever God has for you. At the end of the minute, share any insights about what God had to say to you.*

## **2. Do You Have Enough?**

*1 Kings 10:23 NLT - 23 So King Solomon became richer and wiser than any other king on earth.*

*Ecclesiastes 5:10-11 NLT - 10 Those who love money will never have enough. How meaningless to think that wealth brings true happiness! 11 The more you have, the more people come to help you spend it. So what good is wealth--except perhaps to watch it slip through your fingers!*

*Luke 12:15 NLT - 15 Then he said, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own."*

The bible tells us Solomon was the richest king on earth. And yet he concluded that those who love money will never have enough. How do we determine when we have enough? We live in a comparison culture. Most people will compare themselves to others to see how they measure up. And more is always better- right?

*Solomon lists several pitfalls of riches in the verses below. Why do you think the rich don't sleep well? How would you describe the attitude of a hoarder? Do you know any wealthy but unhappy people?*

*Ecclesiastes 5:12-17 NLT - 12 People who work hard sleep well, whether they eat little or much. But the rich seldom get a good night's sleep. 13 There is another serious problem I have seen under the sun. Hoarding riches harms the saver. 14 Money is put into risky investments that turn sour, and everything is lost. In the end, there is nothing left to pass on to one's children. 15 We all come to the end of our lives as naked and empty-handed as on the day we were born. We can't take our riches with us. 16 And this, too, is a very serious problem. People leave this world no better off than when they came. All their hard work is for nothing--like working for the wind. 17 Throughout their lives, they live under a cloud--frustrated, discouraged, and angry.*

In verse 16 we find, if God is not at the top of your life's priorities, hard work alone produces only vapor. And Matthew says pursuing wealth will compete for our devotion.

*Matthew 6:19-21, 24 NLT - 19 "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. ... 24 "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*

*1 Timothy 6:10 NLT - 10 For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.*

*It is not money that is the root of evil, but our misplaced love of it. What are some warning signs that might alert us that we have allowed money to become our "master" rather than our servant? How ways can we use our money to serve God, family, and community rather than our own success and pleasure? Can you recall an occasion when giving your money away brought you joy?*