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DAY ONE

WE ARE RESTLESS

We are restless; we are looking for something or someone to fill a void in our lives. We use money, possessions, status, and people to fill the voids in our hearts. Is it any wonder why our lives can feel out of control?

The question in this entire study is “What are we trying to fill our voids with?” My hope is that when we’re finished with Ecclesiastes, we can recognize what is important and what doesn’t matter in our lives.

If you read just Ecclesiastes and no other books in the Bible, you may want an antidepressant! My professors told me to remember that all the books in the Bible were meant to be read as a continuous story. Ecclesiastes is a segment of the wisdom books and can be found in the center of the Bible following Proverbs.

We will begin by learning background information regarding this Old Testament wisdom book. The author of Ecclesiastes is unknown. However, Ecclesiastes is indirectly accredited to Solomon, son of King David.¹ In the introduction to Ecclesiastes, you will find that the title of this book comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, the “calling of an assembly.”² In Hebrew, the word is *qoheleth*. The qoheleth—think of a preacher or speaker—leads an assembly. In some of the newer English translations of the Bible, the word is translated as “teacher.”³

The preacher who spoke to the assembly in Ecclesiastes is unknown. To the Jews, the book of Ecclesiastes was significant and often read during Jewish worship. The preacher would read Ecclesiastes during the Festival of Tabernacles.⁴

Ecclesiastes contains twelve timeless treasures to assist you on your journey in life. Throughout the study, you will notice italicized these timeless treasures. Once you read the treasure, you will be asked to write it down in the back of your study book as a reminder. I hope you will find the treasures useful to live simply and enjoy the journey.

I wish we could chat so I could learn more about what is going on in your life. Do you feel a void or a restlessness? Are you feeling overwhelmed? Is your life feeling out of control? At times in my life, I did. St. Augustine of Hippo stated, “Thou hast made us for thyself, oh Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee.”⁵

Okay, I guess the study is over and we have the answer—in order to live simply and enjoy our journeys; we are to rest in Him.

Come back! Don’t leave yet. Join me as we dive into Ecclesiastes and find the hidden treasures to help us get our lives under control and be happy.

The first treasure is this: *When you worship God, you will be happy.* Please go to the back of your book and fill in the blank with this wisdom treasure. The gem seems doable, don’t you think? Your life becomes meaningful when you follow the commandments and fix your eyes on the One who created everything and everyone.

It’s time to get down on paper all that is going on in your life and consuming so much of your day. List the events here.

Did I give you enough space to write? I hope you answered the question as honestly as you could. To live a simpler life, we must first recognize what is consuming our time.

The Scripture verses that I have laid out in this study are taken from New American Bible Revised Edition. Please open your Bible and turn to Ephesians 3:17–19.

Who will dwell in you because of your faith? _____.

What are you to be rooted and grounded in? _____.

Because of your faith and dwelling in Christ, with whom will you be filled? _____.

Have you ever thought, *When I have this or that, I will be happy?* Realize that the very thing you thought would make you happy may be the very thing causing you chaos and difficulty.

How do you define *happiness*? _____.

The one who should occupy the emptiness you may feel is Jesus. Any of us can become restless because we've taken our eyes off the One who made us. I am ready to live life simply and extraordinarily. How about you?

Read Ecclesiastes 1:1–11.

All things are what? _____ (v. 8)

What two senses are not filled? _____ and _____.

Now turn to James 4:13–17.

You do not understand what? _____.

Instead, what should one say? _____.

Do you see a similar message between the two readings? _____. If so, what would you say the message is? _____.

What difference could this make as you look at what your priorities are?

According to these scriptures, the weariness or heaviness we can feel could be due partially to not seeking God and His will. When I was young, I would make a plan and try to make it work. When the plan didn't go as I would have liked, I prayed and asked God to bless my plan. Did you see what I said—"my" plan?

I would ask God at the end to bless my efforts, and sometimes, things would go as planned, but most of the time, my efforts were in vain. It wasn't until I had learned from a strong Christian woman the power of prayer during the first hour in the morning. At the training conference I attended, she asked us if we would want to join the 5:00 a.m. club. I came up with all the reasons I couldn't do that. I had two babies who didn't sleep through the night. I felt the woman knew what my thoughts were because she then asked, "How about the five-minutes-a day club?" *Tell me more*, I thought. The woman explained that when you spend the first part of the morning praying to God, you will find that to be the best part of your day.

Because I respected the woman, I gave her challenge a try. I began by setting my alarm ten minutes before I thought the babies would awake. I made a pot of coffee, found a devotional, and prayed. The Christian woman was right; I still love my time in prayer and would say it is still the best part of my day.

A second treasure to live a simplified life is this: *When we go to God first thing in the morning, we can keep our eyes on Him.* Now go to the back of the book to list the treasure.

Turn to Isaiah 41:8–10.

Do not _____ . Who will be with you? _____ .

What will God do? _____ .

Well, sweet friend, with the help of God, we will be able to get our lives back on track to a simpler life. I am so looking forward to journeying with you. Thank you for coming along.