

Christian student ministry workers in Sweden developed a series of questions to ask when reading a Bible passage. Called the “Swedish Method” because of its origins, these questions can be used when reading the Bible by yourself or with others.

The daily readings in this family worship guide have a few questions. However, we encourage you, as appropriate for your family, to ask the following general questions of the text each day.



Is there something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most, or draws attention?



Is there something you don’t understand, or a question the passage raises in your mind?



Is there a personal application to your life?



Is there something you plan to share with someone else – and who will you share it with?



How do ideas in the passage interrelate? Or with other passages in this book – or in the whole Bible?

Worshipping Together is part of the vision and is a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Frankston, Victoria, Australia. frankstonrp.org.au bit.ly/WTrpcaf

The concept and layout draws heavily from *Let’s Worship God*, a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Airdrie, Scotland. airdrierpcs.org

The readings are from Tim Chester’s 3-year weekly reading plan. bit.ly/WkBbl or bit.ly/3yrBbl

The quote on the cover is from the article *What Shampoo and Family Worship Have in Common*, Written by Randy Greenwald, (Quoted from *Tabletalk* magazine, Nov 1997.)

Notes this week are drawn in part from commentaries on commentaries on Ecclesiastes by Gordon Keddie, Warren Wiersbie, and Jim Winter, and notes from the HCSB Study Bible, and the Reformation Study Bible

Worshipping Together



We love God because He first loved us.

And we love to tell God that we love Him.

Joyful and faithful worship together twice each Lord’s Day is the highlight of our week. We are glad that they said, “Let us go to the House of the Lord.” Corporate worship prepares us for the week and prepares us for Heaven.

In addition, we regularly worship God as families and as individuals.

One father put it this way:

The back of my shampoo bottle says, “Lather, rinse, repeat.” Simple enough that even I can do it. Though family worship may be a bit more complicated than shampooing hair, it ought not to be rated with “home dentistry” in the scale of difficulty.



If you could buy family worship in the store, it would come in the form of a Bible, and the directions would simply say, “Read, pray, repeat.” Men should gather their families at least once daily. They should read a portion of the Scriptures to them. And they should pray with them. There need be no fireworks or pizzazz to keep the kids interested. There needs to be only a father* with a heart-love for God – who desires to see that love appropriated by his children.*

Read, pray, repeat.

* Fathers leading their family in worship is always the goal. When, in the Lord’s providence, the father is absent or uninterested, a godly mother will lead her children

Reading Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 A time for everything...

Notes
(See back page for authors)

In this complicated book, the Preacher (likely Solomon, but uncertain) examines life. In these familiar words he concludes there is a time for every activity under heaven. As my mother has just died, his reminder is of the painfully obvious. Yet God controls those times. As Winter notes, *in the midst of his search, the Preacher pauses for reflection. God is mentioned eight times in this chapter. This indicates that he is beginning to look above the sun for meaning and purpose.*

God has all these times in His hand. And He works them all out according to His purposes and the good of His people. Keddie quotes Martin Luther “with his characteristic bluntness” commenting that *all this is directed against the free will of man, and against all human purposes and fancies, but especially against the notion that it is in our power to determine seasons, and hours, and persons, and measures, and place; that we can settle how the affairs of this world shall go, ... in fine, we are taught that nothing comes to pass before the hour fixed for it by God.*

Aren't you glad God controls the times?

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. What times does the Preacher mention here?
2. Who controls the times? How can we be sure?
3. Does that mean we simply do nothing?

4.     

Praise Pray

- Psalm 120a²
1. Commit you and your family in prayer to trust God's control of the times
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

¹ You will notice we only have a printed guide for 6 days. We recommend each Lord's Day you review the previous week's readings and/or the previous or current week's sermons and pray together

² Psalm selections are taken from the *Book of Psalms for Worship*. We encourage our congregation to sing the same selection each day for a week to gain familiarity with the selection

Reading Ecclesiastes 3:22 Enjoy your activity

Notes
(See back page for authors)

The Preacher ends this chapter with a call to enjoy the life God has given.

As Keddie notes, *you are not the “master of the future, therefore...rejoice in the present.” (quoting Ernest Hengstenberg) God has given the present to be enjoyed as it affords God-honoring opportunities to do so. The future must be the subject of a rising personal trust in the Lord, who is ordering our lives and calling us to be his men and women in the midst of a world that so profoundly needs his saving grace.*

Wiersbie comments that *the Preacher closed this section by reminding us again to accept life from God's hand and enjoy it while we can (v. 22). Nobody knows what the future holds; and even if we did know, we can't return to life after we have died and start to enjoy it again. (See 6:12, 7:14, 9:3.) Knowing that God is in sovereign control of life (3:1), we can submit to Him and be at peace.*

Faith learns to live with seeming inconsistencies and absurdities, for we live by promises and not by explanations. We can't explain life, but we must experience life, either enduring it or enjoying it.

Solomon calls us to accept life, enjoy it a day at a time, and be satisfied. We must never be satisfied with ourselves, but we must be satisfied with what God gives to us in this life. If we grow in character and godliness, and if we live by faith, then we will be able to say with Paul, “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (Phil. 4:11, NIV).

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. Who is master of the future? Why does it matter?
2. How does what we believe affect what we experience?
3. How can we be satisfied with the life God has given us?

4.     

Praise Pray

- Psalm 120a
1. Pray that you and your family will enjoy life, with God's help
 2. Pray for your family
 3. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member
 4. Pray for the reading and preaching of God's word tomorrow

Reading Ecclesiastes 3:16-21 God’s perspective, and man’s

Notes Winter notes that *the Preacher now goes on to show us the nature of [God’s] accounting from two perspectives.*

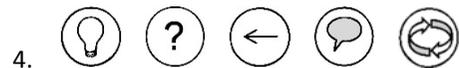
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God’s perspective (vv. 16–17): We begin in the place where man is called to exercise a God-like function—justice. In the courts of law, where true judgment was called to prevail, there was wickedness... True justice could not prevail because true judgement cannot be made without righteousness. In its place there was iniquity. We are called to make judgements throughout our lives...but these judgements will always be impaired in some way by our sin. Only God is the righteous judge, and the Preacher shows us that God is testing man so he can see clearly that in this area he is, in effect, little more than an animal. He, too, will face the true righteous Judge. Man’s destiny is to face the judgement of God.

Man’s perspective (vv. 18–22): The Preacher goes on to show us that fallen man sees things from a different angle. He sees the same things, but views them in a different way. In acknowledging the failures of his own race in exercising justice and acting in righteousness, he concludes that he is no more than an animal of a different species. His destiny is no different from a dog or any other living creature. It is easy to see that, once this philosophy is adopted, man will perceive his origin to be the same.

Is there any hope in this scenario? ...What fallen man needs is revelation: someone to show him the true reality of his position in the mind and heart of God; someone to show him his destiny...which is to be found clearly within the pages of the Bible.

- Questions** (see back page for explanation of symbols)
1. Why can true judgment not prevail in man?
 2. What happens when man views himself merely an animal?
 3. Who has the answer to life and how do we find it?



- Praise Pray** Psalm 120a
1. Ask God to keep you seeing His perspective
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading Ecclesiastes 3:9-11 Eternity in their hearts

Notes Now the Preacher continues to remind us that God is in the day to day times of our lives. We struggle at times – many in denial of God’s existence and involvement – but God is there.

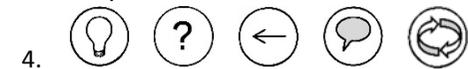
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As Wiersbie notes, the Preacher adjusted his sights and no longer looked at life only “under the sun.” He brought God into the picture and this gave him a new perspective. In verse 9, he repeated the opening question of 1:3, “Is all this labor really worth it?” In the light of “new evidence,” Solomon gave three answers to the question. [we’ll consider two here]

First, man’s life is a gift from God (v. 10). In view of the travail that we experience from day to day, life may seem like a strange gift, but it is God’s gift just the same. We “exercise” ourselves in trying to explain life’s enigmas, but we don’t always succeed. If we believingly accept life as a gift, and thank God for it, we will have a better attitude toward the burdens that come our way. If we grudgingly accept life as a burden, then we will miss the gifts that come our way. Outlook helps to determine outcome.

Second, man’s life is linked to eternity. (v. 11)...He has “eternity in his heart” and is linked to heaven. This explains why nobody (including Solomon) can be satisfied with his or her endeavors and achievements, or is able to explain the enigmas of life (1:12–2:11). God accomplishes His purposes in His time, but it will not be until we enter eternity that we will begin to comprehend His total plan.

- Questions** (see back page for explanation of symbols)
1. How should we consider God’s gift of our life?
 2. How does eternity in our hearts work out?
 3. Why does it matter if God is involved in life under the sun?



- Praise Pray** Psalm 120a
1. Commit yourself and your family in prayer to living for eternity, with God’s help.
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading Ecclesiastes 3:12-14

Notes
(See back page for authors)

Wiersbie continues considering answers to the question, *“Is all this labor really worth it?”*

Man’s life can be enjoyable now (vv. 12–14)... Solomon is encouraging not pagan hedonism, but rather the practice of enjoying God’s gifts as the fruit of one’s labor, no matter how difficult life may be. Life appears to be transitory, but whatever God does is forever, so when we live for Him and let Him have His way, life is meaningful and manageable. Instead of complaining about what we don’t have, let’s enjoy what we do have and thank God for it.

However, we must note that Solomon is not saying, “Don’t worry—be happy!” He is promoting faith in God, not “faith in faith” or “pie in the sky by and by.” Faith is only as good as the object of faith, and the greatest object of faith is the Lord. He can be trusted.

How can life be meaningless and monotonous for you when God has made you a part of His eternal plan? You are not an insignificant insect, crawling from one sad annihilation to another. If you have trusted Jesus Christ, you are a child of God being prepared for an eternal home (John 14:1–6; 2 Cor. 4). The Puritan pastor Thomas Watson said, “Eternity to the godly is a day that has no sunset; eternity to the wicked is a night that has no sunrise.”

The proper attitude for us is the fear of the Lord (v. 14), which is not the cringing of a slave before a cruel master, but the submission of an obedient child to a loving parent. If we fear God, we need not fear anything else for He is in control.

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. How are we to enjoy life?
2. What must we guard against as we enjoy life?
3. How can we be in awe of God?

4.     

Praise Pray

- Psalm 120a
1. Commit yourself and your family in prayer to fearing and enjoying God, with God’s help.
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading Ecclesiastes 3:15 God will call the past to account

Notes
(See back page for authors)

Again the Preacher stresses God’s control of the events of our times and our lives.

Wiersbie notes that *Solomon already mentioned the certainty of death in 2:12–23, and he will bring the subject up several times before he ends his book (4:8; 5:15–16; 6:6; 8:8; 9:2–3, 12; 12:7–8). Life, death, time, and eternity: these are the “ingredients” that make up our brief experience in this world, and they must not be ignored.*

Verse 15 helps us recall 1:9–11 and gives us the assurance that God is in control of the “cycle of life.” The past seems to repeat itself so that “there is no new thing under the sun” (1:9), but God can break into history and do what He pleases. His many miracles are evidence that the “cycle” is a pattern and not a prison. His own Son broke into human life through a miraculous birth. He then died on a cross and rose again, thus conquering the “life-death cycle.” Because Jesus Christ broke the “vicious circle,” He can make us a part of a new creation that overcomes time and death (2 Cor. 5:17–21).

Solomon added a new thought here: “and God will call the past to account” (v. 15, NIV). Scholars have a difficult time agreeing on the translation of this phrase. It literally says “God seeks what hurries along.” Solomon seems to say that time goes by swiftly and gets away from us; but God keeps track of it and will, at the end of time, call into account what we have done with time (12:14).

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. Is life just an endless, repeating, empty cycle? Explain
2. What is Jesus’ role in the life/death cycle for a Christian?
3. Who controls our times and our lives? Why does it matter?

4.     

Praise Pray

- Psalm 120a
1. Rejoice with your family in prayer that God is in control
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member