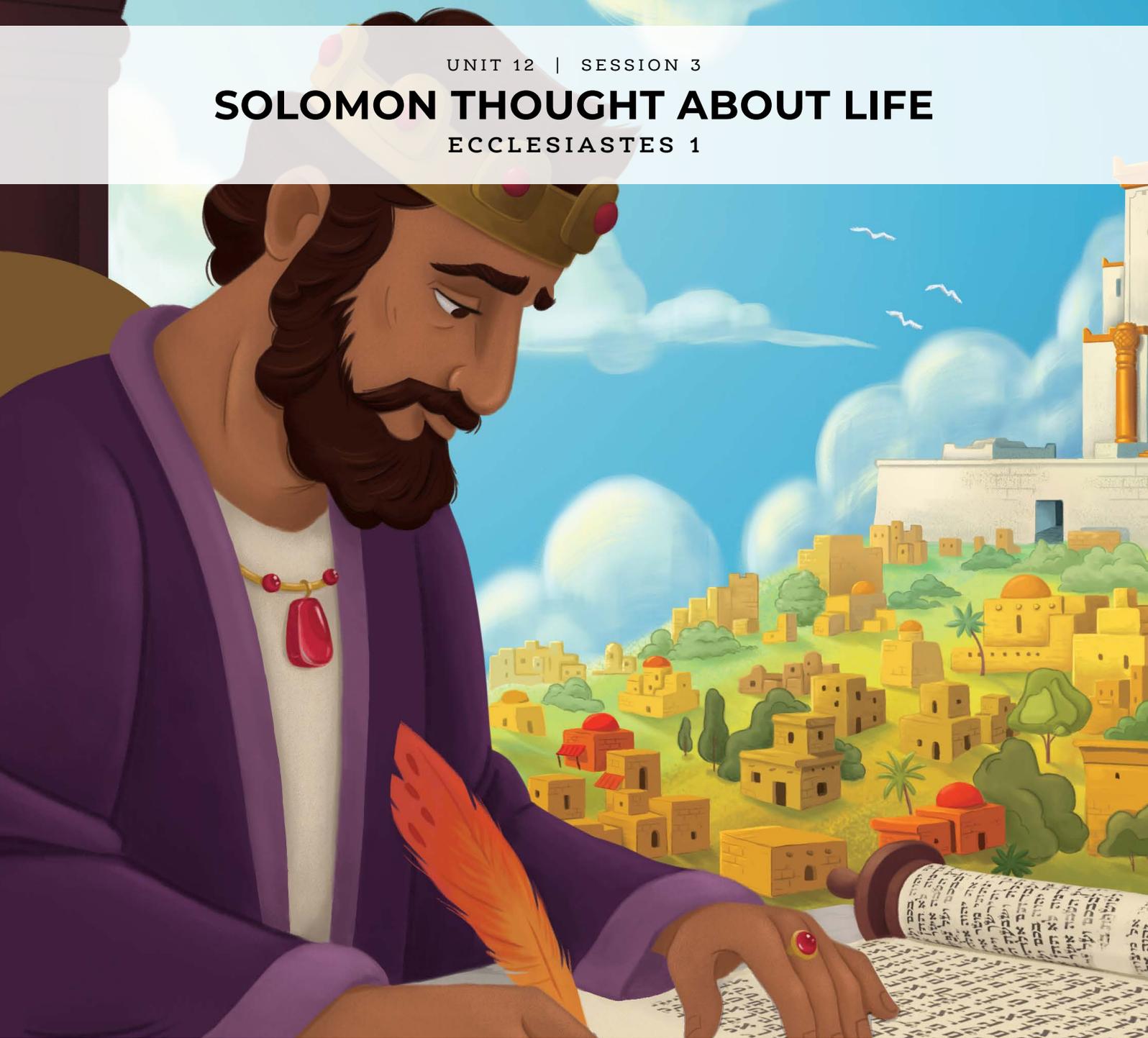


SOLOMON THOUGHT ABOUT LIFE

ECCLESIASTES 1



KEY PASSAGE: Proverbs 3:7

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What does God know? God knows everything about the past, present, and future.

CHRIST CONNECTION: People spend their lives trying to get riches, power, and fame, but none of it lasts. Only a life spent trusting in Jesus as Savior and following Him will matter in the end. Jesus lived, died, and rose again so we could find purpose in Him and be with God forever.

STORY POINT: Solomon taught that life has no meaning apart from God.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The book of Ecclesiastes is part of the Old Testament poetry and wisdom division. Ecclesiastes was written by King Solomon toward the end of his life as he reflected on his legacy and leadership. Though he had all the riches and wisdom life had to offer, he relayed in this writing that nothing matters apart from fearing the Lord and walking in His ways.

If everything is worthless, how are we to live meaningful lives as Christ followers? How is Jesus able to redeem our purpose in life?

The overall tone of Ecclesiastes seems pretty dreary. Solomon spoke of the meaninglessness of all our hard work and effort as people in a fallen world. These ideas seem to be in stark contrast to the ideas of God's beautiful, wonderful creation that we find throughout Scripture. A deeper look reveals that Solomon wasn't commanding his readers to stop caring about working hard, investing in the next generation, or experiencing what life has to offer. Instead, he poetically explained how lives spent on pursuing only the things of this world have no eternal meaning and will not be remembered.

The pursuits of this life are done in vain when we place them above our pursuit of the Lord and the wisdom He provides. Everything loses its meaning when held up against the cross of Jesus Christ. Only a life built on faith in Jesus will matter in the end.

When we order our lives with Jesus as our main pursuit, we experience the purpose and meaning that Christ died for us to receive; we experience life everlasting here and now. The gospel frees us from chasing after temporary, empty things and transforms our hearts to love and serve God. Christ died so that we may have life and have it in abundance (John 10:10).

Lead boys and girls to see the beauty of a life spent pursuing Christ! When all else seems meaningless, in Him we find our meaning as creations lovingly fashioned by a good Creator. Pray that they would turn from their sins and receive the gift of abundant life.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- "What's Important?" activity page

Session Starter (Option 2)

- brick
- wet sand
- plastic bins, 2
- pitcher of water, 2
- wooden or plastic blocks, 2
- square plastic container



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- countdown video
- Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- "Solomon Thought About Life" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Questions from Kids

- "Unit 12, Session 3" Questions from Kids video

Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- "Fear the LORD (Proverbs 3:7)" song
- worship song of your choice (optional)
- ball



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set
- world map



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 1)

- Phillips head screw driver
- stapler
- pen
- batteries
- watercolor paint
- staples
- paper
- flashlight without batteries
- screw
- paintbrush

Journal and Prayer

- Journal Page
- "Unscramble It" activity page



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY “What comes to mind when you hear the word ‘valuable’? What is something valuable you own or that you’d like to own?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “What’s Important?” activity page.

SAY “Today, we’ll learn about a book of the Bible Solomon wrote called Ecclesiastes. In this book, we’ll learn what’s most important or most valuable in our lives.”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



On individual slips of paper, write down a common idiom for each group of two or three kids. For example, “piece of cake” (describes something easy), “break a leg” (good luck), “under the weather” (feeling sick), “raining cats and dogs” (stormy weather), “bull in a China shop” (to be clumsy or to not be careful), “apple of my eye” (something or someone who is cherished above all others), “fish out of water” (in a strange or uncomfortable situation). Then invite groups to guess the meaning of their phrase. Offer assistance for phrases that may be too difficult or consider writing the meanings on a dry erase board for groups to guess from.

SAY “These phrases have meanings that are different from the actual words. Sometimes our world gives us messages that are different from the truth of God’s words. We can be tempted to gain meaning from the world rather than God. Today, we will learn how the true meaning of life can only be found in Jesus.”

OPTION 2: A SOLID FOUNDATION

Perform an object lesson to demonstrate how a life built on the firm foundation of Jesus matters. In a plastic bin, place a brick. On the brick, place a small wooden block or plastic block to represent a “house.” Place wet sand in a square mold, such as a plastic container. In a separate plastic bin, gently pour out the sand so it keeps the shape of the square mold. On the sand, place another “house.” Pour the same amount of water over the house on the sand as you do with the house on the brick. Watch as the house built on sand falls down.

SAY “The house built on sand did not have a strong, solid foundation, and it collapsed. The world is like shifting sand; it will not last, and it will not keep you safe. Today, we will see that **SOLOMON TAUGHT THAT LIFE HAS NO MEANING APART FROM GOD**. Only a life built on Jesus will matter in the end. Jesus taught that those who hear His words and obey them will be like the house built on the rock (Matthew 7:24-27). Following Jesus gives us confidence in knowing that no matter what comes our way, Jesus gives our lives meaning and He will be our place of security.”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “ Hi, kids! My name is [your name], and I am excited you are here to learn God’s Word. If you have a Bible with you, will you hold it up? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] Today, we will be in the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. It is believed that the author of Ecclesiastes was King Solomon.

As we hear our story, we will see that **SOLOMON TAUGHT THAT LIFE HAS NO MEANING APART FROM GOD.** [Display the Story Point Poster.] We’ll learn how Solomon described how trying to gain riches or power or fame will not matter in the end. We find meaning, purpose, and joy when we follow Jesus. Let’s pray together: ‘God, thank You for making Yourself known to us so we can find meaning and purpose in You. Give us ears to hear and hearts to believe Your Word. Amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “ What does God know? Who remembers the answer? [Allow responses.] **God knows everything about the past, present, and future.** Even though many people, like King Solomon, have wisdom, only God knows everything. Today, we will learn how God spoke through Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes and how God helps us understand how those who are truly wise will build a life built on following Jesus. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “ After David died, God chose Solomon to be king over the Israelites. Solomon was young and didn’t know how to lead God’s people well. God appeared to Solomon in a dream and told Solomon to ask for anything. Solomon asked for wisdom to lead God’s people. God gave Solomon wisdom, and Solomon used his wisdom to build a temple for God. The temple was a place for the Israelites to worship God, and it was also a reminder of God’s presence and His promise to build a forever kingdom through David’s family. Today, we will learn how Solomon wrote a book called Ecclesiastes and shared how our lives have no meaning apart from God. ”



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Ecclesiastes 1:1-11. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Solomon Thought about Life.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

SOLOMON THOUGHT ABOUT LIFE

“Solomon was the richest man in the world. He was famous. He was wiser than any man who had ever lived. He was the most powerful person in all of Israel. Yet, Solomon realized that having all these gifts could never give his life meaning and purpose.

Solomon wrote a book called Ecclesiastes to teach this truth to other people. The book begins this way:

“Absolutely worthless,” says the Teacher.

‘Everything is absolutely worthless.’

What does a person gain for all his hard work?

All his sweat and effort that he gives under the sun?

A generation of people dies, and another is born,

But the earth is pretty much the same as it has always been.

The sun rises and sets over and over, the same as it always has.

The wind rushes to the south, then to the north, and it’s always turning in cycles.

The streams all flow to the sea, but the sea is never full, and the streams keep flowing.

Everything is so tiring, more than anyone wants to say out loud.

No matter what you see, you always want to see more.

No matter what you hear, you always want to hear more.

What has been before will be again.

What you do today, you’ll have to do again tomorrow.

There is nothing new anywhere under the sun.

No one remembers the people who came before them.

And no one who will be born in the future will be remembered either.”

Solomon wanted people to realize that no matter what we do on earth, none of it really matters unless we are living for God’s glory. Knowing and serving God is what truly matters (Eccl. 8:12).

Christ Connection: People spend their lives trying to get riches, power, and fame,

STORYTELLING TIPS

Display emotion:

Tell the Bible story by emphasizing the different negative emotions portrayed, such as tiredness and sadness to help convey the theme of worthlessness.

Define it: Tell kids that the phrase “under the sun” is an idiom that means nothing new happens on earth. Instead, life repeats itself and what was will be forgotten for those who live only for this world and not for God.



but none of it lasts. Only a life spent trusting in Jesus as Savior and following Him will matter in the end. Jesus lived, died, and rose again so we could find purpose in Him and be with God forever. ”

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ King Solomon was the richest and wisest man in the world. However, what we learn from his writings is that meaning and purpose come from God and placing our trust in Him. What word did Solomon use to describe a life lived without knowing God? Look at Ecclesiastes 1:2. [Ask a volunteer to read Ecclesiastes 1:2 aloud.] Solomon, in all of his great wisdom, riches, and power, knew that the things of this world were all meaningless apart from the God who gives our lives meaning. **SOLOMON TAUGHT THAT LIFE HAS NO MEANING APART FROM GOD.**

What did Solomon say about the world and how it operates? Look at Ecclesiastes 1:10-11. [Ask a volunteer to read Ecclesiastes 1:10-11.] Solomon explained how the cycles of life repeat themselves and nothing new happens in the world. The experiences of people long ago are like what we experience today. We wake up, work, eat, spend time with people, go to school, play, travel, etc. But what is the point of these activities? Solomon’s words help us understand that everything we do apart from God has no true meaning or purpose in light of eternity. However, when we go to school with the truth that God is with us, and we are there to point others to Him, then we have purpose. If we play with our friends, loving them the way God has loved us, we find meaning. God created people to trust in His Son, Jesus, and follow Him, so that we would experience everlasting life and true meaning in Him alone. We were created to seek Him above the things of this world.

What does Solomon say about people who fear or love God? Look at Ecclesiastes 8:12-13. [Ask a volunteer to read Ecclesiastes 8:12-13.] Solomon wrote that it will go well for those who fear God. People spend their lives trying to get riches, power, and fame, but none of it lasts. Only a life spent trusting in Jesus as Savior and following Him will matter in the end. Jesus lived, died, and rose again so we could find purpose in Him and be with God forever. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ We can only experience our true purpose—to love God and be loved by Him—by placing our trust in His Son, Jesus. We were made to know God and enjoy Him forever. Only faith in Jesus can bring us to God. Have you put your faith in Jesus? ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 12, Session 3” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. How can we remember to serve the Lord as we go about our days?
2. How does following Jesus give our lives purpose?



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

SAY “Orvil Reid was a missionary to Mexico from 1938–1976. One way Orvil drew in crowds to share the gospel was through strong-man feats. One time, nine male students tried to pull an iron bar from Orvil’s grip but could not succeed. Another time, Orvil challenged four men to bend his outstretched arm. During another feat, Orvil clasped his hands together and challenged 32 men to pull them apart. After these performances, Orvil would share the good news about Jesus.”

Invite kids to perform some fun “strength building” skills. Lead kids to do jumping jacks, arm circles, crab walks, lay on their stomachs while lifting feet, legs, hands, and head into the air to see how long they can maintain the pose. Compliment the kids on their acts of strength.

Close in prayer, thanking God for sending missionaries like Orvil Reid to tell the people of Mexico about Jesus. Thank God for the purpose He gives Christians to tell others about Jesus.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Proverbs 3:7 together.

SAY “King Solomon had more wisdom, riches, and power than anyone. Yet, he realized the emptiness of a life lived without God. He wrote Proverbs 3:7 to remind people where true wisdom comes from.”

Invite kids to stand in a large circle. Begin by passing the ball to a kid, instructing him or her to quickly recite the first word of the key passage. Then direct him to pass the ball around the circle. Whoever has the ball in hand for the last word of the key passage will be eliminated. Continue until one kid remains.

Lead kids to sing “Fear the LORD (Proverbs 3:7).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “God, we thank You for creating us to be people who know You and find our purpose through following Jesus. Help us seek You above the things of the world because only You can give meaning to our lives. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles, and display the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Ecclesiastes 1. Tell kids that the name Ecclesiastes means “a person who calls an assembly.” Share how the book of Ecclesiastes is in the Old Testament poetry and wisdom division. Discuss how Ecclesiastes shares two perspectives: a life lived without God and a life lived trusting God.

Consider comparing the Old Testament Kingdoms Map to a modern-day map to help kids understand where Solomon lived. (Tip: Locate the areas in and around modern-day Jerusalem [H5]). Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ecclesiastes 1:2 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verse aloud.

SAY “Solomon said that everything is futile or worthless or empty. Think of a pile of ashes left after a fire has burned the wood. When a strong wind comes along, the pile of ashes will be blown by the wind, scattered and remembered no more. Solomon helps us understand that this is what people’s lives are like when they live apart from God.

But Solomon also offers us wisdom and hope: a life centered around following the Lord is always meaningful. He shared how people should fear God and trust in Him. Even when hard times come or we are disappointed, nothing is wasted or meaningless for those who have trusted in Jesus.”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “Where are people most tempted to place their value, worth, and time? Why?”

Discuss how people may place their worth, time, and attention on the things of this world—money, good grades, reputation, and success. We often believe we will experience greater joy by gaining the things of the world. However, King Solomon gained all that the world had to offer yet realized that only God could satisfy and provide him with meaning and purpose. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eccl. 2:4-11.)

SAY “How does faith in Jesus give us purpose?”

Tell kids that this world and its values are temporary, but God is eternal. The gospel frees us from chasing after temporary and empty things and transforms our hearts to love and serve God over the ways of the world. Christ came that we may have life and have it in abundance. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eph. 3:7-11.)

SAY “Why should we trust God and His Word over the ways of the world?”

Remind kids that because God is our Creator, all authority and truth come from Him. God holds all wisdom and has promised that those who fear Him and trust in Jesus will have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eccl. 12:13-14.)





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: PURPOSEFUL PAIRS

Form kids into 10 groups. Distribute one of the following items to each group: Phillips head screw driver, stapler, pen, batteries, watercolor paint, staples, paper, flashlight without batteries, screw, paintbrush. Challenge kids to find the group whose object helps fulfill the purpose of their item. For example, the group who has the stapler would pair up with the group who has the staples. Play until every group is matched. Repeat, choosing new pairs of items to use.

SAY “ If we had a flashlight without batteries, the flashlight’s purpose would be meaningless. We need batteries to allow the flashlight to fulfill its function. Today, we learned that **SOLOMON TAUGHT THAT LIFE HAS NO MEANING APART FROM GOD**. Like the flashlight needs batteries, we need God. Trying to find purpose in the things of this world will leave us empty. God has made the way through Jesus to find joy and eternal life. Only a life spent trusting in Jesus as Savior and following Him will matter in the end. ”

OPTION 2: SUN, WIND, AND STREAM



Challenge kids to perform a specific motion associated with a word. Explain the following motions associated with each word: sun (place both arms above your head in a circle), wind (wave both arms back and forth above your head), stream (move one arm in a wave-like motion). Call out the words in random order. Increase the speed at which you call out the words. Any kid who performs the incorrect motion is out. Play as many rounds as time allows, inviting volunteers to call out the words as well.

SAY “ In Ecclesiastes 1, Solomon wrote how the sun, wind, and streams repeat the same actions over and over every day. And yet, the sun, wind, and streams are doing what God created them to do. They have purpose in glorifying God by obeying Him and helping life to exist on earth. Even when life seems dull, repetitive, uncertain, unfair, or even meaningless, we can trust that God has a purpose for everything. ”

2 JOURNAL AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page. As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas.

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

Review the gospel, and encourage kids to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions. Then pray, praising God for giving believers purpose and meaning in following Jesus. As time allows, lead kids to complete “Unscramble It” on the activity page.