

A lighthouse with a white body and black horizontal bands stands on a dark, mossy stone pier. The sea is turbulent, with large white waves crashing against the pier and the lighthouse. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

**BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE®**

Personal

Study Guide

SENIOR ADULTS
FALL 2024
CSB

Thrive: Living on Purpose

Navigating Family Conflict

RESTORED AND MADE NEW

Home improvement and car restoration. These topics remain some of the most popular TV shows and YouTube channels. We love to see old houses and cars given “a new lease on life.” Many of us watch these shows to give us ideas on what we can do to restore something of our own. And many of us know that to make such a restoration, we’re going to need outside help.

We are flawed human beings. Because of sin in our lives, we need restoration. We don’t just need “a new lease on life,” we need a full restoration. However, to be restored to the life and purpose God created us for requires outside help. None of us are capable of doing this on our own.

Thankfully, God Himself has stepped in to give us the restoration we need. Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God, took our sin upon Himself, dying on a cross to remove and forgive our sin. He rose again to give us a new, eternal life.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!” (2 Cor. 5:17).

This restoration is for you, but it calls for belief and trust. If you would like to have a new life in Christ, repent of your sins and put your faith in Him. Admit to God that you are a sinner. Turn from the sin that has kept you from God and accept Jesus’s gift of forgiveness. Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Express your repentance and faith by praying something like this:

“Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died on the cross to forgive me of my sins. I’m sorry for all the wrong I’ve done and ask You to forgive me. I now accept Your gift of eternal life. Thank You for forgiveness and for new life in Jesus Christ. From this day forward, I choose to follow You. In Jesus’s name, Amen.”

Share your decision to follow Jesus with a pastor or those in your Bible study group. Get involved in a church that will help you grow in your faith. Be baptized as an expression of your faith.

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God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth,
without any mixture of error, for its matter, and
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Welcome

Welcome!

The study of God's Word is important. The fact that you're holding this book may mean you agree with that statement. Or maybe you're holding this book because you're curious about the Bible or seeking answers. Either way, I pray that you will be transformed as we look into God's Word together.

"Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Prayer should go hand-in-hand with reading God's Word. God speaks to us through His Word, and in turn, we speak to God about what we read and discover in that Word! I want to encourage you to pray as you study.

Periodically, throughout this book, you'll find "prayer prompts" to encourage you to pray. They are not labeled as such, but they are there: calls to pray about what you read, directions on turning a passage into a prayer back to God, and so forth. An example would be:

Father, help me to be diligent in studying Your Word. Open my eyes so that I will correctly handle the word of Truth.

May God richly bless your time with your Bible study group!

Lynn H. Pryor

Team Leader, *Bible Studies for Life*
@lynnpryor

Prayer Requests

[illegible]

Prayer Requests

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Prayer Requests

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Prayer Requests

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THE PATHWAY OF DISCIPLESHIP

Growing in Christ is a journey—a lifelong journey—but what does that look like? Lifeway’s research reveals eight markers consistently present in the lives of believers who are growing spiritually. Each year, Bible Studies for Life engages all eight of these areas. Following this intentional plan for discipleship ensures progress on the pathway to becoming more like Christ.

Visit www.BibleStudiesforLife.com for a fuller picture of this discipleship plan through 2025.

	FALL 2024	WINTER 2024-25	SPRING 2025	SUMMER 2025
LIVE UNASHAMED	Thrive: Living on Purpose			
BUILD RELATIONSHIPS	Navigating Family Conflict			
SHARE CHRIST		Looking Forward to Christmas		
SEEK GOD		The Heart of Worship		
ENGAGE WITH SCRIPTURE			All Signs Point to Jesus	
SERVE GOD AND OTHERS			Elisha: Seeing the Hand of God at Work	
OBEY GOD & DENY SELF				Character Counts
EXERCISE FAITH				Risk Takers

THRIVE: LIVING ON PURPOSE

How This Study Supports the Discipleship Plan

Live Unashamed. Knowing the purpose God has given us helps us live with confidence. When we are living out God's plan and desire for us, the reaction of the world around us is of little consequence.

Sept. 1	Session 1	Purpose Questioned (Ecclesiastes 1:1-14)
Sept. 8	Session 2	Purpose Abandoned (Psalm 8:1-6; 14:1-7)
Sept. 15	Session 3	Purpose Restored (Acts 3:14-26)
Sept. 22	Session 4	Purpose Lived (Galatians 5:16-26)
Sept. 29	Session 5	Purpose Expressed (Galatians 6:1-10)
Oct. 6	Session 6	Purpose Exemplified (Philippians 1:1-11)

NAVIGATING FAMILY CONFLICT

How This Study Supports the Discipleship Plan

Build Relationships. Among our human relationships, none is more important than the relationships within the family. By considering both positive and negative examples from the book of Genesis, we discover how to build relationships in a positive way that is Christ-honoring.

Oct. 13	Session 1	Cain and Abel: Family Responsibility (Genesis 4:1-12)
Oct. 20	Session 2	Abram and Lot: Family Rights (Genesis 13:5-11,14-18)
Oct. 27	Session 3	Isaac and Rebekah: Family Favorites (Genesis 25:24-28; 27:5-13)
Nov. 3	Session 4	Jacob and Esau: Family Rivalry (Genesis 27:35-37,41; 33:1-4,8-11)
Nov. 10	Session 5	Joseph and His Brothers: Family Jealousy (Genesis 37:1-4,18-24,31-34)
Nov. 17	Session 6	Joseph and His Brothers: Family Reconciliation (Genesis 42:3-5,21-24a; 45:1-5)



Introduction

THRIVE: LIVING ON PURPOSE

Antique stores. Not everyone is a fan, but my wife and I like to walk the aisles of an antique store. I may find something I can refurbish or repurpose into something else. I often get a harsh dose of reality when I see a toy I played with as a kid. My childhood toys are now antiques.

Occasionally, I'll see something that is new and unusual to me. "What is it?" I am not interested in simply knowing its name; I want to know what it does. What is its purpose? Knowing the purpose of some tool or instrument I pick up tells me so much. Knowing its purpose tells me why it was invented, who might use it, and how effective it was.

Too many of us go through life without purpose or ever realizing God created us with a purpose in mind. Life can be mundane and even carry a sense of hopelessness, but that was never God's intent for us. God created us with purpose, and when we discover that purpose in Christ, life takes on a meaning and richness the world can't offer. Over these six Bible study sessions, we're going to see the purpose for which God created us, how we can recapture that purpose, and what it practically looks like to live life with purpose.

LYNN H. PRYOR

Lynn H. Pryor is the team leader for *Bible Studies for Life*. He has been a part of the ministry of Lifeway Christian Resources for thirty years and has served multiple churches in middle Tennessee as a transitional, interim pastor. He provides a weekly blog that complements these studies at lynnhpryor.com.



Purpose Questioned

THE POINT

Apart from God, life is meaningless.

THE PASSAGE

Ecclesiastes 1:1-14

QUESTION 1:

What's something you get tired of doing over and over again?

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Life can often feel like a hamster wheel.

- The salesman clinches a deal, only to spin again on that wheel to find another customer.
- The fry cook sends out dish after dish, only to clean the grill and start all over again tomorrow.
- You mow the yard, only to have to do it all over again next week.

- You clean the house thoroughly, but before the cleaning supplies are put away, the dust has already started to return.

Do this long enough and you might gravitate to that one question that's a perennial favorite among three-year-olds: "Why?" While the kid directs his question to everyone else, as adults, we often ask that question of ourselves. "*Why am I doing this? What's it all for?*" You can come to the end of your life with that three-year-old's "why" still reverberating in your head.

The whirl of the hamster wheel can blur your vision to the fact your life has purpose, but that purpose is only realized when you look to the One who gave you that purpose. As King Solomon found out, looking anywhere else for your purpose is meaningless.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-7

1 The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem.

2 “Absolute futility,” says the Teacher.

“Absolute futility. Everything is futile.”

3 What does a person gain for all his efforts
that he labors at under the sun?

4 A generation goes and a generation comes,
but the earth remains forever.

5 The sun rises and the sun sets;
panting, it hurries back to the place
where it rises.

6 Gusting to the south,
turning to the north,
turning, turning, goes the wind,
and the wind returns in its cycles.

7 All the streams flow to the sea,
yet the sea is never full;
to the place where the streams flow,
there they flow again.

“Absolute futility” (v. 1). Ever said that? Maybe you’ve said it when work feels like “two steps forward, three steps back.” Or when a relationship goes south, or plans go awry. When life is not going like we’d hope, we can cry out in frustration, “What’s the point?”

I wouldn’t expect someone like King Solomon to feel like that. After all, Solomon was the wisest person in the world. God had given him “a

wise and understanding heart, so that there has never been anyone like you before and never will be again” (1 Kings 3:12). Not only that, but God had also given him “riches and honor, so that no king will be [his] equal during [his] entire life” (v. 13). Solomon wasn’t stingy with what he had; he was quite generous with his wisdom. Consider all the nuggets of wisdom he shared in the book of Proverbs, truths that are so

encouraging and insightful on how to get the most out of life.

That's why I was initially surprised to read Solomon's cry of futility and meaninglessness. If Solomon, with all his wisdom and wealth, had given up on finding any purpose or meaning in life, what hope is there for the rest of us? But because Solomon was so wise, let's consider why he said this.

Solomon began Ecclesiastes with an important question: "What does a person gain for all his efforts that he labors at under the sun?" (1:3). Solomon would keep coming back to this question in his quest to find purpose (2:11, 22; 3:9; 5:16). The key to understanding where Solomon is taking us in this book is the phrase "under the sun." Life lived "under the sun" (v. 3) is life lived apart from God. It is life viewed through the lens of someone who believes there is nothing above the sun, in the heavens. To live life only with a perspective "under the sun" is to live life with no regard for God, the One who is *above* the sun. And with no regard for God, we will surely miss finding any purpose or meaning in life.

Our world continually promises satisfaction and happiness if we accept what it has to offer. Too many of us chase the things of this world. We fill our lives and our minds with the stuff that's "under the sun," hoping to push out the thoughts of futility. We can attempt to mask it, but underneath it all is still that thought: "Absolute futility" (v. 1).

God has ultimately revealed Himself in Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-4). From the perspective of the Christ-follower, the question changes to: "Apart from Christ, what do we actually gain from all we do in this life?" But even as Christians, we can still struggle with the seeming futility of our day-to-day lives. We live and we die, generations come and go, but the earth keeps going through its endless, repetitive, monotonous, natural cycles. Solomon used three pictures from nature to make this point:

- **Life can seem like the repetitive cycles of the sun.** "The sun rises and the sun sets" (Ecc. 1:5). Up and down, and it always returns to its place in a hurry. Do you work hard all the time, but feel like you always end up back where you started?

- **Life can seem like the directionless flow of the winds.**

The wind goes around and around without any apparent purpose or direction. Ever feel like, no matter how fast you go, you're getting nowhere?

- **Life can seem like the never-ending flow of the rivers into the oceans.** Rivers and streams continue to flow into the ocean

without ever filling it. Does it often feel like the harder you work at some tasks you never get finished?

If you've ever felt like your life was pointless, hang on. It's about to get worse before it gets better.

QUESTION 2:

What are the pitfalls of pursuing what we're most passionate about?

Ecclesiastes 1:8-10

8 All things are wearisome,
more than anyone can say.

The eye is not satisfied by seeing
or the ear filled with hearing.

9 What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done;
there is nothing new under the sun.

10 Can one say about anything,
"Look, this is new"?

It has already existed in the ages before us.

It's bad enough that what we do in life feels pointless, but the very pursuit of things will wear us out. No matter what we try to experience or own, we come away weary and unsatisfied.

QUESTION 3:

Where do you see evidence that people are experiencing weariness in our culture?

- **No matter how much your eyes see, you will not be satisfied.**

Surely, we've all seen things that took our breath away. I've had the opportunity to see some incredible sights, such as the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, and the Great Wall of China. Maybe you've seen the famous Monet paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the Mona Lisa at the Louvre. There is beauty all around us, but all the glorious sights in God's creation and all the magnificent paintings, buildings, gardens, and wonders of the world will still leave us unsatisfied.

- **No matter what your ears hear, you will not be satisfied.** I don't know what you would consider music to your ears. Maybe it's the sounds of wildlife when you're out in nature, the patter of rain on the roof, or the sound of children playing. Or maybe it's actual music. I can be enraptured when I hear Gershwin, Mozart, or (to my wife's annoyance) an opera aria. But when the sounds fade away, what are we left with? We're left wanting more.

But maybe a *new* experience will be different. Nope. Being new and innovative doesn't change things.

As Solomon said, "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecc. 1:9). Let's not write off Solomon as someone endorsing the Eastern worldview. Eastern religions view history as repetitive, an endless cycle through thousands of reincarnations. They sadly view our lives as reincarnating over and over and over, and they believe even the whole of history will happen again. That wasn't Solomon's view. No, Solomon was simply stating the obvious: "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

Don't let the advertisers fool you. Companies spend millions trying to convince us that their product is "new and improved," but nothing is fundamentally new. Book publishers sometimes rerelease a book with a new cover, and sales go up. Even people who already own the book will purchase the book with a new cover. Newsflash: It's the same book! We see this in other ways in culture. Many of our songs and movies are simply a remaking of the old. Many of today's fashion trends are recycled styles. Hold on to your old clothes; they'll eventually come back in style again.

The Point Apart from God, life is meaningless.

To be clear: All these things we've been referring to are not necessarily bad. We can appreciate the security and freedom a good job provides. Working on home improvement projects can provide a level of satisfaction in working with your hands to make differences you can see. Active involvement in church life or volunteering in the community can offer a tangible benefit. Yet, there remains a common cry as we pursue all these things: We're exhausted.

I used to love cycling. Where I lived meant riding up some serious hills. I endured the hard push to get up the hill because of the rush of going down the other side. For too many of us, life feels like we're constantly going uphill, and we never come to the crest. This takes us right back

to where I started this study: the seemingly endless turning of the hamster wheel.

We continue to ask the same questions of life that generations before us have. *What is life about? How does what I do matter?* Though the specifics of culture may change, generation after generation keep asking the same questions. And if we keep viewing life "under the sun," we'll keep coming to the same faulty conclusion: It's all futile!

QUESTION 4:

What are some experiences in life that have caused you to say, "there is nothing new under the sun"?

ENGAGE

The teacher in this passage states that all pursuits outside of God are futile and ultimately miserable. In the space below, record some things in your life that you have come to realize are without purpose or meaning that you should eliminate from your life.

Ecclesiastes 1:11-14

11 There is no remembrance of those who came before; and of those who will come after there will also be no remembrance by those who follow them.

12 I, the Teacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

13 I applied my mind to examine and explore through wisdom all that is done under heaven. God has given people this miserable task to keep them occupied.

14 I have seen all the things that are done under the sun and have found everything to be futile, a pursuit of the wind.

One way many people try to bring meaning into their lives is by building a strong reputation and leaving a legacy. We want to be remembered! Sorry, but it doesn't matter what we've done or who we are; we will be forgotten. How many of us can rattle off the names of the last five vice-presidents? Even among football fans, how many of you can name the winners of the last five Super Bowls? Those were huge events at the time, but we quickly forget.

I was always proud of my father. As a mechanical engineer, he had multiple patents in his name that were used in the oil field. However, my father has been gone for over twenty-five years, and while his contributions are still used, I daresay no one in his field likely remembers his name. Thankfully, my father didn't look to these outward contributions for the source of his purpose or significance.

That was Solomon's sad point in verse 11: "There is no remembrance of those who came before; and of those who will come after there will also be no remembrance by those who follow them." Apart from Christ, all the work we do in this life adds nothing new and is quickly forgotten.

That didn't keep Solomon from being a go-getter. Here was a man driven by exceptional wisdom and armed with the resources and means that come with being the king. He made it his mission to live life to the fullest. Yet, in all he did, purpose and satisfaction eluded him.

- He sought purpose in pleasure and "living the good life" (Eccl. 2:1-3).
- He sought purpose through the pursuit of knowledge (vv. 14-16).
- He sought purpose in achievement and in making something of himself (vv. 4-6).

- He sought purpose in his possessions and what he owned (vv. 7-8).
- He sought purpose in making a name for himself (v. 9)
- He sought purpose in making the world a better place (4:13)
- He sought purpose in the pursuit of justice (8:14)

I think all along Solomon knew his purpose wasn't ultimately found in these things. From his vast wisdom, knowledge, and experience, Solomon set out to expose the emptiness of a secular worldview by trying to find meaning in "all that is done under heaven" (1:13)—that is, apart from God. His conclusion? It's all meaningless, "a pursuit of the wind" (v. 14).

Again, these different areas—pleasure, work, wisdom, possessions—are not bad. God is good and He allows these things into our lives out of His goodness. But if we look to those things for our ultimate purpose, then we ultimately lose our main purpose.

Some of you might be feeling a little down with all this talk about futility and meaninglessness. Why are we focusing on such a negative

topic? The good news is that our bad news helps point us to our ultimate hope. We might question our purpose, but we can find our purpose! That's the whole point of this study. Over the next several sessions, we're going to look at what God's Word says about our purpose—and it's a good message!

The good news is that our perspective is *not* limited just to what is "under the sun" (1:9). Our heavenly Father, who is above the sun, created this world through Christ and for Christ (Col. 1:15-17). All God created was good! Therefore, we *can* enjoy this world, and we *can* have confidence that history is moving toward God's appointed end. Our search for purpose is not a miserable task when we find our purpose in Christ. As we will see in the sessions that follow, as we seek Christ, all we need will fall into place.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you" (Matt. 6:33).

QUESTION 5:

In your experience, what are some key ingredients of a meaningful life?

LIVE IT OUT

What will you do this week to view life from a Christian worldview, a view from above the sun, where our Creator God dwells?

Read further. Block out some time to carefully read the rest of Ecclesiastes. As you meditate on Solomon's words, consider what the Lord is teaching you.

Search your heart. Take some quiet time away from the rush of life and ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart with the question: What am I looking to apart from God for meaning in my life?

Share the gospel. We are surrounded by people with no purpose. Point them to Christ, the One who gives purpose to our lives.

If we fall into the trap of seeing life merely from a secular viewpoint, life will feel like an endless, monotonous hamster wheel. Reset your perspective and view life from above the sun.



Jordan River Rules

The problems of life drive us to the promises of God. As my wife, Katrina, grew debilitated by multiple sclerosis, I stepped away from pastoring to care for her. Then she went to heaven, and I faced a new stage of life—a post-pastorate widower without the church I’d known for decades. From my study of Joshua 1–6, I developed 10 principles, which I call “The Jordan River Rules.” They’ve given me a new perspective on pressing into the future.

1. Realize God Means for You to Move Forward (Josh. 1:1-2). Don’t get stuck in life. Our times are in God’s hands, and He moves us onward at the speed of providence. Paul said in Philippians 3:13-14: “One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus.”

2. Say No to Discouragement, Yes to Strength (Josh. 1:3-9).

These words of Joshua are perhaps the best motivational talk in the history of leadership. “Do not be afraid or discouraged.” (v. 9).

3. Step Up to the Moment (Josh. 1:10-18). The people responded to Joshua’s challenge, saying, “‘Everything you have commanded us we will do, and everywhere you send us we will go’” (v. 16). We can say: “Jesus, everything You have commanded me I will do, and everywhere You send me I will go.”

4. Find Someone to Help Along the Way (Josh. 2). Joshua 2 tells the story about the two spies sent to scout out Jericho. This unlikely alliance resulted in Rahab being in the family tree of Jesus. (See Matt. 1:5.) You never know what will happen when you help someone else.

5. Expect God to Guide You Where You've Never Been Before

(Josh. 3:1-4). The Lord knows the way, and He goes before us. The next stage in life isn't uncharted to Him. Don't fear the future; trust the Father.

6. Prepare Today for Tomorrow's Wonders

(Josh. 3:5). This is one of the Bible's greatest verses on the subject of rededication:

“Consecrate yourselves, because the Lord will do wonders among you tomorrow.” God has blessings for you tomorrow. Prepare for them.

7. Trust God to Turn Problems into Pathways

(Josh. 3:15-17). In the dramatic story of the parting of the Jordan River, we are reminded the Lord Himself makes a way for us.

8. Build a Monument

(Josh. 4). In Joshua 4, an entire chapter is devoted to building a monument to remind future generations of the event. God wants us to leave behind a testimony, a record of His faithfulness to us.

9. Remember Who Is in Charge

(Josh. 5:13–6:5). In Joshua the “commander of the Lord's army” appeared. The Captain of our salvation is with us, and He knows how to deal with roadblocks.



10. Encircle Obstacles with Faith and Shout the Victory

(Josh. 6). The Lord's plan for conquering Jericho was unusual, requiring simple faith in Him. He told the Israelites to march around the city, and in seven days its walls would collapse. We face hindrances before us, but when we surround them with prayer, praise, patience, and the power of God, we'll soon shout the victory.

These principles have helped me move onward. For God's children, the way is always forward, the route is always guided, the Lord is always near us, and the future is always bright.

Pastor Robert Morgan teaches the Bible through a weekly podcast, books, video and social media resources, and speaking engagements. He and his late wife, Katrina, have three daughters and sixteen grandchildren. Visit him at robertjmorgan.com.