

LIFE UNDER THE SUN

The Unexpectedly Good
News of Ecclesiastes

HANNAH ANDERSON



LEADER GUIDE

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LEADER GUIDE

Welcome! Before you read any further, we want to say how thankful we are for you, the leader. Thank you for your willingness to dive into Scripture, brew the coffee, place the chairs, and set aside the time regularly to meet with other women.

Life Under the Sun: The Unexpectedly Good News of Ecclesiastes is a discussion-based Bible study from Hannah Anderson.

Our goal is for this leader guide to help you feel equipped to facilitate and guide your Bible study group gatherings in a way that fosters deep conversation and prayer for you and the women you're leading.

We want to encourage you to use this study however it works best for you and your group. If you want to follow this leader guide to the letter, do that! If you want to do your own thing, feel free! Our goal is to give you all the tools you might need, but we are certain God has ordained your time with your specific group in your specific setting.

We are grateful for you and praying for you as you lead this study.

Lifeway Women

WEEKLY GROUP MEETING: *SUGGESTED SCHEDULE*

Eight Group Meetings • Meeting Length: 1 hour

SESSION ONE—Introduction: Distribute Bible study books and get to know one another.

SESSION TWO—Discuss the Session Two personal Bible study.

SESSION THREE—Discuss the Session Three personal Bible study.

SESSION FOUR—Discuss the Session Four personal Bible study.

SESSION FIVE—Discuss the Session Five personal Bible study.

SESSION SIX—Discuss the Session Six personal Bible study.

SESSION SEVEN—Discuss the Session Seven personal Bible study

SESSION EIGHT—Discuss the Session Eight personal Bible study and wrap up the study.



HOW TO STRUCTURE YOUR GROUP TIME

Each group session contains the following elements. We've included a suggested amount of time based on a one-hour group meeting. Adjust as you need to for the time you have together!

GATHER (10 MINUTES) This is a time to greet and welcome everyone and get them talking. In the first session, you're provided with some icebreaker and general discussion questions to help group members get to know each other and introduce the study. In the subsequent sessions, you'll find one or two icebreaker questions that set the tone for the study.

DISCUSS (40 MINUTES) You'll find a suggestion of questions for each week in this leader guide. Pick and choose the ones you want to discuss with your group. These questions are designed to help you facilitate conversation around the week's Bible study and personal reflection. As you go through your own study during the week, put a star by any questions or statements you might want to discuss with your group.

CLOSE (10 MINUTES) Brief closing activity ideas and/or prayer prompts have been provided. You can use this however you wish to enhance or close the session.

HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO HELP YOU LEAD.

GET THE WORD OUT. Be sure to advertise the study early and utilize all methods for getting the word out. Post it on your church's website, send emails to potential attendees, and promote it on all forms of social media. It's best to start advertising the study four to six weeks before it begins. The study is eight sessions long, which means you will meet eight or nine times. Visit lifeway.com/lifeunderthesun for free promotional materials to help get the word out about your study.

SCHEDULE. Be sure to make everyone aware of the schedule ahead of time and start promptly each week to honor everyone's time. In your group time, you will watch the teaching video together and discuss what you're learning. You'll also be encouraged to spend a good bit of time in prayer.

STAY IN TOUCH. Prepare a sign-up sheet with space for names, email addresses, and phone numbers. You may also include information like birthdays, social media handles, and favorite candy so that you can foster community among group members.

GET COZY. Make an effort to create a comfortable environment for group meetings. Arrange chairs in a circle to encourage conversation. If your group is large, you may want to split into smaller groups for the discussion time. If you choose to do so, enlist discussion leaders for each group to keep the conversation moving and focused.

CHILDCARE. Be sure to check with participants to see if childcare is needed and organize leaders and space for the children in advance.

BIBLE STUDY BOOKS. Each participant will need a Bible study book. Make sure you leave plenty of time for all the books to be ordered and received between announcing and starting your Bible study. Consider offering a scholarship or buy one-give-one option for those who cannot afford a study book on their own.

EARLY PREP. We encourage you to read through the entire leader guide before the first session and evaluate how this will work best for your group. Highlight specific questions from the leader guide you want to make sure you cover during your group time. Be sure you stay on top of your own personal study between each meeting! We've left room in the leader guide for you to write down additional talking points and questions you want to pull in from the personal study.

PERSONAL STUDY. Between each meeting, there are five days of personal study to complete in the Bible study book.

PRAYER. Most importantly, be sure to pray for the women who attend the study. And pray for yourself as you prepare to lead. Ask God to draw the women closer to Him as they consider the wisdom of Ecclesiastes afresh and search for a solid foundation for life under the sun.

EVALUATE. At the end of each group session, ask yourself: What went well? What could be improved? Did you see women's lives transformed? Did your group grow closer to Christ and to one another? Also, do a final evaluation at the close of the study.

CONNECT. Find ways to interact and stay engaged with each member of your group throughout the study. Make use of social media, email, text messages, and handwritten notes to encourage them. Continue these connections even after the study ends.

Next, we've provided a discussion guide for each session. Remember these are simply suggestions for how to use your time together. We want to empower you as you lead to do what is best for your group!

SESSION 1

GATHER

Welcome women to the first session of *Life Under the Sun*. Provide name tags and distribute Bible study books if participants don't have them yet. MEET AND GREET is the main point of today's meeting, so spend as much time getting to know one another as you can. (We highly recommend snacks, coffee, and tea!)

DISCUSS

Here are a few discussion questions and prompts. Use these or create your own.

Invite each woman to introduce herself and share basic get-to-know-you information.

What book have you read that you feel paints life as it really is? Why did you name this book?

What do you know about Ecclesiastes?

What drew you to this study?

What do you hope to gain from this Bible study and this group?

PREVIEW THE STUDY

Lead group members to thumb through the book. Point out some of the features such as the Call Out Boxes and the Reflection Pages. Share about the weekly structure and the five days of personal study. Encourage women to do as much as they can. If they are unable to finish all five days of the personal study, they can still learn and contribute to the group time each week. Brainstorm specific times when they might try to complete their personal study each day.

Inform your group that three different Bible reading plans for Ecclesiastes can be found at lifeway.com/lifeunderthesun. Encourage participants to complete at least one of the plans during this study.

Set the commitment and time expectations you have for your group, and take the opportunity now to cover any important housekeeping notes.

Remind your group to complete Session Two of the personal Bible study (pp. 10–37) before your next group gathering.

PRAY

Close with prayer. Ask how the group can be praying for one another over the coming week, and then do that now.

SESSION TWO

GATHER

Welcome participants back to the study. Ask the following question to get your group talking:

When it comes to books and movies, do you like the story to be tied in a nice bow or to be left open-ended? Explain.

DISCUSS

Encourage discussion by asking some of the following questions, along with any you flagged in the days of personal study. Note especially the *Think About It* questions found throughout the week. Many of these would be good to use for group discussion.

Which day was your favorite day of study? Why?

How would you summarize the Teacher's view of life under the sun?

How does this compare to what Jesus and the New Testament writers taught about life under the sun?

How do you view life differently because of this week's study?

What stood out to you from this week of personal study? What has stuck with you? What surprised you or was new information?

CLOSE

Ask group members to share how this week's lesson has prompted them to pray in their personal prayer lives. Encourage them to pray for one another throughout this study. Close by leading your group in prayer.

Remind your group to read and complete the Session Three personal Bible study (pp. 38–65) before your next group meeting.

SESSION THREE

GATHER

Welcome participants back to the study. Ask the following question to get your group talking:

Who would you say is the wisest person you know? Why did you choose that person?

DISCUSS

Encourage discussion by asking some of the following questions, along with any you flagged in the days of personal study. Note especially the *Think About It* questions found throughout the week. Many of these would be good to use for group discussion.

Which day was your favorite day of study? Why?

How would you summarize the Teacher's view of wisdom under the sun?

How does this compare to what Jesus and the New Testament writers taught about wisdom under the sun?

How do you view wisdom differently because of this week's study?

What stood out to you from this week of personal study? What has stuck with you? What surprised you or was new information?

CLOSE

Ask group members to share how this week's lesson has prompted them to pray in their personal prayer lives. Encourage a few participants to share areas in their lives where they are praying for wisdom. Ask for volunteers to pray for some of the specific requests.

Remind your group to read and complete the Session Four personal Bible study (pp. 66–91) before your next group meeting.

SESSION FOUR

GATHER

Welcome participants back to the study. Ask the following question to get your group talking:

If someone gave you a million dollars, what would you do with the money?

DISCUSS

Encourage discussion by asking some of the following questions, along with any you flagged in the days of personal study. Note especially the *Think About It* questions found throughout the week. Many of these would be good to use for group discussion.

Which day was your favorite day of study? Why?

How would you summarize the Teacher's view of goodness under the sun?

How does this compare to what Jesus and the New Testament writers taught about goodness under the sun?

How do you view goodness differently because of this week's study?

What stood out to you from this week of personal study? What has stuck with you? What surprised you or was new information?

CLOSE

Ask group members to share how they have experienced God's abundant goodness this week. Brainstorm ideas for how your group can help meet needs around you out of God's abundance to you. Provide time for quiet prayers of thanksgiving.

Remind your group to read and complete the Session Five personal Bible study (pp. 92–119) before your next group meeting.

SESSION FIVE

GATHER

Welcome participants back to the study. Ask the following questions to get your group talking:

What's the first job you had and what was that experience like?

What would be your dream job?

DISCUSS

Encourage discussion by asking some of the following questions, along with any you flagged in the days of personal study. Note especially the *Think About It* questions found throughout the week. Many of these would be good to use for group discussion.

Which day was your favorite day of study? Why?

How would you summarize the Teacher's view of working under the sun?

How does this compare to what Jesus and the New Testament writers taught about working under the sun?

How do you view working differently because of this week's study?

What stood out to you from this week of personal study? What has stuck with you? What surprised you or was new information?

CLOSE

Provide time for group members to pray, asking God to give them a healthy, God-honoring view of their work, whether that's inside or outside the home. Lead the prayer, or allow some members to voice prayers.

Remind your group to read and complete the Session Six personal Bible study (pp. 120–147) before your next group meeting.

SESSION SIX

GATHER

Welcome participants back to the study. Ask the following question to get your group talking:

If you were going to be stuck on a deserted island for twenty years but could have five other people (living or dead) with you, who would you choose and why?

DISCUSS

Encourage discussion by asking some of the following questions, along with any you flagged in the days of personal study. Note especially the *Think About It* questions found throughout the week. Many of these would be good to use for group discussion.

Which day was your favorite day of study? Why?

How would you summarize the Teacher's view of community under the sun?

How does this compare to what Jesus and the New Testament writers taught about community under the sun?

How do you view community differently because of this week's study?

What stood out to you from this week of personal study? What has stuck with you? What surprised you or was new information?

CLOSE

Break into smaller groups and spend time sharing personal requests and praying for each other. After several minutes, close the prayer time thanking God for the community of faith around you.

Remind your group to read and complete the Session Seven personal Bible study (pp. 148–175) before your next group meeting.

SESSION SEVEN

GATHER

Welcome participants back to the study. Ask the following question to get your group talking:

What is your favorite show or movie centered around politics or courtroom drama? Why did you choose this one?

DISCUSS

Encourage discussion by asking some of the following questions, along with any you flagged in the days of personal study. Note especially the *Think About It* questions found throughout the week. Many of these would be good to use for group discussion.

Which day was your favorite day of study? Why?

How would you summarize the Teacher's view of justice under the sun?

How does this compare to what Jesus and the New Testament writers taught about justice under the sun?

How do you view justice differently because of this week's study?

What stood out to you from this week of personal study? What has stuck with you? What surprised you or was new information?

CLOSE

Discuss for a few moments the injustice that touches the lives or is on the hearts of your group members. Talk about how each of you personally and as a community can deal with these injustices in a Christ-centered, gospel-focused way. Close with a time of silent prayer.

Remind your group to read and complete the Session Eight personal Bible study (pp. 176–206) before your next group meeting.

SESSION EIGHT

GATHER

Welcome participants back to the study. Ask the following question to get your group talking:

If you had only six months to live, and you had unlimited resources, what would be on your bucket list of places to go, things to do, people to see?

DISCUSS

Encourage discussion by asking some of the following questions, along with any you flagged in the days of personal study. Note especially the *Think About It* questions found throughout the week. Many of these would be good to use for group discussion.

Which day was your favorite day of study? Why?

How would you summarize the Teacher's view of time under the sun?

How does this compare to what Jesus and the New Testament writers taught about time under the sun?

How do you view time differently because of this week's study?

What stood out to you from this week of personal study? What has stuck with you? What surprised you or was new information?

CLOSE

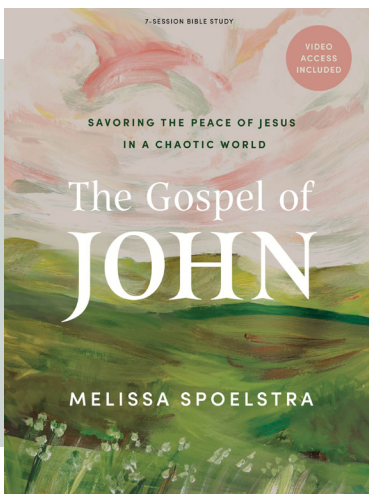
Take a few minutes to evaluate the whole study. Feel free to use the following questions to guide your evaluation:

**What is your overall takeaway from this study? How has it affected your view of God, His purpose in the world, and His call on your life?
How will you live differently because of what you've learned?**

Close with a time of prayer, allowing any group member to voice a prayer.

FINISHING WELL

NEXT STEPS Even after the study concludes, follow up and challenge women to stay involved through another Bible study, church opportunity, or anything that will continue their spiritual growth and friendships. Provide several options of ministry opportunities the members can participate in individually or as a group to apply what they have learned through this study



What's Next?

If you enjoyed this study, check out *The Gospel of John* by Melissa Spoelstra.

lifeway.com/gospelofjohn