

A NEW CAR**Core Competency***Stewardship*

I Tim 6:17-19

Core Competencies**Core Beliefs**

- Trinity
- Salvation by Grace
- Authority of Bible
- Personal God
- Identity in Christ
- Church
- Humanity
- Compassion
- Eternity
- **Stewardship**

Core Practices

- Worship Prayer
- Bible Study
- Single-Mindedness
- Biblical Community
- Spiritual Gifts
- Giving Away My Time
- Giving Away My Money
- Giving Away My Faith
- Giving Away My Life

Core Virtues

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness/Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control
- Hope
- Humility

Dear Fellow Good Stewards,

We enter the second week in our *When the Price is Right Series*. No doubt we are talking about very personal matters...money, material items, what we value most in life. Obviously, these are not 'water cooler' discussions but they are discussions needed to help us in our journey to be more like Christ. Money is the most mentioned topic in the Bible (2,345 times).

As a church, we would not be doing you any favors by avoiding this subject. If you've been coming to Grace for any length of time, you will know that we don't talk about money all the time. Yet, the subject of stewardship involves more than our money. Therefore, having discussions about being a good 'steward' of our resources and talents should be a part of conversations we have with others as we become a fully devoted follower of Christ.

I'm confident that as we continue learning what God's Word says about 'things' and possessions, all of us will be able to look at our lives and our goals with better perspective.

I trust you will continue to pray for our church and how God might use you as you carry on in our 40 Days of Prayer. Combining the reality of hundreds of people praying for the church while also being challenged by God's Word on issues of stewardship is laying the groundwork for some exciting times here at Grace.

I'm thankful to be on the journey with you,

Juno

Engaging Our Minds & Hearts**Day 1****Pray first!**

Jesus said in **Matthew 16:17** that truth is revealed to us by God, and in John 14:26 that the Holy Spirit will teach us all things, and bring to our minds those things that God has revealed to us through His Son. So each day, before you open your Bible, go to God in prayer and ask for His Holy Spirit to reveal the truths that are contained in His Word and to apply them to your heart and life.

This week's scripture references are **Ecclesiastes 5:10-6:2** and **Proverbs 23:1-5**. Today, spend all of your time reading through the entire book of Ecclesiastes. It's only 12 short chapters! (If you don't finish it today, you can pick up where you left off tomorrow.) For ease of reading today, you may want to choose a version such as *The Message* or *The English Standard Version*. If you have internet capabilities, you can go to www.biblegateway.com, and access a variety of versions.

Before you begin your reading, do two things. Remember that all you read must be considered in the context of all scripture and the whole counsel of God. Ecclesiastes is one book among all scripture that contain God's Word for us.

Read 1:1-3 and 12:13-14 to see how this book begins and ends. Keep these verses in mind as you read and study this week.

Day 2

Pray first!

Finish up your reading assignment from yesterday.

A word repeated throughout the book of Ecclesiastes is the Hebrew word “*hebel*,” which translates “vapor or breath.” A further definition is “meaningless or purposelessness.” (*Hebel* appears more in Ecclesiastes than in any other book of the Bible; half of all its occurrences are in Ecclesiastes!) In Ecclesiastes, *The Message* translates *hebel* with the word “smoke;” the NIV, “meaningless;” and the NAS, “vanity/futile/futility.”

Read through **Chapter One** again and write down everything you learn about the author of Ecclesiastes. (You may also want to add to this list any other details about the author that you notice as you go back through each chapter.) Is he a man that is qualified to give wise counsel to you? Why or why not?

Re-read through **Chapters 1-6** and summarize in one or two sentences the main point from each chapter.

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:

Chapter 5:

Chapter 6:

Day 3

Pray first!

Continue reading through **Chapters 7-12**, summarizing in one or two sentences the main point from each chapter. Also add to your list from Day 2, any further details about the author.

Chapter 7:

Chapter 8:

Chapter 9:

Chapter 10:

Chapter 11:

Chapter 12:

Review the main points from the book of Ecclesiastes and ask God to apply His thoughts to your heart, mind and life. Allow His Holy Spirit to speak His truth to your life as you go about your day today.

Day 4

Pray first!

Today we will concentrate on **Ecclesiastes 5:10-6:2**. Slowly and carefully, re-read this passage. This passage begins with describing something as “meaningless” (NIV) or “vanity” (NAS), and ends using the same term to describe something else. What two conditions are described as meaningless/vanity?

What are the reasons for these conditions being described as meaningless (5:11-12, and 6:2)?

There is another repeated phrase in this passage that appears in verses 13, 16, 6:1-2. What is that word or phrase?

What actions or situations are described in this way?

Verses 18 through 20 describe a situation that is “good and proper.” (NIV) What is that?

What part does God play in this situation? What part does man play, or what is our responsibility?

Allow God to speak to your heart and mind today as you evaluate which situation more often describes your daily life – vs. 16-17 “*he toils for the wind? ¹⁷ All his days he eats in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger,*” or vs. 20, “*God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.*”

Day 5

Pray first!

Today we will look at our other passage, **Proverbs 23:1-5**. Read this through several times, if you have internet capabilities, you can go to www.biblegateway.com, and access a variety of versions.

Now read the commentary provided for you on the last page of your study guide. Considering all that you have seen in the wisdom of Solomon as recorded in Ecclesiastes, rewrite the Proverbs 23:1-5 passage, using current vernacular, in a way that would speak directly to your everyday life.

The **Core Competency** for our current series is **Stewardship**, and our **Creed** reads, **“I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.”** The key passage for this is **1 Timothy 6:17-19**:

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”

One of the assessment statements for this competency reads, *“I believe that a Christian should live a sacrificial life, not driven by pursuit of material things.”*

Today as you meditate on the truths that God has shown you this week, and as you reflect on the application these truths have on your life, ask God to reveal to you what areas of your life are in line with God’s teaching, where does there need to be a repentance and a turning, how might God like to train you in righteousness and equip you to live a life that is reflecting more and more of His glory.

As a sign of your desire to be changed by God and His living word, write a prayer that reflects your heart in this matter.

¹⁹You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.’²⁰“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

Jesus continues by quoting the last six of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12-16). This is interesting because the first four deal with the individual’s relationship with God. These six have to do with the individual’s relationship with other people in the community. It appears that Jesus is bringing out the fact that this person is rich in love towards people but not necessarily towards God.

Engage the Context

Ecclesiastes 5:10-17

One commentator summarizes the theme of Ecclesiastes as, “All of human existence, when lived apart from God, is frustrating and unsatisfactory. All of the pleasures and material things of life, when sought for their own sake, bring nothing but unhappiness and a sense of futility.” After stating this theme in the opening verses of the book, the writer goes on to give several lengthy demonstrations of how he has personally found this to be true. In the section we are studying this week, the author explains how even wealth that is meant to be enjoyed is meaningless and unfulfilling apart from God.

10 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.

Verse 10 is a summary of this section. The Hebrew word for **money** originally meant a piece of silver, but the meaning had grown to mean any kind of currency. A modern translation might be “cash.” The Hebrew word for **wealth** signifies “abundance” or “the accumulation of riches much higher than the norm.”

Feedback

What is helpful?
What could be better?
What is missing?
Is it helping you be more prepared for Sunday?

Send your feedback to
engage@gccaz.org

11 As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?

Ecclesiastes is in the genre of Wisdom Literature, like Proverbs. How timeless and wise is the observation that the more people have, the more they want? We can see the timeless nature of true wisdom in this verse.

12 The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep.

Often sleep is portrayed in a negative way – the mark of a sluggard. The use here is positive. Sleep represents peace of mind and freedom from anxiety that can be lost due to riches.

13 I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, 14 or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him.

This refers to the loss the man sustains by **some misfortune**, that is, in a bad business speculation. The vanity of wealth lies in the fact that a man may accumulate a great deal, only to lose it in an unfortunate business enterprise, and thus have nothing to leave his son.

The illustration of verse 14 shows the pointlessness of riches by a man who loses all his money in a business deal and is thus unable to pass on anything to his son.

15 Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand. 16 This too is a grievous evil: As a man comes, so he departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind?

These verses add another illustration to verse 14. Here the fact that “you can't take it with you” is pointed out and we see riches are meaningless because they do not follow us to the grave.

The Hebrew at the beginning of verse 16 is emphatic in two areas. The NIV catches the first emphasis, with **a grievous evil**. However, it misses the second emphasis with **As a man comes, so he departs**. Perhaps a better translation is “Quite exactly as a man comes, thus exactly will he die.” Also note the parallel in this verse between birth and death.

Proverbs 23:1-5

1 When you sit to dine with a ruler, note well what is before you,

The setting for the section of Proverbs is at the table of a king. Instead of sitting down with a ruler and thinking about how you can get rich, one should honor the relationship with the king foremost. The value that is being championed by the teacher is to put relationships above material gain.

2 and put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony.

To **put a knife** is an Eastern figure of speech for putting restraint on the appetite.

3 Do not crave his delicacies, for that food is deceptive.

4 Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint.

Cross reference 1 Timothy 6:9-10

5 Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.

The Hebrew speaks of the eyes “flying” to riches and then contrasting that with the riches flying away.