

Ecclesiastes
Living in Light of the End
Who Do You Hear and Fear Most?

Ecclesiastes 12:8-14

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Aug. 27, 2023

I. The Wisdom of Man Is Confusing and Exhausting

Ecclesiastes 12:12 “My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.”

Solomon is warning us to not believe everything we read if it doesn't come from the one true Shepherd.

The danger we face today has only escalated with the unlimited access we have to social media and the internet. Since the iPhone rocked our world in 2007, there are now 2.2 million apps available and over 75 ways to stay in contact with the latest news, videos, and your own group of friends.

None of this is making us wiser or helping us live better, as epidemic numbers of people are now anxious, addicted, angry, fearful, hopeless, and even suicidal, despite having unlimited amounts of information at their fingertips for free!

The problem is that so much of it is just information, misinformation, speculation, and even conspiracy. What we really need is wisdom!

“Because wisdom is a submission to God’s good and given reality, our immersion in computer and internet existence is a crisis of spiritual formation. Our digital environments dislocate us, training us to believe and feel and communicate in certain ways that our given, embodied, physical environments do not. The more immersive...the technology, the more extreme this effect.”

~ Samuel James, *Digital Liturgies: Rediscovering Christian Wisdom in an Online Age*

II. The Word of God Will Sting and Stabilize You

Ecclesiastes 12:11 “The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.”

“Like goads” – God’s Word is like a sharp stick they used to prod an animal in the right direction.

“Like nails firmly fixed” – God’s Word gives you something you can count on that’s nailed down and does not change!

III. The Fear of God Will Free You to Obey Him

Ecclesiastes 12:13 “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

In other words, fearing God and keeping His commands are the answer to the emptiness and futility that we’ve been slogging through for 12 chapters now.

A. When You Fear God, You Experience the Peace and Rest of Real Wisdom

The fear of God is not just the beginning of wisdom; it’s also the beginning of joy, contentment, and a sense of purpose for your life. Until you stop trying to be God, you can’t start submitting and delighting in God, which is what you were actually made for.

“There is thus only one way to wisdom: awe. Forget your sense of awe, let your conceit diminish your ability to revere, and the universe becomes a marketplace for you. The loss of awe is the great block to insight.”

~ Abraham Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, p. 78

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that One has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised.”

B. When you Obey God, You Experience the Freedom to Flourish

We think if we could just live life with no restrictions and no limitations, we would flourish and thrive, but it’s a lie! We desperately need God’s counsel and commands to know how to live.

Back in 1599, Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” included the memorable line: “This above all: to thine own self be true.” People today go around quoting it, but it was Polonius the fool who said it!

In the 1800s, Sigmund Freud pioneered the concept that repression of desire is the basis for all of our problems. He believed the reason you’re unhappy is because other people are telling you what you can and can’t do, so the answer is to look inside you and do what you want to do.

Our world thinks the way to be happy is to follow our hearts, and yet the Bible says to guard your heart, guide your heart, and to be wary of your heart.

“Modern authenticity encourages us to create our own beliefs and morality, the only rule being that they must resonate with who we feel we really are. The worst thing we can do is to conform to some moral code that is imposed on us from outside—by society, our parents, the church, or whoever else. It is deemed to be self-evident that any such imposition would undermine our unique identity...The authentic self believes that personal meaning must be found within ourselves or must resonate with our one-of-a-kind personality.”

~ Jonathan Grant, *Divine Sex*, quoted in
John Mark Comer’s *Live No Lies*, p. 117

IV. The Judgment of God Will Force You to Face Him

You can spend your life trying to avoid God, ignore God, or deny God, but you will face God on that final day.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 “For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

Hebrews 9:27 “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...”

The final message of Ecclesiastes is not that nothing matters, but that what you do now with Jesus determines what God does with you on that final day of judgment.

John 5:24 “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”