

# Ecclesiastes 12 Commentary

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Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them";

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them":

NET Ecclesiastes 12:1 So remember your Creator in the days of your youth— before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no pleasure in them";

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:1 κα μν σθητι το κτ σαντ ς σε ν μ ραις νε τητ ς σου ως του μ λθωσιν μ ραι τ ς κακ ας κα φθ σωσιν τη ν ο ς ρε ς ο κ σιν μοι ν α το ς θ λημα

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:1 And remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the days of evil come, and the years overtake thee in which thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:1 So remember your Creator in the days of your youth: Before the days of adversity come, and the years approach when you will say, "I have no delight in them";

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them";

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them"--

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:1 Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor him in your youth before you grow old and say, "Life is not pleasant anymore."

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember also thy Creators in days of thy youth, While that the evil days come not, Nor the years have arrived, that thou sayest, 'I have no pleasure in them.'

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember your Creator while you are still young, before the bad days come, before the years come which, you will say, give you no pleasure;

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come, and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no pleasure in them";

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when you will say, "I have no pleasure in them";

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come And the years approach of which you will say, I have no pleasure in them;

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember your Creator when you are young, before the days of trouble come and the years catch up with you. They will make you say, "I have found no pleasure in them."

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:1 Let your mind be turned to your Maker in the days of your strength, while the evil days come not, and the years are far away when you will say, I have no pleasure in them;

- **Remember:** Ec 11:10 Ge 39:2,8,9,23 1Sa 1:28 2:18,26 3:19-21 16:7,12,13, 1Sa 17:36,37 1Ki 3:6-12 14:13 18:12 2Ch 34:2,3 Ps 22:9,10 Ps 34:11 71:17,18 Pr 8:17 22:6 Isa 26:8 La 3:27 Da 1:8,9,17 Lu 1:15 2:40-52 18:16 Eph 6:4 2Ti 3:15
- **while:** Ec 11:8 Job 30:2 Ps 90:10 Ho 7:9
- **when:** 2Sa 19:35

#### Related Passages:

Psalms 119:9 Beth. How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

Isaiah 46:4 Even to your old age I will be the same, And even to your graying years I will bear you! I have done it, and I will carry you; And I will bear you and I will deliver you.

2 Timothy 3:15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to **give you the wisdom** that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Luke 12:20-21 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' 21 "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

## THE CALL FOR YOUTH: DON'T WASTE THE SUNRISE

This verse marks a major transition from the joy and warnings of chapter 11 to the sobering portrait of aging and death in Ec 12:2–7.

**William Barrick** - Ecclesiastes 12 **Life Under a Setting Sun** - In conclusion, the Preacher determines to fear God, obey God, and enjoy life (Eccl 9:1–12:14). Continuing the book's grand finale (Eccl 11:9–12:7), Solomon transitions from the enjoyment of "**seeing the sun**" (Ec 11:7) to the approach of death. Assuming temporal existence for mankind "under the sun," "he broadens the range of his observation to include God, who is above the sun, and death, which is beyond the sun." (See Estes, [Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms - Page 373](#)) When the wise contemplate death, they find all aspirations to grandeur and gain exposed as illusory visions of their own arrogance. **Brown** says of such contemplation, that it "purges the soul of all futile striving and, paradoxically, anxiety....The eternal sleep of death serves as a wake-up call to live and welcome the serendipities of the present." (Borrow [Brown, Ecclesiastes, 108](#).) Just as the setting sun signals the end of a day, so aging signals the approach of the close of one's life. Preparation for the end of life must begin even in youth. "**Before**" in Eccl 12:1, 2, 6 sets up a time-oriented series of statements that favor understanding the text as a description of the time of death, rather than merely a depiction of the process of aging. (Borrow [Fox, Qohelet and His Contradictions](#), 286) The first seven verses of this chapter comprise one long sentence. (Whybray, [Ecclesiastes](#) online) If someone were to read it aloud as one sentence, he or she would be "out of breath" by the end" (Borrow [Huwiler - Ecclesiastes, 215](#).)—a play on the key word [hebel](#), which can also mean "breath," as well as "vanity," "futility," or "fleeting." However, the interpreter would be remiss to focus too much upon death in this section. Both preceding (Eccl 11:9) and subsequent (Eccl 12:14) contexts identify God's judgment as the real focus. (Borrow [Kelley, The Burden of God, 142](#))

**Remember** ([zakar](#); Lxx - [mimnesko](#)) **also your Creator** ([bara](#); Lxx - [ktizo](#)) - Solomon shifts commands from **rejoice** and **remove** sorrow to **remember**, **remember** your Creator before it's too late. **Remember** is a command and in the Septuagint is [mimnesko](#) in the [aorist imperative](#), a command meaning "Just Do It!" and ultimately a command that selfish sinners (all of us) cannot obey in our own strength, but which calls for continual [dependence on the Holy Spirit to obey](#). I would submit that the implication is that the only ones who can truly obey this command are believers in the Old and New Testament! Fallen flesh does not want to remember God but reject God! The default mode of all men in Adam is away from God, not toward God (Ro 3:11+). It is also important to "remember" that **remember** is not just a mental recall, but involves actions calling on us to actively honor, obey, and live in relation to our **Creator**. To remember means pay attention to and consider with the intention of obeying. The idea is to live daily with God-consciousness, recognizing His ownership, your dependence, and your call to obey and glorify Him.

**NET NOTE** on **remember** - The imperative זָכֹר (zekhor, "Remember!") is a figurative expression (metonymy of association) for obeying God and acknowledging his lordship over one's life (e.g., Num 15:40; Deut 8:18; Pss 42:6–7; 63:6–8; 78:42; 103:18; 106:7; 119:52, 55; Jer 51:50; Ezek 20:43; Jonah 2:7; Mal 4:4). The exhortation to fear God and obey his commands in 12:13–14 spells out what it means to "remember" God.

**Charles Swindoll** - Remembering our Creator means more than just thinking about Him now and then. It means keeping Him at the forefront of our minds so His will affects our attitudes and actions. (See [Living on the Ragged Edge Workbook](#))

**Keith Krell** - To "**remember**" doesn't mean to jog one's memory. Rather, the verb "to remember" ([zakar](#)) is a command that involves a wholehearted commitment to love, serve, and fear God.<sup>478</sup> God's expectation is that "remembering" Him translates into action. We must live as stewards who will give an account to our Creator.<sup>479</sup> The phrase "**evil days**" refers to sickness, sorrow, senility, and eventually dying.<sup>480</sup> God commands us to remember Him in our youth because He wants the best days of our lives.

*In a life full of fleeting pleasures,  
only your Creator gives lasting meaning.*

**Bob Utley** - "**Creator**" This is a form of the Hebrew word *bara* (BDB 135, KB 153, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, Gen. 1:1). It is exclusively used to describe God as the One who creates! It is interesting that the PARTICIPLE is PLURAL (cf. Job 35:10; Ps. 149:2; Isa. 54:5), which relates to (1) the "us" passages in Genesis (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 3:22; 11:7), (2) the general name for God as creator, *Elohim*, which is PLURAL (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#), C.), found throughout Genesis 1-2:3, (3) the "us" passage of Isa. 6:8.

**Duane Garrett** - To forget the Creator of youth is to invite bitter regrets and an empty existence in old age. To remember the Creator<sup>232</sup> is to follow the path of wisdom and extend the joy of life. (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

Augustine prayed "You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." Our souls will have no peace in life until we remember and rest in our Creator and Redeemer (cf Mt 11:28-30+).

**In the days of your youth, before the evil days come** Don't wait until you're old, tired, or regretful. Start walking with God early, while your heart is still tender and your life still full of choices. Life will get harder so youth is the time to seek and serve your Creator, while strength and clarity are yours.

**Keith Krell** - Three times in this section (Ec 12:1, 2, 6) Solomon uses the word **before**.<sup>472</sup> His clarion call is for you and me to live life to the fullest before old age and death comes.

**NET NOTE** on **before** - The temporal adjective **לִפְנֵי** ('ad, "before") appears three times in 12:1–7 (vv. 1b, 2a, 6a). Likewise, the temporal preposition **כִּי** (bet, "when") is repeated (vv. 3a, 4b). These seven verses comprise one long sentence in Hebrew: The main clause is 12:1a ("Remember your Creator in the days of your youth"), while 12:1b–7 consists of five subordinate temporal clauses ("before ... before ... when ... when ... before ...").

**NET NOTE** on **evil** - The adjective **רָעָה** (ra'ah, "evil") does not refer here to ethical evil, but to physical difficulty, injury, pain, deprivation and suffering (e.g., Deut 31:17, 21; 32:23; 1 Sam 10:19; Neh 1:3; 2:17; Ps 34:20; 40:13; 88:4; 107:26; Eccl 11:10; Jer 2:27; Lam 3:38); see HALOT 1263 s.v. 4 רָעָה.b; BDB 949 s.v. רָעָה 2.

**Bob Utley - in the days of your youth**" This is a chronological beginning point (i.e., young person still at home, pre-marriage). In Judaism a person is not responsible to keep the law until a period of training and personal commitment (i.e., bar mitzvah, bat mitzvah). From this time forward covenant believers are responsible to God for their actions. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY](#) Notice that Wisdom Literature informs all stages of life, but starts with young people (cf. Eccl. 11:9). Chapter 12 moves from the opening days of spiritual responsibility throughout life until old age and death. In every state (1) before evil days, Eccl. 12:1, (2) before old age, Eccl. 12:2 and (3) before time of death, Eccl. 12:6 believers must remember God! Faith is to be lifelong. **Evil days** In Hebrew this means sickness, sorrow, or here, senility (cf. 2 Sam. 19:35). This term (BDB 949) basically means "evil," "misery," "distress," or "injury" (cf. Eccl. 2:21; 5:12,15; 8:11; 11:8,10). See note at Eccl. 9:12.

**And the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them"**- There will come a time, if you delay, when life no longer brings pleasure, and it may be too late to turn back joyfully to God.

As **Michael Eaton** says "The Preacher has constantly described the life of faith as one of enjoyment (2:24–26; 3:12f., 22; 5:18–20; 9:7–10; 11:8–10). Now he presents another aspect: where God has been neglected, the capacity for joy will be lost. The passing years will press the unheeding reader to self-confessed (you will say) despair." (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

*Remembering one's **Creator** involves more than mere memory or acknowledgment.  
For the Hebrew writers, **remember** involves action*

**Bob Utley - "I have no delight in them"** The deterioration of the physical body robs life of joy. Remember Qohlelth's repeated admonition of "enjoy daily life now" (i.e., Eccl. 2:24-26; 3:12,13,22; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7-9).

**Davis** - "In Scripture, the words translated by NASB as **"no delight"** (ayin chephets) appear in combination only seven times, as follows: of a dowry that is not desired (1 Sam 18:25), of a vessel that is not desired (Jer 22:28; 48:38; Hos 8:8), of worship that does not please God (Mal 1:10; Eccl 5:4), and of old age (Eccl 12:1). Considering only these verses, we discover that that which does not delight is that which is insufficient, not special, of no significant value, unacceptable, or that which is accompanied by misery and is incapable of producing any real or

**The Tragedy of Delay** - This is not a guilt trip—it's an invitation: Don't wait to turn to God when your heart is hard, your strength is gone, and your memory is fading. Remember Him when: You're strong. You're dreaming. You still have a future to shape. Because old age is not a time to start building—it's a time to reap what's been sown.

**William Barrick** Solomonic Advice (Eccl 12:1–7) - Just when one might expect either **"Remember death"** or **"Remember darkness,"** Solomon surprises readers with **"Remember your Creator."** (Borrow [Lohfink, Qohlelth](#), 137) **Creator** (**bara'**) is actually a plural form in the Hebrew—a typical means of expressing majesty and superiority. Solomon's choice of this title "is not by accident. It both looks back to the creation narrative, which plays so prominent a role in Ecclesiastes, and maintains the perspective of wisdom that a joyful life is found through adherence to the principles built into the creation."<sup>8</sup> What Solomon has to say in these verses is for every man, woman, and child on the planet. Before one can **"remember"** the **Creator**, he or she must believe that "there is a **Creator** Who made us, not some naturalistic process of evolution." (Morris, *The Remarkable Wisdom of Solomon*, [Ecclesiastes 12](#)) The Hebrew word (**bara'**) for **Creator** involves a root that never takes a human being as the subject. Only God creates, as far as the Old Testament writers are concerned. Remembering one's **Creator** involves more than mere memory or acknowledgment. For the Hebrew writers, **remember** involves action, (Borrow [Kaiser, Ecclesiastes](#)) or allowing the objects of remembrance to "shape one's perspective in the present." (Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, 346.) First, we must "drop our pretence of

self-sufficiency and commit ourselves to Him." (Borrow [Kidner, 100](#)) If an individual neglects serving the Creator in intentional obedience to His Word, "the capacity for joy will be lost." (Borrow [Eaton, Ecclesiastes, 148.](#))

**Before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them"- NLT** = "Honor him in your youth before you grow old and say, "Life is not pleasant anymore." **Days of trouble** refers to old age, with its hardships and decline. There will come a time—if you delay—when life no longer brings pleasure, and it will be too late to turn back joyfully to God.

**William Barrick** - "**Before the evil days come**" (Eccl 12:1) relates to the previous mention of "**the days of darkness**" in Ec 11:8+ and stands in contrast to "**the days of your youth**" (Ec 12:1a). Both refer to times of misery and trouble. The previous reference deals with the bad times throughout one's lifetime; the second refers to the end of life. The threefold occurrence of "**before**" (Eccl 12:1, 2, 6) in these concluding verses of Ecclesiastes emphasizes the brevity of life and the finality of death. (Fredericks, Ecclesiastes, 238)

**"The Best Time to Know God Is Now"** Don't believe the lie: "I'll follow God later." Later might be too hard. Later might never come. The best time to know, love, and serve Your Creator is: While your heart is open to the Gospel. While you can still shape your course. Start young with Christ. Stay close to Christ. End well in Christ. God wants your heart early—not just your leftovers. Youth is not a time to forget God, but to form a foundation in Him. Delaying your devotion leads to regret and diminished joy. Old age brings sorrow unless it's preceded by godly purpose.

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**Remember** (record, mention) ([02142](#)) [zakar](#) The first use of zakar is wonderful for it says "God remembered Noah" remembering His covenant (Ge 6:18), declaring later "I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 "When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." (Ge 9:15-16) Similarly we see "that God remembered Abraham" and for that reason (based on covenant), He spared Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Ge 19:29). When Israel was in bondage in Egypt "God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (Ex 2:24, 6:5, cp Lev 26:42, 45, Ps 98:3 [lovingkindness = covenant term] Ps 105:5, 106:45, 109:16, Ezek 16:60) Moses interceded for Israel asking God to "remember" the Abrahamic covenant and pass over their stubbornness, wickedness and sin (Dt 9:27) Thus we see these many of the early uses of zakar speak of God's good memory (so to speak - for His memory is perfect) is based on the fact that He is in covenant with those He recalls to mind. If you are like me and from time to time think God has forgotten you, recall to mind that you are in covenant with Him (New Covenant) and on that basis He will (forever) remember you! I love Hezekiah's prayer "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly." (2Ki 20:3) King David called on the people - "Remember His wonderful deeds which He has done, His marvels and the judgments from His mouth...Remember His covenant forever, The word which He commanded to a thousand generations." (1Chr 16:12, 15) Nehemiah repeatedly called on God to remember in his prayers (Neh 1:8, 4:14, 5:19, 6:14, 13:14, 13:22, 29, 31). I think Nehemiah gives us a good "template" to imitate when we make petition to the Most High God! I love David's prayer to God not to remember and then to remember (Ps 25:6-7). Korah gives us a great pattern to imitate when we are downcast in Ps 42:4, 6. Many of the psalms (see 49 uses below) speak of either men remembering God (often in form of a prayer) or of God remembering men (e.g., Ps 78:35, 39) Ps 78:42 is a warning to all believers = "They did not remember His power, The day when He redeemed them from the adversary." Have you been saved? Then you have experienced His power! And doubtless there are countless other instances we could all remember (if we chose to!) in which His great power has been palpably present to enable or deliver us! Lord, give us ready recall of Your past power in our life that we might apply it to our present circumstances. Amen

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Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. - I saw once, lying side by side in a great workshop, two heads made of metal. The one was perfect; all the features of a noble, manly face came out clear and distinct in their lines of strength and beauty; in the other, scarcely a single feature could be recognized; it was all marred and spoiled. "The metal had been let grow a little too cool, sir," said the man who was showing it to me. I could not help thinking how true that was of many a form more precious than metal. Many a young soul that might be stamped with the image and superscription of the King, while it is warm with the love and glow of early youth, is allowed to grow too cold, and the writing is blurred and the image is marred. - CANON TEIGNMOUTH SHORE

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### **Ecclesiastes 12:1 Grim Reaper**

According to an old fable, a man made an unusual agreement with Death. He told the Grim Reaper that he would willingly accompany him when it came time to die, but only on one condition—that Death would send a messenger well in advance to warn him. Weeks winged away into months, and months into years. Then one bitter winter evening, as the man sat thinking about all his possessions, Death suddenly entered the room and tapped him on the shoulder. Startled, the man cried out, "You're here so soon and without warning! I thought we had an agreement." Death replied, "I've more than kept my part. I've sent you many messengers.

Look in the mirror and you'll see some of them."

As the man complied, Death whispered, "Notice your hair! Once it was full and black, now it is thin and white. Look at the way you cock your head to listen to me because you can't hear very well. Observe how close to the mirror you must stand to see yourself clearly. Yes, I've sent many messengers through the years. I'm sorry you're not ready, but the time has come to leave."

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**Keith Krell** - Young people, one of the worst moves you can make is to forget your Creator in the days of your youth. This leads to bad choices that can forever affect your life. If you don't walk with God in your high school and college years, the choices you make in a college, a spouse, and a vocation may not be the ones God wants you to make. If you don't believe me, ask Solomon. Initially, Solomon loved God. He was the son of David and the builder of the temple. He asked for wisdom above any other gift. He started well but got off track. He eventually refused to remember his Creator in the days of his youth. Gradually, over the course of time, he made little compromises that resulted in disaster. He cultivated relationships with ungodly women and these ungodly women led him into idolatry. Even though he had everything this world has to offer (i.e., wine, wealth, wisdom, women, and work), he was miserable. It was all hebel.<sup>481</sup>

But if you **"remember your Creator in the days of your youth"** you will be set up for decades to come and into eternity. You will abstain from sexual immorality and marry a godly spouse. You will select the right college for you to attend. You will choose the vocation that God has created for you to do (Eph 2:10). You will make the right financial decisions. You will not have to overcome various vices and addictions. You will have a love and a commitment to the local church.

Some people have insinuated that our church focuses too much on children and youth. Whenever I hear this, I strive to tell folks that this is indeed what we are attempting to do. We prioritize children and young adults because we want to be preventative. We believe that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. It's not that we don't love adults, but many adults are set in their ways. They have the broken marriages, addictions, and bad attitudes. Our goal is to keep these things from happening to our young people. We are thinking of the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

However, you may be saying, "I have wasted my youth. Is there any hope for me?" The answer is, "YES...if you begin to remember the Lord TODAY!" It is a grave mistake to say, "I'm going to wait until I get older to begin serving the Lord." Relatively few people turn to the Lord in their old age. I understand there's a sign on the Trans-Alaska Highway that says, "Choose your rut carefully; you'll be in it for the next 200 miles!"<sup>482</sup> So today you must choose whether or not you're going to remain in your rut. God will give you a new lease on life if you say, "I want to remember you." Of course, you can't turn back the hands of time, but you can live while you are dying.

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**Spurgeon** - Youth is the best time for religious consideration and decision. In old age little heart and little ability are left for the weighty themes of eternity; infirmity and general decay unfit the mind for contemplating subjects to which it has been all its life long unaccustomed. O that young people would beware of delay, and for ever renounce the idea that advanced years are favourable to conversion. No tree is so easily bent as the green sapling.)

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**SHEPHERD OF EAGER YOUTH** Clement of Alexandria, c. 170–c. 220

Translated by Henry Martyn Dexter, 1821–1890

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them!" (Ecclesiastes 12:1)

Someone cried, "Where must the seed be sown to bring the most fruit when it is grown?"

The Master heard as He said and smiled, "Go plant it for Me in the heart of a child."

—Unknown

It is vitally important that our children be led to a personal relationship with Christ and instructed in His Word when they are young. What truth there is in these familiar statements: "To save a child is to save a life," or "Give me a child till he/she is seven and I care not who gets him after that." D. L. Moody, the noted evangelist, once said: "If I could relive my life, I would devote my entire ministry to reaching children for God."

Christian nurturing of our children requires consistent discipline. Webster defines discipline as "training which corrects, strengthens, and perfects." Discipline goes far beyond merely being punitive. Discipline and training have done their job only when they result in a changed character and the desire to live with self-control. Although there may be times when our youth may rebel and react against their early Christian training, they can never get completely away from it (Proverbs 22:6).

"Shepherd of Eager Youth" is the oldest Christian hymn of which the authorship is known. Clement of Alexandria wrote this text in the Greek language sometime between A.D. 202 and the time of his death in A.D. 220. The title in the original Greek could literally



be translated "Tamer of Steeds Unbridled." It was evidently used as a hymn of Christian instruction for new young converts from heathenism.

Shepherd of eager youth, guiding in love and truth thru devious ways—Christ, our triumphant King, we come  
Thy name to sing; hither Thy children bring tributes of praise.

Thou art our Holy Lord, the all-subduing Word, healer of strife; Thou didst Thyself abase that from sin's deep  
disgrace Thou mightest save our race and give us life.

Ever be near our side, our shepherd and our guide, our staff and song; Jesus, Thou Christ of God, by Thy  
enduring word lead us where Thou hast trod, make our faith strong.

For Today: Deuteronomy 32:46; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 2:25

Reflect on this truth: The prized possession of any church is its youth. Seek to speak a word of encouragement to some young person. (Borrow [Amazing Grace - Kenneth Osbeck](#))

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**D A Carson** - To "remember" God is not simply to recall the bare fact of his existence, but to abandon all illusions of independence and self-sufficiency as God regains his rightful centrality in our lives. God made everything, he alone sees the entire pattern, he is the One who has put eternity into our hearts (Ec 3:11). He is the One who made everything good, and we are the ones who have done so much damage with our schemes (Ec 7:29).

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James Hastings - [Ecclesiastes 12:1 Timely Remembrance](#) - (THIS IS ONLY A SHORT EXCERPT OF THIS LENGTHY ARTICLE) - **"Remember."**—The word "remember" in the text is a word full of meaning. It tells us that we have not to do something new, but to keep in mind something that we have already known. We have not by searching to find out a God unknown to us, but to recall a God in whose image we were created, by whose grace we were redeemed, and for whose glory we were made. His likeness was at first stamped upon us, as truly as the portrait of the king is stamped upon the coin we use, and on the postage stamp we put upon our letter. In the most sinful and polluted nature traces of this Divine image can be detected. And what is wanted is that this Divine image in us, which sin has soiled and defaced, which the evil things of the world have grown over and hidden, shall be restored.

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**James Smith - REMEMBER.**

1. From whence thou art fallen, Rev. 2:5.
  2. Now thy Creator, Eccles. 12:1.
  3. Lot's wife, Luke 17:32.
  4. Son, remember, Luke 16:25.
- 

**Response of Youth**

- Alexander the Great ascended the throne at twenty and conquered the known world by thirty-three.
  - Julius Caesar at a young age captured eight hundred cities, conquered three hundred nations, defeated three million men, became a great orator and one of the greatest statesmen known.
  - Washington was appointed adjutant general at nineteen, was sent at twenty-one as an ambassador to the French, and won his first battle as a colonel at twenty-two.
  - Lafayette was made general of the whole French army at the age of twenty.
  - Charlemagne was master of France and of Germany at thirty.
  - Galileo was but eighteen when he saw the principle of the pendulum in the swinging lamp in the cathedral at Pisa.
  - Sir Robert Peel was in Parliament at twenty-one.
  - William Gladstone was in Parliament before he was twenty-two and at twenty-four was Lord of the Treasury.
  - Martin Luther was twenty-nine when he nailed his famous theses to the door of the cathedral at Wittenberg.
  - Shakespeare wrote masterpieces at thirty-six.
- 

**QUESTION - What does it mean to "remember your Creator in the days of your youth" (Ecclesiastes 12:1)?**  
**GOTQUESTIONS.ORG**

**ANSWER** - Ecclesiastes, written by King Solomon (Ecclesiastes 1:1), explores various aspects of reality, contrasting two worldviews: 1) life under the sun (life without the acknowledgement of God) and 2) life beyond the sun, as it were (life with the acknowledgement of God). In Ecclesiastes 12:1, Solomon gives critical guidance for the worldview he posits as true: "*Remember your Creator* in the days of your youth" [emphasis added]. This instruction follows an exposition of the assertion that all is vanity "under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 4:7). All is empty in a life lived "under the sun," that is, in a life lived without acknowledging God. Life

beyond the sun is meaningful and accords with truth.

In Ecclesiastes 11:9, Solomon turns his attention to the young man as he addresses the proper attitude of youth. Solomon concludes chapter 11 by asserting that childhood and the prime years of life are fleeting. He begins chapter 12, still talking to the young man, giving another imperative to remember the Creator throughout one's youth or childhood. Interestingly, two verses prior, Solomon tells the youth to "follow the ways of your heart" (Ecclesiastes 11:9)—but with the important knowledge that God will judge all actions.

Ecclesiastes 11:9—12:4 deals with the freedom humanity possesses (as a gift from God) to follow the desires of their hearts. The caution is that we should utilize that freedom knowing that all actions will come under God's judgment. The question then becomes, what might we do with our freedom?

Solomon qualifies how the desires of the heart should be guided: 1) know that God will judge your actions, 2) remove grief and anger, and 3) remember your Creator. At both ends of the qualifying statements, the focus is on God and our relationship with Him. This idea of remembering one's Creator refers to a continual remembering, not simply a one-time occurrence (cf. Deuteronomy 8:18). Remembering one's Creator is the foundational concept for a proper worldview.

Solomon is imploring the reader to live life in accordance with life beyond the sun; recognize the Creator of all things; live with the Creator throughout the days of youth. We must cultivate a godly fear of the One to whom we must give account. To live life under the sun, without remembering our Creator, is vanity and meaningless (Ecclesiastes 12:8).

This passage emphasizes the wisdom of remembering the Creator in one's youth because, as one grows older, physical limitations begin to diminish freedom (Ecclesiastes 11:10), ultimately concluding with death (Ecclesiastes 12:7). What a tragedy it is to walk through the prime years of one's life in vanity and [meaninglessness](#) because of one's failure to recognize the Creator!

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#### Ecclesiastes 12:1–14

He is God and we are not. When you observe life and listen to wise people, you will quickly find that we simply can't invest our hopes, dreams, and love in the self because it was never intended to carry such freight. For that matter, there is nothing created that was intended to sustain such hopes. Creation is to be enjoyed, but we don't put our trust in it. The only alternative is God himself.

The Teacher in the book of Ecclesiastes tries to save us time in our search for meaning and purpose. He tells us that he tried learning, laughter, great projects, unbridled sexual pleasure, money, music, and children. None of them, when they were elevated to his life's purpose, led to anything but despair. He could not find his purpose in the created world. After briefly envying an ordinary life of honest toil, good friends, food, moderate drink, and doing right, he comes to his answer—his purpose. "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

The fear of God is how we respond to the fact that God is greater than we are—different from us—in all things. His beauty is greater. His wisdom is greater. His love is greater. And, yes, his anger is greater. Simply put, he is God and we are not. - Edward T. Welch

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**ILLUSTRATION** - A man came rushing up to a ferry, breathless after running at a terrific pace, but he got there just as the gateman shut the door in his face. A bystander remarked, "You didn't run fast enough." The disappointed man answered, "I ran fast enough, but I didn't start on time."

To accomplish the most for God in a lifetime, you must start in early—"in the days of your youth" (Eccles. 12:1, NIV).1521

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#### DON'T FORGET GOD "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth...." Ecclesiastes 12:1

1. Remember God While You Are Young
2. Remember God While the Days of Evil Are Far-off
3. Remember God While Life Is Yet Favorable

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#### Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR Ecclesiastes 12:1-2

Have you ever stopped to consider how many young people in the Bible did something significant for God?

- Joseph, sold into slavery at age seventeen by his brothers, rose to become one of the rulers of Egypt and later saved his people in a time of famine (Genesis 37).
- Gideon was just a young man when the Lord used him to rescue Israel from the Midianites (Judges 6-7).
- David was a teenager tending his father's sheep on the hillsides of Bethlehem when he rose up and slew Goliath (1 Samuel 16-17).



- Joash became king of Judah at age seven; he reigned for forty years and led the people in a major refurbishing of the Temple (2 Kings 12).
- Uzziah became king of Judah when he was sixteen years old; he reigned for fifty-two years and was counted as one of the great military leaders of the Bible. At one point, he led an army of 307,500 fighting men (2 Chronicles 26).
- Hezekiah became king of Judah at the young age of twenty-five and was Judah's greatest king; he reigned for thirty-one years (2 Kings 18-20).
- Josiah became king of Judah when he was only eight years old; he reigned for forty years and led the nation in a mighty religious revival (2 Kings 22-23).
- Daniel was taken captive as a teenager by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. God honored Daniel's convictions, and he entered the king's service (Daniel 1).

The point must not be missed: God has always used young people to get His message to the world. He still does today. As I think about the next generation of Christian teenagers, I wish I could guarantee them a long life and much happiness. But I can't promise them that. If they decide to live by faith, there are no guarantees. Some of them may not live for seventy years. Some of them may be called of God to serve Christ halfway around the world. Some of them may end up great heroes of the faith; some of them may end up among those who suffer for Jesus Christ.

To any teens and young adults reading these words, I cannot promise you an easy road if you decide to follow Jesus Christ. But I do promise this: If you "remember your Creator in the days of your youth," you will be blessed and you won't be sorry. You will discover that the life of faith is full of adventure, and you will be glad you weren't a couch potato but dared to make a difference in the world.

Lord, I don't want to remember You only when I'm dying. Help me to do it now, while it matters, and for the rest of my life. Amen.

#### SHINING THE LIGHT

- What does it mean to you to say that God is your creator?
- What would it look like if you were to truly "remember" God this week? In what areas are you most tempted to "forget" the Lord?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Deuteronomy 8:17-18; Matthew 6:33; and Romans 12:1-2.

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### Messages for Children and Young People

Title: **The Search for Happiness**

Text: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:1, 13).

Scripture Reading: Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

Introduction - How to live in these tense days and be happy and useful is the deep concern of youth. The days in which we live are days of confusion, perplexity, bewilderment, uncertainty, and disillusionment. They are critical days for all of us. Let us discover how to live life at its highest.

King Solomon, the writer of the book of Ecclesiastes, traveled down many blind alleys in search of happiness. Life for him was full of many perplexing problems and disappointments. His theme is "vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Eccl. 1:2). Dr. John Sampey, in his book *Syllabus for Old Testament Study* ([Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924], 148-49 - [click here for this online book](#)), points out twenty-seven things that disturbed Solomon:

- One event happens to the wise man and to the fool (2:14-17).
- A man has to leave the fruits of his toil to another, and his heir may be a fool (2:18-23).
- Man is under the decrees of God and cannot change them (3:1-15).
- There is wickedness in the place of judgment (3:16-17).
- Man dies like the beasts (3:18-22).
- Oppressors are full of power (4:1-3).
- Skill begets envy (4:4-6).

- H. Wealth does not fulfill (4:7–12).
- I. The old, even on a throne, are quickly forgotten (4:13–16).
- J. Increase of goods brings an increase of those who consume them and loss of sleep to the owner (5:10–12).
- K. Wealth can be lost suddenly (5:13–17).
- L. Some possessors of wealth cannot enjoy their riches (6:1–6).
- M. Appetite and desire are never permanently satisfied, and the future is unknown (6:7–12).
- N. The laughter of fools is unfounded (7:5–6).
- O. Women are not to be trusted (7:23–29).
- P. Man knows not the day of his death and cannot avert it (8:6–8).
- Q. One man has power over another to his hurt (8:9–11).
- R. The fate of the righteous and of the wicked often are identical (8:14).
- S. Death is inevitable, and the dead are soon forgotten (9:2–6).
- T. Chance renders everything uncertain (9:11–12).
- U. Achievements of a poor wise man are unrewarded and forgotten (9:13–16).
- V. A little folly outweighs wisdom and honor (10:1).
- W. Fools are placed in distinguished positions (10:5–7).
- X. The days of darkness shall be many (11:8).
- Y. Old age can be dreary and comfortless (12:1–7).
- Z. Much study is a weariness of the flesh (12:12).
- AA. We must give an account for all things at the judgment bar of God (11:9; 12:14).

Solomon wrote from a skeptical human viewpoint, but at the conclusion of the book, he came to the road that leads to happiness. “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole [duty of man]” (Eccl. 12:13).

#### **I. If We Are to Find Happiness, We Must Fear God**

We are taught in the Bible to fear God.

- A. The fear of God is life (Prov. 19:23).
- B. The fear of God is wisdom (Job 28:28).
- C. The fear of God is holiness (2 Cor. 7:1).
- D. The fear of God causes one to hate evil (Prov. 8:13).
- E. The fear of God causes one to depart from evil (Prov. 16:16).
- F. The fear of God prolongs one’s day (Prov. 10:27).
- G. The fear of God produces great confidence (Prov. 14:26).

#### **II. If We Are to Find Happiness, We Must Remember The Creator in the Days of Our Youth (Eccl. 12:1)**

- A. Responsible for your youth (Eccl. 11:9).
- B. Rejoice in your youth (Eccl. 11:9; 1 Tim. 4:12).

#### **III. If We Are to Find Happiness, We Must Keep God’s Commandments**

- A. What are God’s commandments?
  - 1. The first commandment (Matt. 22:36–38).
  - 2. The second commandment (Matt. 22:39–40).
- B. What is necessary for the keeping of God’s commandments?
  - 1. Reverence.
  - 2. Love for God (John 14:15; 15:10).
  - 3. Obedience to God (John 15:14).
  - 4. Walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:3–6). How did Jesus walk?
    - a. With purity of conduct.
    - b. With divine purpose.
    - c. With implicit faith.
    - d. In humility and self-sacrifice.
    - e. With compassion for others.

#### **Conclusion**

To leave God out of life is to miss the road to happiness. Let God take control of your life so that you may have happiness. He is the end of the search for happiness.

Title: God Is Looking

Text: "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me" (Ezek. 22:30).

Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 22:23–31 (This excerpt is from the excellent resource by [T. Crabtree - Zondervan Pastor's Annual](#))

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## FADED ROSES

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Ecclesiastes 12:1

An attractive young lady was surprised one day when she received a gift of roses from a wealthy woman named Mrs. Mack. Upon opening the box, her amazement turned to sheer bewilderment, for she saw that the roses were wilted and the petals were falling off. Perhaps the flowers had been packed for delivery a few days earlier and then neglected. Later that day she met Mrs. Mack on the street and thanked her for the roses. The older woman smiled and said, "I'm glad you like them. I cut them last Monday and enjoyed them all week, but this morning when I noticed they were beginning to get old and faded, I thought of you and had them delivered to your door." Seeing the puzzled and hurt look in the girl's face, she continued, "The other evening I was sitting in the car while my husband went into the drugstore. As you walked by I heard you telling someone that you wanted to become a Christian later, but not now while you are still young. You said you wanted to have a good time first. In other words, you wish to give the Lord your life after the beauty, charm, and vigor have faded and you have become old and wrinkled. I thought these roses would be an illustration of what you are doing in relation to the Lord."

The writer of Ecclesiastes wrote this book after he had wasted much of his life in pursuit of empty pleasure. He had found that this world does not satisfy the deepest longings of the heart, and urged the youth to avoid the mistakes he had made. The young person who gives the Lord his best will never regret this decision. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

"Choose you this day"; time hastens on,  
Thou canst not neutral be;  
To serve the world or Christ, thy Lord,  
"Choose now, which shall it be?"  
—Meyer

Waiting until old age to give yourself to Christ is making a sacrifice to God of the devil's leavings.

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## Land of eternal spring

I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken. — Psalm 37:25

The former president of Columbia Bible College in South Carolina, J. Robertson McQuilkin, pointed out that God has a wise purpose in letting us grow old and weak:

"I think God has planned the strength and beauty of youth to be physical. But the strength and beauty of age is spiritual. We gradually lose the strength and beauty that is temporary so we'll be sure to concentrate on the strength and beauty which is forever. And so we'll be eager to leave the temporary, deteriorating part of us and be truly homesick for our eternal home. If we stayed young and strong and beautiful, we might never want to leave."

When we are young, happily occupied with all our relationships and activities, we may not long for our celestial Home. But as time passes, we may find ourselves without family and friends, afflicted with dim vision and hearing difficulties, no longer able to relish food, or troubled by sleeplessness.

Here's the advice I give myself: Be grateful that, as the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:17, "God . . . gives us richly all things to enjoy" in life's summer and autumn. And rejoice too that with the onset of life's winter we can anticipate that we'll soon be living in the land of eternal spring. — Vernon Grounds (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

There's a land that is fairer than day,  
And by faith we can see it afar;  
For the Father waits over the way;  
To prepare us a dwelling-place there.  
— Bennett

The promise of heaven is our eternal hope.

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## Living Or Just Alive?

Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth. --Ecclesiastes 12:1

What matters is not how long you live, but how well you live. Some people live for 85 years and do very little. Others live only a relatively few years, but they fill that time with service to God and others, and their influence lives on.

Many people are concerned only with prolonging their stay here on this earth, and so they strive to add years to their lives. Every year we spend billions of dollars for medicines, vitamins, and special diets to stay alive. And yet we forget that it is not the quantity of life but the quality of life and what we accomplish for the Lord that makes life meaningful. Only when we devote our lives to our Creator (Ecclesiastes 12:1,13-14) do our days on earth count for eternity.

Today, let's seek to fill the hours with service, worship, and work for the Master. If this is our last day (and who knows, it may be), rather than wasting it in dreaming of a long life, let it be occupied with producing abundant fruit and being a blessing. Instead of just drifting aimlessly through our allotted hours and days, let us truly live.

Yes, the only life that's worthwhile (be it long or short) is the one spent in service for the Lord and in bringing blessing to others. — M.R. De Haan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Take my life and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;  
Take my moments and my days,  
Let them flow in ceaseless praise!  
—Havergal

It is better to add life to your years than to add years to your life.

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## Ecclesiastes 12:1 Leftovers

Leftovers are such humble things,  
We would not serve to a guest,  
And yet we serve them to our Lord  
Who deserves the very best.

We give to Him leftover time,  
Stray minutes here and there.  
Leftover cash we give to Him,  
Such few coins as we can spare.

We give our youth unto the world,  
To hatred, lust and strife;  
Then in declining years we give  
To him the remnant of our life.  
- Author Unknown

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## Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 The Four Calls

The Spirit came in childhood and pleaded, "Let me in,  
"But oh! the door was bolted by thoughtlessness and sin;  
"I am too young," the child replied, "I will not yield today;  
There's time enough tomorrow." The Spirit went away.

Again He came and pleaded in youth's bright happy hour;  
He came but heard no answer, for lured by Satan's power  
The youth lay dreaming then and saying, "Not today,  
Not till I've tried earth's pleasures." The Spirit went away.

Again He called in mercy in manhood's vigorous prime,

But still He found no welcome, the merchant had no time;  
No time for true repentance, no time to think or pray,  
And so, repulsed and saddened, the Spirit went away.

Once more He called and waited, the man was old and ill,  
And scarcely heard the whisper, his heart was cold and still;  
“Go leave me; when I need thee, I’ll call for thee,” he cried;  
Then sinking on his pillow, without a hope, he died!

**Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain;**

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:2 While the sun and the light, The moon and the stars, Are not darkened, And the clouds do not return after the rain;

NET Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light of the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds disappear after the rain;

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:2 ως ο μ σκοπισθ λιος κα τ φ ς κα σελ νη κα ο στ ρες κα πιστρ ψωσιν τ ν φη π σω το ετο

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:2 While the sun and light are not darkened, nor the moon and the stars; nor the clouds return after the rain:

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light are darkened, and the moon and the stars, and the clouds return after the rain;

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain,

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain;

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:2 Remember him before the light of the sun, moon, and stars is dim to your old eyes, and rain clouds continually darken your sky.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:2 While that the sun is not darkened, and the light, And the moon, and the stars, And the thick clouds returned after the rain.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light grow dim and the moon and stars, before the clouds return after the rain;

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return with the rain;

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:2 before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain;

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:2 Before the sun is darkened. and the light, and the moon, and the stars, while the clouds return after the rain;

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:2 Remember your Creator before the sun, the light, the moon, and the stars turn dark, and the clouds come back with rain.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, are not dark, and the clouds come not back after the rain;

- the sun: Ec 11:7,8 Ge 27:1 48:10 1Sa 3:2 4:15,18
- nor: Ps 42:7 71:20 77:16

**BEFORE THE**

## LIGHT FADES

**before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain-** There is disagreement on the interpretation of this verse. Note the time phrase "before" which is a continuation of the previous verse that advocated that youth remember their Creator and years draw near that appears to point to advancing age. If one interprets in this context, it would seem most reasonable to see verse 2 as a metaphorical description of advancing age. Thus here Solomon uses the language of fading light and recurring storms to describe how joy, clarity, and vitality wane as death approaches.

*Many prepare for retirement,  
Far fewer prepare for eternity!  
What are you preparing for?*

**Walter Kaiser** summarizes some of the interpretations of Ecc 12:2 - One view sees verses 2–6 as a description of an approaching Palestinian storm that puts a stop to all business and causes all (masters, servants, men, women, and children alike) to quake. The second and more probable view, if a single interpretation of the analogy is to be used, is that the imagery of a decaying and unprotected house pictures the progressive decay that is coming on the bodily members.

**Michael Eaton** says "The general idea is clear: the common Old Testament imagery of light and darkness represents the fading capacity for joy. Similarly, the returning clouds refer probably to a continual succession of sorrows. Leupold cites similar imagery in Ezekiel 13:11–13; 38:22. It underlines the inevitability of the problems of old age. 'Even if the storm ceases another one will come soon' (Jones)—a fact easier to appreciate in countries which have a distinct rainy season."

**Wycliffe Bible Commentary** on Ecc 12:2 - The imagery in this and the following verses has led to a variety of interpretations, but the majority of commentators take the passage as an extension of the author's advice to his readers to enjoy their youth. These verses are probably, then, an allegory on the decay of old age and the approach of death. The figures of the **sun**, the **light**, the **moon**, the **stars**, and the **clouds** depict old age as a storm that gathers and obscures the light and the heavenly bodies, so that there is no warmth or brightness, that is, no enjoyment of life. (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** says it signifies "Youth is typically the time of dawning light, old age the time of twilight's gloom."

**Derek Kidner** - There is the chill of winter in the air of verse 2, as the rains persist and the clouds turn daylight into gloom, and then night into pitch blackness. It is a scene sombre enough to bring home to us not only the fading of physical and mental powers but the more general desolations of old age. There are many lights that are liable then to be withdrawn, besides those of the senses and faculties, as, one by one, old friends are taken, familiar customs change, and long-held hopes now have to be abandoned. All this will come at a stage when there is no longer the resilience of youth or the prospect of recovery to offset it. In one's early years, and for the greater part of life, troubles and illnesses are chiefly set-backs, not disasters. One expects the sky to clear eventually. It is hard to adjust to the closing of that long chapter: to know that now, in the final stretch, there will be no improvement: the clouds will always gather again, and time will no longer heal, but kill. (Borrow [The Message of Ecclesiastes: A Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance](#))

This verse has led to some absurd interpretations even by an OT commentator as respected as Delitzsch who saw allusion to the spirit, the light of self-examination, the soul and the five senses!

**Keith Krell** - This refers to the fading capacity for joy and excitement. It also points to the repetitive gloom faced by the elderly.

I think **Donald Glenn** has an accurate comment on this passage - Using a wordplay on the word "troubles" in Ecclesiastes 11:10 ("the troubles of your body"), Solomon advised responsible living in one's youth, before the days of trouble come, that is, the days of old age whose troubles he figuratively depicted in 12:2-5, the years in which he said they would find little or no pleasure." The miseries of old age ("the days of trouble," v. 1) and the approach of death (vv. 6-7) are likened to recurring rainstorms. As clouds often block out the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars, so old age is a period of diminishing joy (light) and increasing gloom (dark), heralding the approach of the long night of death. This obviously alludes to the earlier figurative use of light and darkness to depict life and death (11:7-8). This allusion would have been obvious to the ancient Hebrews who held a more dynamic view of death than people have today. Any decrease in the vitality of a person, even a young person, was viewed as the onset of death (cf., e.g., Pss. 18:4-5; 88:3-5). (Borrow [The Bible knowledge commentary](#))

**William Barrick** - **The Gathering Storm** (Ecc 12:2) The second "**before**" (Ecc 12:2) speaks of '**the sun and the light, the moon and the stars**' being darkened. Mention of "**light**" causes confusion for some interpreters, but in the creation account "the light" (Gen 1:3–5) existed separate from sun, moon, and stars (Gen 1:14–16). Thus Solomon demonstrates his awareness of the Genesis account and puts some of its concepts to work for him in speaking of the Creator and the approaching death of a human being, one of the Creator's creatures. Whether a reader understands the verse as a description of a storm or the coming of death, the context inevitably links the text to death. A gathering storm **might** depict the suddenness of death, "setting forth the fear, melancholy and



desolation which grip a household upon which death has cast its shadow.” (Leahy in [Zuck](#)) The returning clouds **might** symbolize the repetitive occurrences of calamities and sorrows. (Borrow [Eaton](#)) (ED: NOTICE BARRICK’S USE OF “MIGHT” WHICH IS AN EXPRESSION OF UNCERTAINTY. THIS IS A VERSE ONE WOULD BE WELL ADVISED NOT TO BE TOO DOGMATIC UPON!)

“**Light Now, Shadow Later**” You may feel strong now. You may see clearly. Your world may feel full of brightness. But Solomon says: clouds will come.

The light will fade. The storms may not pass. So walk with your Creator now, while light still shines. Because the faith you form in the sun will sustain you in the storm and shadow. Old age brings inevitable decline—so live wisely before it comes. Persistent trials will come with age—don’t wait to prepare. God must be remembered before strength and clarity are gone. Cultivate a walk with God that doesn’t depend on how you feel. Invest spiritual truth into your memory while your mind is strong. Plan for eternity, not just retirement.

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**Spurgeon** - While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: (meaning that in old age sicknesses are many, and are more keenly felt than in our prime.)

**Ecclesiastes 12:3 in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble, and mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few, and those who look through windows grow dim;**

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:3 In the day when the keepers of the house tremble, And the strong men bow down; When the grinders cease because they are few, And those that look through the windows grow dim;

NET Ecclesiastes 12:3 when those who keep watch over the house begin to tremble, and the virile men begin to stoop over, and the grinders begin to cease because they grow few, and those who look through the windows grow dim,

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:3 ν μ ρ ν σαλευθ σιν φ λακες τ ς ο κ ας κα διαστραφ σιν νδρες τ ς ουν μεως κα ργησαν α λ θουσai τι λιγ θησαν κα σκοτ σουσιν α βλ πουσαι ν τα ς πα ς

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:3 in the day wherein the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the mighty men shall become bent, and the grinding women cease because they have become few, and the women looking out at the windows be dark;

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:3 on the day when the guardians of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, the women who grind cease because they are few, and the ones who watch through the windows see dimly,

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:3 in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed,

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:3 when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim;

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:3 Remember him before your legs-- the guards of your house-- start to tremble; and before your shoulders-- the strong men-- stoop. Remember him before your teeth-- your few remaining servants-- stop grinding; and before your eyes-- the women looking through the windows-- see dimly.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:3 In the day that keepers of the house tremble, And men of strength have bowed themselves, And grinders have ceased, because they have become few. And those looking out at the windows have become dim,

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:3 the time when your watchmen become shaky, when strong men are bent double, when the women, one by one, quit grinding, and, as they look out of the window, find their sight growing dim.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:3 in the day when the guards of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the women who grind cease working because they are few, and those who look through the windows see dimly;

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:3 in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look through the windows are dimmed,

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:3 When the guardians of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, And the grinders are idle because they are few, and they who look through the windows grow blind;

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:3 Remember your Creator when those who guard the house tremble, strong men are stooped over, the women at the mill stop grinding because there are so few of them, and those who look out of the windows see a dim light.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:3 In the day when the keepers of the house are shaking for fear, and the strong men are bent down, and the women who were crushing the grain are at rest because their number is small, and those looking out of the windows are unable to see;

- **mighty men:** 2Sa 21:15-17 Ps 90:9,10 102:23 Zec 8:4
- and those: Ec 12:2

Our body ages like a home in disrepair

## IN THE DAY OF BODILY DECLINE

**in the day** - The question is what is "**the day**" referring to? In context, Solomon is describing the ravages that time will have on everyone who ages, which is everyone reading this note! This is "the day" when these declines become prominent. By comparing the body to a house with guards, workers, windows, Solomon dignifies the body while acknowledging its inevitable collapse. He does not mock old age—he prepares us to accept it soberly and live wisely now.

**ESV Study Bible** - This section contains a metaphorical description of the aging process and death. In many instances the specific metaphor is clear (e.g., in v. 3 the grinders refer to teeth), though some are more difficult to interpret. (See [ESV Study Bible - Page 406](#))

**that the watchmen of the house tremble** Interpreted as the arms and hands, which guard and care for the body ("house") but now tremble with age. I am now the full-time caregiver for my wife of 55 years and over the last 3 years have detected a notable tremulousness in her hands when I hand her something.

**NET NOTE** - The verb זָעַו (zéua', "to tremble") probably does not refer to physical tremors but to trembling in fear (e.g., Esth 5:9; Hab 2:7; Sir 48:12); cf. HALOT 267 s.v. זָעַו. At the onset of old age, those who had been the most courageous during their youth suddenly become fearful.

**and mighty men stoop** Likely refers to the legs or shoulders, strong in youth but now bent or weakened. I am 79 and used to stand 6 foot 3 inches tall but I recently gave a eulogy at a funeral and when I watched the replay, I was shocked at how stooped over I was as I walked to the podium!

**NET NOTE** - The verb עָוָה ('avat, "to bend; to stoop") means "to be stooped" (HALOT 804 s.v. עָוָה) rather than "to bend themselves" (BDB 736 s.v. עָוָה). The perfect tense may be taken in an ingressive sense ("begin to stoop over").

**the grinding ones stand idle because they are few** A picture of teeth, which become few and cease to function well. If anyone has false teeth, they would agree that this is a reference to teeth!

**NET NOTE** - The term הַטְּחָנוֹת (hattokhanot, Qal active participle feminine plural from טָחַן, takhan, "to grind") is a double entendre. In its literal sense, it refers to female mill-grinders; in its figurative sense, it refers to molar teeth (HALOT 374 s.v. \*טְחָנָה). The related Hebrew noun טַחְנָה (takhanah) refers to a "mill," and the related Arabic noun tahinat means "molar tooth" (HALOT 374 s.v. \*טְחָנָה).

**and those who look through windows grow dim** Symbolic of eyesight diminishing, like looking through darkened or cloudy windows. I am 79 and about 3 years ago the light was growing dim in my vision because it was blocked by the increasing opacity of cataracts. Then I opted for lens replacement and it was like everything became not only clearer but brighter, with even colors appearing more vibrant.

**NET NOTE** - The verb קָשַׁח (khashakh, "to grow dim") is used elsewhere in reference to failing eyesight (e.g., Ps 69:24; Lam 5:17); see HALOT 361 s.v. קָשַׁח. Therefore, the phrase "those who look through the windows" is probably a figurative description of the eyes, picturing failing eyesight at the onset of old age.

**John MacArthur** agrees with the metaphorical description of old age - **watchmen of the house tremble**. The hands and arms

which protect the body, as guards do a palace, shake in old age. **mighty men stoop**. The legs, like supporting pillars, weaken. **grinding ones**. Teeth. **those who look through windows**. Eyes. (See [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Walter Kaiser** - The arms and hands tremble in old age with palsy or feebleness. The legs are bent in feebleness, and the knees totter. The teeth lose their ability to masticate food. The eyes begin to lose their sight, and the pupils become less dilated and more contracted.

**Donald Glenn** - the keepers of the house tremble (the arms and hands grow weak). Also the strong men stoop, that is, the legs grow bent and feeble. The grinders cease because they are few refers to the teeth becoming fewer, and those looking through the windows grow dim refers to the eyesight beginning to fail. (Borrow [The Bible knowledge commentary](#))

**Keith Krell** - In Ecc 12:3 Solomon says that the “the watchmen of the house tremble.” This means that the arms and hands shake and become feeble. When he says that the “mighty men stoop,” he is referring to the shoulders, legs, and back slumping and becoming feeble. Your knees buckle when your belt won’t! Your back goes out more than you. “The grinding ones stand idle because they are few” speaks to the scarcity of teeth. You sink your teeth into a steak and they stay there. The phrase “those who look through windows grow dim” means vision suffers.<sup>486</sup> Or if you prefer, your arms aren’t long enough to hold reading material.

**William Barrick** -(WHILE I GENERALLY FIND DR BARRICK’S COMMENTS ACCURATE, I DO NOT AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS WHICH MAY HAVE LITERAL TRUTH, BUT THEY SEEM FAR AFIELD FROM THE PICTURE SOLOMON IS PAINTING OF OLD AGE.) **The Household of the Deceased** (Eccl 12:3–4) In verses 3 and 4, Solomon seems to depict a great house either in decline or anticipating the death of its master. The picture not only describes happenings within the house, but extends to the village and ultimately becomes a metaphor of death itself. According to Ec 12:3, four classes of people experience the fear and anxiety created by the proximity of death within the household. The “**watchmen**” represent the male servants who are responsible for protecting the household. “**Mighty men**” depict the freemen, the landowners, the family members of the estate or the heads of nearby estates. Following the two groups of men come two groups of women: the maidservants who grind the grain and the free women, the mistresses of the estate, who avoid the public eye in their grief. “**Those who look through the windows**” most naturally refers “to the women of the household who, according to Middle Eastern custom, were not allowed to mingle with the men in the business of the household, so they peered through the lattice-work of the house.” (C. Davis, “[Zuck](#)”) Other biblical examples of women looking out from a house include Sisera’s mother (Jdg 5:28) and David’s wife Michal (2Sa 6:16–23). Whether due to death in the house, calamity in the village, or the arrival of a severe winter storm, these women have become more isolated from the life they once knew.

**“The House Is Fading—The Spirit Must Shine”** Your body may be: Strong now Sharp-eyed Sure-footed But not forever. This “house” was never meant to last. The soul within it must be anchored in Christ (Heb 6:19+) Don’t mourn the house—secure the soul. Don’t wait for the stairs to break—turn to the Builder now. The body ages like a home falling into disrepair. Hands tremble, legs bend, teeth fall, eyes dim—this is the human condition. Take care of your body, but never idolize it—it will fade. Make peace with the reality of physical decline—it points you to eternal hope. Start building your spiritual “house” before your physical one collapses.

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**Richard De Haan** - Recently an elderly couple from Montana visited me in my office. Their presence emphasized the “generation gap”—not the kind you usually think of, however. We had sweet Christian fellowship and agreed on spiritual matters. We saw eye-to-eye concerning world affairs. In fact, we thoroughly enjoyed the moments we were allowed to share on “common ground.” Yet, as I said, there was a “generation gap”—a physical one. “Father Time” had exacted his toll upon these dear friends. Their steps were faltering, their eyesight failing, and their hearing diminishing.

I usually move at a rather brisk pace, but as I slowed down enough to walk beside them, I felt I was almost standing still. In addition to that, I had to repeat my words again and again to accommodate their deafness. They reminded me of the Preacher’s description in Ecclesiastes 12 of the time “when the keepers of the house tremble, those that look out of the windows are darkened, and the sound of the grinding is low.”

I prayed silently, “O Lord, help me always to be patient and understanding with all who are aged, not in a condescending way, not out of pity, but because of a genuine respect for these who have walked life’s pathway before me, endured its trials, and waged its battles.” May all of us who still enjoy the vigor of good health and do not yet feel the frailties of the declining years, treat these elderly saints with proper esteem. Also let us do everything we possibly can to bridge the gap and gladden the hearts of those who have earned their place in God’s “gallery of honor!”

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**Warren Wiersbe** - Ec 12:3–7 give us one of the most imaginative descriptions of old age and death found anywhere in literature. Students don’t agree on all the details of interpretation, but most of them do see here a picture of a house that is falling apart and finally turns to dust. A dwelling place is one biblical metaphor for the human body (Job 4:19; 2 Cor. 5:1–2 [a tent]; 2 Peter 1:13 [a tent]), and taking down a house or tent is a picture of death. The meaning may be:

keepers of the house—Your arms and hands tremble.  
strong men—Your legs, knees, and shoulders weaken and you walk bent over.  
grinders—You start to lose your teeth.  
windows—Your vision begins to deteriorate.  
doors—Either your hearing starts to fail, or you close your mouth because you've lost your teeth.  
grinding—You can't chew your food, or your ears can't pick up the sounds outdoors.  
rise up—You wake up with the birds early each morning, and wish you could sleep longer.  
music—Your voice starts to quaver and weaken.  
afraid—You are terrified of heights and afraid of falling while you walk down the street.  
almond tree—If you have any hair left, it turns white, like almond blossoms.  
grasshopper—You just drag yourself along, like a grasshopper at the close of the summer season.  
desire—You lose your appetite, or perhaps your sexual desire.  
long home—You go to your eternal [long] home and people mourn your death.

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**Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - THE BUDDING OF THE ALMOND TREE Ecclesiastes 12:3-5**

Many—OK, perhaps most—of us don't like to think about growing older. The hands tremble, the back begins to stoop, our teeth don't work so well, and our eyesight grows dim. We wake up early but don't have the energy we once had. We worry about things that never bothered us before. Sexual ardor fades away. Life itself slows to a crawl.

The words of Ecclesiastes 12:3-5 describe in poetic language the toll that old age takes on the human body. Finally death comes, and man "goes to his eternal home" while his friends gather at his wake to tell a few stories and shed a few tears.

We may not wish to consider our later years, yet this is life as it really is—this is what is ahead for all of us if we live long enough. The only people who escape this slow decline are those who die before they grow old. The rest of us will learn the truth of Solomon's words. I'm thinking as I write this of a friend of mine who uses a walker to get around because her legs are unsteady. Looking me straight in the eye, she proclaimed, "It's heck growing older." I did not doubt her at all.

There is another side to the story. Psalm 92:12-15 speaks of the vitality of the righteous in their old age. The righteous are blessed with long life and good health and fruitfulness even into old age. They don't dry up and wither away, but bear fruit until the end.

They leave this world, praising God all the way. They proclaim, "The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him" (Psalm 92:15). Only those who have seen life in all its fullness can say that with conviction. Here is a fundamental difference between the old and the young. The young know the words to the song; the old know the composer.

Perhaps you've heard the story of the young pastor who rose to preach on Psalm 23. He gave it his best effort but never connected with the audience. Afterward an old man got up to speak. He bowed his head, his hands quivering, his body worn from years of hard work. Gripping the podium, he began to recite, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." As he finished the audience sat in deep silence, profoundly moved. When the young pastor asked the old man why his words had made such a difference, the old man said simply, "You know the psalm, I know the Shepherd."

Some things are learned only through hard experience. Only those who have known suffering and hardship can say with deep conviction, "The Lord is upright. All that He does is good. He makes no mistakes, and He made no mistakes in my life." It is only looking back that the testimony of the righteous is seen in its full power.

Lord of years, may all my days be spent serving You and may I come to the end without fear, ready to enter my eternal home through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### SHINING THE LIGHT

- Are you afraid of growing old? Why or why not?
- What will happen to you when you die?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read John 5:24; 11:25-26; and 1 John 3:1-3.

**Ecclesiastes 12:4 and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low, and one will arise at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song will sing softly.**

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:4 When the doors are shut in the streets, And the sound of grinding is low; When one rises up at the sound of a bird, And all the daughters of music are brought low;

NET Ecclesiastes 12:4 and the doors along the street are shut; when the sound of the grinding mill grows low, and one is awakened by the sound of a bird, and all their songs grow faint,

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:4 κα κλε σουσιν θ ρας ν γορ ν σθενε φων ς τ ς ληθο σης κα ναστ σετ αι ε ς φων ν το στρουθ ου κα ταπεινωθ σονται π σαι α θυγατ ρες το σματος

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:4 and they shall shut the doors in the market-place, because of the weakness of the voice of her that grinds at the mill; and he shall rise up at the voice of the sparrow, and all the daughters of song shall be brought low;

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:4 the doors at the street are shut while the sound of the mill fades; when one rises at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song grow faint.

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:4 and the doors on the street are shut-- when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low--

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:4 when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint;

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:4 Remember him before the door to life's opportunities is closed and the sound of work fades. Now you rise at the first chirping of the birds, but then all their sounds will grow faint.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:4 And doors have been shut in the street. When the noise of the grinding is low, And one riseth at the voice of the bird, And all daughters of song are bowed down.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:4 When the street-door is kept shut, when the sound of grinding fades away, when the first cry of a bird wakes you up, when all the singing has stopped;

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:4 when the doors on the street are shut, and the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low;

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:4 and the doors on the street are shut; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low;

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:4 When the doors to the street are shut, and the sound of the mill is low; When one waits for the chirp of a bird, but all the daughters of song are suppressed;

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:4 Remember your Creator when the doors to the street are closed, the sound of the mill is muffled, you are startled at the sound of a bird, and those who sing songs become quiet.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:4 When the doors are shut in the street, and the sound of the crushing is low, and the voice of the bird is soft, and the daughters of music will be made low;

- all: 2Sa 19:35

## WHEN THE SONG GROWS FAINT AND THE BIRD AWAKENS

Solomon extends his description to include pictures one might see in a village. While the interpretations of the metaphorical descriptions in Ec 12:3 had relatively good agreement, there is considerably less agreement between the commentaries on the meaning of these metaphors. I will give you a sampling from several excellent conservative commentaries, but the variation suggests **it is best not to be too dogmatic**.

**and the doors on the street are shut** This may refer to hearing loss (ears closed) or withdrawal from public life (shut in). The aged person no longer hears the outside world well or engages with it fully. But see other interpretations below. This one suggest we should not be too dogmatic!

**Spurgeon** - the senses are gradually closed, both ears and eyes become as doors shut up

**as the sound of the grinding mill is low** Normal household sounds—like grinding grain—are now barely audible. This reflects both

reduced sensory perception and slower activity in daily life.

**and one will arise at the sound of the bird** Paradoxically, while the aged can't hear well in general, they are easily disturbed in sleep by even the quietest noise. This captures the light, restless sleep common in old age.

**Spurgeon** - his nights are weary, the first crowing of the cock awakes him

**and all the daughters of song will sing softly** - The enjoyment of music, singing, and celebration fades. It could reflect hearing loss, emotional dullness, or simply a waning desire for song.

**Spurgeon** - his own voice is gone, and he is no longer able to hear the voice of others

**NET NOTE** - The noun טַחְנָה (takhanah) refers to a “**grinding-mill**” where grain is ground into flour (HALOT 374 s.v. טַחְנָה). The term is here used as a double entendre, figuratively describing the loss of one's teeth at the onset of old age. The figurative usage also draws upon the polysemantic nature of this noun; the related Arabic root tahinat means “molar tooth” (HALOT 374 s.v. \*טַחְנָה).

**NET NOTE** - Heb “rises up.” The verb קוּם (qum, “to arise”) refers to being awakened from sleep in the middle of the night by a sound (e.g., Exod 12:30; 1 Sam 3:6, 8) and waking up early in the morning (e.g., Gen 24:54; Judg 16:3; Ruth 3:14; Neh 2:12; Job 14:12; 24:14); see HALOT 1086 s.v. קוּם; BDB 877 s.v. קוּם.a. Here it describes one of the frustrations of old age: the elderly person is unable to get a full night's sleep because every little sound awakens him in the middle of the night or too early in the morning.

**NET NOTE** - Heb “**all the daughters of song**.” The expression “the daughters of song” (בְּנוֹת הַשִּׁיר, bénot hashir) is an idiom for “songs; musical sounds; melodious notes” (HALOT 166 s.v. בְּנוֹת; BDB 123 s.v. בְּנוֹת; GKC 418 §128.v). The genitive הַשִּׁיר (“song”) represents the nature, quality, character or condition of the construct בְּנוֹת (“daughters”); see IBHS 149–51 §9.5.3b. The idiom refers to the musical songs sung during one's youth or to the ability to hear songs that are sung. This line is lamenting the loss of hearing which occurs at the onset of old age.

**John MacArthur** - **doors**. Lips that do not have much to say. **sound of the grinding**. This refers to little eating, when the sound of masticating is low. **arise**. Light sleep. **daughters of song**. The ear and voice that once loved music. (See [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Donald Glenn** - **The doors to the street are closed** may picture the lips sinking in, due to the loss of teeth. **When men rise up at the sound of birds** suggests that old people get up early because of their inability to sleep. **All their songs grow faint** speaks of hearing that becomes impaired. (Borrow [The Bible knowledge commentary](#))

**Daniel Akin** - The first part of this verse may refer to the fact that elderly people are shut off from business and daily commerce. It could also refer to the loss of teeth. Either way, old age limits a person's activities. The second part of the verse also raises different possibilities. One possibility is that this depicts how elderly people are easily startled, even at the soft sound of a bird. Another interpretation moves more in the direction of saying that elderly people can't enjoy music or can't participate in singing any longer (see 2 Sam. 19:35). Either interpretation furthers the idea that Solomon is trying to get across about aging. (See [Holman Old Testament Commentary - Ecclesiastes](#))

**Michael Eaton** shows how respected commentators disagree - If the details are significant, **the doors on the street** will refer to the reduced access to the outside world which follows impaired hearing. The next phrase, when (RSV; better is Leupold's ‘in that’) the sound of the grinding is low, may extend the image; for the grinding of grain must have been a common cheerful indication that younger folk were going about their business, while the elderly found themselves increasingly shut off from the hum of daily life. Rising at the voice **of a bird** has often been taken to mean that ‘the old sleep so lightly that even the twittering of birds will rouse them’ (Jones). So much for impaired hearing! More likely the picture is one of waking erratically in the early hours. (**ED**: AT 79 I CAN ATTEST TO WAKING EARLY, USUALLY AROUND 3 AM, BUT SOMETIMES AT EARLY AS MIDNIGHT!) Some interpret the reference to the **daughters of song** to participation in singing; some refer to enjoyment of others' singing. There is no need to decide between the two. (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

**William Barrick** - (AGAIN BECAUSE OF THE CONTEXT WHERE SOLOMON BEGAN BY DISCUSSING YOUTH AND THEN MOVED TO DESCRIBE AGING, I DISAGREE WITH BARRICK'S INTERPRETATION AS FAR TOO LITERAL.) Eccl 12:4 continues the description of the stricken household and, perhaps, its village. “**Doors**” literally means “two doors.” However, most houses in ancient Israel possessed but one door. The dual number favors a reference to a city gate through which people would enter the bazaar and the nearby judgment seat where the elders of the city held court. “**The sound of the grinding mill is low**” thus indicates a decrease in the normal economic and commercial activities common to everyday life. The village activities slow nearly to a halt for the death of a key citizen and his funeral. Rising at the **sound of the bird** may refer either to being startled to action by the sound of a bird through the silent streets or to the hooting or cooing of birds viewed as harbingers of death. “**Daughters of song**” could refer



to the women whose function involves singing laments for the dying master.

**Ecclesiastes 12:5 Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street.**

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:5 Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:5 Also they are afraid of height, And of terrors in the way; When the almond tree blossoms, The grasshopper is a burden, And desire fails. For man goes to his eternal home, And the mourners go about the streets.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:5 and they are afraid of heights and the dangers in the street; the almond blossoms grow white, and the grasshopper drags itself along, and the caper berry shrivels up— because man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about in the streets—

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:5 κα γε π ψους ψονται κα θ μβοι ν τ δ κα νθ σ τ μ γδαλον κα παχυνθ κρ ς  
κα διασκεδασθ κ ππαρις τι πορε θη νθρωπος ε ς ο κον α νο ς α το κα κ κλωσαν ν γορ ο κοπτ μενοι

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:5 and they shall look up, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall blossom, and the locust shall increase, and the caper shall be scattered: because man has gone to his eternal home, and the mourners have gone about the market:

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:5 Also, they are afraid of heights and dangers on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper loses its spring, and the caper berry has no effect; for man is headed to his eternal home, and mourners will walk around in the street;

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:5 they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets--

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:5 when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:5 Remember him before you become fearful of falling and worry about danger in the streets; before your hair turns white like an almond tree in bloom, and you drag along without energy like a dying grasshopper, and the caperberry no longer inspires sexual desire. Remember him before you near the grave, your everlasting home, when the mourners will weep at your funeral.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:5 Also of that which is high they are afraid, And of the low places in the way, And the almond-tree is despised, And the grasshopper is become a burden, And want is increased, For man is going unto his home age-during, And the mourners have gone round through the street.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:5 when going uphill is an ordeal and you are frightened at every step you take- yet the almond tree is in flower and the grasshopper is weighed down and the caper-bush loses its tang; while you are on the way to your everlasting home and the mourners are assembling in the street;

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:5 when one is afraid of heights, and terrors are in the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along and desire fails; because all must go to their eternal home, and the mourners will go about the streets;

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:5 they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along and desire fails; because man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets;

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:5 And one fears heights, and perils in the street; When the almond tree blooms, and the locust grows sluggish and the caper berry is without effect, Because man goes to his lasting home, and mourners go about the streets;

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:5 Remember your Creator when someone is afraid of heights and of dangers along the

road, the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and the caper bush has no fruit. Mortals go to their eternal rest, and mourners go out in the streets.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:5 And he is in fear of that which is high, and danger is in the road, and the tree is white with flower, and the least thing is a weight, and desire is at an end, because man goes to his last resting-place, and those who are sorrowing are in the streets;

- the almond: Ge 42:38 44:29,31 Lev 19:32 Job 15:10 Ps 71:18 Pr 16:31 20:29 Isa 46:4 Jer 1:11
- because: Ec 9:10 Job 17:13 30:23 Ps 49:10-14 Heb 9:27
- the mourners: Ge 50:3-10 Jer 9:17-20 Mk 5:38,39

## FADING OF EARTHLY STRENGTH POINTS TOWARD ETERNITY

**Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road-** The meaning is uncertain. In old age, there's a loss of mobility, confidence, and boldness. The once-bold man is now timid and cautious, wary of danger. I will admit that at age 79, because of fear of falling, I now hire younger men to clean the leaves and branches from my roof. Some see this description as the elderly simply becoming more fearful in general. **NJB** has a very interpretative translation "when going uphill is an ordeal and you are frightened at every step you take."

**Wycliffe Bible Commentary** - This is probably a reference to the shortness of breath which makes any ascent difficult. (Ed: As a physician I doubt this is the meaning. Shortness of breath is not found in all aged people, but is a symptom of congestive heart failure.) (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

**NET NOTE** - The Hebrew noun חַתְּחַתִּים (khatkhattim) literally means "terrors" (HALOT 363 s.v. חַתְּחַת; BDB 369 s.v. חַתְּחַת). Here it is used as a metonymy (cause for effect) to refer to dangers that cause the elderly to be fearful of going outside or walking along the streets

**The almond tree blossoms - NLT** is interpretative = "before your hair turns white like an almond tree in bloom." Most favor white hair given that the almond blossom is white.

**NET NOTE** - The verb נָצַח ("to blossom") is a geminate verb (II = III) that, in this case, is written with a matres lectionis (plene spelling) rather than the normal spelling of נִצַּח (GKC 204 §73.g). The Hiphil verb יָנֵאֵץ (yane'ts) is from the root נָצַח "to shine; to sparkle; to blossom" (HALOT 717 s.v. נָצַח; BDB 665 s.v. נָצַח). It is used in reference to almond blossoms whose color progresses from pink to white as they ripen (e.g., Song 6:11). This is an appropriate metaphor (comparison of sight) to describe white hair that often accompanies the onset of old age.

**The grasshopper drags himself along** - Grasshopper, once agile and energetic is now limping or dragging. For aged folks, even the lightest movements become burdensome. What was once lively is now labored and slow. Elderly people are usually not jogging through the neighborhood, and their strolling stride is generally shorter and less stable than when they were a young pup.

**Donald Glenn - The grasshopper drags himself along** speaks of the body being bent and one's walk being slowed; the grasshopper, normally moving about quickly, is an apt figure of the past liveliness of one's childhood and youth. (Borrow [The Bible knowledge commentary](#))

**And the caperberry is ineffective - KJV** = "desire shall fail" **NIV** = "desire no longer is stirred" **NLT** = "the caperberry no longer inspires sexual desire" Most interpret this as a reference to decreased sexual desire in aged individuals. The natural passions and pleasures of life no longer stir the aged body. The senses are dulled, and appetites are weak.

**NET NOTE** - The noun אַבִּיּוֹנָה ('aviyyonah, "caper berry, caper fruit") is a hapax legomenon, occurring only here in the Hebrew Bible. It refers to the Capparis spinosa fruit which was eaten as an aphrodisiac in the ancient Near East (HALOT 5 s.v. אַבִּיּוֹנָה; BDB 2-3 s.v. אַבִּיּוֹנָה). There are two options for the interpretation of this figure: (1) At the onset of old age, the sexual virility that marked one's youth is nothing more than a distant memory, and even aphrodisiacs fail to stimulate sexual desire to allow for sexual intercourse. (2) The onset of old age is like the shriveling up of the caper berry fruit; the once virile youth has passed his prime just like a shriveled caper berry can no longer provide a sexual stimulant.

**NET NOTE** on **ineffective** - Or "fails"; or "bursts." The meaning of the verb פָּרַר (parar, "to break; to make

ineffectual”) is debated: (1) “to be ineffectual,” that is, to fail to provide sexual power as an aphrodisiac, or (2) “to break; to burst,” that is, the caper berry fruit shrivels as it lingers on its branch beyond its period of ripeness (HALOT 975 s.v. 2 פָּרַר.f; BDB 830 s.v. I. 2 פָּרַר.d).

**Daniel Akin** - The grasshopper drags himself along seems clear. The passing of years causes the elderly to develop a slower gait. Desire no longer is stirred (or “the caperberry is ineffective,” NASB) is seen by many commentators as a description of loss of sexual desire, although “no evidence for the aphrodisiac qualities of the caper appears prior to the medieval Jewish commentaries” (Garrett, 342). Some extend it to refer to the loss of desire in general (Leupold, 282). This interpretation certainly has some merit because of what this passage may say about the loss of teeth and sight. Senses like taste and smell usually grow dull with age.(See [Holman Old Testament Commentary - Ecclesiastes](#))

**For man goes to his eternal home** (Beth [Olam](#)) **while mourners go about in the street** - The poetic metaphors now turn literal: death approaches. Man is about to depart this temporary life for his permanent dwelling place for eternity. Here Solomon is clearly referring to the “tearing down of the house” so to speak. While he makes no distinction between heaven and hell, he clearly believes that men and women live forever in their **eternal home**. As the man dies, mourners begin their procession, signaling the final farewell of earthly life.

**NET NOTE** on **eternal home** - In the construct phrase בֵּית עוֹלָם (bet ’olamo, “house of his eternity”), the genitive עוֹלָם (“eternity”) functions as an attributive adjective: “his eternal home.” This is an idiom for the **grave** as the resting place of the body (e.g., Ps 49:12 [11]; Job 7:9; 14:10–12; Eccl 12:5) or **Sheol** as the residence of the dead (e.g., Job 17:13; 30:23); see HALOT 124 s.v. I 5) 799 ;2; בֵּית; BDB 109 s.v. 1 בֵּית.d. For example, the term בֵּית (“house”) is used in Job 30:23 in parallelism with “death” (מָוֶת, mavet). The same idiom appears in postbiblical Hebrew: “the house of eternity” (בֵּית עוֹלָם, bet ’olam) is a euphemism for a burial ground or cemetery (e.g., Lamentations Rabbah 1:5); see Jastrow 1084–85 s.v. עֹלָם III. This idiom is also found in a Moabite text in reference to the grave (Deir Alla Inscription 2:6). A similar idiom is found in Phoenician and Palmyrene in reference to the grave (DISO 35). The idiom appears to have originated in Egyptian literature (H. A. Hoffner, TDOT 2:113). See F. Cumont, *Afterlife in Roman Paganism*, 48–50.

*All of these characteristics of the aging indicate that they are on their final journey to their “eternal home.”*

**William Barrick** - (NOW BARRICK APPEARS TO PICK BACK UP THE PICTURE OF AGING SO I AGREE WITH THESE COMMENTS) - **Aging: The Ultimate Harbinger of Death** (Eccl 12:5) Fear of either climbing heights (which might result in a heart attack or stroke—at least being left with belabored breathing) or moving about in crowded streets characterize the elderly. The **blossoms of the almond tree** come toward the end of winter before the leaves even sprout. The white color of the **blossoms** crowning the whole tree reminds one of the white hair of the aged. A locust or **grasshopper**, when no longer able to hop about with youthful vigor, **drags** itself along as though burdened—much like the awkward gait of old men and women. The ancient peoples in the Near East prized the **caperberry** for stimulating appetite or sexual desire. In the advanced years, however, the **caperberry** no longer acts as an effective stimulant. Indeed, all of these characteristics of the aging indicate that they are on their final journey to their “eternal home.” Jewish communities still refer to their cemeteries as Beth [Olam](#) (eternal), the same phrase as used here. Readers of the New Testament readily associate the description with a similar concept in 2 Corinthians 5:1+. Granted, Solomon does not refer to a heavenly habitation and Paul does not refer to the grave or the netherworld of departed spirits of Old Testament times. However, both texts speak of the state of existence following life “**under the sun**” as a “**house**”—a place of habitation. The reference to “**mourners**” going **about in the street** (Eccl 12:5) fits the ancient Hebrew custom of mourning the death of an Israelite (Amos 5:16–20; Jer 9:17–22; 22:18; 34:5).

**Ecclesiastes 12:6 Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed;**

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:6 Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, Or the golden bowl is broken, Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, Or the wheel broken at the well.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:6 before the silver cord is removed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the well, or the water wheel is broken at the cistern—

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:6 ως του μ νατραπ σχοιν ον το ργυρ ου κα συνθλιβ νθ μιον το χρυσ ου κα συντριβ δρ α π τ ν πηγ ν κα συντροχ σ τροχ ς π τ ν λ κκον

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:6 before the silver cord be let go, or the choice gold be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel run down to the cistern;

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:6 before the silver cord is snapped, and the gold bowl is broken, and the jar is shattered at the spring, and the wheel is broken into the well;

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:6 before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern,

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:6 Remember him--before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well,

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:6 Yes, remember your Creator now while you are young, before the silver cord of life snaps and the golden bowl is broken. Don't wait until the water jar is smashed at the spring and the pulley is broken at the well.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:6 While that the silver cord is not removed, And the golden bowl broken, And the pitcher broken by the fountain, And the wheel broken at the well.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:6 before the silver thread snaps, or the golden bowl is cracked, or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, or the pulley broken at the well-head:

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:6 before the silver cord is snapped, and the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern,

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:6 before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern,

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:6 Before the silver cord is snapped and the golden bowl is broken, And the pitcher is shattered at the spring, and the broken pulley falls into the well,

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:6 Remember your Creator before the silver cord is snapped, the golden bowl is broken, the pitcher is smashed near the spring, and the water wheel is broken at the cistern.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:6 Before ever the silver cord is cut, or the vessel of gold is broken, or the pot is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the water-hole;

Remember your Creator before you are broken

## LIFE: BEAUTIFUL, FRAGILE, BRIEF

*Remember Him* - Added by the translators but the sense seems to be intended. "Remember Him" your Creator before life breaks beyond repair.

**Before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed** These metaphors (**broken...crushed...shattered...crushed**) speak not of gradual decline (as in earlier verses) but of the final snap as when death comes. Life is precious and fragile—like a silver cord. Once it breaks, the connection is lost. Just as a valuable bowl, once shattered, cannot be used again, so life, once ended, cannot be restored.

Someday the silver cord will break,  
and I no more as now shall sing;  
but O the joy when I shall wake  
within the palace of the King!  
And I shall see Him face to face,  
and tell the story—saved by grace!"  
-- Fanny Crosby

**Wycliffe Bible Commentary on the silver cord is broken** - The figure represents an expensive gold and silver lamp hung from the ceiling. Its chain is snapped so that it comes crashing to the ground. The oil spills out of the broken bowl, and the light is gone. Light is the symbol of life. (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** agrees writing "Perhaps this pictures a lamp hanging from a silver chain, which breaks with age, smashing the lamp. Some suggest this refers to the spinal cord." (**ED**: AS A PHYSICIAN I THINK ALLUSION TO SPINAL CORD IS FAR FETCHED AND IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY AS SPINAL CORDS OF ELDERLY ARE NOT KNOWN FOR "BREAKING".) (See [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**the pitcher by the well is shattered** The body (pitcher) is no longer able to draw from the well of life—death ends its function.

**and the wheel at the cistern is crushed**; Once the wheel (function) breaks, water no longer flows—life ceases. This may represent the final cessation of heart activity or blood flow.

**John MacArthur** - Wells required a wheel with a rope attached in order to lower the pitcher for water. Perhaps this pictures the fountain of blood, the heart.

**NET NOTE** on **wheel** - The term גַּלְגַּל (galgal, "wheel") refers to the "water wheel" or "paddle wheel" for drawing water from a well (HALOT 190 s.v. 1 גַּלְגַּל; BDB 165 s.v. 1 גַּלְגַּל.b). This Hebrew noun is related to the Akkadian term gulgullu ("pot"), as well as Phoenician (?) גלגל ("wheel for drawing water"). The Latin term girgillus ("lever for the bucket") is a late derivation from this term. See G. Dalman, Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina, 2:225–28.

Each metaphor shows value (silver, gold, water), fragility (easily broken), irreversibility (cannot be repaired). The message is that you are valuable. You are mortal. You must live in light of your Creator—before the final break.

**William Barrick** - **Death: Returning to God** (Eccl 12:6–7) The third **"before"** (Eccl 12:6) introduces the end of life when the opportunities to enjoy God's gifts cease and the individual meets his or her Creator. The **"golden bowl"** might depict a lamp like that in Zechariah 4:2–3. The lamp befits the description of death, since texts like Proverbs 13:9 speaks of "the lamp" of an individual being put out at death (cp. Job 18:5–6; 21:17; Pr 20:20; 24:20). The **silver cord** could be the means of hanging the golden lamp, filled with oil. Putting fire to the wicks in the oil would give light as the oil in the wicks burned. If someone cuts the **cord** or it breaks, the lamp of oil crashes to the stone floor and the oil is spilled. Likewise, the **pitcher** that holds life-giving water drawn from a well or cistern cannot serve its task if the **pitcher** breaks. Crenshaw explains that, "The picture of a fountain in disrepair suggests that the water of life can no longer be drawn, and the end has come."<sup>21</sup> The **"wheel"** could be a pulley used to lower a pitcher into the depths of a well and to draw it back up when it is filled. Twice **"crushed"** occurs with the golden bowl as an object and then with **"the wheel."** Interestingly, Hebrew derives its words for "bowl" and for "wheel" from the same root word meaning "roll" or "round." (22 Provan, Ecclesiastes, 218. The Hebrew name Golgotha meaning "place of the skull"; Matthew 27:33+ comes from the same root.) Solomon might be depicting a violent death from a crushed skull and the failure of the destroyed cranium to retain the contents of the brain.

**"Live Before You Break"** Each image in this verse is a beautiful object destroyed: A silver cord—snapped. A golden bowl—shattered. A pitcher—cracked. A wheel—stopped. Life is precious. Death is certain. Eternity is near. But you can prepare now. You can remember your Creator—and commit your spirit to Him, not only at death, but in life. Life is valuable and delicate. Death is the complete and irreversible cessation of function. You must remember God before death—not after. Don't wait until you break to turn to the One who made you. Avoid living as though life will last forever—because it won't. Help others see the urgency of salvation now—not later. Prepare to meet your Maker while you still can.

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Ecclesiastes 12:6 - One of Fanny Crosby's hymns, based on a combination of the thoughts in Ecclesiastes 12:6 and Revelation 22:4, 5 was so personal that for years she never let others see it. Professor Kenneth Osbeck says its revelation to the public came about this way.

"One day at a Bible conference in Northfield, Massachusetts, Miss Crosby was asked by Dwight L. Moody to give a personal testimony concerning her faith and Christian experience. At first she hesitated, then quietly rose and said, "There is one hymn I have written which has never been published. I call it my soul's poem. Sometimes when I am troubled, I repeat it to myself, for it brings comfort to my heart." She then recited while many wept, "Someday the silver cord will break, and I no more as now shall sing; but O the joy when I shall wake within the palace of the King! And I shall see Him face to face, and tell the story—saved by grace!" At the age of 25, Fanny Crosby's wish that the face of Jesus would be the first she would ever see was realized."

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**Ray Pritchard** - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - **A MESSAGE FOR OLDER SAINTS** Ecclesiastes 12:6-7

Some blessings are given to the young—to marry, give birth, and raise a family for the glory of God, to set out to conquer the world, to find a mountain and climb it, to have a career, to rise in your chosen profession, to make a mark with your life. These things occupy the young.

But the old have a different calling. Most of these things they have already done, having persevered through years of struggle, long nights of prayer, seeing their children grow up and go off to school. They have found satisfying careers, developed lasting friendships, and have a raft of memories that uniquely define who they are. Some have lived so long that they have outlived many of their friends. Perhaps they buried a husband or wife along the way.

God gives to those in the sunset years a unique privilege. At the age of forty-five I can testify only to my life so far. But the elderly have lived far longer and they know from experience things I have not yet discovered.

If you live long enough, you may say, as did the senior in the previous entry, "The Lord is upright. All that He does is good. He makes no mistakes." Perhaps you will be able to add some other personal testimony: "I have seen all that life has to offer, I have known joy and I have known sorrow. My Lord is a Solid Rock and I'm still standing on that Rock. My feet are planted on a firm foundation because the Rock Himself is holding me up.

"I've been battered, bruised, bumped, and done my share of bleeding. I've wept an ocean of tears and learned to laugh afterwards. I've known more than my share of setbacks and difficulties. I know how hard life can be. But the Rock of my Salvation has never failed, never moved, never trembled, for all these years; He has never sagged under the weight of all my problems."

Here is a worthy goal for those who have lived to see the crowning years of life. Do not go silently into the night. Do not let these precious days go by quietly. Speak up for the Lord. We need you more than you know. We need your testimony, your years of experience, and most of all, we need you to tell us, and tell us again, that the Lord is a Rock upon whom we can all rest. Help us fix our lives on the one Rock that cannot be moved. Show us the way and someday we will thank you by sharing with our children what you have told us.

Rock of Ages, grant that my faith may remain strong until I draw my dying breath and go home to be with Jesus. Amen.

#### SHINING THE LIGHT

- Think of the last person you knew who died unexpectedly. What lessons do you draw from that person's life and death?
- If you were to die today, what three things would your friends and family remember most about you?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Genesis 3:19; Job 1:20-21; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

**Ecclesiastes 12:7 then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.**

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:7 Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the life's breath returns to God who gave it.

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:7 κα πιστρ ψ χο ς π τ υ γ ν ς ν κα τ πνε μα πιστρ ψ πρ ς τ ν θε ν ς δωκεν α τ

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:7 before the dust also return to the earth as it was, and the spirit return to God who gave it.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:7 and the dust returns to the earth as it once was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:7 and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:7 For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:7 And the dust returneth to the earth as it was, And the spirit returneth to God who gave it.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:7 the dust returns to the earth from which it came, and the spirit returns to God who



gave it.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath returns to God who gave it.

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:7 And the dust returns to the earth as it once was, and the life breath returns to God who gave it.

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:7 Then the dust of mortals goes back to the ground as it was before, and the breath of life goes back to God who gave it.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:7 And the dust goes back to the earth as it was, and the spirit goes back to God who gave it.

- **dust:** Ec 3:20 Ge 3:19 18:27 Job 4:19,20 7:21 20:11 34:14,15 Ps 90:3 Ps 146:4 Da 12:2
- **the spirit:** Ec 3:21
- **God:** Ge 2:7 Nu 16:22 27:16 Isa 57:16 Jer 38:16 Zec 12:1 Heb 12:9,23

### Related Passages:

Genesis 3:19 By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.”

Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath (neshamah) of life; and man became a living being.

## RETURN TO SENDER

**Then the dust will return to the earth as it was** This is the undoing of creation: the body decomposes, returning to the earth from which it came. It's the physical end of life.

**and the spirit will return to God Who gave it - NET** = "and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the life's breath returns to God who gave it." The body decays, but the spirit endures. God gave man a spirit (Genesis 2:7), and at death, that spirit returns to Him—not into oblivion, but into His presence for judgment or reward.

**NET NOTE on the spirit - Or “spirit.”** The likely referent is the life's breath that originates with God. See Eccl 3:19, as well as Gen 2:7; 6:17; 7:22.

*Only by accepting the reality and naturalness of death, can a person face life with the kind of joy that Solomon encourages in the enjoyment passages*

**William Barrick** - Although Eccl 12:7 does not specifically identify an afterlife, other texts in the Old Testament make the concept more explicit (cf. Ps 49; Da 12:2+). Elsewhere, the reference to human beings returning to **the dust** out of which they came (Job 34:14–15; Ps 104:29) make it clear that the biblical prophets and sages clearly understood the historical record of mankind's creation (cp. Ge 2:7+; Ge 3:19+). Only by accepting the reality and naturalness of death, can a person face life with the kind of joy that Solomon encourages in the enjoyment passages (cp. Eccl 9:2–10 and Eccl 11:7–10). For the wise believer, contentment with the brevity of life produces a freedom for living the life God gives in His service and for His glory. **Ryken** reminds his readers that aging and death consist of “some of the hardest experiences in life. The Bible is honest about this, but not bitter.” (See [Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters](#)) The psalmist speaks of the death of God's saints as precious in His estimation (Ps 116:15). **Swindoll** offers three pieces of practical advice in the light of Eccl 12:1–7: (1) I must face the fact that I'm not getting any younger. (2) God has designed me to be empty without Him. (3) Now is the time to prepare for eternity. (Borrow [Living on the Ragged Edge, 385](#))

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### I Can Only Imagine

The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Ecclesiastes 12:7

Today's Scripture & Insight : 2 Corinthians 5:1–10

I settled into the church pew behind a woman as the worship team began playing “I Can Only Imagine.” Raising my hands, I praised God as the woman's sweet soprano voice harmonized with mine. After telling me about her health struggles, we decided to pray together during her upcoming cancer treatments.

A few months later, Louise told me she feared dying. Leaning onto her hospital bed, I rested my head next to hers, whispered a prayer, and quietly sang our song. I can only imagine what it was like for Louise when she worshiped Jesus face-to-face just a few days later.

The apostle Paul offered comforting assurance for his readers who were facing death (2 Corinthians 5:1). The suffering experienced on this side of eternity may cause groaning, but our hope remains anchored to our heavenly dwelling—our eternal existence with Jesus (vv. 2–4). Though God designed us to yearn for everlasting life with Him (vv. 5–6), His promises are meant to impact the way we live for Him now (vv. 7–10).

As we live to please Jesus while waiting for Him to return or call us home, we can rejoice in the peace of His constant presence. What will we experience the moment we leave our earthly bodies and join Jesus in eternity? We can only imagine! By: Xochitl Dixon (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

When have you been worried about or discouraged by facing death or losing a loved one? How does God's promise of everlasting life encourage you?

Loving God, thank You for promising to be with me on earth and for all eternity.

For further study, read *Crying for Us All: How Jesus Shares Our Grief* [Crying for Us All: How Jesus Shares Our Grief](#)

### **Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "all is vanity!"**

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "All is vanity."

NET Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Absolutely futile!" laments the Teacher, "All of these things are futile!"

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:8 ματαιι της ματαιοι των ε πεν κλησιαστ ς τ π ντα ματαιι της

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, said the Preacher; all is vanity.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Absolute futility," says the Teacher. "Everything is futile."

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Everything is meaningless!"

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Everything is meaningless," says the Teacher, "completely meaningless."

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, said the preacher, the whole is vanity.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:8 Sheer futility, Qoheleth says, everything is futile.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher; all is vanity.

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:8 Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth, all things are vanity!

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Absolutely pointless!" says the spokesman. "Everything is pointless!"

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:8 All things are to no purpose, says the Preacher, all is to no purpose.

- Ec 1:2,14 2:17 4:4 6:12 8:8 Ps 62:9

#### **Related Passages:**

Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14+ "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."....14 I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind.

### **FULL CIRCLE: FINAL WORD ON VANITY**

**Vanity** ([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#)) of **vanities** ([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#))," says the Preacher, "all is **vanity**([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#))!" Everything in life is a vapor—fleeting, elusive, passing—when viewed apart from God. The one who

has explored pleasure, wisdom, work, wealth, youth, and death concludes that none of it brings lasting meaning on its own. Solomon is not saying life is worthless, but that apart from God, everything is ultimately ungraspable. Solomon affirms that the search for meaning without God ends in frustration and futility. Everything else, wisdom, pleasure, possessions, success, etc, cannot satisfy.

**Philip Ryken** - These are the Preacher's first and also his last words (see Ecclesiastes 1:2+)--a literary technique known as *inclusio*. The writer begins and ends his composition by saying exactly the same thing....The Hebrew word for **vanity** ([hebel](#)) is the Preacher's multipurpose metaphor to express the futility of life in a fallen world. Taken literally, the word refers to a breath or vapor, like the steam rising from a boiling kettle. Such is life. It is impossible to grasp, and before you know it, life is gone; it vanishes into thin air....what the Preacher mainly wants us to see is how meaningless life is without God, how little joy there is under the sun if we try to leave our Creator out of his universe (See [Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters](#))

*All earthly goals and ambitions when pursued  
as ends in themselves produce only emptiness.*

-- John MacArthur

**Duane Garrett** says it this way - For us the "meaninglessness" of life which the Teacher so ruthlessly exposes would seem to lead to despair or nihilism; for him it is an incitement to true piety. The insignificance of all that is done under the sun leaves him awestruck and silent before God. His inability to control or predict the future provokes him to dependence on God. The futility of attempting to secure his future through wisdom or acts of religion (e.g., making vows) leads him not to impiety but to an understanding of the true nature of obedient trust. (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

**John MacArthur** - This book shows that if one perceives each day of existence, labor, and basic provision as a gift from God, and accepts whatever God gives, then that person lives an abundant life (cf. Jn 10:10). However, one who looks to be satisfied apart from God will live with futility regardless of their accumulations. (Borrow [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**NET NOTE** on **vanity** ([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#)) of **vanities** - Heb "futility of futilities." The phrase "absolutely futile" (הֶבֶל הָהֶבֶל, *havel havalim*) is a superlative genitive construction (GKC 431 §133.i). When a plural genitive follows a singular construct noun of the same root, it indicates the most outstanding example of the person or thing described. Examples: קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים (*qodesh haqqodashim*, "holy of holies"), i.e., "the most holy place" (Exod 26:33); שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים (*shir hashirim*, "song of songs"), i.e., "the most excellent song" (Song 1:1); אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַאֲדֹנֵי הָאֲדֹנִים (*'elohe ha'elohim va'adone ha'edonim*, "the God of gods and Lord of lords"), i.e., "the highest God and the supreme Lord" (Deut 10:17). See also R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 17–18, §80; IBHS 154 §9.5.3j.

**NET NOTE** on all (everything) - tn Heb "Everything." The term is rendered "all of these things" for clarity. Although כֹּל (*kol*, "everything; all") is often used in an absolute or comprehensive sense (BDB 481 s.v. 1 כֹּל), it is frequently used as a synecdoche of the general for the specific, that is, its sense is limited contextually to the topic at hand (BDB 482 s.v. 2). This is particularly true of הַכֹּל (*hakkol*, BDB 482 s.v. 2.b) in which the article particularizes or limits the referent to the contextual or previously mentioned topic (e.g., Gen 16:12; 24:1; Exod 29:24; Lev 1:9, 13; 8:27; Deut 2:36; Josh 11:19 [see 2 Sam 19:31; 1 Kgs 14:26 = 2 Chr 12:9]; 21:43; 1 Sam 30:19; 2 Sam 17:3; 23:5; 24:23; 1 Kgs 6:18; 2 Kgs 24:16; Isa 29:11; 65:8; Jer 13:7, 10; Ezek 7:14; Pss 14:3; 49:18; 1 Chr 7:5; 28:19; 29:19; 2 Chr 28:6; 29:28; 31:5; 35:7; 36:17–18; Ezra 1:11; 2:42; 8:34–35; 10:17; Eccl 5:8). Thus, "all" does not always mean "all" absolutely or universally in comprehension. In several cases the context limits its reference to two classes of objects/issues being discussed, so הַכֹּל means "both" (e.g., 2:14; 3:19; 9:1, 2). Thus, הַכֹּל ("all; everything") refers only to what Qoheleth characterizes as "futile" (הֶבֶל, *hevel*) in the context. This does not mean that everything is futile. For example, fearing God is not "futile" (2:26; 3:14–15; 11:9–10; 12:1, 9, 13–14). Only those objects/issues that are contextually placed under כֹּל are designated as "futile" (הֶבֶל).

**NET NOTE** Absolutely futile!... All of these things are futile! This motto is the theme of the book. Its occurs at the beginning (1:2) and end of the book (12:8), forming an envelope structure (*inclusio*). Everything described in 1:2–12:8 is the supporting proof of the thesis of 1:2. With few exceptions (e.g., 2:24–26; 3:14–15; 11:9–12:1, 9), everything described in 1:2–12:8 is characterized as "futile" (הֶבֶל, *hevel*).

**William Barrick** - **The Epilogue to Ecclesiastes** (Eccl 12:8–14) **Most commentators hold that an editor added these final verses.** A Jewish tradition attributes them to Hezekiah's men who penned them as a conclusion to all canonical Solomonic writings. (Borrow Reichert [Ecclesiastes](#)) Some, like **Longman**, believe that the final editor added Eccl 12:8–14 in order to express a positive and orthodox theology, because the editor was unhappy with the ultimate conclusion of the book as a whole. (Ecclesiastes, 284.) Such a viewpoint finds little support from a careful reading of Ecclesiastes. Concepts of divine judgment, human accountability, and

divine demands or imperatives surface throughout the book (cp. Eccl 2:26; 3:1, 17; 5:1, 2, 4–7; 7:29; 8:12, 13; 9:7–10; 11:9; 12:14). Crenshaw states that the presence of the refrain (“**Vanity of vanities, . . . all is vanity**”) in Eccl 12:8 “refutes the claim that Qohelet hoped for immortality of the soul.” (Borrow [Crenshaw](#)) Such a negative treatment of the teachings of Solomon languishes for adequate support. **(1)** Elsewhere in the book, Solomon speaks clearly of future judgment (Eccl 11:9; 12:14; cp. 1 Cor 4:5; Heb 9:27). **(2)** Crenshaw’s declaration that the writer “hoped” for immortality rests upon an unknowable—the writer himself must specifically identify his hopes in order for later readers to claim their existence. **(3)** The fact that the spirit returns to God speaks of hope—implies that the spirit does not cease existence with the dissolution of the body in the grave. (Longman, 284.) **Ryken** cites a set of syllogisms: “If there is no God, then there is no Judge. If there is no Judge, then there will be no Final Judgment. If there is no Final Judgment, there is no ultimate meaning to life. Nothing matters.”(See [Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters](#)) But, “The final message of Ecclesiastes is not that nothing matters but that everything does.” (See [Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters](#)) In other words, Solomon’s argument goes this way:

- God exists—He is the Creator.
- Since God is the Creator, He is also the Judge.
- If God is the Judge, there will be a final judgment.
- Since there will be a final judgment, everything we do (how we live) matters.
- Therefore, even though life is but a fleeting breath, it is not futile and insignificant.

All things continue as they were from the beginning. From the fall of man (cp. Eccl 7:29), vanity or futility entered the creation through mankind’s sins. Death came because of sin (Rom 5:12). Because of death, life is fleeting. The use of hebel (“vanity” or “breath”) in verse 8 follows the mention of “spirit” in Eccl 12:7 so closely that the text seems to indicate that “Human breath is the metre not only of one’s life but of the duration of all that is done under the sun.” (Fredericks, Ecclesiastes, 240.)

“Don’t End in Vanity” Solomon says everything is vapor—unless you remember your Creator (v.1), fear God (v.13), and obey Him. Your work, wealth, body, reputation—they all fade. But your soul, your worship, your obedience—these last. The Preacher ends his sermon with a warning: Don’t settle for the vapor. Don’t waste your life chasing wind. Don’t ignore the only One who gives life meaning. Life apart from God is ultimately unfulfilling. All earthly pursuits are temporary and fragile. The phrase “vanity of vanities” sums up Solomon’s search for meaning under the sun. True meaning is found only by looking beyond the sun—to the Creator. This verse sets up the final charge: fear God and obey Him.

- Reassess what you are living for—will it last beyond this life?
- Let go of chasing things that cannot satisfy.
- Read this verse not with despair, but as an invitation to find true purpose in God.
- Use this truth to witness to others chasing worldly success.
- Ask yourself daily: Am I pursuing vapor—or eternity?

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**Vanity** (futility, idols, breath, delusion, worthless, emptiness)([01892](#)) **hebel** literally means breath or vapor, vanity, emptiness, meaninglessness; idols. Hebel commonly has the figurative use of that which is evanescent and unstable. The first OT use refers to idols ([Dt](#) 32:21, cf 1 [Ki](#) 16:13, 26, [Jer](#) 8:19; [Jeremiah](#) 10:8, 15; [Jer](#) 14:22 [Jer](#) 51:18; [Jonah](#) 2:9; [Ps](#) 31:6), a fitting word picture for the worthlessness of idols! **Hebel** refers to breath because of its transitory fleeting character, as in Job’s figurative use “my days are but a **breath**.” ([Job](#) 7:16, cf similar idea [Ps](#) 39:5, 6, 11; [Ps](#) 62:9; [Ps](#) 78:33 where hebel parallels behālā from root bāhal “to hasten”: [Ps](#) 94:11; [Ps](#) 144:4) **Hebel** “generally appears in contexts where it is used as a simile emphasizing the transitory state of an object, never as descriptive of the biological function. A prime example would be “Humanity is like a breath ([Ps](#). 144:4). Not only is breath ethereal and of short duration, but all things which breathe will die.” (Gilbrant)

**Hebel** expresses the futile attempt to be satisfied apart from God. This word is used 38 times expressing the many things hard to understand about life.

**HEBEL IN ECCLESIASTES** - 38x - Eccl. 1:2; Eccl. 1:14; Eccl. 2:1; Eccl. 2:11; Eccl. 2:15; Eccl. 2:17; Eccl. 2:19; Eccl. 2:21; Eccl. 2:23; Eccl. 2:26; Eccl. 3:19; Eccl. 4:4; Eccl. 4:7; Eccl. 4:8; Eccl. 4:16; Eccl. 5:7; Eccl. 5:10; Eccl. 6:2; Eccl. 6:4; Eccl. 6:9; Eccl. 6:11; Eccl. 6:12; Eccl. 7:6; Eccl. 7:15; Eccl. 8:10; Eccl. 8:14; Eccl. 9:9; Eccl. 11:8; Eccl. 11:10; Eccl. 12:8

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**John MacArthur** - The author’s declaration that “all is vanity” envelops the primary message of the book (cf. Ecc 1:2; 12:8). The word translated “vanity” is used in at least 3 ways throughout the book. In each case, it looks at the nature of man’s activity “under the sun” as: 1) “fleeting,” which has in view the vapor-like (cf. Jas 4:14) or transitory nature of life; 2) “futile” or “meaningless,” which focuses on the cursed condition of the universe and the debilitating effects it has on man’s earthly experience; or 3) “incomprehensible” or “enigmatic,” which gives consideration to life’s unanswerable questions. Solomon draws upon all 3 meanings in Ecclesiastes.

While the context in each case will determine which meaning Solomon is focusing upon, the most recurring meaning of vanity is “incomprehensible” or “unknowable,” referring to the mysteries of God’s purposes. Solomon’s conclusion to “fear God and keep His commandments” (Eccl 12:13, 14) is more than the book’s summary; it is the only hope of the good life and the only reasonable response of faith and obedience to sovereign God. He precisely works out all activities under the sun, each in its time according to His perfect plan, but also discloses only as much as His perfect wisdom dictates and holds all men accountable. Those who refuse to take God and His Word seriously are doomed to lives of the severest vanity. (Borrow [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION** - Let me give you an example of **vanity of vanities** from one of the world's great, godless thinkers Bertrand Russell...

We stand on the shore of an ocean, crying to the night and the emptiness; sometimes a voice answers out of the darkness. But it is a voice of one drowning; and in a moment the silence returns. The world seems to me quite dreadful; the unhappiness of most people is very great, and I often wonder how they all endure it. To know people well is to know their tragedy: it is usually the central thing about which their lives are built. And I suppose if they did not live most of the time in the things of the moment, they would not be able to go on. (Russell, Autobiography, 1,994)

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**D L Moody** - THE worship of pleasure is slavery. (Solomon tried pleasure, and found bitter disappointment, and down the ages has come the bitter cry, “All is vanity.”) There is no rest in sin. The wicked know nothing about rest. The Scriptures tell us the wicked “are like the troubled sea that cannot rest.” Man, like the sea, has no rest. He has had no rest since Adam fell, and there is none for him until he returns to God again, and the light of Christ shines into his heart. Rest cannot be found in the world, but thank God the world cannot take it from the believing heart! Sin is the cause of all this unrest. It brought toil and labor and misery into the world.

Here's a summary of what "rest" signifies (See full study of Rest in the Bible)

Freedom from Worry and Disturbance: Rest is described as freedom from anxieties, worries, and the things that disturb one's peace.

Peace with God and Inner Tranquility: It involves being at peace with God, having a quiet and composed spirit, and experiencing inner tranquility even during labor.

Cessation of Self-Effort for Salvation: Rest means ceasing from one's own efforts to earn salvation, instead relying on God's grace and forgiveness.

Confidence and Trust in God: It includes maintaining confidence and trust in God's power and care, knowing that He will support and sustain.

A Divine Rest: The rest offered by Jesus is described as a divine rest, a rest that God Himself enjoys and makes available to believers (Mt 11:28-30+).

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**Ray Pritchard** - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - **NAILS FROM THE SHEPHERD** Ecclesiastes 12:8-11

The experiment has ended. With the words "meaningless, meaningless," Solomon ends where he began—with the utter vanity of life apart from God. Taking the standpoint of a man "under the sun," he has searched every possible avenue to find the key to the meaning of life. His search led him to wealth, wisdom, education, pleasure, possessions, achievement, fame, folly, and eventually to the house of sorrow. He examined it all and discovered that without God, life is truly meaningless.

No matter what you accomplish in this life, death trumps everything else. Since we all die and no one knows what happens afterwards, nothing is left but to enjoy the short life God gives you.

The last few verses of Ecclesiastes 12 are Solomon's personal epilogue to the reader. They summarize the journey and apply the truth to the human heart. Verse 11 reminds us that Solomon's wisdom came from God. They also tell us how hard he worked to write this short book—how he arranged the stories and proverbs to produce a pleasing result.

We also discover why he wrote as he did. His words are like sharp goads—meant to stick in the mind. If you find yourself arguing with something in Ecclesiastes, all the better, because Solomon fully intended to nail the truth to your heart. His is no mere devotional book, meant to be picked up and read casually. To the contrary, only serious readers will appreciate his literary creation.

Solomon himself acknowledged the wisdom contained in the book came from God—the "one Shepherd" (verse 11). This should answer forever those critics and commentators who doubt the value and inspiration of Ecclesiastes. The same Shepherd who gave Romans to Paul gave Ecclesiastes to Solomon.

This brings us face-to-face with the inspiration of Holy Scripture. No question could be more fundamental. Christians believe and teach that the Bible alone is the Word of God. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. What the Bible says, God says.

The Bible stands alone because it was given by one Shepherd to many authors over 1,500 years. No other book can remotely be compared to it. No one who reads it with an open mind will ever be disappointed.

O God of truth, I thank You for the Holy Scriptures, for in them I discover the way to life eternal. May the truth of Your Word be etched on the tablets of my heart. Amen.

#### SHINING THE LIGHT

- What does it mean to you to say that the Bible is the Word of God?
- What "nails" of truth have you gained from this study of Ecclesiastes? Which passages were like "goads" that seemed to stick in your mind?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; and Hebrews 4:12-13.

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#### QUESTION - Why does the Preacher conclude, "All is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 12:8)? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG

**ANSWER** - In Ecclesiastes 1:2 and again in Eccl 12:8, we find this curious observation: "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity" (ESV). Today, when we hear the word *vanity*, we think of pride, conceit, and an exaggerated opinion of and attention to oneself. But here in the [book of Ecclesiastes](#), the word *vanity* is correctly understood as "meaningless," as rendered by the New International Version: "'Meaningless! Meaningless!' says the Teacher. 'Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.'"

[Vanity](#) is a key word in the book of Ecclesiastes, appearing 34 times. The original Hebrew word means "breeze," "breath," or "vapor" and speaks of the fleeting nature of things. It is translated as "meaningless," "futility," and "pointless" in various Bible versions. How did this biblical preacher's determined search to make sense of life lead him to conclude that there is no meaning or purpose to human existence?

The author of the book of Ecclesiastes, who refers to himself as the "Preacher" (KJV, ESV) or "Teacher" (NIV, HCSB), is King David's son Solomon. To understand Solomon's ruling that "all is vanity," we must study the phrase within its written context.

Ecclesiastes is unique from any other book in the Bible. Written by Solomon in the later years of his life, its central theme is the pointlessness of human activity and human goals apart from God. During this season of his life, Solomon attempted to understand life using human reason and intellect. His exploration stemmed from a perspective of worldly wisdom based on available information from the physical realm.

Solomon may have been out of fellowship with God when he wrote Ecclesiastes or thinking back on such a time. Like many worldly philosophers, separated from God and His divine revelation, Solomon concluded that nothing in life has significance. The human experience has no purpose. Solomon's search proved futile based on one pivotal detail—his pursuit was limited to the finite span of life humans experience here on earth. Apart from God, His revelation of Himself, and His purposes, our lives are indeed vacant and void of meaning. Anything that lacks eternal value has no real value at all.

Ecclesiastes speaks to those times when life seems empty or doesn't make sense. Our human experiences are often bewildering and confusing. Wicked people succeed while the righteous suffer, and horrible injustices are all around (Ecclesiastes 3:16; 4:1–5). Ultimately, life and all of our human endeavors are pointless in themselves. Like Solomon, if we look for meaning and purpose apart from God, our quest will end in frustration.

Only through a relationship with God in Jesus Christ do we discover our true purpose and destiny. God exists outside these momentary years of mortal life on earth, and in Him our future extends far beyond this finite world: "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NLT).

We are made in the [image and likeness of God](#) to be His representatives on the earth (Genesis 1:26). In Him, we discover who we are and what we made for: "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago" (Ephesians 2:10, NLT). In the eyes of God, every human life has tremendous value and significance. We are His most precious possessions and the center of His attention (Deuteronomy 32:10; Zechariah 2:8; Psalm 17:8). When God is present in our lives, He becomes our source and our treasure—the meaning and purpose of our lives. When we "think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth," we discover "real life" that "is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:2–3, NLT).

Just as many humans do, Solomon sought [meaning in life](#) outside of God's will and apart from His presence. His search ended in vanity, or emptiness. But in Jesus Christ, who is "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6), the believer's search culminates in



everything: “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need” (Matthew 6:33, NLT). In the Lord, our work has meaning: “So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless” (1 Corinthians 15:58, NLT).

Solomon closed Ecclesiastes in the same place he started. “All is vanity” bookends his journey, underscoring the emptiness and futility of life without God. When we focus only on this earthly life—“everything going on under the sun”—it does seem pointless, “like chasing the wind” (Ecclesiastes 1:14, NLT). But when we know God through a relationship with Jesus Christ, we receive abundant life in His kingdom and a heavenly treasure worth far more than all the world’s silver and gold (Acts 3:6; Matthew 6:19–21; 1 John 5:11–13).

**Ecclesiastes 12:9 In addition to being a wise man, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs.**

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:9 And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:9 And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:9 Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also taught knowledge to the people; he carefully evaluated and arranged many proverbs.

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:9 κα περισσ ν τι γ νετο κκλησιαστ ς σοφ ς τι δ δαξεν γν σιν σ ν τ ν λα ν κα ο ς  
ξιχνι σεται κ σμιον παραβολ ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:9 And because the Preacher was wise above others, so it was that he taught man excellent knowledge, and the ear will trace out the parables.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:9 In addition to the Teacher being a wise man, he constantly taught the people knowledge; he weighed, explored, and arranged many proverbs.

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:9 Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:9 Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:9 Keep this in mind: The Teacher was considered wise, and he taught the people everything he knew. He listened carefully to many proverbs, studying and classifying them.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:9 And further, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge, and gave ear, and sought out -- he made right many similes.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:9 Besides being a sage, Qoheleth taught the people what he himself knew, having weighed, studied and emended many proverbs.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:9 Besides being wise, the Teacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs.

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:9 Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging proverbs with great care.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:9 Besides being wise, Qoheleth taught the people knowledge, and weighed, scrutinized and arranged many proverbs.

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:9 Besides being wise, the spokesman also taught the people what he knew. He very carefully thought about it, studied it, and arranged it in many proverbs.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:9 And because the Preacher was wise he still gave the people knowledge; searching out, testing, and putting in order a great number of wise sayings.

- he still: 1Ki 8:12-21 10:8
- he gave: 1Ki 4:32 Pr 1:1 10:1 25:1

## THE WISE PREACHER TRUTH CAREFULLY TAUGHT

In addition to being a wise man Qoheleth (the Preacher) was not merely a philosopher—he was recognized as wise, grounded in fear of the Lord (cf. Proverbs 9:10).

As an aside there are some who think this "epilogue" (Eccl 12:9-14) was not penned by Solomon. One writer says "The words that close Koheleth's book seem not to have come from the Preacher's hand." I think these are definitely from Solomon's hand as he brings his sermon to a fitting conclusion of "Fear God and Keep His commandments."

I agree with **Tommy Nelson** who writes "Solomon concludes Ecclesiastes by giving us a creedal statement about the divine nature of the Bible. He tells us about the author, the book, and the reader of Ecclesiastes. In verse 9, he tells us about the author—himself....Solomon, the author, speaks of himself in the third person. He was wise. In Israel that description simply meant that he knew the will of God. Verse 9 says that he taught people knowledge and arranged proverbs. A proverb is a truism that applies to life. 1Ki 4:32 tells us that Solomon wrote thousands of proverbs to help his people navigate life. He didn't just rule them; he led them. He gave them axiomatic ideas about the navigation of life. God was not trying to turn the Jews into mystics; He was trying to make them holy. He wanted them to live life as He meant it to be lived and to enjoy the life He'd given them.

" (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

**The Preacher** ([qoheleth](#); Lxx - ekklesiastes) **also taught the people knowledge** ([daat](#); Lxx - [gnosis](#)) His wisdom wasn't self-centered, hoarding the wisdom God had graciously given him, but he shared it (you are a beneficiary of his sharing as you study Ecclesiastes!). He taught others as a public instructor, sharing truth with clarity and purpose.

**And he pondered** (weighed, considered carefully, reflected deeply), **searched out** (investigated, explored thoroughly) **and arranged** (set in order, organized with purpose) **many proverbs** ([mashal](#); Lxx - [parabole](#) = parable) - **NIV** = "He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs." The Preacher wasn't casual. He was a deliberate craftsman, a wordsmith as it were. He thought deeply, researched thoroughly and organized skillfully, all with the purpose that he could teach wisdom effectively.

*A proverb is an earthly saying  
containing heavenly truth.*

**NET NOTE** on **pondered, searched** - Heb "he weighed and studied." The verbs וַיִּזְזֶנּוּ וַיִּחְקֹר (vé'izzen vekhiqquer, "he weighed and he explored") form a hendiadys (a figurative expression in which two separate terms used in combination to convey a single idea): "he studiously weighed" or "carefully evaluated." The verb וַיִּזְזֶנּוּ (conjunction + Piel perfect 3rd person masculine singular from II זָז (ʾazan) "to weigh; to balance") is related to the noun מֹזֶן (mo'zen) "balances; scales" used for weighing money or commercial items (e.g., Jer 32:10; Ezek 5:1). This is the only use of the verb in the OT. In this context, it means "to weigh" = "to test; to prove" (BDB 24 s.v. זָז) or "to balance" (HALOT 27 II זָז). Cohen suggests, "**He made an examination of the large number of proverbial sayings which had been composed, testing their truth and worth, to select those which he considered deserving of circulation**" (A. Cohen, The Five Megilloth [SoBB], 189).

**NET NOTE** on **arranged** - The verb תָּקַן (taqan, "to make straight") connotes "to put straight" or "to arrange in order" (HALOT 1784 s.v. תָּקַן; BDB 1075 s.v. תָּקַן). This may refer to Qoheleth's activity in compiling a collection of wisdom sayings in an orderly manner, or writing the wisdom sayings in a straightforward, direct manner.

**William Barrick** - Eccl 12:9–10 give implicit, if not explicit, testimony to the reality of the writer's historical existence. (Fox, Qohelet argues that this might be a common literary device to cause readers to "suspend disbelief" in order to accept the book itself as credible) Eccl 12:9, even if written by an editor, seems to point to the book of Proverbs, which the writer attributes to "the Preacher." That implies that the author of Proverbs is the same as "the Preacher." Solomon's pursuit of wisdom displays a pastoral tone more than an academic or professional tone. (Borrow [Eaton, Ecclesiastes](#)) "**Pondered**," "**searched out**," and "**arranged**" all reflect Solomon's knowledgeable pursuit of wisdom and the issues involved in life "under the sun." "**Pondered**" (literally, "weighed") "points to careful evaluation, indicating his honesty, caution and balance"; (Borrow [Eaton, Ecclesiastes](#)) "searched out" implies his "thoroughness and diligence"; (Borrow [Eaton, Ecclesiastes](#)) and, "arranged" points to orderliness and an artistic skill in his presentation (cp. 1 Kgs 4:32). (Borrow [Eaton, Ecclesiastes](#)) The description of the author reminds readers of the introduction to the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:1–4) and of the various inscriptions found in the Book of Proverbs 24:23; 30:1; 31:1. All are a straightforward account of how the respective book or collection (in Proverbs) came to be written.

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**Preacher** (06953) **qoheleth** (from [qahal](#) = to gather or assemble, convocation - 116v frequently in context of assembling people for

worship, war or teaching) refers to a collector (of sentences or of wisdom), preacher, public speaker, speaker in an assembly, Qoheleth. Qōheleṯ only occurs in Ecclesiastes and is the Hebrew name for the book.

The English title **Ecclesiastes** is a transliteration of the Greek ([Lxx](#)) word **ekklesiastes**, which is one who speaks to the assembly or a preacher/public speaker in an assembly and is derived from [ekklesia/ecclesia](#) which means assembly or congregation. In sum, the Greek **ekklesiastes** is one who addresses the congregation or the assembly.

the wealth and influence to live the "good life" and report his findings to the assembly.

**TWOT (PAGE 790) - qōhelet.** Preacher, speaker in assemblies. qōhelet is a Qal feminine participle from qāhal which in the Niphal means "to come together" and in the Hiphil "to bring together." The Qal form is used only here. The word is related to the noun qāhal (assembly). The LXX chose ecclesiastes (a member of an assembly) as a translation due to the alleged relation of qāhāl to ecclēsia (assembly, see above). The English rendering "Preacher" follows Jerome's Latin concionatur ("speaker before an assembly"), however the meaning of the Hebrew name is by no means clear. The content of the book fits the wisdom literature category rather than the sermonic category. A second conjecture contends that the Qal form qōhelet is used as though it were a Hiph 1 and means "one who convenes an assembly." The word has the definite article in Eccles. 12:8 which lends credence to the claim that the word is intended to be a description, not a personal name.

qōhelet occurs seven times in the book of Ecclesiastes (Eccles. 1:1-2, 12; Eccles. 7:27; Eccles. 12:8-10) and nowhere else in biblical literature. As a noun designating the speaker, it also gives the Hebrew name Qōhelet to the book itself. The noun is ordinarily construed with masculine forms of verbs. The exception in Eccles. 7:27 may be due to an erroneous word division since qōhelet identifies himself as a son of David, king in Jerusalem (Eccles. 1:1, 12).

**QOHELETH - 7V - Preacher(7).** Eccl. 1:1; Eccl. 1:2; Eccl. 1:12; Eccl. 7:27; Eccl. 12:8; Eccl. 12:9; Eccl. 12:10

**Knowledge (01847) daat** derived from **yada** = to know, speaking in many contexts of an intimate knowledge) expresses knowledge gained in various ways by the senses (and is the opposite of folly). It describes "experiential active knowing." In other words this **knowledge** is not just a bookish collection of information but is experiential knowledge of the Living God. **Knowledge** of His written Word cannot be separated from personal **knowledge** of God. To know God is to live in harmony with His will, and to live in harmony with His will we must know His word. In Ex 31:3 (cp Ex 31:3; 1Ki 7:14) **daat** emphasizes skillful, the application of knowledge to a craft. Daat can refer to "moral" knowledge (Ge 2:9 - Lxx = **gnostos** - something clearly recognizable or made known; In Ge 2:17 the Lxx = "**Tree of ginosko**").

God possesses **daat** (Job 10:7; Ps 139:6; Pr 3:20), nothing can be hidden from Him (Ps 139:1–18) and He gives knowledge to man (Ps 94:10, 119:66; Pr 2:6), with the corollary being that man could never know unless He taught us! Prayer: Teach us O Great Jehovah, Thy "**daat**". Amen.

**NET Note - Daat** refers to experiential knowledge, not just cognitive knowledge, including the intellectual assimilation and practical application....The term דַּאֵת (da'at, "knowledge") goes beyond cognition; it is often used metonymically (cause) for obedience (effect); see, e.g., Pr 3:6, "in all your ways acknowledge him," and BDB 395 s.v. This means that the disciple will follow God's moral code; for to know God is to react ethically and spiritually to his will

**Proverbs (04912) mashal** [Singular = mashal, Plural = misle] from the verb **mashal** - to rule [e.g., Ge 1:18] or more generally indicates idea of comparison, likeness or equality and thus to speak a proverb or popular saying comparing 2 objects, attitudes or activities -Ps 49:12, Ezek 16:44, 18:2, 24:3) usually conveys the meaning of a wise saying (or a pithy maxim which suggest special insight and authority), but in two occurrences of the connotation of **parable** or **allegory** (as defined above) is clearly evident (viz. Ezek 17:2ff = a parable centering on two eagles, Ezek 17:12 representing Babylon and Ezek 17:15 representing Egypt, as well as centering on a vine Ezek 17:6), both in indictments against Israel for her sin. In Nu 23: 7, 18, 24:3ff. **mashal** refers not to a popular or common saying but to Balaam's prophetic oracles (the first 7 uses in Scripture). In Isa 14:4 the context is after Israel's return to the land and the song is one of contempt or taunting (mashal) directed at the king of Babylon. A proverb is a truth expressed in brief and striking words, like "Pride cometh before a fall."

**John Phillips** noting that the root verb means **to rule** says "**Mashal** therefore are words and sayings that are supposed to rule and govern life. The book of Proverbs then is not simply a collection of bits of human wisdom. It contains God's rules." (Proverbs Commentary)

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:10 The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright-- words of truth.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Teacher sought to find delightful words, and to write accurately truthful sayings.

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:10 πολλὰ ζήτησεν κλησιαστὸς τὸ ἐρεῖν λόγους θελήματος καὶ γεγραμμένον ἐθιχτοσ λόγους ἀληθεῶς

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Preacher sought diligently to find out acceptable words, and a correct writing, even words of truth.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Teacher sought to find delightful sayings and write words of truth accurately.

ESV Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Teacher sought to find just the right words to express truths clearly.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:10 The preacher sought to find out pleasing words, and, written by the upright, words of truth.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:10 Qoheleth took pains to write in an attractive style and by it to convey truths.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Teacher sought to find pleasing words, and he wrote words of truth plainly.

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Preacher sought to find pleasing words, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:10 Qoheleth sought to find pleasing sayings, and to write down true sayings with precision.

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:10 The spokesman tried to find just the right words. He wrote the words of truth very carefully.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:10 The Preacher made search for words which were pleasing, but his writing was in words upright and true.

- **Preacher:** Ec 1:1,12
- **delightful words** Pr 15:23,26 16:21-24 25:11,12 1Ti 1:15
- **to write words:** Pr 1:1-6 8:6-10 22:17-21 Lu 1:1-4 Joh 3:11 Col 1:5

## WORDS DELIGHTFUL AND TRUE

**The Preacher** ([qoheleth](#); Lxx - ekklesiastes) **sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly**- **NET** = "and to write accurately truthful sayings." **GWN** = "He wrote the words of truth very carefully." The **Preacher** didn't only aim to teach truth, but he aimed to do so beautifully and memorably, in a way that engaged the heart as well as the mind. He not only sought truth, but he worked to present it rightly.

*Qoheleth wrote his proverbs so effectively that  
he was able to take moral and aesthetic delight in his words*

**NET NOTE** on **delightful** - In the construct phrase דְּבִרֵּי-חֶפֶץ (divre-khefets, "words of delight") the noun חֶפֶץ ("delight") functions as an attributive genitive ("delightful words") or a genitive of estimation or worth ("words viewed as delightful by Qoheleth" or "words that he took delight in"). For another example of a genitive of estimation of worth, see זִבְחֵי אֱלֹהִים (zivkhe 'elohim) "sacrifices of God" = "sacrifices viewed as acceptable to God" (Ps 51:19). In other words, Qoheleth wrote his proverbs so effectively that he was able to take moral and aesthetic delight in his words.

**William Barrick** - Solomon attributes both delightfulness (cf. Prov 25:11) and dependability to the words that he sought (Eccl 12:10). These two characteristics of instruction in Ecclesiastes reveal a balance. "To be upright but unpleasant is to be a fool; to be

pleasant but not upright is to be a charlatan.” (Borrow [Eaton, Ecclesiastes](#)) The positive message of Ecclesiastes as presented in the enjoyment passages and in the book’s closing exhortations argue against a pessimistic approach to the teachings of the book. **Kaiser** concludes, “In no way can that be a description of the work of a pessimist, nihilist, or Epicurean with an ‘eat-drink-and-be-merry-for-tomorrow-we-die’ mentality.” (Borrow [Kaiser, Ecclesiastes](#))

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## **F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - Eccl 12:10**

The wise preacher or teacher is not content with merely teaching the people knowledge, he will ponder and seek out and set in order the lessons of Divine wisdom; and when these are settled, he will go on to find out acceptable words. We must be careful to secure the “apples of gold,” and no less careful to place them in the “pictures of silver.” Not that we are to make beauty of language an object in itself; but having conceived high and holy thoughts we should give them a worthy expression, so that the Royal word may ride forth in a becoming equipage. It is unfit that the vessels of the sanctuary should be carried only in badger skins; their first covering at least must be “all of blue.” If we are stewards in God’s household to give his children food, let us serve it up suitably. The linen should be clean, and the table garnished.

Remember, however, that the words of the wise are as goads and nails. They must have points, sometimes to prick to duty, at other times to stick fast in the memory. In every sermon or lesson there should be points. To arrest and compel attention is more important than to please the ear. Do not refine and beautify it to such an extent that there may be nothing left to stir the conscience and lacerate the heart.

Words that best fit the enunciation of God’s truth are given from the One Shepherd. We are enriched by Him, not only in all knowledge but in all utterance. He who made the mouth can put his words into the mouth. Ask Him to speak to you, that you may speak in accents borrowed from his tone; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.

**Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd.**

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the sages are like prods, and the collected sayings are like firmly fixed nails; they are given by one shepherd.

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:11 λ γοι σοφ ν ς τ βο κεντρα κα ς λοι πεφυτευμ νοι ο παρ τ ν συναγμ των δ θησαν κ ποιμ νο ς κα περισ ν ξ α τ ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails firmly fastened, which have been given from one shepherd by agreement.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:11 The sayings of the wise are like goads, and those from masters of collections are like firmly embedded nails. The sayings are given by one Shepherd.

ESV 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.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails--given by one Shepherd.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are like cattle prods-- painful but helpful. Their collected sayings are like a nail-studded stick with which a shepherd drives the sheep.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:11 Words of the wise are as goads, and as fences planted by the masters of collections, they have been given by one shepherd.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:11 The sayings of a sage are like goads, like pegs positioned by shepherds: the same shepherd finds a use for both.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:11 The sayings of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings that are given by one shepherd.

RSV Ecclesiastes 12:11 The sayings of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings which are given by one Shepherd.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:11 The sayings of the wise are like goads; like fixed spikes are the topics given by one collector.

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:11 Words from wise people are like spurs. Their collected sayings are like nails that have been driven in firmly. They come from one shepherd.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of the wise are pointed, and sayings grouped together are like nails fixed with a hammer; they are given by one guide.

- **as goads:** Jer 23:29 Mt 3:7 Ac 2:37 2Co 10:4 Heb 4:12
- **masters:** Joh 3:10
- **given:** Ge 49:24 Ps 23:1 80:1 Isa 40:11 Eze 34:23 Joh 10:14 Heb 13:20 1Pe 5:4

#### Related Passages:

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Acts 26:14+ "And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' (Note - To fight against the law of God is painful and fruitless. God will achieve what he has purposed, regardless of our faithfulness.)

Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

Psalms 119:105 Nun. Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

John 6:68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

God's word is like a goad to  
nudge, guide, correct and direct

## GOADS AND NAILS FROM OUR SHEPHERD

**The words of wise men are like goads** - A **goad** is a long, pointed stick used by farmers to prod oxen along as they plowed a field, not to injure the animal but to inflict just enough pain to get their "cooperation!" On the other end was a small shovel-like tool used to remove built-up dirt from the plow itself. True wisdom isn't always comfortable—it stings, awakens, convicts, directs, motivates, and corrects. Like a goad stirs the ox to plow, men are stubborn as oxen and we need our heart and conscience stirred by God's "prodding" wisdom. God's goads redirect us when we stray and stir us out of spiritual laziness. "Wise words can serve to clean away the sin that often prevents us from being effective or moving in a straight line." (Swindoll)

**Philip Ryken** - Think of Ecclesiastes, then, as God's cattle prod. The Preacher's words push us not to expect lasting satisfaction in money or pleasure but only in the goodness of God. They steer us away from foolish rage and mocking laughter. They spur us on to patience, contentment, humility, and joy. When we forget about God, the Preacher prods us to remember our Creator, and the moment we begin to think that we will live forever, he pokes us in the ribs and reminds us that soon we will die. (See [Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters - Page 277](#))

*When you read Scripture and feel "prodded,"  
don't resist—respond.*

**And masters of these collections are like well-driven nails**- Literal **well-driven nails** make something fixed and immovable. Wisdom doesn't just poke but it stabilizes and anchors **like well-driven nails**. It gives the soul firm truths to hang life upon, like nails



in a wall, holding steady in a world of uncertainty. If we are "nailed down" by God's Word we are much less likely to be "tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine." (Eph 4:14+).

**Keith Krell** - If you are comfortable with your life, God's Word acts as a goad to move you out of your comfort zone. It pushes you to do those things you ought to do.<sup>506</sup> If you are burdened and tossed to and fro by the winds of life, it provides a haven of stability.<sup>507</sup>

**Ryken** adds on the nails that "the Bible may simply mean that once a wise saying is driven into the mind, it stays there, like a nail pounded deep into a block of wood. Life may be a vapor, but wisdom can help us pin it down, giving us a place to hang our experience. The Biblical proverbs have a way of nailing us right in the conscience. They also have a way of sticking into our brains. They are so memorable that once we hear them, we never forget them." (See [Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters - Page 277](#))

**They are given by one Shepherd** - The **Shepherd** is not a reference to Solomon, contrary to what some writers think. He has chosen to call himself the **Preacher**. There is only **one Shepherd**, God. Note that ESV, NIV, and CSB capitalize "Shepherd" indicating their translators saw this as a reference to God. Though wise words come through many men (like Solomon), true wisdom comes from one source, the Shepherd of souls (cf. Psalm 23, John 10). Given by one Shepherd is another way of saying that what Solomon recorded was inspired by God. As Peter writes "No prophecy of scripture ever comes about by the prophet's own imagination, for no prophecy (INCLUDING THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES) was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2Pe 1:20-21+).

**Walter Kaiser** - Accordingly, Qoheleth's words are designed to prod the sluggish into action. They "goad" him into doing something. But they are also meant to be "nails" that are "fastened" as definite points in the sluggard's mental furnishings to give him anchorage, stability, and perspective on life. At one time they are pricking his conscience, perhaps with a single proverb; at another time they are fixing themselves on the memory like a central nail on which the important, everyday articles of clothing or cooking are kept. (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

**NET NOTE** on "goads"; NCV "sharp sticks used to guide animals." For further information see M. A. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 29–32.

**William Barrick** - Interpreters variously take the "**one Shepherd**" as either Solomon, wisdom writers in general, or God (Ec 12:11). Since the book addresses the author as "the Preacher," it seems better to understand "**Shepherd**" as a title of deity rather than another title for the human author. This title for God in this context implies a doctrine of divine superintendence in the writing of Scripture (cp. 2Pe 1:21). (Borrow [Eaton](#)) "**Shepherd**" refers to God Who "is the real source of the words of this book; not cynicism, not skepticism, not worldliness." (Borrow [Kaiser](#)) The agricultural reference to **goads** (cf. 1Sa 13:21) provides a vehicle for saying that "**Words and goads** are tools to guide people on the right path, though making them uncomfortable in doing so." (Fox, Qohelet) The "**well-driven nails**" appear to be something like tent pegs for the herdsman's tents or pegs driven into beams for use in hanging utensils from them. The two figures represent the stimulation and the steadying effects of wise words, or, as Kidner notes, "they spur the will and stick in the memory." (Borrow [Kidner](#))

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Perhaps you've heard the story of a young pastor who rose to preach on Psalm 23. He gave it his best effort but never connected with the audience. Afterward, an old man got up to speak. He bowed his head, his hands quivering, and his body worn from years of hard work. Gripping the podium, he began to recite, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." As he finished the audience sat in deep silence, profoundly moved. When the young pastor asked the old man why his words had made such a difference, the old man said simply, "You know the psalm, I know the Shepherd." The truth is some things are learned only through experience.<sup>496</sup>

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## Wise Words

The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. — Ecclesiastes 12:11

Today's Scripture : Ecclesiastes 12:6-14

Now in my sixties, I reflect back on wise spiritual leaders who had a positive impact on my life. In Bible school, God used my Old Testament professor to make the Word come alive. My Greek teacher relentlessly employed high standards to goad my study of the New Testament. And the senior pastor in my first pastoral ministry shepherded me in building vital ministries to help others grow spiritually. Each of these teachers encouraged me in different ways.

King Solomon wisely observed some ways that spiritual leaders can help us grow: "The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd" (Eccl. 12:11). Some teachers prod us; others build solid spiritual structures into our lives. Still others, as caring shepherds, are there with a listening ear when we hurt.

The Good Shepherd has given leaders a variety of gifts: exhorting, developing, and shepherding. Whether we're a leader or a learner, though, He desires that we maintain humble hearts and a love for others. What a privilege to be led and used by our Shepherd to encourage others in their walk with Him. By: Dennis Fisher

Give us the wisdom we need, Lord, to encourage others in their spiritual walk. We know we need Your Spirit's power to do that. Use the gifts You have

given us to help others along on their journey. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

May our words reflect the heart of God and His wisdom.

**Ecclesiastes 12:12 But beyond this, my son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body.**

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:12 And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:12 And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:12 Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. There is no end to the making of many books, and much study is exhausting to the body.

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:12 ὁ υἱός μου φράσαι ποιεῖν βιβλία πολλὰ οὐκ ὅτιν περᾶσι καὶ μετὰ πολλὰ κόπον σαρκός

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:12 And moreover, my son, guard thyself by means of them: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:12 But beyond these, my son, be warned: there is no end to the making of many books, and much study wearies the body.

ESV 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.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:12 Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:12 But, my child, let me give you some further advice: Be careful, for writing books is endless, and much study wears you out.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:12 And further, from these, my son, be warned; the making of many books hath no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:12 Furthermore, my child, you must realise that writing books involves endless hard work, and that much study wearies the body.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:12 Of anything beyond these, my child, beware. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

RSV 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.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:12 As to more than these, my son, beware. Of the making of many books there is no end, and in much study there is weariness for the flesh.

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:12 Be warned, my children, against anything more than these. People never stop writing books. Too much studying will wear out your body.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:12 And further, my son, take note of this: of the making of books there is no end, and much learning is a weariness to the flesh.

ASV Ecclesiastes 12:12 And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

DBY Ecclesiastes 12:12 And besides, my son, be warned by them: of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

BHT Ecclesiastes 12:12 wüyötër mēhē<sup>9</sup>mmâ Būnī hizzāhēr `ásôt sūpārīm harBĔ ěn qēc wūla<sup>9</sup>hag harBĔ yūgì`at Bāsār

- **But beyond this** Lu 16:29-31 Joh 5:39 20:31 21:25 2Pe 1:19-21
- **wearying to the body:** Ec 1:18

## WHEN BOOKS ARE TOO MUCH

**But beyond this, my son - Beyond** what? **Beyond** the wise words that guide (goad) and anchor (nail) your soul.

**Be warned** ([zahar](#); Lxx - [phulasso](#) - be on guard in [aorist imperative](#) = "Do not procrastinate!") - Notice again that Solomon is not giving a suggestion but a command. This is a loving but serious warning to guard against the tendency to drift away from the truth of God's Word and wisdom by overindulging in man-made wisdom, much of which is antithetical to God's wisdom! Solomon is not saying we can never read any book other than the Bible, but that we need to guard our time. How many people will spend as much time reading the Bible as they spend reading a well-written, popular Christian novel? You only have so many seconds left. What is the optimal use of the time you have left?

**Warren Wiersbe** - The statement is a warning to the student not to go beyond what God has written in His Word. Indeed, there are many books; and studying them can be a wearisome chore. But don't permit man's books to rob you of God's wisdom....Don't test God's truth by the "many books" written by men; test men's books by the truth of God's Word.... Our textbook is the Bible, and the Holy Spirit is our Teacher (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:12–15). The Spirit can use gifted human teachers to instruct us, but He longs to teach us personally from His Word (Ps. 119:97–104). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**The writing of many books is endless** There's no end to the writing of books and now with self-publishing on of books on the internet the number of books available is astounding. No one could read even a fraction of the books. Writing and reading books both utilize one resource that you only have a finite supply of and that is time. People send me books to read frequently but I almost never read them because I want to focus on reading and commenting on the one Book that will endure eternally, the Bible.

**And excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body** Excessive study can wear you out, not just physically and mentally, but spiritually. It can become pointless labor when it doesn't lead to truth or transformation. This verse is not anti-intellectual. Solomon wrote Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes so clearly he valued learning. But he warns not to let the intellectual pursuit of knowledge become a distraction from obedience. The danger is knowing without doing. The Pharisees were prime examples. The danger is pursuit of information, not transformation. God is not seeking smarter sinners, but saved sinners who are more like the Savior! It follows that the only book truly deserving of **excessive devotion** is God's Word, for it is the only book by which we will "grow in respect to salvation" (aka progressive sanctification). (1Pe 2:2+)

**NET NOTE** on The exhortation may be understood in two ways: (1) to avoid any so-called wisdom sayings beyond those mentioned in vv. 10–11: "The words of the wise ... are given from one shepherd. And of anything beyond these, my son, be warned!" (see RSV, NRSV, NAB, Douay, NIV). This is paraphrased well by Moffatt: "My son, avoid anything beyond the scriptures of wisdom" (Moffatt). (2) The exhortation refers to the concerns of v. 12b, namely, diligent study is wearisome, i.e., "Furthermore, my son, be warned: there is no end to the making of books, and much study is wearisome to the body" (see NEB, ASV, NASB, MLB).

**Walter Kaiser** - Another function found in Ecclesiastes is admonishment (v. 12). Whereas books may multiply and men may weary themselves with study of the ever enlarging library of volumes, the inspired words of Ecclesiastes will instruct, warn, and admonish. (The Hebrew word [zahar](#) does not appear in Proverbs, but it is found in Eccles. 4:13, where it means "to take advice.") Only one true source of the book could cause Solomon, the human author, to have such a high estimation of this book of Ecclesiastes: the "one Shepherd" (Ec 12:11). This can only mean Jehovah (or, more accurately, Yahweh), the Shepherd of Israel (Psalm 80:1). He is the real source of the words of this book; not cynicism, not skepticism, not worldliness—not any of these sources. He gave the ideas and aided Solomon in the composition of Ecclesiastes. (Borrow [Kaiser](#))

**William Barrick** - In Eccl 12:12–13, the imperatives fill the air with a sense of urgency. (Crenshaw, Ecclesiastes) Eccl 12:12 provides the only occurrence of the phrase "**my son**" in Ecclesiastes. Some commentators apply the nomenclature to students, rather than to actual sons. (Borrow Crenshaw, [Ecclesiastes](#)) The context does not resolve the meaning for the reader. Either interpretation might be correct. One commentator takes the position that "**the writing of many books is endless**" means "'Making many books is a thing of no purpose'. Writing is praiseworthy, but there is no point in overdoing it." (Fox, Qoheltet) Another sees the

statement as a warning about the many pagan writings from other nations that claim to offer wisdom. (Borrow [Eaton](#)) Understanding it as a warning, another identifies it with "poring over unsuitable literature," which will only weary and do harm. (Whybray, [Ecclesiastes](#) online) In other words, the writer intends more the "use" of **books** than the writing of them. (Fredericks, "Ecclesiastes," 244.)

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**Warned** (teach) ([02094](#)) [zahar](#) means to teach, to admonish or to warn. For example in Ps 19:11<sup>+</sup> David says that "Moreover, by them (**judgments** in Ps 19:9) Your servant is **warned** (zahar); In keeping them there is great reward." In Da 12:3<sup>+</sup> the sense is different = "Those who have insight will shine ([zahar](#)) brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven." **Summary** - 1) to admonish, warn, teach, shine, send out light, be light, be shining 1a) (Niphal) to be taught, be admonished 1b) (Hiphil) 1b1) to teach, warn 1b2) to shine, send out light (in Da 12:3)

Zahar - give them warning(1), receive instruction(1), take warning(2), taken warning(1), teach(1), took warning(1), warn(6), warned(7), warns(1). - Ex 18:20; 2 Ki. 6:10; 2 Chr. 19:10; Ps. 19:11; Eccl. 4:13; Eccl. 12:12; Ezek. 3:17; Ezek. 3:18; Ezek. 3:19; Ezek. 3:20; Ezek. 3:21; Ezek. 33:3; Ezek. 33:4; Ezek. 33:5; Ezek. 33:6; Ezek. 33:7; Ezek. 33:8; Ezek. 33:9; Dan. 12:3

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### Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - MAKE UP YOUR MIND! Ecclesiastes 12:12

As a careful reading of Ecclesiastes makes clear, Solomon enjoyed the challenge of mastering a new topic. He didn't mind doing the hard work of research necessary in order to find the truth. But eventually the time comes when you have to make up your mind. You can't sit on the fence forever. If your studies don't lead you to the Lord, then perhaps you've been studying the wrong things.

It meant taking a long motorcycle ride over the dusty, hot roads of northern India, but I jumped at the chance to see the actual village work. When we arrived in a small village in the state of Bihar, my guide introduced me to two local Christian leaders. Together we sat down on the mat and I listened with awe as the two men sang original songs they had written in the local dialect of the Hindi language. Indian music sounds nothing at all like Western music—the pitch, tone, and rhythms are completely different. But they sang with enthusiasm and obvious joy in the Lord, accompanied only by a tambourine that one man beat against his shin.

The leader of the local congregation came from a warrior caste. His people had a long and proud history that stretched back many centuries. How did he become a Christian? It started a few years ago when someone told him about the Bible. Although he was illiterate, he tried to read it, and as he did a light shined from heaven upon Matthew 5:5 and gave him the meaning. This miraculous insight appeared to him several more times, each time teaching him more about Jesus.

When he finally accepted Christ, his wife threw him out of their house, whereupon he moved to this village and joined the small band of believers. With great pride he showed me the stones in the ground for the new church they hoped to build. It wasn't large—about 11 feet by 17 feet—but his face glowed with joy at the thought of having a proper building for God's worship.

Through a translator he told me five other men in this village had a name identical to his. Therefore, his official address consists of his name plus the word "Christian," because he was the only believer by that name in the village.

Although it's not easy for him to be known as Mr. Christian, he smiled as he told me the story. He thinks that God is going to do something great in his village. I believe he's right, because God honors those who aren't ashamed of Jesus' name.

Lord, I ask for the courage to make up my mind, so that I won't be guilty of always searching but never quite finding the way of truth. Amen.

### SHINING THE LIGHT

- Name someone you know who is "sitting on the fence" spiritually. What will it take to move the person to a decision one way or the other
- In what areas of your life do you need to make up your mind? What is holding you back?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 119:89-91; John 17:17; and 2 Timothy 3:6-7.

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**Ecclesiastes 12:13** The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: **fear** God and **keep** His commandments, because this applies to every person.

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KJV Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:13 Having heard everything, I have reached this conclusion: Fear God and keep his commandments, because this is the whole duty of man.

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:13 τ λος λ γου τ π ν κο εται τ ν θε ν φοβο κα τ ς ντολ ς α το φ λασσε πι το το π ς νθρωπος

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:13 Hear the end of the matter, the sun: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole man.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:13 When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is: fear God and keep His commands, because this is for all humanity.

ESV 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.

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:13 That's the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:13 The end of the whole matter let us hear: -- 'Fear God, and keep His commands, for this is the whole of man.

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:13 To sum up the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments, for that is the duty of everyone.

NRS Ecclesiastes 12:13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone.

RSV 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.

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:13 The last word, when all is heard: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is man's all;

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:13 After having heard it all, this is the conclusion: Fear God, and keep his commands, because this applies to everyone.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:13 This is the last word. All has been said. Have fear of God and keep his laws; because this is right for every man.

- Fear: Ec 5:7 8:12 Ge 22:12 De 6:2 10:12 Ps 111:10 112:1 145:19 147:11 Pr 1:7 23:17 1Pe 2:17 Rev 19:5
- for: Ec 2:3 6:12 Job 28:28 Ps 115:13-15 Pr 19:23 Lu 1:50

### Related Passages:

Psalms 25:14-15+ The **secret** (**sod** - "of the sweet, satisfying companionship," intimacy, friendship) of the LORD (**Jehovah**) is for those who **fear** Him, And He will make them know (**yada**) His covenant. 15 (HERE IS "FEAR" PUT INTO ACTION) My eyes are continually toward the LORD, For He will pluck my feet out of the net (MY FEET WILL GET CAUGHT FROM TIME TO TIME!).

Deuteronomy 10:12+ "Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to **fear** the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, **fearing God** and turning away from evil. (**NOTE: FEAR PRECEDED AND PROMPTED TURNING AWAY!**)

Proverbs 8:13 "The **fear** of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate.

Psalms 33:8 Let all the earth **fear** the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.

Proverbs 1:7+ The **fear** of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

**Fear** God and **keep** His commandments.

## THE END OF THE MATTER: LIFE'S TRUE PURPOSE

**The conclusion** (soph - end; Lxx - [telos](#) - termination), **when all has been heard is** - YLT = "The end of the whole matter let us hear." Solomon has examined everything, pleasure, toil, success, wisdom, mortality, and now gives his final verdict.

**Fear** ([yare](#); Lxx - [phobeo](#)) **God** ([Elohim](#)) - This is a command, not a suggestion and in the Septuagint it is in the [present imperative](#) which command continual reverential fear which ultimately calls for us to [depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#). In the active voice ([phobeo](#) in the Septuagint), this calls for use to make a volitional choice, a choice of our will, moment by moment. Paul says of all men in Adam that "There is **no fear** before their eyes." (Ro 3:18+). The only way fallen men can or will fear God is to experience a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, Who then gives them the desire (fallen flesh does not desire fearing God) and the power to fear God (Php 2:13NLT+). **Fear** is not terror, but reverence, awe, worshipful obedience. It is a vital Old Testament truth involving submission (Deut. 10:12), worship (Psalm 33:8), moral living (Proverbs 8:13) and awareness of judgment (Prov. 1:7). See discussion of a too little studied but powerful truth, Fear of the Lord.

One of the most beautiful benefits (of many) of a reverential fear of Yahweh is a growing intimacy with our Creator as David described in Psalm 25:14+

The [secret](#) ([sod](#) - "of the sweet, satisfying companionship," the intimacy, the friendship) of the LORD ([Jehovah](#)) is for those who **fear** Him, And He will make them know ([yada](#) - intimate knowledge of) His covenant.

I agree with the comments by **Danny Akin** that "Fearing God is a major theme in the Bible, yet it is rarely talked about any more. The common way of defining the fear of God as a "healthy respect" for God does not seem to do justice to all the teaching about this important topic. There are times when terror in the presence of God is appropriate. Even those who are in covenant relationship with God experience this at times (Isa. 6:1–7; Rev. 1:17–18)." (See [Holman Old Testament Commentary - Ecclesiastes](#))

*"The remarkable thing about fearing God is that, when you fear God, you fear nothing else; whereas, if you do not fear God, you fear everything else."*

-- Oswald Chambers

**Warren Wiersbe** - The statement is a warning to the student not to go beyond what God has written in His Word. Indeed, there are many books; and studying them can be a wearisome chore. But don't permit man's books to rob you of God's wisdom....Don't test God's truth by the "many books" written by men; test men's books by the truth of God's Word.... Our textbook is the Bible, and the Holy Spirit is our Teacher (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:12–15). The Spirit can use gifted human teachers to instruct us, but He longs to teach us personally from His Word (Ps. 119:97–104). The "fear of the Lord" is that attitude of reverence and awe that His people show to Him because they love Him and respect His power and His greatness. The person who fears the Lord will pay attention to His Word and obey it. He or she will not tempt the Lord by deliberately disobeying or by "playing with sin." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**And keep** ([shamar](#); Lxx - [phulasso](#) - guard like a sentry at the gate of your heart) **His commandments** ([mitsvah](#); Lxx - [entole](#)) - **Keep** is also a command, not a suggestion and in the Septuagint it is in the [present imperative](#) which command continual guarding of our heart (Pr 4:23+) which ultimately calls for us to [depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#). Notice that these two commands are like the yoke on the neck of an ox which guides the animal in the way it should walk, for fear and obedience are intimately connected. Fear of God precedes and promotes obedience to God. If it does not, then the fear is a sham! Without genuine fear, obedience wanes. Obedience to God shows we love God (Jn 14:15+). "To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed than the fat of rams." (1Sa 15:22+) "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." (Ps 51:17) Life's meaning is found not in knowing ABOUT God, but in OBEYING God. There will be many people in hell who knew a lot ABOUT God (Mt 7:21-23+), but tragically they never actually knew Him personally through belief in His Son, and thus they never received His Spirit, Who Alone could have enabled them to **keep His commandments**. The only way to overcome futility under the sun is to live in holy fear and Spirit enabled obedience to the Almighty God.

This command echoes what Jesus later taught:

And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL



YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' 38 "This is the great and foremost commandment.(Mt 22:37–38+)

And speaking to His disciples in the Upper Room he taught them about the meaning of genuine love declaring

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (AND BECAUSE HE KNEW THAT MEN OF FLESH COULD NOT DO THIS RELYING ON THEIR OWN POWER, HE IMMEDIATELY PROMISED THE SPIRIT) 16  
"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; (John 14:15,16+)

**Because this applies to every person** Fearing God and obeying Him is not option #2, but is requirement #1, and is to be the very end for every man. This is why we were made.

**Warren Wiersbe** - The last phrase in verse 13 can be translated "this is the end of man" (i.e., his purpose in life), or "this is for all men." Campbell Morgan suggests "this is the whole of man." He writes in *The Unfolding Message of the Bible*, "Man, in his entirety, must begin with God; the whole of man, the fear of God" (p. 228). When Solomon looked at life "under the sun," everything was fragmented and he could see no pattern. But when he looked at life from God's point of view, everything came together into one whole. If man wants to have wholeness, he must begin with God.

**Walter Kaiser** - What then is the grand conclusion (end) of all these things? If we have been following our author's aim carefully, we should have added up all the parts of the preceding argument and concluded that the chief end of man is to "fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the 'manishness' of a man and 'womanliness' of a woman" (Eccl 12:13). What is the "profit" of living? What does a man get for all his work? He gets the living God! And his whole profit consists of fearing Him and obeying His Word. ([Borrow](#))

**William Barrick** - Eccl 12:13–14 form the ultimate conclusion of Ecclesiastes. The Masoretes, preservationists of the ancient Hebrew text from around 700–1200 A.D., instruct the public reader to repeat Eccl 12:13 after Eccl 12:14 so that the reading does not end upon a negative note. Ending with verse 14 makes "evil" the final (and ominous) word of Ecclesiastes. (Reichart and Cohen, *Ecclesiastes*) The Hebrew text in Eccl 12:13 emphasizes "**God**" and "commandments." ([Borrow Eaton](#)) The logical order of the two imperatives ("fear" and "obey") supplies additional significance. As **Eaton** explains, "Conduct derives from worship. A knowledge of God leads to obedience; not vice versa." ([Borrow Eaton](#)) The teaching in these final verses reflects instructions in the book of Deuteronomy 4:6, 10; 6:2, 24; 8:6; 10:12–13. **Every person** (literally, "the whole of man"; Eccl 12:13) occurs also in Ec 3:13 and Ec 5:19. According to **Greidanus**, "The Hebrew does not have the word 'duty,' so it reads literally that fearing God and keeping his commandments 'is the whole of everyone.' It's not just our duty, it's our essence." (See [Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes - Page 309](#)) In Psalm 109:4 the psalmist uses a similar construction to indicate that he is characterized by prayer: "I am prayer." The same type of construction appears also in Psalm 120:7 ("I am peace") and Job 8:9 ("we are yesterday"). The point is that the attribute is the defining essence of the person or persons to which it is ascribed. Thus, it is mankind's very essence to **fear God** and obey Him. The truths of Ecclesiastes apply to everyone (cp. Ro 2:14–16+). Here is the answer to the opening question (Eccl 1:3+, "What advantage [or, profit] does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?"): "He gets the living God! And his whole profit consists of fearing Him and obeying His Word." ([Borrow Kaiser](#)) Or, as Estes puts it, the advantage "resides not in human achievement apart from God, but rather in human connection with God." Solomon's pursuit of wisdom and investigation of mankind's condition "under the sun" results in "an incitement to true piety. The insignificance of all that is done under the sun leaves him awestruck and silent before God." ([Borrow Garrett](#))

**"This Is What You Were Made For"** You were not made to chase success, to accumulate knowledge, to indulge pleasures or to escape death. You were made to **fear your Creator**, to walk with Him in His truth and to glorify and enjoy Him forever. Solomon, at the end of his life, cuts through the fog of everything else and says: "This is the purpose of your existence."

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**Fear** ([03372](#)) **yare** is a verb meaning to fear, to be afraid (first use = Ge 3:10+), to respect, to reverence, to be terrified, to be awesome, to be feared, to make afraid, to frighten. The most common translations are to be afraid, to fear, to fear God. On one had **yare** conveys the sense of threat to one's life, but on the other it can express the idea of reverence and deep respect (as in Ps 25:14). In the OT fear of the Lord involves a person's total response to the Lord. It is notable that more than 75% of the over 370 uses of yare are in the context of reverencing the Lord. In English our word **reverence** (from Latin reverentia "awe, respect," from revereri "to stand in awe of, respect, honor, fear, be afraid of; revere,") refers to a feeling of profound respect for someone or something, and with yare in the OT as noted this is most often to God. The classic use is Pr 1:7+ "The **fear** (yare) of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." Notice that a genuine holy fear of the Lord is often equated with believers (e.g. Mal 3:16+, Mal 4:2+, Eccl 8:12-13, cf the last worldwide proclamation of the Gospel which says "Fear God..." - Rev 14:6-7+)

Fear is that affection of the mind that arises with the awareness of approaching danger. Fear is a feeling of reverence, awe, and respect, or an unpleasant emotion caused by a sense of danger. Fear may be directed toward God or humankind, and it may be either healthy or harmful.

**Gilbrant** - The result of this reverential awe is a repentant humility and an ongoing sense of accountability (Lev. 19:14, Lev 19:32; Lev 25:17; Pr 3:7). Out of this flows obedience (Dt. 31:12; Hag. 1:12; Prov. 24:21) and performing one's duties righteously (2 Sam. 23:3). Job 1:1 has **fearing** God parallel to being blameless, upright and shunning evil (ED: WHY DID JOB TURN AWAY FROM EVIL? IN CONTEXT CLEARLY BECAUSE HE FEARED GOD!). Then, in Job 1:9ff, Satan contrasts fearing God with cursing Him after losing everything, which implies that fearing God includes trusting in and staying loyal to Him. Deuteronomy 8:6 parallels fearing God with walking in his ways. Devotion to the Lord in worship is the use of "fearing" Him found in 2 Ki. 17:34-39. Eccl 12:13 summarizes the life that has meaning and fulfillment as fearing God and keeping his commandments - "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person." Thus, to fear God can refer to one's total devotion to God, with such a deep reverence that one responds in worship, and service to Him. Joshua 22:25 has the best example of this meaning - "'For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between us and you, you sons of Reuben and sons of Gad; you have no portion in the LORD.'" So your sons may make our sons stop fearing the LORD.". There the trans-Jordan tribes say they were worried that the others would cause their descendants to "stop fearing the Lord." They might cause them to stop worshipping and serving the Lord. To fear the Lord is to respond to a true grasp of how awesome He is and make an effort to walk with Him in a well-balanced relationship of loyal devotion. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Andrew Bowling** - ([TWOT ONLINE](#)) biblical usages of *yārē'* are divided into five general categories: 1) the emotion of fear, 2) the intellectual anticipation of evil without emphasis upon the emotional reaction, 3) reverence or awe, 4) righteous behaviour or piety, and 5) formal religious worship. Major OT synonyms include *pāḥad*, *hātat*, and *hārad* as well as several words referring to shaking or quaking as a result of fear. Typical examples of fearing as an emotional reaction are the Jews' fear of the fires on Mount Sinai (Deut. 5:5) and the fear of the Jews at Mizpah when they heard of the Philistine mobilization (1 Sa 7:7). Other examples give more emphasis to the anticipation of evil without necessarily pointing to the emotional reaction. David's recognition while in Achish's court that his reputation was a danger to him (1 Samuel 21:13) is an example along with Jacob's anticipation that his family might be taken from him (Genesis 31:31).

**YARE IN ECCLESIASTES** - Eccl. 3:14; Eccl. 5:7; Eccl. 7:18; Eccl. 8:12; Eccl. 8:13; Eccl. 9:2; Eccl. 12:5; Eccl. 12:13;

Ecclesiastes 3:14 I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that **men should fear Him**.

Ecclesiastes 5:7 For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. **Rather, fear God.**

Ecclesiastes 7:18 It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other; **for the one who fears God** comes forth with both of them.

Ecclesiastes 8:12 Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life, still I know that **it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly**.

Ecclesiastes 8:13 But it will not be well for the evil man and he will not lengthen his days like a shadow, because **he does not fear God**.

Ecclesiastes 9:2 It is the same for all. There is one fate for the righteous and for the wicked; for the good, for the clean and for the unclean; for the man who offers a sacrifice and for the one who does not sacrifice. As the good man is, so is the sinner; as the swearer is, so is the one who is **afraid to swear**.

Ecclesiastes 12:5 Furthermore, **men are afraid of a high place** and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street.

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## G Campbell Morgan - Ec 12:13

With Ec 11:9 of the previous chapter the final division of this book begins. It stands in direct and intended contrast to all that has preceded it. That contrast is immediately seen when verses eight and nine in chapter ix are compared. Both call upon man to rejoice, but the motive is entirely different. The voice of worldly wisdom says: rejoice because all the future is dark and vanity. Now the higher wisdom speaks, and it says: rejoice, by remembering that God brings men into judgment as to the exercise of all their natural powers. Let it be remembered that judgment does not mean punishment, unless and until men abuse those natural powers. Wisdom says: life is to be full of joy, and the way to find joy is to order it under the judgment, that is under the government of God.

This is urged in all that follows, until in these words every-thing is summarized. I cannot refrain from saying that this statement has suffered incalculably from the introduction by translators of the word duty. The word does not occur in the Hebrew text. Leave it out, and the statement is: "This is the whole of man." This at once emphasizes the outlook of all that has gone before. The outlook of the Debater has not been the whole of man. Life in its wholeness takes in the things above the sun, the spiritual facts and forces; it begins with the fear of God, and brings that fear to bear upon all the lower facts and forces, by walking in His commandments. No man who lives a whole life, ever says that "all is vanity." He, first finding God, finds also the joy and fulness of life in every aspect. To him life becomes a song and a gladness; it is full and glorious.

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**Adrian Rogers** - God is great, and therefore we should live humbly. This verse tells us, "Fear God"—"fear God." (Ecclesiastes 12:13) That doesn't mean that you're going to understand God. But oh, the reverence that we must have before God! "Fear God." (Ecclesiastes 12:13) Lay your intellectual pride in the dust. You'll never ever figure life out. James Barry said, "Life is a long exercise, a long lesson, in humility." God is a great God; therefore, we should live life humbly. (From his sermon "**A Perspective of Life**" on Ecclesiastes 12:13 - [click here and go to page 56](#))

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## TODAY IN THE WORD

Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. - Ecclesiastes 12:13

We can't finish this issue of Today in the Word until we have heard "the conclusion of the matter" (v. 13). Since that was Solomon's concern too, the book of Ecclesiastes gives us a good closing word.

Ecclesiastes is not the final revelation from God on issues such as work. But remember that Solomon's advice comes to us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Old Testament professor and biblical writer Donald Glenn notes the following about Solomon's summary: "Solomon counseled his readers to enjoy life in the fear of God as God enables." What does this mean for us in our work?

The most important piece of advice Ecclesiastes has for us is to fear God, or reverence Him and worship Him for who He is. We can live out the fear of God at work by working every day as if He alone were both our only Customer and the only Boss we would ever have to please.

Keeping God's commandments also becomes very practical in our work. We are commanded to do everything to God's glory in the name of Christ, to care for God's workers, and to honor God with the resources He supplies. If that sounds like a heavy duty, remember that God has built enough satisfaction, challenge, and pure pleasure into human work that we can actually enjoy what we do to the fullest.

Solomon says that these things apply to every person (v. 14, an alternative to the translation, "This is the whole duty of man"). As far as Solomon is concerned, this is the answer. This is how a person enjoys life even in a world that is often unfair and puzzling, filled with things that are ultimately meaningless in terms of eternity.

Fearing and obeying God encompasses every part of our life. The New Testament's specific commands and principles concerning work could easily fit into one of these categories. Solomon's final reminder that God will judge everything impartially helps to remind us that as Christians, we will stand before Christ someday to give Him an account of our work (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

One good way to finish this study would be to review some of the lessons or principles that have stood out to you or met a particular need

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## Selwyn Hughes - The Fear of God

To fear the Lord is to hate evil.—PROVERBS 8:13

We are taught over and over again in Scripture that because God is uniquely and awesomely holy—pure, separated, and shining in His moral majesty—we are to draw near to Him with godly reverence and fear. The fear of the Lord, as we know, is the beginning of wisdom. Contemplation of His character, particularly His holiness, will lead to a reverential fear that prepares the soul (as it did for Isaiah) for more profitable service and activity.

But what does it mean to "fear" God? There are times in the Bible when we are told to fear and times when we are told not to fear. There is a fear that helps and a fear that hinders. How do we know the difference?

The fear that helps is the fear that expresses itself in reverence, veneration, awe, a sense of the grandeur and majesty of God. The fear that hinders is described for us in 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment."

The Greek word *deilia*, which is translated "fearfulness" or "timidity" in this verse, comes from a root that means "wretched, sorry, miserable" and implies someone lacking in courage. God is not to blame for attitudes of cowardice or timidity; they come from within our own hearts. Timid people are frightened people, and if you want to explore this thought still further, ask yourself: what kinds of things frighten me that are not related to the fear of God? If we fear them more than we fear God, then we are being ruled by the wrong kind of fear.

Prayer

O God, I bring to You all my unhealthy fears and lay them at Your feet. Help me develop such a reverential fear for You that all other fears are quickly swallowed up. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Further Study Dt 10:1-12; Jos 24:14; Eccl 12:13

What did the Lord require of Israel?

What did Joshua admonish Israel to do?

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**FEAR OF GOD** - This would make a fruitful study that would surely bring about transformation in all the students. One could simply read the Scriptures (in context) and observe what is taught about the fear. This truth could then be applied to our lives.

Described:

wisdom (Job 28:28; Pr 15:33),  
pure (Ps 19:9),  
beginning of wisdom (Ps 111:10; Pr 9:10; 15:33),  
beginning of knowledge (Pr 1:7),  
hating evil (Pr 8:13),  
adding length to life (Pr 10:27),  
fountain of life (Pr 14:27),  
leading to life (Pr 19:23).

Commanded

Lev 19:14, 32; 25:36, 43; Dt 6:13; 10:20; 13:4; Jos 24:14; 1Sa 12:24; 2Ki 17:36; 1Ch 16:30; 2Ch 19:7, 9; Ne 5:9; Ps 2:11; 22:23; 34:9; 96:4; Pr 3:7; 23:17; 24:21; Ecc 5:7; 12:13; Isa 8:13; 29:23; Ro 11:20-21; Col 3:22; 1Pe 2:17; Rev 14:7

Cultivated by God

Ex 3:5; 19:12-13; Heb 12:18-24

Deters from sin

Ex 20:18-20; Pr 16:6; Je 32:39,40

Averts temporal calamity

Dt 28:47-49; 28:58-68; 2Ki 17:36-39).

Secures divine blessing

Dt 5:29; Ps 25:12-14; 31:19-20; 33:18-19; 34:7, 9; 85:8-9; 103:11, 13, 17; 111:5; 112:1; 115:11, 13; 128:1-4; 145:18-19; Pr 22:4; Ecc 7:18; 8:12-13; Mal 4:2; Lk 1:50; Ac 10:34,35

Universality of, foretold

Ps 76:11-12; 102:15

A bond of fellowship among righteous

Mal 3:16-18

Instances of **Guilty Fear**:

Adam and Eve Ge 3:8-13

The wicked Job 15:20-25; 18:11; Pr 10:24

Those without moral direction Pr 1:24-27

Those without God in general Isa 2:19-21; 33:14

King Belshazzar Da 5:6

The nations Mic 7:17

Judas Mt 27:3-5

The guards at Jesus' tomb Mt 28:4

Christians no longer fear Ro 8:15; 2Ti 1:7, 1Jn 4:18

Demons Ja 2:19

The nations in the day of wrath Rev 6:16

#### Instances of **Godly Fear**:

Noah, in preparing the ark Heb 11:7

Abraham, tested in the offering of his son Isaac Ge 22:12

Jacob, in the vision of the stairway, and the covenant of God Ge 28:16-17; 42:18

The midwives of Egypt, in refusing to take the lives of the Hebrew children Ex 1:17, 21

The Egyptians, at the time of the plague of thunder and hail and fire Ex 9:20

Phinehas, in turning away the anger of God at the time of the plague Nu 25:11, w 25:6-15

The nine-and-one-half tribes of Israel west of the Jordan

Jos 22:15-20

Obadiah, in devotion to God, sheltered one hundred prophets against Jezebel because he feared God more than he feared the wrath of Jezebel

1Ki 18:3-4 (cp Pr29:25)

Jehoshaphat, in proclaiming a fast when the land was about to be invaded by the armies of the Ammonites and Moabites

2Ch 20:3

Nehemiah, in his reform of the public administration which had heavily taxed the people and lorded their rule over the people

Ne 5:15

Hanani, which qualified him to be ruler over Jerusalem

Ne 7:2

Job, according to the testimony of God & even Satan

Job 1:8,v9

David (or whoever wrote Ps119)

Ps119:38

Hezekiah, in his treatment of the prophet Micah, who prophesied evil against Jerusalem

Je26:19

The Israelites, in obeying the voice of the Lord

Hag 1:12

The women at the tomb

Mt 28:8

Cornelius, who feared God with all his house

Ac 10:2

#### Motivates God's:

Power

Jos 4:24; Ps 99:1; Jer 5:22; Mt 10:28; Lk 12:5

providence

1Sa 12:2-4

power and justice

Job 37:19-24

wrath

Ps 90:11

forgiveness

Ps 130:4

majesty

Je10:7

## Motivates People:

To respect others

Lv19:14, 30; 25:17, 36, 43

To obedience

Nu 32:15; Dt 6:13-15; 7:1-4; 8:5-6; 10:12-13, 20; 13:4, 6-11; 17:11-13; 21:18-21; 28:14-68; 31:11-13; 1Sa 12:24-25; Job 13:21; 31:1-4, 13-23; Isa 1:20; Jer 4:4; 22:5; Mt 10:28; Lk 12:4-5; 2Co 5:10-11; 2Ti 4:1-2; 2Pe 3:10-12; Rev 14:9-10).

To truthfulness

Dt 15:9; 19:16-20

To filial obedience

Dt 21:21

## Reverence: Expressed in OT

Ge 35:5; Ex 18:21; 20:18-26; Lev 22:32; Dt 4:10; 5:29; 6:2; 10:12-13, 20-21; 14:23; 17:13; 28:58; Jos 24:14-15; 1Sa 12:14-15, 23-25; 2Sa 23:3-4; 1Ki 8:40; 2Ki 17:36-39; 1Ch 16:30; 2Ch 19:7, 9-10; Ezr 10:3; Job 28:28; 37:24; Ps 2:11; 15:4; 19:9; 22:23, 25; 31:19; 33:8, 18; 34:11; 37:7, 9, 11; 46:10; 52:6; 60:4; 64:9; 67:7; 72:5; 76:7, 11; 85:9; 86:11; 89:7; 90:11; 96:4, 9; 99:1; 102:15; 103:11, 13, 17; 111:5, 10; 112:1; 115:11, 13; 118:4; 119:63, 74, 79; 128:1, 4; 130:4; 135:20; 145:19; 147:11; Pr 1:7; 2:5; 3:7; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:2, 16, 26-27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; 24:21; 28:14; 31:30; Ecc 3:14; 7:18; 8:12-13; 12:13; Isa 2:10, 19-21; 25:3; 33:6, 13; 50:10-11; 59:19; 60:5; Jer 5:22; 10:7; 32:39, 40; 33:9; Hos 3:5; Mic 7:16-20; Zep 3:7; Zec 2:13; Mal 3:16; 4:2).

## Expressed in the NT

Mt 10:28; Lk 1:50; 12:5; 23:40; Ac 10:34-35; 13:26; Ro 11:20; 2Co 5:11; 7:1; Eph 5:21; 6:5; Php 2:12-13; Col 3:22; Heb 5:7; 12:28-29; Jas 2:19; 1Pe 1:17; 3:1-2; 1Jn 4:16-18; Rev 11:18; 14:7; 19:5).

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FEAR GOD, NOT MAN In an interview on CNN with Piers Morgan, Morgan challenged Pastor Rick Warren's stand on Gay marriage. Warren's reply was one all Christians could take to heart. "I fear the disapproval of God more than I fear your disapproval or the disapproval of society."—Jim L. Wilson and Rodger Russell. World, December 28, 2013 p. 16

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## Heed the Signals - Max Lucado -- Borrow - [In the Eye of the Storm](#)

Honor God and obey his commands, because this is all people must do. ECCLESIASTES 12:13

Here are some God-given, time-tested truths that define the way you should navigate your life. Observe them and enjoy secure passage. Ignore them and crash against the ragged rocks of reality ... :

- Love God more than you fear hell.
- Make major decisions in a cemetery.
- When no one is watching, live as if someone is.
- Succeed at home first.
- Don't spend tomorrow's money today.
- Pray twice as much as you fret.
- God has forgiven you; you'd be wise to do the same.

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## DISCIPLESHIP—no limitations - Virgil Hurley

Ecclesiastes 12:13; Luke 17:10

### Not Just What's Expected

The mule is a genuinely intelligent animal that has proved its superiority to the horse in durability, memory, and dietary control. Pack mules have been used for years to lug gear for exploratory and recreational expeditions. They will carry seventy-five pounds on each side—but only seventy-five pounds. According to one veteran packer, if you put additional weight on a mule, it will buck the load off, refuse to move, or head for a tree to scrape the load off. These animals have sensitized their inner scales to the ounce and will haul nothing more.

Jesus warned about the mule in each of us: the spirit of mere duty that produces only what is expected and nothing more. He encourages us to go beyond that, to love him with the same unqualified depths that he loves us. The mule has an excuse—it's only a mule. What possible excuse could we have who are made in the image of God, redeemed in the likeness of Christ, and possessed



even now of the Holy Spirit?

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**Warren Wiersbe - Satisfaction Guaranteed** [Pause for Power: A 365-Day Journey through the Scriptures - Page 191](#)

Read Ecclesiastes 12

Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. Ecclesiastes 12:13

People may seem to get away with sin (8:11), but their sins will eventually be exposed and judged righteously (vv. 12–13). Those who have not trusted the Lord Jesus Christ will be doomed forever. “The eternity of punishment is a thought which crushes the heart,” said Charles Haddon Spurgeon. “The Lord God is slow to anger, but when He is once aroused to it, as He will be against those who finally reject His Son, He will put forth all His omnipotence to crush His enemies.”

Solomon tells us to enjoy life while we can, but at no time does he advise us to enjoy sin. The joys of the present depend on the security of the future. If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, then your sins have already been judged on the cross; and “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1; John 5:24). But if you die having never trusted Christ, you will face judgment at His throne (Rev. 20:11–15).

Is life worth living? Yes, if you are truly alive through faith in Jesus Christ. Then you can be satisfied, no matter what God may permit to come to your life.

Something to Ponder - What are specific things you can do today that are likely to bring you a greater degree of satisfaction with life tomorrow?

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**Henrietta Mears** - The Bible tells us that we should fear the Lord. This is found in many places of the Bible. Ecclesiastes 12:13 says, “**Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all**” To “fear the Lord” means to recognize His holiness and to realize how great He is and how unworthy we are to have His love.

Sometimes we forget that God is holy and we treat Him as we would treat one of our earthly friends. God is our friend, that is true, but He is also our God and we should respect and honor Him. He says, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). The problem with most of us is that we are seldom still long enough to learn anything.

The worship of the true and living God is the highest expression of which man is capable. We worship Him by waiting upon Him in silence as we realize who He is and what He does. We can worship Him in prayer. Christians can worship Him by singing His praise and hearing about Him. We can worship Him wherever we are. Remember to do as Jesus Christ commanded: Worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

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**Painted Sticks (Ecclesiastes 2:11) - AMG Bible Illustrations**

One Sunday a preacher told how, while sitting in his garden, he had watched a caterpillar climb a painted stick that was for decoration. After reaching the top, the caterpillar reared itself, feeling this way and that for a juicy twig to feed on, or some way to further progress. Finding nothing, it slowly returned to the ground, crawled along till it reached another painted stick, and did the same thing all over again. The preacher said: “There are many painted sticks in the world—those of pleasure, wealth, and fame. All these call man and say, ‘Climb me to find the desire of your heart, fulfill the purpose of your existence, taste the fruit of success, and find satisfaction, but they are only painted sticks.’” Solomon tried to find the purpose of his life in the world’s “painted sticks.” He gave his heart to seek wisdom, but learned that it was “vanity and vexation of spirit” (Eccl. 1:15). He then turned to the pleasures of the world for meaning in life. He built great houses, and gardens, and pools. He had servants and maidens; in fact, he had all that a man could desire. Solomon’s comment on pleasure as a true source of happiness, however, was, “All was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun” (Eccl. 2:11). After trying all that the world could offer, Solomon’s final decision was, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13).

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**FINDING MEANING IN LIFE** [NIV, Once-A-Day: Worship and Praise Devotional: 365 Days to ...](#)

A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? ECCLESIASTES 2:24 – 25

Perhaps no one in history has illustrated this longing for meaning in life more than Solomon. The second son of David and Bathsheba, the boy grew up to become Israel’s third king. Blessed with unearthly wisdom (see 1 Kings 4:29 – 34), Solomon enjoyed a reign of remarkable prosperity and unprecedented peace. He oversaw the building of Jerusalem’s greatest and most glorious temple. He dabbled in engineering and botany, and became famous worldwide. But over time, proving that even wise people can do stupid things, he accumulated a household of 700 wives and 300 mistresses — many of them foreigners and worshipers of other

gods.

Not surprisingly, Solomon's heart for the one true God cooled. His restlessness multiplied. Eventually he found himself in the ultimate mid-life crisis — a time of frantic searching, boredom and despair.

His diary from this period, the ancient book of Ecclesiastes, reads like the bitter ramblings of a depressed old skeptic. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless" (Ecclesiastes 1:2). Yet at the end of this book, after experimenting with every pleasure and pursuit this world has to offer, he concluded, "Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

What was Solomon's great discovery? That a life divorced from God is no life at all. That meaning and joy in life can only be found by relating rightly to the source of life. To fear God is to worship him. To worship him is to make him the top priority in your thoughts and actions.

#### PRAYER

Lord, my life has meaning because ...

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**William Wilberforce** - 'Keeping God's commandments' Eccl 12:13 (excerpt from page 188 of [Private Papers of William Wilberforce](#) - 1897)

The best way to promote the right temper of mind will be after earnest prayer to God to bless your endeavours, to try to keep the idea of Jesus Christ and of his sufferings, and of the love which prompted him willingly to undergo them, in your mind continually, and especially when you are about your business. And then recollect that he has declared he will kindly accept as a tribute of gratitude whatever we do to please him, and call to mind all his kindness, all his sacrifices; the glory he left, the humiliation, shame and agony he endured; and then reflect that the only return he, who is at that very moment actually looking upon you, expects from you is that you should remember him and his heavenly Father who sent him, and endeavour to please him. This he tells us is to be done by keeping God's commandments.

Not that we shall be able actually to do this; but then we must wish and desire to do it. And when, from our natural corruption, infirmities do break out we must sincerely lament them, and try to guard against them in future. Thus a true Christian endeavours to have the idea of his Saviour continually present with him. To do his business as the Scripture phrases it, 'unto the Lord and not unto men.' This is the very perfection of religion.

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#### Before the Face of God - The Bottom Line on Life

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man. [Eccles. 12:13]

As the Teacher concludes he provides us with the foundations of a biblical philosophy of life.

First, he tells us that death does indeed pervade our existence. Not only so, but death is the destiny of each of us.

Second, in God's goodness, death is not the whole story. God provides times of joy as well as times of sorrow. We can and should enjoy the good things God gives us, as well as mourn the hard things he finds necessary to send our way. "Enjoy life," says the Teacher, "because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat, drink and be glad" (Eccles. 8:15).

Third, death is not the last word, because after death comes the judgment. Therefore, says the Teacher, in the midst of enjoying life, we must not break God's law, because God will bring everything into judgment. The young person should rejoice in his or her strength and vigor. Youth should be enjoyed, because the older person no longer has the ability to do as much. The body decays, and our vitality fades (12:1–8). The young man should bear this fact in mind, and live accordingly.

Fourth, the wise man should expose himself to the words of sages, because they are like goads that drive him to think seriously about life. The goad is a long, pointed stick, by which livestock can be prodded, guided, and turned when headed in the wrong direction. The words of sages are also like nails that firmly fix the realities of life in place. These two benefits of godly wisdom arise from the fact that such wisdom comes from the Great Shepherd (12:11).

Finally, as the Teacher has told us repeatedly, true wisdom shows us the limits of human knowledge and understanding. This should cause us to live by faith, confident that, even if we don't understand all of life, there is One who does, One who is firmly in control.

The bottom line is this: We are to fear God and obey him, knowing that he will evaluate everything in our lives. God sovereignly disposes our lives here below, "under the sun," and he sovereignly judges our lives when we stand before him.

Coram Deo - On the Lord's Day we take a break from the treadmill of our work, and we eat and drink and rejoice before God, as the Teacher commends. In what other ways should the weekly experience of worship reinforce the fundamental wisdom and insight of Ecclesiastes? The activities of the wise each day are conducted with eternity in view. Does this perspective change the priorities with which you approach today's events?

For further study: Nehemiah 8:8–12; Isaiah 58:13–14; James 3:13–17

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#### **David Jeremiah - THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN** (from his [daily devotionals](#))

I devoted myself to study and to explore. ECCLESIASTES 1:13 NIV

What an enigma Solomon was—the wisest man on earth yet the most foolish. Scottish preacher Alexander Whyte said, “If ever ship set sail on a sunny morning, but all that was left of her was a board or two on the shore that night, that ship was Solomon.”

In his Book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon applied his God-given wisdom to the pursuit of meaning in life. He explored every avenue, seeking satisfaction. He tried education, money, public works, fame, creative writing, sensual pleasure, and religion. But nothing satisfied.

Are you exploring, experimenting, and seeking satisfaction in similar things? Tennis star Boris Becker said, “I had won Wimbledon twice before, once as the youngest player. I was rich. I had all the material possessions I needed. . . . It's the old song of movie stars and pop stars who commit suicide. They have everything, and yet they are so unhappy. I had no inner peace.”

In Ecclesiastes 12:13, Solomon finally reached the conclusion of the whole matter: **“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man”** (NIV).

Only a life devoted to God through Jesus Christ satisfies the heart.

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#### **Henry Blackaby - WHICH PATH?** [Encountering God Study Bible: Insights from Blackaby ... - Page 891](#)

Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. ECCLESIASTES 12 : 13

Skepticism and pessimism are prevalent in the book of Ecclesiastes. Not until the end is it evident that this book is an apologetic discourse defending faith in God and describing the futility of life without Him. The argument is made that wisdom, resources, and plans apart from God lead to a meaningless existence. The fear of God is the only true key to happiness, fulfillment, and meaning. Is that the path you are choosing?

Life is brief and, apart from God, is filled with such mundane activity as the pursuit of food, shelter, comfort, and safety. What, then, is the significance of human effort, sorrow, and joy? Only our relationship with God gives us an eternal perspective and divine purpose for life.

Earthly comforts are gifts from the Lord. Laughter, friendship, family, and marriage—as wonderful as they are—are all temporary. God created us for eternity, yet He puts rich blessings and profound joy in our path to remind us that He loves us. Apart from His grace, life would indeed be dreary and meaningless. Do you have a proper perspective on the life God has graciously given you?

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#### **Jack Hayford -** What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun? Ecclesiastes 1:3

The quest of the writer of Ecclesiastes is for a fixed value (“profit”) in this life that can serve as a foundation. He examines and discards as bankrupt of real value one item after another. The meaning of life is not to be found in human wisdom, in pleasure, in wealth, in great accomplishments, or in materialism. Even human life itself, in any secular, humanistic sense, cannot be the “profit” which Solomon seeks.

Are we then doomed to despair when we look for meaning in life? No. Underneath his entire quest is the conviction that meaning in life must be found not “under the sun,” but “above the sun,” in the fear and obedience of God (Eccl. 12:13).

As with the Preacher of Ecclesiastes, the challenge to us who live in this age of greed and materialism is not to seek real value in earthly things and comfortable lifestyles, but to concentrate on those things which are above (Col. 3:1). We will find our fulfillment in God alone.

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#### Dennis Rainey - THE BEST AND WORST OF TIMES {Part Two} [Moments Together for Couples: 365 Daily Devotions for ... - Page 9](#)

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments. ECCLESIASTES 12:13

The doctors went to work on Barbara while Christians across the country prayed. Her heart beat so quickly (200-300 beats per minute) that it was not filling with blood, and her blood pressure went down. This low pressure could harm the baby if it continued.

The doctor made a quick decision. Using electric shock, he successfully reduced her heart rate to 75 beats per minute. Afterward, through tears, we gave thanks for God's intervention in saving both Barbara and the baby.

We talked quite a bit after that terrifying event. Often we think we are in control. We think we can plan our lives. We struggle over so many insignificant things, but we find ourselves asking, "What really matters?"

In the midst of these best and worst of times, a certain book reached us like a beacon in the darkness. It's a book that rips away the veil of idealism about life. It deals with purpose and significance. It gives meaning to life's storms, to prosperity, to our search for security.

The book? Ecclesiastes.

In its pages Solomon paints the paradoxes of life better than Charles Dickens ever dreamed. Whether we're experiencing the best or worst of times, God must be our reference point (see Eccles. 12:13, above). If not, then life is emptiness—void of meaning.

As I drove away from the hospital later that afternoon, I reflected on how different people respond to crisis situations. And I wondered, What is their reference point for a life and death situation? Where do they find meaning? How do they make sense out of suffering?

That night, as I put our five children to bed, we crowded together and prayed. Benjamin, then eight, prayed as only a child can: "Father, we give thanks that Mommy got sick 'cause we know You want us to give thanks in everything...and we give thanks that she's okay, too."

He prayed with childlike faith, and a mature perspective. He understood how God wants us to respond in the best and worst of times. Sometimes it takes a child's faith in God to remind us, doesn't it?

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**James Hastings - [Ecclesiastes 12:13 The Whole Duty of Man](#) - (THIS IS ONLY A SHORT EXCERPT OF A LENGTHY ARTICLE)**

OF what "matter" is this the conclusion? Ecclesiastes, in the writing of this little book, had a practical object in view. He had not indulged in any elaborate speculation; he had not attempted to solve the riddle of the world. He had simply recorded the results of his own experience and observation; and he had confessed himself unable to fathom the mysteries of Divine Providence. But he felt that he had a practical message for his countrymen. He had laid before them certain maxims for the guidance of their conduct. He had endeavoured to put them in the way of securing the "chief good" of life—of making the best of this present existence, with all its unsatisfying elements, and all its insoluble problems. And now, at the very end of his book, he seeks to drive the nail home, and to clinch all his exhortations by one pithy, pregnant counsel in which he sums up his practical philosophy of life. And what is the conclusion of the Wise Man's wisdom? "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom!" So the boy had been taught: and now the old man wonders whether it may not be, not only the beginning, but the end. When so much is dark, is not one path clear? one thing plain? Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." A life of godliness and virtue—this is the chief good for man. There is no better or deeper satisfaction to be found on earth than that which springs from reverencing God and keeping His commandments. This was the grand "conclusion" at which Ecclesiastes had arrived.

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**Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - THE LAST WORD AND THE FIRST RULE** Ecclesiastes 12:13

Where can we find meaning in life? Answer: Life makes sense if you fear God and keep His commandments. And conversely, nothing makes sense if you don't. If life is like a long, dark tunnel, then this is the light at the end.

Fear God! Keep His commandments! This is your whole duty. This is why you were born. Everything else is just details. That is Solomon's conclusion at the end of his journey to find ultimate meaning.

Several weeks ago a friend e-mailed me with the news that his mother's cancer surgery had been successful. He ended his message with this statement: "God is God, good, and great." As I pondered his words, I was struck at once by their simplicity and profundity. How much truth those six little words contain. They summarize an entire Christian worldview.

To say that God is God is simply to remind ourselves of the First Rule of the Spiritual Life: He's God and we're not. When I read my Bible it seems to pop up on every page and in every biblical story. Because God is God, He does whatever pleases Him and works in every situation of life in ways I cannot see and would not understand if I could see. This is a humbling truth because it brings me to my knees and forces me to admit that God alone is running the universe and I'm not running any part of it—not even the part I think I'm running.

To say that God is good means that His heart is inclined toward kindness. This gives me courage to pray for mercy in times of trouble. It also helps me to keep a positive perspective when life tumbles in around me. We often say that all things work together for good—and they do (Romans 8:28)—but that's true only because God Himself is good. That means I can be content right now because I have everything I need at any given moment. If I truly needed anything else, God would give it to me.

To say that God is great means that He isn't limited by my circumstances but can work through them for my good and His glory. Let these six simple words lift your spirits: "God is God, good, and great." God is God; be humbled. God is good; be encouraged. God is great; be thankful. Center your life on Him and in the end you will have no regrets.

Almighty God, to know You is life's highest goal and the reason for which I was created. May I be satisfied with nothing less. Amen.

## SHINING THE LIGHT

- What does it mean to fear God? What are the marks of a person who fears God?
- Why is this the first step in the spiritual life?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read 1 Samuel 12:24; Proverbs 9:10; and Hebrews 12:1-3.

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Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

Duties are ours, events are God's. This removes an infinite burden from the shoulders of a miserable, tempted, dying creature. On this consideration only, can he securely lay down his head, and close his eyes. CECIL.

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## Six Words From Solomon

Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. —Ecclesiastes 12:13

Today's Scripture : 1 Kings 10:23; 11:1-10

SMITH magazine, an online community that "celebrates the joy of storytelling," invited readers to submit six-word memoirs that describe their lives. Thousands responded with brief biographies ranging from the light-hearted "Sweet wife, good sons—I'm rich" to the painful "Sixty. Still haven't forgiven my parents."

Based on Scripture, I tried to imagine how King Solomon might have summed up his life in six words. As a young man, he could have written: God has given me great wisdom. But in his later years, he might have said: Should have practiced what I preached.

During a reign distinguished by peace and prosperity, Solomon developed spiritual heart problems. When he was old, "his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David" (1 Kings 11:4). The result was God's displeasure and a sad end to a previously exemplary life (v.9).

The multiple times Solomon used the word vanity (or meaningless) in Ecclesiastes may indicate his disillusionment about life. This once-wise king who had it all, lost it all, and pondered it all, ended the book with this final conclusion: "Fear God and keep His commandments" (12:13). Those are six words worth heeding. By: David C. McCasland (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

The pleasures of this sinful world  
Are meaningless and vain;  
But if we love and follow God  
True purpose we will gain.  
—Sper

Obedience to God is the key to a life of blessing.

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## Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 What's The Point?

What's the point? This question came to mind as I watched my grandsons' dog fetch a ball for me again and again.

What's the point? That's what the writer of Ecclesiastes asked as he thought about the monotonous cycle he observed in nature and in life—the same things happening year after year, generation after generation.

What's the point? That's what a retired businessman was asking, in effect, when he told me he would just as soon die as live any longer. He had seen and done everything he had wanted to do. Now he had reached the place where life held more pain for him

than pleasure.

What's the point? Here it is. A few years before a friend of mine died, he said, "Life is a wonderful experience. It's marvelous to see that God keeps nature going in its pattern. It's wonderful to know that we're here to love God above everything and to love our neighbor as ourselves. It's comforting to believe that all our sins are forgiven because of what Christ did on the cross. And it's exciting to think about the eternity God has for us. It sure is great to be alive."

Life can be depressing when God is left out. But how exciting it is when He is at the center! —Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

The life that counts is linked with God  
And hopes in His unfailing love;  
It walks with joy where Jesus trod—  
The life that counts is from above.  
—Anon.

When we focus on Christ, everything else becomes clear.

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**Ray Pritchard - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - THE TRUEST BOOK IN THE BIBLE** Ecclesiastes 1:2; 12:13

When I set out to write this book, several of my friends wondered whether this was a worthwhile project. A number commented on how rarely they had read Ecclesiastes. At least one person cautioned that Ecclesiastes could not be trusted because Solomon wrote it in a spiritually backslidden condition. My viewpoint is almost entirely the opposite. It seems to me that Ecclesiastes is the truest book in the Bible. I doubt that I would have said that twenty years ago—on reflection, I know that I wouldn't have—because I simply didn't appreciate the depth of Solomon's brutal candor about the ragged edges of life. Over the years, this book has become more and more familiar to me until at last it seems as natural and honest as anything in the Bible.

Not long ago I commented to my congregation that as a pastor I am very weary of doing funerals. After two decades of visiting mortuaries and doing graveside services, I have seen all the death I ever want to see. I've done funerals for babies, for young people, for adults who died suddenly, and many services for older people who died after a long illness. It's not that I don't find a profound satisfaction in bringing God's comfort to grieving hearts. I do, and I thank God for calling me into the ministry. But of death itself I am very tired. I long to see a few resurrections. In feeling that way, I am in good company because Solomon struggled mightily with the awesome reality of human death.

But I know something Solomon never knew. I know that Jesus Christ has come back from the dead. There is no other reason to think that we will ever see our loved ones again. The New Testament again and again connects our resurrection with His. Ours will happen in the future because His happened in the past. Sometimes when I stand by the grave of someone I know, I can almost hear a voice from beneath the ground saying, "I'm coming up." To unbelievers that may sound like wishful thinking, but to me it's nothing but solid biblical faith. In the words of the Apostles' Creed, I believe in the resurrection of the dead.

Ecclesiastes is true and when it comes to the human condition, this may be the truest book in the Bible. But it's not the final word.

Lord Jesus, thank You for solid answers to life's hardest questions. Amen.

#### SHINING THE LIGHT

- Which parts of Ecclesiastes are hardest for you to understand? Which parts seem to ring true to your own experience?
- Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 111; Romans 8:31-35; and Revelation 19:1-5.

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**Walter Kaiser - What Does Ecclesiastes Teach?** - See [Hard Sayings of the Bible](#)

Many modern readers of the book of Ecclesiastes cannot believe that the book originally ended on such a high ethical and theological note. Therefore, the conventional wisdom of many scholars is to attribute these final verses of the book to a late manuscript addition intended to ensure that the book would be adopted into the canon of Scriptures.

Could a book that could very well have come from the hand of Solomon have been capable of such elevated theology as to conclude that fearing God was the main task of men and women and that obeying God was the most excellent way? Could it argue that one day each person would give an account of all he or she had done in life before God, from whom it was impossible to hide anything? First, we must note that there is no manuscript evidence to suggest that this alleged pious ending was dropped into place



by some late redactor wanting to make sure Ecclesiastes remained in the scriptural canon. All available manuscripts reflect the present ending, so the supposition of its being an addition must remain just that: a supposition.

On the other hand, this brief text might well supply one of the keys for understanding the book, for it purports to be the summary of the whole book.

The warning that everything done on earth is reviewable in the final day was not meant to scare people, but to put a holy restraint in them. If God will judge all these acts, then it would follow that those being judged are capable of being resurrected, or at least able to appear personally and consciously before the living Lord for his verdict. The implication is that death is not a final end for the author of this book—though many who have studied Ecclesiastes have assumed that it is.

Injustice in this world is so objectionable that God has provided avenues for immediate amelioration of wrongdoing through human courts of law. However, final relief must come in the future, when the ultimate Judge, the Lord himself, comes to rectify all wrong. This theme of the need for a final judgment is raised several times in the course of the book (Eccles 3:17; 9:1; 11:9), as well as in the conclusion in Ecclesiastes 12:14. Obviously, the Preacher believes in a judgment after death and expects that all that has not been set right on earth will be set right in that day by God.

This interpretation of the last two verses is in harmony with the rest of the epilogue (Eccles 12:8–14). The writer concludes by restating the theme he had announced in Ecclesiastes 1:2: “ ‘Meaningless! Meaningless!’ says the Teacher. ‘Everything is meaningless.’” In other words, how futile it is to have lived life without having known the key to life.

But that is not the end of the matter; the writer has a solution. He quickly adds his qualifications for giving such heady advice in Ecclesiastes 12:9–10. He laid claim, by virtue of revelation, to being “wise”; therefore, he “imparted knowledge to the people” with a caring attitude and a deliberateness that elicited his audience’s serious attention.

His words were “pleasant” ones or “words of grace.” His was not a haphazard spouting of negativisms, nihilisms or an eat-drink-and-be-merry philosophy. Rather, he taught “right words ... upright and true.” Any interpreter of this book who fails to take these claims seriously is not listening patiently enough to what is being said. So useful are the words of this whole book that they can be used as goads to proper action or as nails on which you can hang your hat (Eccles 12:11). These teachings are not experiential or autobiographical; they come from “the one Shepherd.” This can be no one but the Shepherd of Israel (Ps 80:1), the Shepherd of Psalm 23:1. The ideas in Ecclesiastes do not come from cynicism, skepticism or worldly wisdom, but from the Shepherd.

The grand conclusion to this book is that we are to fear the living God and heed his Word. This is no legalistic formula, but a path for happiness. In coming to know God we come to know ourselves, for believing faith opens us up to the riches of the treasures of God, humankind and the world.

Since God is a living being and since men and women live forever, every deed, even what has been secret, is reviewable in that final day by the Lord who knows us so well. The apostle Paul echoes this teaching in 2 Corinthians 5:10. Humans are responsible beings, and one day each will personally face the Lord to give an account of the deeds done in the flesh.

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## THE SECRET OF LIVING - Greg Laurie - borrow [For Every Season](#)

The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant. (Psalm 25:14 - see commentary)

Have you ever been semi-listening in on someone’s conversation? Not intentionally, of course, because you would never do that. Maybe you were in a restaurant and your table was right next to someone else’s. And then (even though you didn’t mean to hear) someone said, “What I’m about to tell you now is a secret. I need you to hold this in complete confidence...”

What did you do? Did you put your hands over your ears? No. If you’re like most people, you listened more carefully. We all love to hear secrets! We all want to know the inside story. Even if someone is a complete stranger, we’re still interested and intrigued by what his or her secret might be.

God has a secret that He wants to declare to you. The Bible says, “The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him” (Psalm 25:14). In many ways, this isn’t really a secret, because it is plainly declared in Scripture. Unfortunately, because so few people have opened up the Bible to see what it says, they have missed out.

This is the secret of making life more full and meaningful. It is a secret that can help you avoid untold misery and heartache. You might even say it’s the secret of living. Solomon said much the same in the concluding chapter of Ecclesiastes:

**“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:**

**Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all”**

(Ecclesiastes 12:13)

That's what it all comes down to. A deep reverence for God and His Word, and a desire to walk that particular path He has marked out for your life.

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#### **FILLING THE VOID - Greg Laurie - borrow [For Every Season](#)**

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all.  
(Ecclesiastes 12:13)

If you are seeking fulfillment, purpose, or meaning from this world and from human accomplishments, I have some bad news: you will never find it. There is nothing in the world that will fill the deepest void in your life—not the ultimate car, not the greatest job, not the most beautiful girl or the most handsome guy, not the greatest education. There is nothing that can even come close.

King Solomon, one of the wealthiest men who ever lived, had everything he wanted. Yet he went on a binge, trying to satisfy his appetites with the wrong things. He went after passion. He went after possessions. He went after things of beauty and buildings and land. He drank and he partied. After all of that, here was his conclusion: "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

Have you ever been ravenously hungry and tried to satisfy your appetite with snacking? It just doesn't work. You want a real meal. In the same way, we were created with a God-shaped hole in our lives. We have been created to love God, to know God, and to bear fruit. Everything else is secondary.

Think about it: Everything else in life, every other responsibility, no matter how significant, must be ordered behind the central purpose of your existence on Earth: knowing, loving, and serving your Creator. Yes, God cares about your career, your marriage, your family, and your ministry. But knowing Him, prioritizing Him, is number one. And when you do, the Bible says you will never be a loser for it!

"Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs, and he will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern" (Matthew 6:32-33, NLT).

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#### **IN CONCLUSION...- Greg Laurie - borrow [For Every Season](#)**

"Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." (Ecclesiastes 1:2)

Before I became a Christian I was, like most young people, looking for purpose and meaning in life. The thinking of the day was that we, the young people, were going to change our world. The adult "establishment" didn't have the answers. Our faith in government was shattered. So we thought we would change things.

But after a little time, I began to realize that the youth movement had the same phony love and hypocrisy I had seen in the adult world. It was the same selfishness and emptiness of the generation that preceded it...and the generations that would follow. It was only a pale version of what can really be known in a relationship with God and as you walk with His people.

On my high school campus, there was a very outspoken group of Christians who weren't ashamed of the gospel. I went to one of their meetings, heard the gospel, and—much to my own surprise—gave my life to Christ. As I saw God's promises coming to literal fulfillment in my own life, in the days that followed my faith in Jesus Christ—His love and power—grew and grew.

Having lived in the world for seventeen years and having sampled many of the pleasures it had to offer, I knew the futility and emptiness of it all. I knew it was a dead-end street. I knew then that this world was empty.

And it still is. As Solomon said, "Everything is meaningless...utterly meaningless!" (Ecclesiastes 1:2, NLT).

So what's the answer? "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Without God, life is vain and empty. But experiencing the reality of His Holy Spirit living in the very core of our being gives life a dimension that defies all description.

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#### **David Rudolph - Voice of the Lord: Messianic Jewish Daily Devotionals**

Here is the final conclusion, now that you have heard everything: fear God, and keep his mitzvot [commandments]; this is what being human is all about (Eccles. 12:13).

The renowned medieval rabbi Moses Maimonides (the Rambam), wrote in his Guide to the Perplexed that King Shlomo (Solomon)

not only knew every one of God's commandments by heart, he also knew the divine reason behind each one. Yet, King Solomon's wisdom deserted him at a critical point in his life. He had built everything, tasted everything, drunk everything, and had married over 700 women! Yet, what he concluded was most important is summarized in the verse above.

Given the chance to go back and do it over again, Shlomo would not have violated the commandments of God, even knowing that God's grace would meet him later in his repentance. In Ecclesiastes, we sense that we are listening to a man with one driving compulsion: to convey this message to succeeding generations, "It is not worth it."

Shlomo emphatically warns us to embrace eternal values, even when we are young, when eternity seems far away. This warning is his most lasting legacy, enduring beyond his spectacular Temple, which lay in ruins only four centuries after it was built—many centuries before Messiah came to walk among us.

The thought expressed at Shlomo's most lucid moment is the message we must share with our own generation. Yeshua himself commissioned us to share this truth, calling us to declare God's eternal Kingdom (Matt. 10:7) to a pleasure-seeking world unaware of the eternal bottom line.

Today I Will

... seek to grow as a model of eternity-minded living and to share with others King Solomon's final conclusion as explained in today's verse.

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Edward T. Welch Ecclesiastes 12:1–14

He is God and we are not. When you observe life and listen to wise people, you will quickly find that we simply can't invest our hopes, dreams, and love in the self because it was never intended to carry such freight. For that matter, there is nothing created that was intended to sustain such hopes. Creation is to be enjoyed, but we don't put our trust in it. The only alternative is God himself.

The Teacher in the book of Ecclesiastes tries to save us time in our search for meaning and purpose. He tells us that he tried learning, laughter, great projects, unbridled sexual pleasure, money, music, and children. None of them, when they were elevated to his life's purpose, led to anything but despair. He could not find his purpose in the created world. After briefly envying an ordinary life of honest toil, good friends, food, moderate drink, and doing right, he comes to his answer—his purpose. "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

The fear of God is how we respond to the fact that God is greater than we are—different from us—in all things. His beauty is greater. His wisdom is greater. His love is greater. And, yes, his anger is greater. Simply put, he is God and we are not.

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"When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is: fear God and keep His commands, because this is for all humanity." — Ecclesiastes 12:13

The verse above contains simple instruction on how to become a better Christian. But, though simple, they are by no means easy tasks, especially for teen boys. In this context, fear means both to love and respect God. Loving and respecting God does not come easily to sinners like us. Along with respecting God, we must keep His commandments. We must grow close to God by staying in the Bible daily and by spending time with Him in prayer. We need to listen to Him and not do all the talking! We learn to fear God, not to make us afraid, but a fear that shows respect for who He is. We keep His commandments out of the love and respect that we have for Him. We will fail trying to do these things, but we must get back up with God's help. When we do these things, we will inevitably grow closer to God.

Jackson Reese: 18, Pageland, SC South Pointe Fellowship and South Pointe Christian School, Pageland, SC from "Teen to Teen"

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**John MacArthur - LIVING A FULFILLED LIFE** "Fear God and keep His commandments." Eccl 12:13 [Strength for Today: Daily Readings for a Deeper Faith - Page 5](#)

*Living life apart from God is futile.*

The Book of Ecclesiastes is greatly misunderstood. It is a difficult book to read simply because it is hard to understand. Everything in it appears wrong and as if it doesn't fit with the rest of Scripture. But it is part of the Old Testament wisdom literature because it is a statement of human wisdom. Ecclesiastes tells us how man perceives his world, God, and the realities of life.

Most scholars believe Ecclesiastes was penned by Solomon. They debate whether he wrote it before he was a true believer or after. He may have written it in retrospect, or he may have penned it sometime before he had a full understanding of the life-changing truth of God.

Ecclesiastes is a fascinating book because it reveals the folly, uselessness, senselessness, and frustration of human wisdom—that which James calls “earthly, natural, demonic” (James 3:15+). In Ecclesiastes 1:16 Solomon says to himself, “Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me.” That verse shows me that when God initially gave Solomon wisdom, He gave it to him on a human level. He gave Solomon wisdom to make successful decisions and judgments as king. But although divine wisdom was available to him, I believe Solomon opted for human wisdom the greater portion of his life. And that wisdom was never able to answer his ultimate questions.

The sum of Solomon’s perspective on human wisdom is in Ecclesiastes 4:2–3: “I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living. But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed.” That’s a death wish and is the logical end of worldly wisdom—futility.

Fortunately, Solomon did eventually embrace true wisdom. At the end of his book, he said, “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person” (Eccl 12:13). What then can satisfy your heart and make life worth living? The wisdom of God alone.

Suggestions for Prayer: Ask God to help you follow His ways for a blessed and fulfilled life.

For Further Study: Read Proverbs 3:13–26, noting how the benefits of true wisdom are in contrast to what Solomon experienced.

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**QUESTION - [What does it mean to fear God and keep His commandments \(Ecclesiastes 12:13\)? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)**

**ANSWER** - The [book of Ecclesiastes](#) ends with this call to fear God, obey His Word, and live with a sobering respect for His imminent judgment: “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14).

[Fearing God](#) and keeping His commandments are repeated themes throughout the Bible (Deuteronomy 6:2; 10:12; John 14:15). Fear is something most of us want to avoid. But “fear of the Lord” is good and right for believers. The Hebrew word translated as “fear” in Ecclesiastes 12:13 refers to a genuine reverence and respect for the Lord. To “fear God” is to realize His absolute greatness, immutable power, and justice: “And I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God’s purpose is that people should fear him” (Ecclesiastes 3:14, NLT). When we fear God, we acknowledge He is holy and highly exalted (Exodus 3:5–6; Isaiah 8:13; 1 Timothy 1:17), the only One worthy of our worship and complete obedience.

Those who fear God naturally want to obey Him and keep His commands. Many people see God’s commandments as heavy burdens—negative rules that keep us from doing what we want and having fun. But believers who fear God keep His commandments. Our actions conform to His instructions because we trust He loves us and wants what is best for us (1 John 5:2–3). We have come to understand that His commands are loving instructions from a good and caring Father. God says, “Keep my commandments,” because He wants to bless us and keep us from trouble (Jeremiah 29:11; Psalm 16:11; James 1:17).

Through the Old Testament commandments, God laid out a set of boundaries for His people. These commands included the promise of a good long life (Deuteronomy 17:20), success and prosperity (Deuteronomy 30:9), and rich blessings (Deuteronomy 11:27). The *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words* asserts that genuine fear of God (demonstrated through keeping His commands) “results in spiritual, moral and ethical health and wealth before both God and people” (Carpenter, E. E., and Comfort, P. W., Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000, p. 60).

Jesus said that, when we [keep His commandments](#), we prove that we love Him (John 14:15, 21, 23–24; 15:10). Our obedience also demonstrates the genuineness of our faith (1 John 2:3–5). We obey Him because we are fully convinced that God is watching us and evaluating how we think, speak, and live (Matthew 12:36; Psalm 139:2; Jeremiah 12:3).

At the close of Ecclesiastes, Solomon sums up every piece of wisdom he has acquired in all his life experiences. Nothing else matters more in this life than to fear God and keep His commandments because, in the end, we will all face God’s judgment (Hebrews 9:27; Ecclesiastes 3:17; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Death is not the end of the matter; it is only the beginning. “The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:17). There is resurrection life after death (see 1 Corinthians 15).

When the Messiah, Jesus Christ, returns, He will judge every person, living and dead (Matthew 25:31–33; 2 Thessalonians 1:6–7; 1 Peter 4:5; 2 Peter 3:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Acts 10:42; 17:31). All who are made righteous through faith in Jesus Christ will be saved and spend eternity with God in heaven (Matthew 25:34; John 5:24; 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Corinthians 9:25; Revelation 11:18). But the ungodly “will go away to eternal punishment” (Matthew 25:41, 46; see also 2 Peter 3:7; Romans 2:5; Hebrews 10:26–28; 2 Peter 2:4, 9).

If we fear God and keep His commandments, we've tapped into true wisdom that will guide us on the right path through life. "Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to him," promises the psalmist (Psalm 128:1). We fear God by worshipping Him with the utmost loyalty, respect, and honor; we obey His Word; and we keep an eternal perspective—these three pursuits define the ultimate purpose of our existence and our chief ambition in life.

I once read a story that emerged from World War I of a soldier who became so discouraged and defeated during the war that he went AWOL and deserted his fellow troops in the heat of a battle. The soldier made his way to a nearby house and exchanged his uniform for the clothing of a common farmer. From there, he decided to find the coast in the hope of catching a boat that would enable him to get back to his homeland in England. In the darkness of the night, he became lost and struck a road sign as he walked. The soldier had no idea where he was or what the sign said. He decided to climb the pole hoping to find words on the sign that would tell him where he was and where to go. When he got to the crossbeam, he held on to read the sign. Taking out a match, he lit it, and looked directly in the face of Jesus Christ. He had climbed an outdoor crucifix! Stunned at what he saw, the soldier now realized the shame on his life. He was looking into the face of the One who had endured it all and had never turned back. The next morning, the soldier was found back in the trenches with his fellow troops.

**Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.**

KJV Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

NET Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will evaluate every deed, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

BGT Ecclesiastes 12:14 π σ ν π ν τ πο ημα θε ς ξει ν κρ σει ν παντ παρεωραμ ν ν γαθ ν κα ν πονηρ ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every work into judgment, with everything that has been overlooked, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

CSB Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil.

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

NIV Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

NLT Ecclesiastes 12:14 God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.

YLT Ecclesiastes 12:14 For every work doth God bring into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether good or bad.'

NJB Ecclesiastes 12:14 For God will call all our deeds to judgement, all that is hidden, be it good or bad.

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

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

NAB Ecclesiastes 12:14 because God will bring to judgment every work, with all its hidden qualities, whether good or bad.

GWN Ecclesiastes 12:14 God will certainly judge everything that is done. This includes every secret thing, whether it is good or bad.

BBE Ecclesiastes 12:14 God will be judge of every work, with every secret thing, good or evil.

## Related Passages:

Ecclesiastes 3:17+ I said to myself, **“God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man,”** for a time for every matter and for every deed is there.

Ecclesiastes 8:11+ Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil.

Ecclesiastes 11:9+ Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that **God will bring you to judgment for all these things.**

John 5:28-29+ Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, 29 and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

## THE FINAL EVALUATION YOUR LIFE WILL BE JUDGED

**For God will bring every act to judgment** ([mishpat/mispat](#); Lxx - [krisis](#)) - Every action, large or small, seen or unseen, will be evaluated by God. There is no such thing as an insignificant act (good or evil) in His eyes. Secret sin on earth is open scandal in Heaven!

**Everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.** God sees everything (Pr 15:3), not just what is visible to people. He will judge not only what you did, but why you did it (1Co 4:5+). Every deed is seen, no matter the moral quality and will be weighed by God. This includes righteous acts rewarded, and evil acts exposed and judged.

Solomon closes not with sentiment but sobriety: There is a Judge. There is a courtroom. There is an account to give. Whether you lived for pleasure, work, wisdom, or worship—God will evaluate all of it. The whole book, having declared so much to be “hebel” (vapor), ends by showing that life isn’t meaningless if lived under God’s judgment and sovereignty.

**Walter Kaiser** - What is more, “every work” and “every secret deed,” no matter **“whether it is good or whether it is bad”** (12:14), will be brought under the searching light of God’s judgment in that day when all men shall personally face Him to give an account of the deeds done in the body. So echoed Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:10 (Bema Seat for Believers). Men are responsible beings, not brutes, who are destined to live to confront the past with the God that they either feared or flouted. No formula of legalism is this “keeping of His commandments.” Neither is it a method of earning favor to be used when facing God. It is a summary of the beginning, middle, and end of life as we know it on this earth: coming to know and trust the living God; receiving the gifts of life’s goods; learning how to enjoy those mundane gifts; understanding the major part of the plan of God; and being guided into joyous and strenuous activity in the art of living, even while portions of life remain enigmatic. What a book! What a good God! What a life! And what a plan! ([Borrow](#))

[William Barrick](#) - The reader’s course is clear:

- Remember God, the Creator (Eccl 12:1).
- Fear God, the Creator (Eccl 3:14; 5:7; 8:12; 12:14).
- Keep the commandments of God (Eccl 12:14).
- Enjoy the life God gives (Eccl 9:7–10).
- Prepare for leaving life “under the sun” (Eccl 12:1).
- Prepare to stand before God in a future judgment where we will be held accountable for enjoying what He has given and for living in accord with His commands (Eccl 11:9; cf. Rom 2:16; Heb 9:27).

**Here are a few questions to ponder as we bring this fascinating, enigmatic book to a close...**

- What am I chasing that might turn out to be striving after the wind?
- Do I fear God and live with His Bema Seat judgment in mind (2Co 5:10+)?
- Am I enjoying today as a gift from God or resenting the lot He has given me (1Th 5:18+)?
- How does the brevity of my life and the certainty of death sharpen my focus to redeem the time of my life (Jas 4:14, Eph 5:15-16+)?
- Am I living in a way I would not regret if my life ended today (Ps 90:12+)?

[William Barrick](#) - Questions for study:



1. What does it mean to "Remember your Creator"? How can we do that?
2. Why is death sometimes very unpleasant and even frightening?
3. What are the characteristics of aging for most people?
4. How should we prepare ourselves for old age and death?
5. Explain the reasons for believing that the text of Ecclesiastes actually hints strongly at a life beyond the sun?
6. How does the writer of Eccl 12:9–11 describe the book of Ecclesiastes? How does that compare to a pessimistic or skeptical approach to the book?

"You Will Stand Before God" You may hide from others. You may rationalize to yourself. You may forget what you've done. But God sees.

And one day, God will call it all forth. If that truth scares you, good—it's meant to. But if you fear God and trust in Christ, then judgment becomes: Not a terror, but a vindication, a moment of reward and final reckoning. Live every day with the Judgment Seat in mind and the Cross in your heart (Gal 2:20+).

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**SPURGEON.** God shall bring every work into judgment

Just as the tiny shells make up the chalk hills, and the chalk hills together make up the range, so the trifling actions make up the whole account, and each of these must be pulled asunder separately. You had an hour to spare the other day—what did you do? You had a voice—how did you use it? You had a pen—you could use that—how did you employ it? Each particular shall be brought out, and there shall be demanded an account for each one.

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**Spurgeon** - This, then, is the sum of the matter, but the question is, how are we to fulfil the whole duty of man? We may rest assured that it is quite out of our power to do so of ourselves. Only in Christ Jesus can we find the law fulfilled, and he is ours if we believe on him: this is wisdom, Solomon had been wiser had he known nothing but this.

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Hailey's Handbook - God is mentioned at least 40 times in this book—more frequently than vanity or meaningless/meaninglessness!

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**Ray Pritchard** - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - **CORAM DEO** Ecclesiastes 12:14 (See online discussion of [Coram Deo](#))

Solomon's final argument in favor of serving God may come as a surprise. Instead of ending on an "up" note, he reminds us one final time of the coming day of judgment when our lives will pass under His all-seeing eyes. This means that everything we do and say is important. Since nothing is hidden, everything ultimately matters.

I know many people who struggle with questions of right and wrong—especially in those areas for which we have no explicit guidance in the Bible. They truly want to please the Lord, but worry about their daily decisions. Here is a simple question that will replace many of the dos and don'ts: Can I do this to God's glory? That is, if I do this, will it enhance God's reputation in the world? Will those who watch me know that I know God from my behavior? Or will I simply have to explain this away or apologize for it later?

That brings us back to Question 1 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism: What is the chief purpose of man? "To glorify God and enjoy Him forever." We were made to glorify God. Nothing works right when we don't.

In putting the matter this way I am calling for nothing less than a God-centered life. That means intentionally making your decisions so that God's reputation is enhanced in the world. The Puritans often used the Latin phrase *coram Deo*, which means "under the face of God." It's a reminder that God is always watching everything we do. His eye is always on us, nothing escapes His notice, and all of life must be lived for His approval.

J. S. Bach carved the words *Soli Deo Gloria* on his organ at Leipzig, Germany, to remind him that all his music be composed and performed for the glory of God. The initials SDG appear at the end of his compositions: "To God alone be the glory." That's what I mean by intentional God-centered living.

All I am saying may be summed up this way. People watch what we do and say and draw huge conclusions from our tiniest personal decisions. Living in the light of God's glory means to live so that others will draw the right conclusions as they watch us.

Ruth Bell Graham defines a saint this way: "A saint is someone who makes it easy to believe in Jesus." May God help us to live that way every day.

Righteous Judge, help to me to live in such a way that I will not be ashamed when I stand before You. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- Name three practical ways you can glorify God this week.
- How does it make you feel to know that God is watching you this very moment? Is there anything in your life that you would be ashamed for God to bring to light when you stand before Him?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Romans 14:9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; and 1 John 2:28.

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### **Ecclesiastes 12:14 When To Judge**

God will bring every work into judgment . . . whether good or evil. —Ecclesiastes 12:14

Many people believe that Christians are told never to judge others. As “proof,” they quote Jesus’ words in Matthew 7: “Judge not, that you be not judged” (v.1). But a closer look at what Jesus said shows that there are times when we must make judgments.

In verses 1 to 5, Jesus warned us how easy it is to be blind to our own faults while we pick at the faults of others. In verse 6, however, He showed us the necessity of judging. He told us, “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.”

To follow Jesus’ teaching, we must learn the difference between judging people and evaluating situations. But who among us is wise enough to consider any situation without condemning or judging the persons involved? That is why, in verses 7 to 11, we are told to earnestly ask, seek, and implore help from our heavenly Father. “Your Father who is in heaven [will] give good things to those who ask Him” (v.11).

Whenever we must make judgments, we must prayerfully bear in mind that our God is the one who “will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14). —Albert Lee (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

If you are called upon to judge—  
 A situation to discern,  
 Don't shy away when duty calls,  
 But to God's Word for wisdom turn.  
 —Hess

The righteous Judge gives discernment to those who ask Him.

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### **Smithsonian Scavengers**

God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil. --Ecclesiastes 12:14

The Democratic Convention was over. All the delegates had gone home. But in an obscure storage area at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History the moments were being preserved. Two Smithsonian historians had mingled among the Madison Square Garden crowd, scavenging memorabilia that will evoke the spirit of the convention for many years: Mylar confetti, souvenirs, banners, handmade signs, memories.

Those who work to preserve the spirit of the past are involved in a godlike activity. They remind us that everything is significant. Everything!

But we often forget that. Aging bodies, changing circumstances, and all kinds of losses make us wonder if anything really matters. What's the point if we lose it all in the end?

Solomon wondered about that too. For a while he thought everything was destined to become useless and forgotten. But when he came to his senses and remembered his Creator, he saw that everything is significant, either for good or for evil. God will judge every deed and motive (Eccl. 12:14).

Solomon concluded, "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (v.13 KJV). The only way to find fulfillment is by obeying God. --MRD II (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

God rules as Sovereign on His throne,  
 He judges great and small;  
 And all who would despise His rule,  
 Beneath His rod shall fall.

--DJD

Everything in life has eternal significance--for good or for evil.