

Ecclesiastes 12:8-14 *"Fear God... Keep His Commandments... Prepare for Final Judgment"*

God's word is God's word in it's entirety... The Bible is not a bag of trail mix... pick out the pieces that you like and ignore the rest.

Ecclesiastes Chapter 12 verse 1 says, **"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth"** again in VERSE 6, **"Remember your Creator"**.

"Remember" is listed close to 300x's in the Bible why? Because we forget. As I was traveling through the Old Testament I was taken back by how many verses God spoke this truth. I wrote this, *"God desperately desires for us to never forget Him. He, seemingly, in tears pleads for us to not forget Him. He says write my laws on your heart, write them on your foreheads, doorposts, everywhere so you don't forget me."*

Once again here are the words of Bono "Ecclesiastes is one of my favorite books. It's a book about a character who wants to find out why he's alive, why he was created. He tries knowledge. He tries wealth. He tries experience. He tries everything. You hurry to the end of the book to find out why, and it says, 'Remember your Creator.' In a way, it's such a letdown. Yet it isn't." No, it isn't. Getting to know our Creator before we have grown old and die is the most important thing we can ever do." AMEN!

MAY WE ALL GREET EACH DAY LIKE THE PSALMIST DID Psalm 118:24

This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.

PRAY

No God, no Judge. No Judge, No final Judgment. No Final Judgment, no ultimate meaning to life. **NOTHING MATTERS.**

This is the logic of Quentin's argument in *After the Fall* by Arthur Miller. Quentin says:

For many years I looked at life like a case at law. It was a series of proofs. When you're young you prove how brave you are, or smart; then, what a

good lover; then, a good father; finally how wise, or powerful ... But underlying it all, I see now, there was a presumption. That one moved ... on an upward path toward some elevation, where ... God knows what ... I would be justified, or even condemned. A verdict anyway. I think now that my disaster really began when I looked up one day ... and the bench was empty. No judge in sight. And all that remained was the endless argument with oneself, this pointless litigation of existence before an empty bench ... Which, of course, is another way of saying – despair.

If there is no God to judge the world, then human existence is a pointless litigation that ends in meaningless despair. As we close out this amazing sermon preached by the preacher Solomon; again he repeats his familiar lament...

Ecclesiastes 12:8 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "All *is* vanity." The Hebrew word for vanity (*hevel*) is the Preacher's multipurpose metaphor to express the futility of life in a fallen world. "Life under the sun", life without God and without eternity in mind.

Ryken notes: By beginning and ending with the same statement, the structure of Ecclesiastes reinforces one of its main points – namely, that "there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). As it was before, so it is now, and so it will ever be. Vanity of vanities! All is vanity, all the time. Thus we end up right back where we began.

After 12 chapters of preaching the striking force of the statement resonates deep within our bones.

Life "under the sun" life without God is vanity! *Solomon has taught us...*

Work is vanity, that there is nothing for us to gain from all our restless toil under the SUN (Ecclesiastes 1:13-14; 2:18-23).

Human wisdom is vanity, that it only increases our "sorrow" and "vexation" (Ecclesiastes 1:18).

Wise or foolish both die in the end so what does it matter? (Ecclesiastes 2:15-16).

Pleasure is vanity. Wine, women, and song; parks, houses and vineyards; gold, silver and treasure – there is “nothing to be gained under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

Vanity... It is all chasing bubbles... poof and it's gone, without meaning...

Power is vanity. there is no one to comfort the tears of the oppressed (Ecc. 4:1).

Money is vanity. it causes no end of trouble as we look after our possessions, they may disappear in a moment's notice (Ecclesiastes 5:11-14). But even if we manage to hold on to our money, it cannot satisfy our souls (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

Vanity of death. the great equalizer. The indignities of growing old (Ecclesiastes 12:1), and after that, the final vanity of returning to the ground from which we were made. Dust we are, and to the dust we shall return (Ecclesiastes 3:20).

✘ “Nothing in our search has led us home,” says Derek Kidner, “nothing that we are offered under the sun is ours to keep.” Vanity of vanities! It is all vanity.

As Hughes says, “Yet “vanity” does not get the last word, either in the Bible or in the Christian life. Ecclesiastes might well have ended with chapter 12, verse 8 as a suitable summary of everything Qoheleth said. Instead it closes with further remarks that help us put the entire book into perspective.”

Someone has said that life is like a school, except that sometimes you don't know what the lessons are until you have failed the examination! One of our prayers should be, “Don't let the lessons be wasted.” It's better to learn them the first time so that they don't have to be repeated.

WHILE GRAPPLING WITH ADVANCING AGE, STRUGGLING WITH THE MEANING OF LIFE, SOLOMON STILL CONTINUED TO TEACH.

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.

10 The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; “...acceptable In the Hebrew it means “words of delight.” Solomon searched for just the right words to express

what was on his heart. John Stott likens this process to a dog wrestling with a bone, trying to take off every scrap of meat.

and *what was written was upright*—words of truth. if there is one thing we can always count on the Preacher to do, it is to tell us the truth – not just the truth about God but also the truth about life in a fallen world. However, at no time did he dilute his message or flatter his congregation. He always used upright words of truth.

11 The words of the wise... *No greater words than the words of scripture... Heb. 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

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

Goad is one of the tools of a shepherd's trade, a sharp stick that spurs a stubborn beast to keep moving. It is not designed to injure the animal, of course, but to **INFLECT JUST ENOUGH PAIN** to get his full cooperation.

They are “pricks” to the conscience, making us uncomfortable enough to turn away from sin.



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.

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.

well-driven nails 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. **Isa 22:23-25**, where “nail” refers to the **Word of God Himself**.

The “goads” prod the people to pay attention and to pursue truth while the “nails” give them something on which to hang what they have learned.

End of verse 11 says, **one Shepherd** The “shepherd” is none other than God himself (which is why the term is capitalized in the English Standard Version and some other translations). We should be very careful to listen to Him, therefore, building our life on the Word of God and not on anything **more or less**. As THE Shepherd of our souls, God uses His word... THE BIBLE – to prod in the direction faithful to the will and call of God

So verse 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. *Today more than a million new books are published every year.* **So what the Bible says is true: of the making of many books there is no end, and studying even some of them is enough to wear anyone out.**

The “nails” of God’s word are sure and you can depend on them. test all men’s books by the truth of God’s Word. Chuck Missler reminds us, **“OUR TEXTBOOK IS THE BIBLE, and the Holy Spirit is our Teacher** (Jn 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. So don’t permit man’s books to rob you of God’s wisdom.”**

Are you still seeking spiritual truth? End that quest and surrender to the God who knows the answers. Do not be like the person Paul warned about in the New Testament – “always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:7). Be content with what the Bible says. Do not accept anything less, and do not demand anything more (Revelation 22:13-19).

We are stewards of our lives, and one day we must give an account to God of what we have done with His gift.

SOME PEOPLE ARE ONLY SPENDING THEIR LIVES; OTHERS ARE WASTING THEIR LIVES; A FEW ARE INVESTING THEIR LIVES.

 As Corrie ten Boom said, "The measure of a life, after all, is not its duration but its donation."

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. **14** For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

Ecclesiastes ends where the Book of Proverbs begins (Proverbs 1:7), with an admonition for us to fear God.

Oh yes, EVERYTHING MATTERS so to sum it all up your life to really count needs these characteristics...


Fear God... Keep His Commandments... Prepare for Final Judgment

Fear God 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. The fear of the Lord is the hatred of EVIL... No hatred of evil and there is no fear of the Lord...

SOLOMON THE PREACHER HAS TOLD US TO FEAR GOD!!!

- ... Because His work is eternal (Eccl. 3:14)
- ... Because He demands worship (Eccl. 5:7).
- ... We are to fear God in times of adversity as well as prosperity (Eccl. 7:14-18).
- ... When we fear God it will go well with us (Eccl. 8:12).

****Now we are told to fear God and to obey Him because one day we will stand before him for judgment.**

 Oswald Chambers astutely said, "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."

Fear God & Keep His Commandments God created life and He alone

knows how it should be managed. He wrote the "manual of instructions" and wise is the person who reads and obeys.

Proper fear leads to obedience... no obedience then you don't fear.

Prepare for Final Judgment Man may seem to get away with sin (8:11), but their sins will eventually be exposed and judged righteously. Those who have not trusted the Lord Jesus Christ will be doomed forever.

In Chapter 3 verse 17 Solomon already said, "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked" and again in chapter 11 verse 9 "But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment"

If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, then your sins have already been judged on the cross.

But if you die having never trusted Christ, you will face judgment at the "Great White Throne" and be lost forever (Rev 20:11–15).

The greatest thing in life is to come before the one true God in worship and obedience.

Ecclesiastes does not end with a promise of grace but with the warning of judgment.

WHY? BECAUSE EVERYTHING MATTERS!

The final message of Ecclesiastes is not that nothing matters but that "everything matters". **What we did, HOW WE DID IT, and why we did it** will all have eternal significance.

Please pay close attention to Warren Wiersbe's conclusion.

If you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, then this book urges you to do so without delay. Why? Because no matter how much wealth, education, or social prestige you may have, **life without God is futile**. You are only "*chasing after the wind*" if you expect to find satisfaction and personal fulfillment in the things of the world. Jesus raised the challenge: **For what shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?** Mark 8:36

Solomon experienced life and discovered that there was no lasting satisfaction in **possessions, pleasures, power, or prestige**. He had everything, yet his life was empty! *There is no need for you and me to repeat these experiments.*

Let's accept Solomon's conclusions and avoid the heartache and pain that must be endured when you experiment in the laboratory of life. These experiments are costly and one of them could prove fatal. When you belong to the family of God through faith in the Son of God, life is not monotonous: it is a daily adventure that builds character and enables you to serve others to the glory of God. Instead of making decisions on the basis of the vain wisdom of this world, you will have God's wisdom available to you. (James 1:5). As far as wealth and pleasure are concerned, God gives to us "richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim 6:17).

The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it. Proverbs 10:22

The wealth and pleasures of the world do not satisfy, and the quest for power and position is futile. In Jesus Christ we have all that we need for life and death, time and eternity.

If there is one truth that Solomon emphasizes in this book, it is the certainty of death. No matter what Solomon enjoyed or accomplished, the frightening shadow of death was always hovering over him. But Jesus Christ has defeated death and is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). The victory of His resurrection means that our "labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor 15:58). If you don't know Jesus Christ as your Savior, then all that you work for and live for will ultimately perish; **AND YOU WILL PERISH TOO**. But faith in Jesus Christ brings you the gift of eternal life and the privilege of serving Him and investing your years in that, which is eternal. So, the first message of Ecclesiastes is: turn from the futility of sin and the world, and put your faith in Jesus Christ (Jn 3:16; Eph 2:8-10). But if you are a believer in Jesus Christ and have received the gift of eternal life, then Solomon asks you, "***Are you living for the Lord or for the things of the world?***"

Remember, Solomon knew God and was greatly blessed by Him, yet he turned from the Lord and went his own way. No wonder he became pessimistic and skeptical as he looked at life! He didn't have God's perspective because he wasn't living for God's purposes. More than one professed Christian has followed Solomon's bad example and started living for the things of this world. Paul wrote about one of his associates in ministry, Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. 2 Tim 4:10 The Apostle John warned, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. 1 John 2:15

James also admonished us to keep ourselves “unspotted from the world” (1:27). When you start living for the world instead of for the will of God, you begin to look at life from the wrong perspective: “under the sun” and not “above the sun.” Instead of seeking those things which are above (Col 3:1), you start majoring on the things that are below. This wrong vision soon causes you to adopt wrong values and you stop living for the eternal. The result is disappointment and defeat; the only remedy is repentance and confession of sin.

So, if you have never trusted in Jesus alone for Salvation... **DON'T DELAY!**
Do it today.

If you have trusted in Jesus and have strayed from the path... **DON'T DELAY!**
Repent and get right with your King... He is waiting with open arms.

I Surrender all!