







Weighing and studying And arranging many proverbs with great care The preacher sought to find words of delight And uprightly he wrote words of truth The words of the wise are like goads And like nails firmly fixed Are the collected sayings They are given by one shepherd My son, beware of anything beyond these Of making many books there is no end And much study is a weariness of the flesh The end of the matter All has been heard Fear God And keep his commandments For this is the whole duty of man For God will bring every deed into judgment With every secret thing Whether good Whether good Or evil Amen And may God bless that reading of his word to us We'll sing again to God's praise This time from Psalm 34

Verses 8 Through to verse 15 O taste and see That God is good Who trusts in him is blessed Fear God His saints None that in fear shall be With want depressed The lions young May hungry be And they may lack their food But they That truly seek the Lord Shall not Lack any good Down to the end of verse 15 We'll stand to sing to God's praise O taste and see That God is good To trust in him is blessed Fear God His saints None that in fear Shall we With wantNINGNINGNINGNING!

[ 20 : 26 ] But they that truly seek the Lord shall not like any good.

O children, never do ye come and unto me here.

I shall you teach to understand how ye the Lord should fear.

For time is he that life desires to see good, good, good, long.

Thy lips be paid from speaking guile, and from their words thy tongue.

[ 21 : 32 ] Depart from ill to good, seek peace, pursue eternity.

God's eyes are on the just. His ears are open to their pride.

Let's pray as we turn back to the passage that we read.

My heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your word which we have open.

In front of us, your word which we have sang. and we thank you for that repeated reminder and instruction in the words that we've read that we are to fear God that you are the God who is almighty that you are the God who is holy you are the God who is just the all-seeing, the all-knowing the all-powerful God and so we pray that this evening you would give us a vision a greater, clearer vision of the wonder of who you are we confess that we often turn our eyes upon ourselves we often are distracted by many different things in this world and that causes us to lose sight of your greatness and your glory forgive us we pray help us tonight to to give you the praise the glory that you are due to fear you not with a fear that would drive us away not with an awful fear that would cause us to turn away but we pray that we would have that reverent fear that loving fear that we would see your justice and your peace and how worthy you are of our praise so help us to fear you help us to trust you help us to obey your commandments

[ 23 : 57 ] Lord we we are thankful for the fact that we are not saved by obeying your commandments we thank you that Jesus laid his life down that he shed his blood for sinners like us who are not able to obey your commandments perfectly we thank you that we can pray this evening asking that you would cleanse us from our sin we thank you that we can cry out with that simple prayer that we have in your word God have mercy upon me a sinner and when we cry that from our hearts we are saved because of all that Jesus has done we thank you that we are saved by grace we are saved by by Christ but as those who are saved if we are Christians tonight we ask that you would help us to love you to fear you and as an expression of our love to seek to keep your commandments we pray that you would help us Lord as we study your word that you would make us wise that you would pour out your spirit upon us here and in all the congregations that we are connected with pray for the visitors with us and for any fellowships that they may attend regularly that you would bless them as they come together around your word in different parts of the country and we pray for the faith mission as they meet in Leverborough a little later on this evening that you would help them

Lord that these days of mission would be a blessing that the name of Jesus would be lifted up that many would be drawn to Jesus that many perhaps would be drawn back to Jesus to a close walk with the Lord and we ask Lord that you would help us now to turn our eyes upon Jesus to look full in his wonderful face that the things of earth would grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace so help us Lord we pray take away every distraction and minister to us in the power of the Holy Spirit we thank you for all who are visiting with us we thank you especially for Nicky and for Jack being here tonight and for their friends and for family as they gather we thank you that they are trusting you we thank you that as they prepare for marriage that they want to have Jesus at the centre of that marriage and we pray that the wedding service this coming week and their married

lives would be a blessing where Jesus is seen so help them

Lord we pray and even in the preparation for the end of this week we know that in families with details and all the kind of things that are required in the planning there can be there can be tensions there can be difficulties as well as a whole lot of joy and so we ask that your hand would be upon them and that there would be peace there would be that steady focus on the love that you give to us and the love that we share one with another as we look to you so hear our prayers and help us this evening we ask we pray this in Jesus name and for Jesus sake Amen if you could turn please to the last section in Ecclesiastes Ecclesiastes chapter 12 and we're looking at the last section from verse 9 through to the the end of the chapter hopefully this evening someone said to me kind of early on in ministry when you see the runway land the plane and any preacher well that's maybe a bit cryptic for those who don't preach but it's probably not that cryptic because you've had to endure me preaching for the last few years when you see the runway land the plane what they were talking about was when to end a sermon don't go circling around like a plane that's kind of lost in the fog and the clouds the low clouds in an airport when you see the runway this wiser preacher said to me land the plane it's a skill that

I'm still trying to master but I don't need to tell you that well tonight Solomon the preacher as he calls himself in this book of ecclesiastes he's landing the plane he's bringing this book of ecclesiastes to an end and as he does so he gives us a kind of final insight a final glimpse into himself the preacher the second thing we'll see is the point he goes back over the point of the sermon the reason he's been speaking the reason he's been sharing these things the things that he presents to us in ecclesiastes and the final thing we see as the book comes to an end is the purpose in life so that's the structure we see there's a whole lot of ink that spilled over some people say that the last section in ecclesiastes isn't written by Solomon it's written by somebody else they're kind of looking in they found this collection of amazing writing and they're kind of putting their PS on it and they're giving us a look into the preacher and the sort of summary of it all it's possible my own opinion it's unlikely

I think Solomon is writing and it's just the final section and so we have this structure we see the preacher the point of the sermon the purpose that we are to have in life so first of all the preacher look at verse 9 besides being wise the preacher also taught the people knowledge weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care the preacher sought to find words of delight and uprightly he wrote words of truth so twice in these two verses verses 9 and 10 we see the character the profile of the preacher and he shares with us in conclusion what he's trying to get over in this book and there's more than this but there's just three words I want to highlight in these two verses first of all knowledge secondly weighing or discernment and lastly delight so first of all we see that word knowledge in verse 9 besides being wise the preacher also taught the people knowledge now there's lots of things that we can know everyone in this room will have in-depth knowledge of something the things that we're interested in we tend to find out about remember the [ 31 : 26 ] TV show Mastermind I don't know but it's still on TV but you would get these contestants that would come on to the show and they would have specialist areas of knowledge they would have in-depth knowledge of the most obscure subjects now as we come to this book of Ecclesiastes we see very clearly that God wants us to know some things and he's used the preacher we think it's Solomon he's used the preacher to teach knowledge so as we think back through the book what have we learned through Ecclesiastes Ecclesiastes there's various but there's at least a couple of lessons which are repeated that will stick in our minds as we think back through the breadth of the book we've learned about the futility of life under the sun the futility of life without

God Solomon says repeatedly life under the sun life lived without God it's meaningless it's like chasing the wind a powerful picture that he presents of somebody chasing the wind and in Harris we know how foolish and how stupid we look and we're chasing the wind and that's the picture it's one of the repeat lessons in the book of Ecclesiastes life is meaningless it's futile if all we are focused on is what's under the sun and we leave God out of it we've also learned repeatedly in this book of Ecclesiastes that God has set eternity in the human heart and that's an encouraging point for those here who are Christians sometimes we know that we have this great commission we know that we have to go and speak to people about

Jesus we know that we have to share with people the truth that this life is not all the rips and sometimes we we're standing in front of somebody and this conversation begins and we think

there's just no way that they're going to listen to anything because they have no interest in anything and actually what God tells us at various points in the Bible and particularly in this book is that he has set eternity in the human heart so think about your friends and think about your your family think about perhaps some of the hardest most far away people from God that you know take encouragement from the knowledge that is shared in Ecclesiastes that God has set eternity in their hearts or cross over to

Romans chapter 1 and think about the fact that everybody knows that there is a God to truth that has been hardwired into us we may suppress it we may push it down but it's there the God who is over the sun wants us to know and find meaning and satisfaction in him so these are these are two lessons which are repeated life without God futile meaningless but God is there and God the eternal God wants us to know him and find satisfaction and meaning in him two of the things that we are taught we are to know through this book

Reichen the commentator says Ecclesiastes mainly teaches us to see how meaningless life is without God and how little joy there is under the sun if we try to leave our creator out of his universe so that's one word that the preacher uses as we have this profile of the preacher he is trying to pass on to us knowledge verse 9 but the next word I want to highlight is this word he uses weighing or discernment would be another word to use it's not just knowledge it's weighing that knowledge it's trying to discern it's one thing knowing and studying but it's another thing to apply knowledge so that it actually makes a difference and it has some traction in our lives when you've heard this thing said before it's knowledge to realise that a tomato is a fruit but it takes discernment not to put it in a fruit salad it would be a highly unwelcome guest in a fruit salad but it takes discernment you've got to weigh that up and what

[ 37 : 06 ] God wants us to know he wants us to apply to our lives now thinking about Solomon Solomon didn't always do that Solomon knew and he teaches that there is satisfaction in knowing God and having a relationship with the living God but Solomon often neglected his relationship with God and Solomon we know from the the wider reading of scripture he he focused often on women not his relationship on God but on his relationship with women and not one woman not one wife but many wives he had hundreds so it's not surprising that as he took one wife on another and another and another and went against God's design that his heart was led far away from

God and so Solomon as he writes sometimes he is writing from bitter experience he's learned discernment from some of the mistakes that he's made and I think there's always encouragement to see that when we fail as we do and when we fall and then we repent even our mistakes can be used by God to teach ourselves and others discernment there's no write-offs in the Christian world Christians fall Christians fail we make mistakes but when we repent we're not scrubbed off the list God even can use our mess our mistakes to emphasize to us and to others the discernment the knowledge the wisdom of following his way and not going our way think about

Peter who denied Jesus he fell he failed and yet when he turned back God used him to strengthen the brothers think about David the psalmist he fell he failed he sinned but as he repented he gave us the gift of Psalm 32 Psalm 51 these songs these prayers of how we repent what it looks like and what it feels like to repent and listen to Solomon he doesn't have a curriculum vitae that is unblemished he made many mistakes and yet God is using him to pass on knowledge and to pass on discernment learned experiential discernment to us so there's knowledge there's discernment and the last word in this section is delight verse 10 where do we find delight for our souls we find delight for our souls in God's word and actually more particularly we find delight for our souls in God himself as we meet with him as he reveals himself to us as he speaks to us through his word we have been created we have been made to delight in the

Lord Psalm 37 and verse 4 says delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart now what are the desires of your heart and what are the desires of my heart well the Lord we don't always realize that but Solomon reminds us Solomon knew this Solomon had immense riches he had huge power Solomon in terms of the perception of this world he had it all and yet he says it's all vanity it's all meaningless it's nothing without God there's only delight to be found in that close walk with God remember Israel in the wilderness in Psalm 106 verses 14 and 15 it says they lusted exceedingly in the wilderness and tempted

God in the desert and he gave them their request but sent leanness into their soul and the preacher Solomon he knows what it is to have everything that he could ever request and yet to experience leanness of soul he knows what it is to have all the money all the power all the influence any girl

that he wants and yet he knows what it is to experience leanness of soul the sadness that comes with having it all and also he knows what it is to delight in the

[ 43 : 07 ] Lord and he's sharing with us words of delight he's sharing with us words of truth he's sharing with us from the perspective of one who has learned lessons the hard way sometimes that there is only delight to be found in God everything else apart from God vanity to the preacher it's the first point the second point is the point of the sermon verses 11 and 12 the words of the wise he says are like goads and like nails firmly fixed are the collected saints they are given by one shepherd my son beware of anything beyond these of making many books there is no end and much study is a weariness of the flesh so Solomon here as he comes into land he's reminding us of the point of the sermon the book of Ecclesiastes is a sermon he's reminding us of the point of this book and the point is to make us wise this is a wisdom book what he has written verse 11 are the words of the wise now where does wisdom come from well wisdom comes not from inside of us but from outside of us wisdom comes not from from this world but it comes from heaven

James tells us that and that's what the preacher here is saying he's saying in verse 11 these sayings I've collected them I haven't thought them up they're not mine I've just collected them I've received them they're sayings verse 11 that have been given to me and who has given them we ask the question of Solomon and he answers us the one who has given me these sayings these words of the wise is the one shepherd and if you look at verse 11 you can see in the translation that the word shepherd has the capital S so who is the shepherd who are we seeing in this book who are we hearing in this book well it's Jesus

I remember old John Maxwell the elder and he would regularly say to me on every page of the Bible look for Jesus and I think in every chapter that we've been in in Ecclesiastes we've seen Jesus and again here in this section we see Jesus the good shepherd the one who came from heaven we're seeing Jesus he came to bring us wisdom he himself is wisdom and Solomon has been used by God to say to us look to Jesus if we want to know purpose if we want to know peace if we want to experience joy if we want to avoid living a meaningless life listen to

Jesus because this is where we've been pointed in this book I trust in Jesus verse 11 the words of the wise are like goads boys and girls you can wake up for a wee minute what's a goad does anybody know what a goad is does anybody know what a goad is I didn't I had to look it up something very sharp the commentator Reichen says a goad is one of the tools of a shepherd's trade a sharp stick that spurs a stubborn beast to keep moving to

Solomon he says the words of the wise are like goads sharp sticks to keep us moving when I was thinking about the word goad immediately my mind went to another verse and your mind will be going to the same verse and it's in Acts chapter 26 and verse 14 remember Saul the persecutor he is heading on a expedition to find and persecute Christians and Jesus the resurrected Christ confronts him knocks him flat and says to him in Acts 26 verse 14 Saul Saul why are you persecuting me it is hard for you to kick against the goads it's quite an image when you think about it how hard and how sore and how foolish it would be to kick hard against sharpened sticks every kick every blow that we would strike against this sharp stick it would bring an injury to us and it would have no impact on the gold and that's the picture we think we think about the situation with

[ 49 : 09 ] Paul on the Damascus road Saul he was full of zeal to persecute Christians he hated the name of Jesus but he was never going to overcome he was never going to kick over the resurrected Jesus and so Jesus says to him Saul Saul why are you kicking against me why are you kicking against my church the gates of hell will not prevail against my church so why are you kicking against me it's hard for you it's bloody for you it's painful for you it's futile for you Saul to kick against me i wonder if there's anyone here tonight who is kicking against

Jesus wonder if there's someone here tonight or someone who's who's watching or listening at a distance and they're kicking against Jesus Solomon says to us in Ecclesiastes and Saul says through his testimony and acts don't do it because you will not win that battle if we think about our country today the culture that we're living in it's kicking against the wisdom of God's word constantly we're living in a country where we're living in a culture that says that God has the design for marriage wrong we're living in a culture where we're continually hearing that in many cases God has been muddled up when he's handed out our gender there are governments there are church men and women who think that they can kick against God's word its designs and prevail and they and we never will we've got a picture of what we're living through in Psalm 2 we see in Psalm 2 nations uniting in this display of force against God and against his son against his word and what

does God do does God panic no it says that God laughs because the nations as they unite against him look so pathetic so how do we apply this to to our lives and to our situation well

I think one application that we can take away is that we pray for mercy and we pray for repentance as a nation as we kick against the sharp sword of God's word let's pray that God will move by his spirit so we will stop that we can take the individual application I don't know what's going on in your heart as you don't know what's going on in mine but if we are kicking against the sharp sword of God's word let us repent return to him and then as we move into verse 17 let's not lose sight of God's word by being distracted by another thousand ideologies when we think about our culture how many people today are closing God's word but they're delving into all kinds of mysticism and spiritualism and eastern religions on a quest to find meaning and truth now what does Solomon have to say to that through Solomon well verse 12 he says my son beware of anything beyond these collected sins these verses of making many books there is no end says Solomon and much study is a weariness of the flesh or in weerspeed the commentator says don't test God's truth by the many books written by men test men's books by the truth of God's word and so the book of Ecclesiastes says in

[ 54 : 21 ] Old Testament language what we are told in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 2 we are to be fixing our eyes on Jesus because he is the author he is the pioneer he is the perfecter of our faith so there's the preacher as he teaches us knowledge as he teaches how to discern how to weigh things up as he shares with us the delight of knowing God and then there's the point of the sermon as we see the wisdom and the power and the truth of God's word and the stupidity the futility of kicking against it and the final thing we have here is the purpose in life our purpose in life because this is what the whole!

book is about why are we here? And we have it all captured in verse 13 the end of the matter says Solomon all has been heard fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man!

this is the meaning of life every generation is searching for the meaning of life every generation is asking the question why are we here students generation by generation sit around in dark rooms debating the meaning of life the questions of life often going round and round and round in circles remember the novel for some of the older folks here from the 1970s the hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy wikipedia tells me a group of hyper intelligent beings demand to learn the answer to the ultimate question of life the universe and everything there's this supercomputer that they're trying to learn the answer from called deep thought it's specifically built for this purpose of giving the meaning of life it takes deep thought computer 7.5 million years to compute the answer and check the answer and what was the answer what was the meaning of life at the end of the book well it spat out the answer and the answer was the number what did that mean it meant nothing and that's the point if we try and figure out the meaning of life whilst we set

God aside it means nothing there's no answers see only God the God who made the universe the God who gave us life can answer the question of our purpose and the question of our purpose is that we are to fear God and keep his commandments it's the whole duty of man and woman and boy and girl what does it mean to fear God well it means to trust him means to love him to fear God is to understand how vast how big God is and how small I am to fear God is to understand how holy God is and how pure God is and how sinful I am and then when we have that realization when we have grasped that truth in some measure we don't run from him from some dreadful fear but we run to him in reverent fear because we hear him calling and saying come to me and taste my grace and receive my love and receive my forgiveness and be my child!

[ 59 : 02 ] And we come to him! That's what it means to fear God! Rearsby the commentator says an unholy fear makes people run away from God!

But a holy fear brings them to their knees in loving submission to God! God is our Savior! And we find salvation when we come to him! And God is our Lord! And he is king! And we find freedom and we find meaning and we find satisfaction as we submit to him!

Oswald Chambers says the remarkable thing about fear in God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else!

Whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else and when we fear God when we love him when we trust him as Savior when we submit to him as Lord we want to live to please him we want to keep his commandments as an expression of our love for him remember what Jesus said in John chapter 14 he says if you love me you will keep my commandments!

[ 60 : 50 ] so this is the purpose of our lives this is the meaning of life it's not the number 42 it's not a PhD in your specialist subject it's not a six figure sum that you get paid every year to do the job that you want to do it's not a million likes on Instagram it's not a perfect marriage you'll soon learn they don't exist the purpose of our lives the reason that we have breath in our lungs today is so that we can fear God and keep his commands it's so that we can receive and live by his wisdom it's so that we can trust the son the good shepherd and as we do these things the things that we were created for our souls are not lean they are full and we experience delight

I can see the runway! We're just coming down to land as we hit our final verse and it's a funny verse to finish with in some ways verse 14 for God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing whether good or evil God will bring every deed into judgment every secret thing whether good or evil God is this a threatening verse to finish with

I don't think it is this is a verse this is a word that helps us focus on the God who's over the sun the God who sees all things and it's a word that helps us to remember that because God sees all things our lives are not meaningless when I finish with a quote Ryken says this quicker and better than I can if there is no God and therefore no final judgment then it is hard to see how anything we do really matters but if there is a God who will judge the world then everything matters it will matter how we used our time whether we wasted it on foolish pleasures or worked hard for the Lord it will matter what we did with our money whether we spent it on ourselves or invested it in the eternal kingdom it will matter what we did with our bodies what our eyes saw our hands touched and our mouths spoke what we did for a two year old will matter the way we made time for her and got down on our level what we said about someone else's performance will matter that sarcastic comment or the word of genuine praise the proud boast and the selfless sacrifice will matter the household task and the homework assignment will matter the cup of water the tear of compassion the word of testimony all of it will matter the final message of ecclesiastes is not that nothing matters therefore but that everything does we'll pray heavenly father we thank you for your word and we pray that you would bless it to us that you would impress it upon us and that you would help us to live by it we pray this in

Jesus name amen we will close by saying from mission praise 760 when we walk with the Lord trust and obey there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in

[ 66 : 58 ] Jesus but to trust and obey!

happy in Jesus but to trust and obey not a burden we bear not a sorrow we share but a joy he doth richly repay not a wrath not a cross not a frown not a cross but it's blessed if we trust and obey trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey but he never can prove that he likes of his love until all on the altar we lay for the favour he shows and the joy he bestows but for them who will trust and obey trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey in the fellow ships we we will send at his feet or we walk by his side in the way what he says we will do where he says we will go never fear only trust and obey trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever more Amen