

Psalm 111:10 NIV - 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.

Psalm 111:10 says fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. *What more do we do that demonstrates that we have good understanding?*

Proverbs 29:18 ESV - 18 Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.

God has given us a prophetic vision of the future through His Word. There will be judgment when Christ returns. If we ignore that future, we might disregard His commands, or “cast off restraints” as Proverbs says. This is what Solomon warned the youth about. Keeping the law should not be a burden. It should be a blessing. God didn’t give us His commands to constrain us, but to give us life.

WRAP-UP

Solomon had wealth and power and denied himself no pleasure, but still discovered it was all vapor apart from God. And his conclusion was simple- fear God and obey Him. We should live every day with the end in mind.

MEMORY VERSE

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

- Ecclesiastes 12:13 NLT - 13

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

Challenge – Read the last three chapters of Revelation this week as a reminder of the promise of Christ’s return and the judgment of the world.

Fear God

Living Life Backwards #4

INTRODUCTION

This week concludes our study in Ecclesiastes. Although we haven’t examined the entire book in depth, we found its recurring theme is that all we strive for in this world is vapor, and we will find ourselves “chasing after the wind” if we live our lives apart from God. How then do we find meaning in life? The profound conclusion is in Chapter 12 verse 13, “Fear God and obey His commands”. Yes, it can really be that simple. But leading up to this conclusion Solomon warns the young not to delay. All the days of our lives we should be living with the end in mind.

Ice Breaker

Do you have any phobias?

Key Passage

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

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Remembering Who God Is

Ecclesiastes 12:1 NIV - 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"--

Solomon spent his lifetime chasing the wind. At the conclusion of Ecclesiastes, he shares his wisdom borne of experience, with those who are young. Essentially, he says, “Live your whole life with the end in mind, don’t wait until you are old to honor your Creator.”

There are so many titles and names for God it is challenging to make a complete list. But let's try to make that list. How many can you name? Each of the names on your list represents a unique aspect of God and His relationship to us. What is the significance of God's title as your Creator? Describe what it means that God is your Creator.

Isn't our Creator the one we owe our existence to? He is the one who gives form and purpose to his creation. And yet this verse warns us not to let other things overshadow our Creator during our youth.

What are the things that can commonly draw us away from honoring God when we are young? Why do you think we seek God more fervently when we grow old? (hint- just look at the description of old age in verses 2 -6)

2. What Fear Means

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

In our key verse (Ecc 12:13) Solomon says the bottom line is to fear God and obey his commands. But what does it mean to fear God? If you have been in church for some time, you may have heard that fearing God means to respect and be in awe of Him. But that is only part of it. The word Solomon uses for fear in Hebrew is *yārē'*. It is defined as "fear, revere, be afraid, to stand in awe, honor, respect"

Revelation 1:17 NIV - 17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

Isaiah 6:5 NIV - 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

Ezekiel 1:28 NIV - 28 Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

It can be difficult to understand why we should fear a God of love. But remember, God is also a righteous judge, and a consuming fire. We

would be foolish to enter His presence without fearing Him. Just consider the responses of John, Isaiah and Ezekiel when they were in God's presence.

We need both the fear of God and intimacy with Him. What problems might arise if we only fear God but don't know Him? What are some problems that can arise if we treat God too casually?

Hebrews 12:26, 28-29 NLT - 26 When God spoke from Mount Sinai his voice shook the earth, but now he makes another promise: "Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also." ... 28 Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe. 29 For our God is a devouring fire.

The fear of God is not limited to the Old Testament. In Hebrews our response to God is compared with Moses' experience on Mt. Sinai. God's gift of an unshakable kingdom should fill us with gratitude and worship out of a holy fear and awe of the God who shakes heaven and earth, but loves us.

3. Why We Obey

The second half of Solomon's conclusion was that it is our duty to obey God's commands, and his final statement tells us both why we should fear God and why we should obey His commands.

According to verse 14, why should we fear and obey God?

Ecclesiastes 12:14 ESV - 14 For[because] God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

God knows everything we have ever done. Can you imagine standing before Him in heaven as everything you ever did was reviewed? That thought alone may cause you to have a holy fear of God. It can also persuade you to obey His commands. But knowing that every sin was paid for by Jesus, you can have confidence in your eternal fate. Jesus redeemed you. Fear of God leads us to gratitude, praise, and worship.

Take a moment to reflect and pray a prayer of gratitude that Jesus has wiped away your sins and taken your punishment. Your gratitude and love for Him will also lead you to obey God.