

**This COULD End Well [Ecclesiastes 12]**  
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## INTRODUCTION

1. At the beginning of the fall, we started this study of the book of Ecclesiastes.
2. We started with reading a Shel Silverstein poem entitled, **The Search**.
  - a. Ecclesiastes speaks to our search for meaning in life and in the world.
    - 1) Nearly every time we discover answers, it leads to a new search & more questions.
    - b. That's why we summarized our study by stating, "THIS WON'T END WELL."
  3. As we conclude our study, a comprehensive look, we must ask **COULD this end well?**

## VERSES 8-11

"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Everything is meaningless!" <sup>9</sup>Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs.

<sup>10</sup>The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

1. True wisdom is the recognition of the meaningless of life.
  - a. The book ran through a comprehensive list of things that are meaningless.
    - 1) Whether work, happiness, or wealth, none could alone provide meaning.
    - 2) It doesn't mean these are totally without value.
    - 3) Still, they're incapable of fully providing everything we need for a life of meaning.
  - c. The Teacher's point: understanding this MEANINGLESS will actually help your life.
    - 1) The search for meaning is not conducted in a vacuum. We are reliant on guides.
    - 2) We are impacted by teachers—those willing to invest in you to make us better.
2. It's up to us to do the same. How should we emulate the **teacher**?
  - a. VS9 tells us to teach people.
    - 1) Who is in your life that you are teaching?
    - 2) Into whom are you pouring your wisdom?
    - 3) We have ample opportunity to humbly teach those around us.
  - b. VS9 also instructs us to search the Scriptures.
    - 1) Our personal study of the Bible is an important factor to finding meaning.
    - 2) It's the foundation of our ability to speak into others
  - c. VS10 asks that we contextualize concepts.
    - 1) You must always figure out how to express wisdom well.
    - 2) Wisdom isn't really useful unless people understand what you're teaching.
  - d. Finally, VS 10 tells us to speak the truth.
    - 1) We're in the business of sharing wisdom.
    - 2) Wisdom is truth, not a collection of our personal opinions.
    - 3) And Jesus was the embodiment of wisdom. **John 6:67,68:**  
"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. 'Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'"

## VERSES 11,12

<sup>11</sup>The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by one shepherd. <sup>12</sup>Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.

1. Wise words are likened to two different things here: **goads** and **nails**.
  - a. **Goads** are long wooden rods with iron points, used for driving oxen and other animals.
    - 1) A goad is poked at the animal to make him move in the desired direction.
  - b. **Nails** are fasteners, used to keep things in place.
  - c. Wisdom motivates the lazy like goads and nails secure them from drifting away.
2. I love the simple wisdom of verse 12. There is no end of **making of books**.
  - a. Everyone fancies themselves an author. There's a lot of publishing out there.

- 1) In the U.S. alone, 300,000 books hit bookshelves every year (not counting e-books)
  - 2) The average book sells about 250 copies a year and only 3,000 in its overall printing
  - b. I've always been leery of writing a book because will anyone really care?
  3. Combine this fact with "**much study wearis the body,**" (a verse for students?).
  - a. The point here isn't a discouragement against reading, thinking, or listening.
  - b. Rather, it's a recalibration of how we treat the content with which we wrestle.
- 1) There is wisdom that's INFORMATIONAL and wisdom that's TRANSFORMATIONAL.
  - 2) Again, wisdom is meant to create powerful endings, not make us feel superior.

### **VERSE 13**

<sup>13</sup>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.

1. Verse 13 articulates the point of the whole book. This is where meaning is ultimately found.
  - a. First, **FEAR GOD**.
    - 1) When you feel small, you're struck by his awe
    - 2) This is a healthy fear; it's a form of respect. Understand who He is.
  - b. And **KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS**.
    - 1) Don't misinterpret the biblical view of salvation. You aren't SAVED by keeping laws.
    - 2) However, your life tends to work better when you follow the commands of God.
2. **Wisdom isn't forging your own meaning; it's discovering the meaning God created in you.**

### **VERSE 14**

<sup>14</sup>For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."

1. Our limited perspective will always prompt us to doubt what God is doing.
  - a. Even when we buy into godly wisdom, there are things that make us doubt
  - b. When these moments hit, how do we **FEAR GOD and KEEP HIS COMMANDS?**
  - c. We need to constantly remember the meaninglessness that the world is pursuing.
2. When all is said and done, God will prove himself faithful.
  - a. **1 Corinthians 4:5**

"Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart."

### **CONCLUSION**

1. Even if you haven't resonated with Ecclesiastes, hopefully you appreciate the point.
  - a. A world of hard and unbalanced truth makes life difficult to interpret.
  - b. We need the perspective of the teacher to help it make sense.
2. For us today, trying to formulate our approach to life, we need to ask ourselves:
  - a. **How WON'T this end well?**
  - b. **How COULD this end well**
  - c. Ultimately, in Jesus, this ending is complete.
    - 1) In Revelation 22:13, we read that not only will Jesus be there at the end, he has earned that right since he was also there at the beginning.
  - d. It's Jesus who provides meaning to all we go through in this life and in the one to come.

CONCLUDE WITH A TIME OF COMMUNION