

Everything Matters

Ecclesiastes 12:8-13

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Ecclesiastes calls us to think differently about our daily lives for the Glory of God

[8] **Vanity of vanities**, says the Preacher; all is **vanity**.

“Now we know that work is vanity, that there is nothing for us to gain from all our restless toil under the sun (e.g., Ecclesiastes 1:3). It is all “vanity and striving after wind” (Ecclesiastes 1:13–14; 2:18–23). We know that human wisdom is vanity, that it only increases our “sorrow” and “vexation” (Ecclesiastes 1:18). Whether we are wise or foolish does not even matter because we will all die in the end (Ecclesiastes 2:15–16). We know that 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).



It is all vanity. Power is vanity: there is no one to comfort the tears of the oppressed (Ecclesiastes 4:1). Money is vanity, too, because it causes no end of trouble as we look after our possessions, which may all be lost at 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).

Then there is the last of all vanities, which is the vanity of death. Nearly all of us will have to endure the indignities of growing old (Ecclesiastes 12:1ff.), 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).

Not that we never have any joy, of course. In spite of all the vanity, we can still rejoice in life’s many blessings. The Preacher has encouraged us to eat and drink and find satisfaction in our work (e.g., Ecclesiastes 2:24). He has told us that there is a time for healing and harvesting, a time for laughing and dancing, a time for loving and making peace (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8). He has told us to rejoice in the prosperity that God so richly provides (Ecclesiastes 5:19; 7:14) and to enjoy life with the one whom we love (Ecclesiastes 9:9). There is joy in the world under the blessing of a faithful God.

Yet 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. By the time we get to the end of Ecclesiastes, we have to admit that he has proved his case. "Nothing in our search has led us home," says Derek Kidner; "nothing that we are offered under the sun is ours to keep."2 Vanity of vanities! It is all vanity." - Ryken, Philip Graham Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters

Think Differently About Our Daily Lives

v.9-10 // Commentary on How The Preacher goes about his work:

[9] Besides being **wise**, the Preacher also taught the people **knowledge, weighing** and **studying** and **arranging** many proverbs **with great care**. [10] The Preacher sought to find **words of delight**, and **uprightly he wrote words of truth**.

These phrases in verses 9&10 represent a Logical Clarity, Literary Artistry and an Intellectual Integrity (summary from Ryken) – how our world needs these today... too often as believers we juggle these, trading one for another rather than living the full life we're called to in Christ.

v.11-12 // Summary as to Why The Preacher has compiled these writings:

[11] The words of the wise are like **goads**, and like **nails firmly fixed** are the collected sayings; they are **given by one Shepherd**. [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.

"Ecclesiastes does the same thing for people of faith [goads them on]. Although its words may be pleasing, they also inflict a certain amount of pain. They are goads to the conscience, making us uncomfortable enough to turn away from sin. They are a stimulus to the soul, steering us back onto the right spiritual path." - Ryken, Philip Graham Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters

Our Daily Lives for the Glory of God

[13] The end of the matter; all has been heard. **Fear God** and **keep his commandments**, for **this is the whole [duty] of man**. [14] For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

"This is not the first time that Ecclesiastes has told us to fear the living God. To fear God is to honor and revere him, to worship him as God. At various points the Preacher has told us to fear God because his work is eternal (3:14) and because he demands holy worship (5:7). He has told us to fear God in times of adversity as well as prosperity (7:14–18). He has told us that if we do fear God, it will go well with us (8:12). Now we are told to fear God and to obey him because one day we will stand before him for judgment." - Ryken, Philip Graham Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters

“his whole happiness and business — the total sum of all that concerns him — all that God requires of him — all that the Savior enjoins — all that the Holy Spirit teaches and works in him.” – Charles Bridges, Commentary on Ecclesiastes

The final message of Ecclesiastes is not that nothing matters but that everything does. What we did, how we did it, and why we did it will all have eternal significance. The reason everything matters is because everything in the universe is subject to the final verdict of a righteous God who knows every secret.