



Intro

Solomon, the wisest person to walk the earth, has sought out on this quest to discover if there was meaning / significance / deep purpose in this life apart from God. And his conclusion has been a resounding 'no'! It's all just vanity / enigma. That means that every effort to find meaning in the things of this life apart from God are just chasing after the wind...shepherding the wind. Meaning / joy in this life are found through a living hope in God who knows the end from the beginning.

7 Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.

Though life's dark sides can be unexpected and frustrating, life can be very, very beautiful.

8 So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.

This is reality. You've got a finite number of days, so go after life with all that you have. Yet, remember that for all those days when everything seems to line up...there will be more when the car won't start, coffee spills on your shirt, etc. So don't waste what you've got. Go after depth.

9 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth.

Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

He's aiming at the young people with this book that was probably used to teach others. But remember, we're all young relative to someone else...so listen. Don't waste it. Don't wake up one day with a list of 'want to do or want to be' and realize that the entire list is now 'should have done or could have been'.

Have you stopped being teachable? IE. Have you stopped confessing your mistakes and that you don't know what to do? Are you willing to be vulnerable to younger people? Where do you try to apply 'wisdom' to others' issues and pretend that you have the answers?

12: 1 "Remember also Your creator in the days of Your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them".

99% of people who ever become Christians are Christians before they're 28. If you won't live for your Creator in the days of your youth, chances are you'll never, ever live for Him. A day is coming, you may not believe this but it's true, you won't want to be here anymore. In verses 1-8 he paints a picture of what it'll be like. So remember God in the days of your youth: don't put off repentance to when the kids need religion.

What issues are you waiting for the "right time" to deal with? Reconciliation with a friend and family member? A besetting sin? How would your timetable change if you thought you would die soon? Have you considered that your heart will not always feel this conviction and that your heart may become cold in this area?

13 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: (1) fear God and (2) keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man (because this applies to every person). 14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil." Amen.

1) Fear God:

The fear of God is an awe, terror, respect and worship that we ought to have in response to who he is. It's a response to his holiness, judgment, power, love, mercy. In fact, the negative and slavish fear of punishment does is actually self-consumed with the threat of punishment and not the attributes of God. It's really the opposite of fear of God in the bible. God's enemies are terrified but those who know Him worship

You can know lots about God and not fear Him...even the demons know God and shudder. Some know about God but don't fear Him. You either think high of God and low of yourself or you think high of yourself and low of God...it's a scale.

When was the last time you felt a tangible sense of awe, terror, and respect for the person of God?

What led to that sense?

Have you ever felt awe, terror and respect? Be honest with yourself and your community: has your knowledge about God brought you to God himself or are you satisfied with the intellectual “idea” of God? What in your life would change if you feared Him?

Luke 12:4-5 // Jesus said fear the One who can take your life and throw you into hell...we have all kinds of fears...but of God...?

What fears have eclipsed the fear of God for you? The opinions of other people, failure, success, appearance, pleasure, bugs? What does Luke 12:4-5 say about this folly?

- *Prv. 1:7 - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.*
- *Prv. 14:26,27 - In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence...The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.*
- *Psalm 111:10 - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.*

2) Follow His Commands:

The real question is: Who is God and what has he called you to do? This is a hard word because we want to be Him calling the balls and strikes...Adam and Eve wanted to be Him. It's an old problem called sin.

Without the Fear of God, God's commands become suggestions that you can take or leave.

Can you think of an area of your life where you God's command has become a suggestion? Ask your community to help you see clearly what are some of the consequences of this are.

Where do you think that His commands come from? Love or Anger?

His commands come out of love and protection...He's a dad. Only a foolish and rebellious child would ignore the commands of a loving mom and dad.

Work this out: our struggle with sin is a public or private display of your struggle to fear God which boils itself down to a struggle to understand who God is. What are you not believing about God?

The fight to obey is a fight to trust and obey your Dad in heaven. Do you believe this? How can we help each other trust and obey? (hint...it begins with truth about God.)

14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.” Amen.

How we typically respond:

1) We all think we're ok. Yet, if some of you took your last breath here and now, you would spend eternity apart from God in eternal torment.

2) We think we are the exception to the rule. Yet if God has the courage in His holiness to pour His wrath for sin out on His own Son...who do you think that you are? We are not that smooth. He will deal with you.

3) Judgment means little because

1) ...it's delayed. All seems to go well, but 2 Peter 3:14 says that it's God's patience at work here...He cares immensely and will bring all things into judgment. (*14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. 15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation...*)

2) ... you've been fooled by your self-righteousness. In doing good things out of your own goodness for your own goodness you're doing it for yourself and not God. Morality is further from God than anything.

Which one of these responses describes you the most? Ask yourself: Do I really fear God? What

would someone say if they knew your heart and saw your actions?

everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

Do you find it mildly horrifying that God will judge even the secret things? Where have we been duped into thinking sin is simply behavior and not an attitude of the heart? Why do we think this way? What does this say about the pervasiveness of sin and the need for repentance? Tell your community about one motive that you have been convicted of recently and what repentance looked (looks) like for you.

The Good News Now: You're Still Breathing

At the cross sin was judged, placed on Jesus where He was crushed for my sin in my place as my substitute. I was guilty and was due death b/c of my sin. But in His grace, Jesus did that in my place. The sinless eternal God became man lived the life I was created to live and died in my place to pay the price for the life that I choose to live instead...there is judgement for Christians. It just happened to occur to Jesus. God doesn't overlook my sin, Jesus paid the price. We're saved by grace b/c we could never pay God back. Only God can please God.

So. Judgment is coming and we will stand before the living God and our eternity will be sealed in this lifetime...there is time for repentance. God is still wooing you. There is no chance after death. Just eternity. To joy or torment apart from Jesus.

What about God's love?

1 John 4 says that God is love...the holiness of God gives His love gravity...it means something. In His love He has chosen to love what was unlovely and love it into loveliness. It's not that we first loved God but that God first loved us and gave Himself up for us. God takes the first step and loves you.

Does God love you?

Look at the cross. He demonstrates His love in this, "while we were still sinners, Jesus Christ died for us". There is your God loving you actively...dying in your place for your sins...rather than cursing you He screams out 'forgive them'. There is the justice of God / the judgment of God / the love of God on display.

Read through these statements again. Does this good news move you? If the good news is not "good" to us, is it because we have lost sight of judgment? When was the last time you sensed the judgment of God toward sin in light of His relentless and unwavering holiness? What effect has being reminded of God's wrath toward sin had on you?

How does this transform us?

It's the fear and worship of God that produces obedience from delight. The whole duty of man is to 'fear God'. Solomon's dad taught him: 'if you delight in the Lord, he will give you the desires of your heart.' What he knew was that in the process of cultivating delight God would be cultivating a heart that desires what He desires. David was teaching Solomon and us that is we delight in God we get whatever we want...he was teaching him that delighting in God brings new desires...desires that you can follow with all that you in this life.

Can you feel your desires changing? Tell your Community about a desire that has given way to a greater desire for God?

We can get to delight through repentance...turning from ourselves to Jesus...from folly to wisdom...from sin to obedience through grace.

Describe the intensity of your delight recently? Do you miss it enough to lose face and repent of a particular sin that you are holding on to or not bringing into the light? Confess that to your Community or a close friend.