

# A CHALLENGE TO LIVE WELL

APRIL 9, 2006 – ECCLESIASTES 11 & 12  
LESSON 12

**MEMORY VERSE:** *ECCLESIASTES 12:13, “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”*

## **INTRODUCTION**

As we conclude this study in Ecclesiastes, Solomon comes full circle by reminding us one more time that everything in life is meaningless. Fortunately, for us he does not leave us hanging on this hopeless note. At the end of this profound and relevant book Solomon provides us with the answer to the question that burdens all of us concerning the meaning of life. Before he answers this question, he offers some final words of advice regarding how we should live our lives. Solomon counsels us to share all that we have and not worry about issues in life that we cannot change. We are also exhorted to enjoy life to its fullest while we have the physical and mental capacity to appreciate all that it offers. After struggling with all of the realities, issues, complexities, and mysteries of this life, Solomon points us to his conclusion regarding the meaning of life – we are to fear God and obey His commandments.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT**

1. In 11:1-6, Solomon gives advice concerning how we should approach the uncertainties of this life. What instructions does he offer and what support does he give for adhering to these instructions?
2. Solomon goes on to give us advice regarding how we should embrace life in 11:7-10. According to these verses, what cautions does Solomon offer to the young man concerning how he should live his life?
3. From these same verses (11:7-10), how does this perspective encourage us to pursue joy?

4. In 12:1, what is the wise advice Solomon is pleading with us to embrace? Why is this so important?
  
5. In 12:2-8, what comparisons describing the deterioration brought on by old age and death does Solomon use to encourage us to follow with his wise advice in 12:1?
  
6. How does Solomon describe himself in 12:9-12? What does he state is his purpose for writing the book of Ecclesiastes? What is a “goad” and what is the meaning and purpose of it in this context?
  
7. Describe in your own words the conclusion Solomon draws at the end of this book (12:13-14)? What does it mean to “fear God and keep His commandments?” What does he conclude about God that brings all things into balance?

## **OUR WALK WITH GOD**

1. Life is full of uncertainties that only God truly understands and knows about. Do you spend more time focusing on things you can change, or on worrying about things you cannot change? What might you do to stop worrying about things in life that you cannot explain or change? How does God call us to be bold in a world of uncertainty?

2. Why should the eventuality of death be a strong encouragement to a risk-taking commitment to God? How do you think taking risks in your spiritual life would impact your relationship with the Lord? In your spiritual life, what is one area in which you have been prodded to step out in faith and take a risk? Ask your small group to encourage and hold you accountable to take this step of faith.
  
3. Solomon exhorts us to enjoy the days we have on this earth to their fullest. However, most people are wrapped up in their careers, family issues and the busyness of life. When was the last time you carved out time in your daily routine to enjoy the beauty and majesty of God's creation? Do you consistently slow your life down long enough to spend time alone with the Lord, seeking to know Him intimately and personally? What can you do this week to begin the process of slowing down and enjoying the Lord and the abundant life He desires for you during your few short days on this earth?

### **GOING DEEPER**

1. Read John 1:1-4; 3:16; 6:35; 10:10; 11:25; 14:6. What do these verses reveal to you about Jesus and the true meaning of this life?
  
2. Share with your group some of the ways this study in Ecclesiastes has affected your life.

## **ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS FOR THE WEEK**

“You can’t let what you don’t know stop you from what you can do – Go live!”

Tommy Nelson

“I always notice that people who make the biggest impact are the people who walk the closest to the Lord.”

Tommy Nelson

“We praise God because it is right, because it is appropriate, and because it is commanded. But praising God also has a radical effect on us. I dare you to begin the next seven days with intense, heartfelt praise and worship. Read a praise psalm each day – praise Him for the sunshine or the rain – exalt Him for the sheer goodness of a life that features His presence. Sit at His feet for just a few moments and then watch the effect on your day.”

David Jeremiah, “Searching For Heaven On Earth”

“God created you with a place in your heart that only He can fill. He has set eternity in your heart. Life for you and for me is like a trip to the mall on Christmas Eve. There is color and music and mingled fragrances everywhere, all sensuous, all seductive, all competing for our attention – all the vanities and pursuits that come up empty. Solomon tried every one of them.

Then, in the back corner, we see the narrow door. It is quiet, plain, unmarked, and largely ignored as people rush by. But we know that our Savior has left this door ajar for us and that it leads us to the place where we will find all that our hearts have desired.

The Good Shepherd said, ‘I have come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly’ (John 10:10). The door may be plain, but the world behind it is rich indeed —rich and joyful, filled with pleasures. As a matter of fact, all the vain things that charmed us most in this earthly life – the pleasures and pursuits that felt and tasted so empty – are now as wonderful as they always should have been. The Shepherd makes the very sunshine itself feel brighter.”

David Jeremiah, “Searching For Heaven On Earth”