

Living under God

Ecclesiastes 12:8-14



Finding the right thing to say

Imagine a student going to office hours

"I failed the exam. What should I do?"

What might the instructor say? Which thing is the right thing to say?

Without a good diagnosis, we don't know what the treatment plan should be

"A person finds joy in giving an apt reply— and how good is a timely word!" Prov. 15:23

How are we to know what to say?

Finding the right thing to hear

What word do you and I need from God today?

First step: Choose to pay attention, no matter what He says

Second step: Ask God to speak

"Inclusion"

Two very similar statements around other text. Maybe "bookends" that surround a unit of text

And sometimes the bookends tell us something about what's in the middle

Ecclesiastes 12:8-14

8

See Ecclesiastes 1:1-2

Life is a puzzle with no human solution

→ There are mysteries we can't explain

→ And decay and death come to us all

9-12

Pick your teachers carefully

→ He brings attention to what is next

13-14

Simplicity on the far side of complexity. **In every situation, this is it!**



The Main Point

"Fear God and keep his commandments"

So what does it mean to "fear" God??

Space

Going to space

We need...a spaceship!

A spacewalk

We need...a space suit and a tether

A space drive

We need...a "moon buggy" and enough battery power!

A spacewalk with no tether

We need...a working jetpack, and enough battery power!

What matters most in a spacewalk with no tether?

Always aware of how to get back to the spaceship

They "**fear**" the spaceship:

they **know** that they are entirely dependent upon getting back to the spaceship

always have it in mind

Every action is tested: Is this moving me toward the spaceship or away from it?



Ecclesiastes: Life is like a spacewalk with no tether

What matters most?

Always aware of our connection with God

We must “**fear**” God

know that we are entirely dependent upon our connection with God

always have God in mind

Every action is tested: **Is this moving me toward God or away from God?**

True life is only and always through a life-giving connection with Almighty God

In **every** life circumstance, this is what matters most!

God is the source of all life and goodness

“God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” *1 John 1:5* ▶ “God is love.” *1 John 4:16* ▶ “We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.” *1 Timothy 4:10* ▶ “I am the LORD, who heals you.” *Exodus 12:26* ▶ “Yet their Redeemer is strong; the LORD Almighty is his name.” *Jeremiah 50:34*

First thought in trouble or joy: **Where is God? How am I connected with Him?**

Second thought: **How do I move closer to Him?**

Application

Cry out to God

When there is good Luke 17:15-17

When there is trouble Psalm 86:6-7

When we are tempted Matthew 6:13

When we have sinned Psalm 51:1-2

When we are bored or lifeless Psalm 73:26; Ezekiel 11:29

When we feel unworthy Psalm 22:6, 11

When we are rejected or persecuted 1 Peter 4:19

When we are lost Psalm 107:4-6

When we are in a dark prison Psalm 107:10-11, 13

Then take steps toward God

Ask and listen: how am I to come closer?

The promise: “I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:20

The command: “Come near to God and he will come near to you.” James 4:8

Take steps toward God = Move with God

That is: Obey His commands: Love God and love people and Seek first His Kingdom and His ways

By God’s design, Jesus is our Tehter

“All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is **the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me**, but raise them up at the last day.” *John 6:37-39*

“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.”

Fear God like a spacewalker fears the spaceship

First thought in trouble or joy: Where is God? How am I connected with Him?

Then: “Come near to God and He will come near to you.”

Reflection Questions for later today or this week...

1. What or whom do you naturally fear? In other words, what is your first thought in trouble or joy?
2. What helps you to fear God? What does it look like in your life to fear God above all else?

Conversation starters

See reflection question #1