

## When Life Gets Twisted: Finding Meaning in the Absurdities of Life

### *What it Means to be Human*

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Text: Ecclesiastes 12:8-14 ESV

Keyword: word/words

#### Introduction

#### LIVE THE STORY

*The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community.*

*The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.*

- How might the analogy of the broken vase and the four children fit with what we find in Ecclesiastes?
- Calvin describes the book of Psalms as “An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul.” If we applied that to the whole of Scripture, what does it say about the importance using a variety of Scripture in the diet of the church? What unique contributions might Ecclesiastes make?
- The Preacher set out to find delightful words, but in the end, what did he find? How does the picture of a Shepherd fit well with what he found?
- Why might it be important to find a balance between encouragement and “goads and nails” or “rebuke and correction” in preaching today?
- What do you think the words “beyond these” were referring to? Just this book? Books outside Jewish wisdom literature?
- Why might it be helpful for believers to read writings from godly believers outside of their own particular group of believers?
- What are some misunderstandings about what the fear of God is?
- What is the difference between a childish view of God’s commands and a mature, son and daughter view of God’s commands?
- How does Christ demonstrate the fulfillment of this verse that says that to fear God and keep His commandments is all of the person?

#### I. The Shepherd’s Word (9-11)

- A. What preacher doesn’t want his sermons to be liked?
  - i. The Preacher sets out to find delightful words, but like everything else he sets out to find in Ecclesiastes, he does not find it! Rather, he writes straight words of truth!
  - ii. Goads and Nails
    - a) 2 Tim. 4:1-2
    - b) 2 Tim. 3:16-17
- B. Wisdom Given by One Shepherd

## II. The Superfluous Words (12)

A. Competing Voices

B. Too many books?

N. T. Wright : “Paul notes that Christians are to strive after unity, working hard at loving one another and developing humility, gentleness, and patience (4.1–3), since they are called together to belong to the one God (4.4–6). This is the reason God gives diverse ministries to the church (4.7–13): to build up the body of Christ, in order that we should all reach unity in our belief and loyalty, and in knowing God’s son. Then we shall have a mature and genuine human life, measured by the standards of Christ’s fullness.” (After You Believe, 171)

Wright: “The Christianly virtuous person is not thinking about his or her own moral performance. He or she is thinking of Jesus Christ, and of how best to love the person next door.” (240)

## III. The Superlative Word (13-14)

A. Superlative: “of the highest kind, quality, or order; surpassing all else or others; supreme; extreme.”

B. The Fear of God

C. “This is all of the person (Adam).”

- i. When God the Adam in his own image and likeness, He created them male and female, and designed them to be His representative agents in the world.
  - a) God’s commands teach us the habits of what it means to live in that image.
  - b) ... what it means to function according to what we were designed for.

- ii. Fearing God and keeping his commands constitutes what it means to be human.

D. Don’t miss how local, even pedestrian, it is.

E. Making Sense of the World