

DISCUSSION GUIDE :: EPISODE 9

**WRESTLING WITH LIFE'S REALITIES
THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER
ECCLESIASTES 12:9-14
11/12/2017**



MAIN POINT

The meaning of life is found in having faith in God and obeying Him.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How many of you like to read? When you get your hands on a new book what is the first thing that you are tempted to do?

How is this both positive and negative for the reader?

Many people when they receive a new book will flip to the last chapter and read the ending. This can be both positive and negative as it 'gives away' the story but it also fills in some of the 'gaps' the reader might need to understand. In Ecclesiastes 12, the writer sums up the entire book in one sentence.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ECCLESIASTES 12:13-14.

These verses give us the bottom line for Ecclesiastes. What is it?

How does fearing God lead to obedience?

If you know God but don't obey Him, what does that say about the way you view Him and your relationship?

The importance of fearing God already has been stated in Ecclesiastes (3:14; 5:7; 8:12). In Ecclesiastes 12:13, the command to fear God is elevated to the supreme principle of life. A proper fear of God is not a slavish dread that God will harm us if we displease Him. A proper fear of God is the attitude of a mature believer who recognizes the holiness of God and the reverence He deserves. We choose to obey His commands as we honor who He is. Nothing dishonors God more than willfully disregarding His commands. This level of obedience is the example that Jesus set for us. By leaving heaven and coming to earth to be a sacrifice for us, Jesus demonstrated that obedience is rooted in love for God and worship of Him. When we obey God, we follow Jesus' lead.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

God inspired the book of Ecclesiastes to transform us. As you reflect on the book as a whole, what implications do you see for your life?

What have you learned in this study that might lead you to fear God, turn away from "vanity," and trust more firmly in his providential care?

PRAY

Close by praying that your group would worship by giving God your very best. Ask Him to reveal areas that need improvement so each of you can glorify and honor God through each area in which you're called to be obedient.

COMMENTARY

ECCLESIASTES 12:19-14

12:13-14. The Teacher affirms that the whole of humanity consists not in its mortality or ignorance but in its dependence on God. And yet the conclusion is not surprising. It not only flows naturally from all that has gone before but is the book's final look at Gen 2-3. Humanity sought to become like God in disobeying him, but instead they lost the one thing that made them truly human. For us the "meaninglessness" of life which the Teacher so ruthlessly exposes would seem to lead to despair or nihilism; for him it is an incitement to true piety. The insignificance of all that is done under the sun leaves him awestruck and silent before God. His inability to control or predict the future provokes him to dependence on God. The futility of attempting to secure his future through wisdom or acts of religion (e.g., making vows) leads him not to impiety but to an understanding of the true nature of obedient trust.

Seen in this light, to "keep his commandments" is not to behave with the self-satisfied arrogance of religious presumption, nor is it a nod to piety from an otherwise impious book. Rather, it is the deepest expression of humble acceptance of what it means to be a human before God. Solomon as the Teacher, in his address to his aristocratic colleagues, has anticipated perhaps the deepest mystery of the gospel: The just shall live by faith (Hab 2:4; Rom 1:16-17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38).