

# Solomon's Twelve Secrets

## Session 12: It All Comes Down to This

Edited Transcript

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Good morning. This is great. I am so happy that we're here. Are you guys happy that we're here? Yeah. Me, too. And thanks so much for coming. Anybody go to Winter Park this morning? No. Anybody willing to admit that they went to Winter Park this morning? I went to sleep last night, and I had three different dreams that I woke up in the middle of, and I was in Winter Park in my dream. So I'm glad that I woke up and didn't go to the wrong place.

We are in week 12 of the Solomon's 12 Secrets. So welcome, here we are. Solomon's 12 Secrets, week 12, session 12, and we're going to introduce our shout-outs. The first shout-out we have is to the Men's Friday Bible Study in Voorhees, New Jersey. Albert McCullough and a group of 10 men, who have been meeting for a year, using the video Bible study with us on Fridays at nine a.m., so just when we finish, about an hour later they'll start. And so we're so excited to have those guys with us. Y'all know you are in like one of the largest men's Bible studies in the world, right?

I know there's like a 100 guys here, but there's at least five or 6,000 guys that watch the Bible study every week. And so it's a fantastic, you really are a part of something bigger than yourself, and it's so cool to realize that the study of God's word that happens here with us on Friday mornings, is going out literally across the world in just about every continent. We haven't heard from anybody in Antarctica yet, but I think we've heard from somebody everywhere else. So if you're out there Antarctica, let us know.

Another shout-out to a staff member. Our team member shout-out goes to Peter Hone. Peter is down in Naples, Florida, and he is the Area Director for Southwest Florida, but also the Regional Director for Florida and Southern Alabama. And we asked Peter why he likes being an area director. He says, "I'm passionate about being an Area Director with Man in the Mirror, because our intentional no man left behind process, powerfully helps churches to develop life-on-life discipleship among their men. We need faithful husbands and loving fathers in this failing culture."

So if you're watching the Bible study today, and you're in Southwest Florida, we'd love for you to get in touch with Peter. You can just email him at [peterhone@maninthemirror.org](mailto:peterhone@maninthemirror.org), and he would love to help you disciple men more effectively, personally and also in your church. So let's welcome our guys in New Jersey, and say hi to Peter, down in Naples, Florida. Let's give these guys a hand. One, two, three, oorah. All right.

Well, we're going to talk today about the 12th chapter of Ecclesiastes. So if you have a Bible, turn to Ecclesiastes chapter 12. And the title of today's session is, **It All Comes Down To This**. It All Comes Down To This. And if you have your, if you'll already turned to Ecclesiastes, keep your finger there, and I want you to turn over to John 10 because I want to read a little passage to you in John 10 to sort of set up a little bit of what Solomon is talking about.

And so in John 10, Jesus is teaching and He's using the analogy of a shepherd. Y'all have heard this right, Jesus the Good Shepherd. And so if you go to John 10 verse 11, He says this. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." And so we know that in Christ, we have someone who, what does a shepherd do? He watches out for us, He knows the safe places to go, and the unsafe places to go. And so He guides His sheep away from unsafe places.

Also in this passage, he talks about how the sheep know, they know who He is, they know their shepherd. And so they only, once a sheep knows its shepherd, even if other shepherds, or sort of false shepherds in the analogy come along, they won't follow that shepherd because they know their shepherd's voice. And as we look at scripture, the scripture is, it says in Timothy, "Scriptures God breathe, right. It is the guide that our good shepherd gave us." And so that's really a fundamental component of what we're going to talk about here in Ecclesiastes chapter 12.

So it all comes down to this, and Ecclesiastes 12 wraps up the book. And so we're going to talk about this, the first part of it talks about how strong men fail. Strong Men Fail. Then we're going to talk about Goads and Nails. And then finally, we'll talk about what Solomon calls The End Of The Matter, it all comes down to these two things that we're going to talk about that Solomon says is the end of the matter.

So we're going to look at Ecclesiastes 12. Now I'm going to go two verses back into chapter 11. And the reason is, is because the beginning of chapter 12 is kind of the continuation of a thought in chapter 11. So if you look at the last couple verses in chapter 11, in verse nine He says, "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." Okay, and we talked about this last week, sort like step forward, go to the adventure. Move, that's what we talked about in the last session, was move.

And then he says, "But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity." Are vanity, all right. So He's saying this to the young guys. Like, "Take advantage of being a young guy. Go for it. Move." And then now He shifts gears and He starts talking to the older guys. He says, "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, I have no pleasure in them."

Now I've got aging parents. In fact, I've got four. I've got my parents are in their mid-80s. My wife's parents are in their mid-80s. And I called my mom on her last birthday and I said, "Happy birthday, mom." She said, "Well, thank you son." And I said, "How are you doing?" And she said, "I'm 86 years old. How do you think I'm doing?" And I said, "Well, I mean, that's good though, right? And better than the alternative?" And she said, "No. It's not better than the alternative. It's not better at all, but this is what the Lord has for me, so I'm here."

But she said, "Son, I got to tell you something." I said, "What's that, mom?" She said, "Getting old is not for wimps." I heard some, "Amen's," out there. Getting old is not for wimps, and that's what He's talking about. In fact, so the next part of this chapter or these verses are, and I'll explain it to you, but this is symbolic of getting older.

So listen to what he says. "The evil days come and the years draw near, of which you will say I have no pleasure in them before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain. And the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed."

This is symbolic language, He's talking about the keepers of the house are your shoulders. The strong men are bent, that's your back. The grinders cease, do you know what that is? Your teeth. The grinders cease. And those who look through the windows are dimmed, your eyesight fails. Solomon's going, "Getting old is not for wimps." Right, so when you get older, things are going to slow down. So this, again, like while you've got the energy, you got to go for it, recognizing just sort of the reality that you slow down when you get older. I told you about my mom, she's 86.

My dad is younger, he married an older woman. He's only 85. And I mean, my dad's amazing. He, every Thursday, he meets with a group of guys that he met at a men's seminar like eight years ago at a church that he doesn't even go to. But he went to a men's seminar because his son was teaching it. And he got in with this group of guys, and they have lunch together every Thursday at McDonald's. Like when I was a kid, I couldn't get my dad to go to McDonald's for anything, right.

Now he meets like four or five guys every Thursday at McDonald's, and he won't miss it. And those guys, those guys have taken him in, and so one of those guys has become a good friend of mine. And so like when my dad will lie to me about how he's doing, my friend will call me and tell me how my dad's actually doing. But he's still invested, he's still leaning in. He's got another guy that he talks to on the phone once a week, eight o'clock in the morning, it's an appointment, a standing appointment.

I said, "What do you talk to him about?" He's like, "Well, I disciple him. I mean, we talk about what's going on in his marriage, and in his family, and we get into scripture together." I'm like, "That's fantastic." And he's engaged in his church. When you get older, may mean that things are harder. He's also got heart failure going on and some other issues going on with his health and he just keeps plugging away. But this is, I see this in his life. The eyes are dimming. The grinders are ceasing to work as well as they used to. The back is bent. The shoulders are stooped. "These things are coming," Solomon's saying.

The doors on the street are shut. When the sound of the grinding is low and one rises up at the sound of a bird, you can't even sleep well. And all the daughters of song are brought low, you can't sing very well anymore. They are afraid, also, of what is high and terrors are in the way. The almond tree blossoms, almond tree. White flowers, gray hair. The almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along. What does a grasshopper do, normally? Bounds, right. Jumps. It's dragging itself along. And desire fails because man is going to his eternal home. And the mourners go about the streets.

Before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, the wheel broken at the cistern, he's giving you as many analogies as you can think of for dying. And the dust returns to the earth, as it was. And the spirit returns to God who gave it. What is all that referring to? Go back to verse one, remember also your Creator in the days of your earth, in the days of your youth before the old days come and the years draw near.

I've seen people in their old age go in two directions. I've seen them go in the direction of one, of several people that I've known, that as they've gone into old age, and for these people, dementia has taken

hold. And they're anxious, and they're frightened, and they're angry, completely I mean understandably so. And then I've seen my grandmother go into dementia and she became sweeter, and kinder, and she was already sweet and she was already kind. She already loved God's word. She loved it even more. And in her final days, the nurses in the nursing home, they would love to have Hazel pray for them.

Now those people didn't actually change, I don't think. I think what happened was, was as they entered into the age where the filters drop more and more, and the memory fails, the core of who you are as a person comes out. And so I've said to my wife in the last year over and over again, as we've experienced this with one of our parents that, "We need to guard our hearts now because our hearts could be revealed at a time when we have no way to filter it, no way to give anybody the image that we want to give them anymore. We'll lose the ability to fake it, and our hearts as they really are, will come out."

And so we need to guard our hearts now. That's what Solomon is saying, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth while you can still write His word on your heart," while you can still develop a more deep and personal and intimate relationship with Him. You need to do that now while you can, so then in the days when you don't have as much control, and the days when you don't have the ability to present yourself the way you want to present yourself, and your heart comes out, it's the heart that you want people to see.

### **STRONG MEN FAIL**

Strong men fail. Strong men fail. And here's the thing. Verse nine, "Vanity of vanity," says the preacher. "All is vanity." What's he talking about? Well, what he's talking about is, if you're relying on the strength of your body, if you're relying on the strength of your mind, if you're relying on your social skills to define who you are, when those things go away, you will realize that they were all vanity. You will realize that they were all strength.

So when we live with the wrong guiding principle, and the wrong guiding principle is that my own strength is what defines me. My own strength is where I get my identity from. My job. My possessions. My status. My family. When I look outward to all those different things and feel that those are things that I have control over, and those are my guiding principles, that's what I'm going to rely on. Then what that is, is vanity. Because of all the stuff that's going to happen, you're going to get old, and feeble, and die.

And if you're relying on your own strength, then it's just going to be vanity. That sounds terrible, doesn't it? But He's just trying to speak truth. All right, so strong men fail. If you are trying to be a strong man, stop trying to be a strong man. Now I don't mean like turn into a weak, blubbing idiot, okay. That's not what I mean. But what I mean is, stop relying on your strength, and instead, do what Solomon's encouraging us to do, which is to remember our Creator, to put our faith in Christ, our reliance on an all-powerful God, because God doesn't fail. That's the lesson of the first few verses here.

### **GOADS AND NAILS**

All right, let's talk about goads and nails then. So verses nine to 12. "Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth. The words of the

wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by," who? One shepherd.

They are given by one shepherd. Why would Solomon use that word? And why would Jesus then call himself the Good Shepherd? The whole Bible fits together, you realize this, right? Every book of the Bible is about Jesus and that's what He's saying. "They are given by one shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh."

And so Solomon here, is talking about goads and nails. He says, "The words of the wise are like goads and nails." Now this is an interesting juxtaposition, right. Because what does a goad do? What does it do? It prods you forward, right. What does a nail do? Holds something still. So why is Solomon using this, right back-to-back? Why is he saying it's a goad and a nail? Well, what he's saying is, is the Word of God goads you. It prompts you, it pushes you towards the things that you're supposed to do. At the same time, proving structure and stability for you to do it from.

Anybody ever ridden a horse? Anybody ever ridden a skittish horse? Yeah, those are scary, right. The Word of God is not a skittish horse, the Word of God is a Clydesdale. The Word of God is steady, and firm, and provides structure, and safety, and security for you to operate within. But it's going to take you somewhere. Okay. And so He's saying that the collected sayings, the scripture, they're given by the one shepherd, God, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

John said at the beginning, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word became flesh, Jesus." Right, all of this fits together and Solomon's pulling it all together, and so we need to realize that the Word of God is like a goad and like a nail. It's like a Clydesdale, that's not skittish. It provides a solid base for us to operate from, but it takes us to the places that we need to go. All right, goads and nails.

## **THE END OF THE MATTER**

So then let's look at this next thing. So then He says this. "The end of the matter," so here we are 12, we have 12 chapters. He didn't write it in chapters, right. But we have 12 chapters. But we're at the end of however many words this says. I should have counted that, that would have been interesting. And He says this. "The end of the matter, I'm wrapping it all up right here. All has been heard," and then He says this. "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man, for God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing, whether good or evil."

When we talk about fear today, we don't really get it. When we think of fear, what most people think of, is not the way that the Bible talks about fear of God. But the Bible talks, what we think about as like being frightened. Like, "I'm going to go Halloween Horror nights, and somebody's going to jump out at me, and that's going to scare me." This is not that kind of fear. This is sort of reverential awe. Okay. Like if you're a soldier, and you're about to go into battle and face the enemy, and you're not afraid, you're an idiot.

Right, because people are going to be shooting at you, but you do what you're supposed to do anyway because you have a duty to do that. Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of

man. And you overcome the fright, the scariness that you have, but you still, that doesn't mean you stand up and let people shoot you. "Oh, I'm not afraid of getting shot." Well, you should be afraid of getting shot. But you know your duty, and so you, it's sort of reverential awe. Right.

A little child has no fear of a hot stove until what? Until they touch it, and then they've got a healthy fear of a hot stove from that point on. And for a lot of us, that's what it's like in our relationship with God. We don't really fear Him until we touch the hot stove. And if we're paying attention, then we develop a healthy reverential awe for who God is, and what His power is. And it brings us to a point of duty in life.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, C. S. Lewis' great *Chronicles of Narnia* the first book he wrote, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, we meet Aslan for the first time. And in the book, the four children sort of see him off in the distance, or they sort of sense him, but they don't actually know who he is. They don't know anything about him, and they meet a family of beavers, and so the beavers start to explain to them who Aslan is. And they ask dumb questions like, "So he's a man?" And they're like, "A man? He's not a man. He's a lion. He's the king. That's who Aslan is. He's the King of the Beasts."

And so Lucy and Susan then ask, "He's a lion? That sounds scary. Is he safe?" And the beaver looks at them and laughs, and says, "Of course he's not safe, but he's good." Of course he's not safe. God doesn't goad you forward in the way that you're supposed to go. God doesn't give you this incredible adventure that there is of following Christ, of living the gospel out in a world that doesn't love Him the way that we love Him because He's safe. But you can step into that life of following Christ, that dangerous life of following Christ, or Jesus said, "You'll have suffering in this world because of me. People are going to persecute you."

It's all there. But you can do that because He's good. A good, think about, go back to the war analogy. A good troop, a good platoon will go into battle, following a sergeant who's dangerous, right. They'd rather follow a dangerous sergeant into battle than follow a sergeant that's safe and nice and namby-pamby. Right. They want a guy that's going to go out there and kick some butt and take some names, right. And because he is like that, they feel more confident going into battle.

But if he's constantly a shirk or if he's a guy that's looking for ways around things, if he's so concerned with his own personal safety that he's not protecting the guys that he's leading, those guys don't want to follow him into battle. And we have a battle commander that not only was willing to lead us into battle, but was willing to die for us, and He's good. We can follow Him because He's good. We can trust Him because He's good.

So guys, what does that mean? That means, that sometimes He's going to say things that we don't like. Sometimes He's going to tell us to do things that we don't understand, and we're going to have to decide if we're going to obey Him or not. He's not safe, but He's good. So Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man," because God is not safe, but He's good.

When you're reading your Bible and you're thinking, "I don't want to do that. That seems scary." Well, it is scary. But God is good, He's not going to tell you to do something that's not good for you, that's not right. So our job then, is to have fear of God, the right kind of fear of God. And look what the Bible says about the fear of God. Solomon 1:11 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. All those who practice it have good understanding."

Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Rules despise wisdom and instruction." Job 28:28 says, "Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding." Do you get the theme here? That when we fear God, that's when we become wise because God is good. He's not safe, but He's good.

So I think our challenge then, is to figure out what is, what does this look like in our lives? Because Solomon says, "This is the whole duty," so think about this, too. So we have duty over here, and we have vanity over here, that again, Solomon has set up a juxtaposition, right. So a duty is what? A duty is a calling. It's an understanding that you're a part of a cause, that there's a plan and you play a part in it, and your part is important. So you have a duty to fulfill that part.

Vanity is meaninglessness. Vanity is doing what you want because it feels good. Vanity is like worshiping your own happiness or worshiping your own strength. Vanity is a strong man saying, "I don't need anybody." Or, frankly a weak man just playing the victim all the time. That's vanity, but duty, duty gives you meaning. Duty gives you purpose. Duty gives you a destination. And this is the promise of following Christ, is the promise of purpose, the promise of meaningfulness.

And so as we wrap up what Solomon's teaching us in Ecclesiastes, that's my encouragement to you. Is to recognize that following Christ, it has duty in it. And in today's day and age, that's not really a popular thing to say. Like, "You have a duty," because it implies not being in control. Like you don't give yourself a duty, somebody else gives you duties, right. But that's exactly what it is. And following Christ means obeying His commands because He will judge us. Solomon's very clear, we will be judged in the end of days. So that's my encouragement to you today, to remember that God is not safe, but He is good.

Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for your favor, for your grace, Lord, for your provision of the scriptures that guide us in the way that we should go. They give us wisdom, Lord, and wisdom beneath the surface sometimes, that you've given us an opportunity to dig into your word, so we can figure out and determine the way that you would have us go. Lord, thank you. Thank you for leading us. Thank you for being the courageous God that you are, the essence of meaning. The essence of goodness, Lord, you show us those things.

So Father, I pray that you would help us to see you as our leader. That you would help us to follow you more closely. That you would help us to be disciples. And Lord, that we would then go out and do our duty to live out the truth of the Word of God, to share it with others, to build your Kingdom, Lord, and to bring you glory. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.