

What Goals Give Happiness?

International Bible Lessons

Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:7, 13

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“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone”
(Ecclesiastes 12:13—NRSV).

“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man”
(Ecclesiastes 12:13—ESV).

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man”
(Ecclesiastes 12:13—KJV)

Think of various goals that people set for themselves and work hard to achieve. After they have reached their personal goals, some people have felt as King Solomon felt, “All is vanity. What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil under the sun?” (Ecclesiastes 1:2-3). Having achieved goals that became meaningless, some have simply set higher goals; while others have found joy in their journey toward achievement; however, as King Solomon discovered, if you forget God as you achieve, “the years draw near when you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’” (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

After King Solomon had explored every earthly alternative and found life without meaning, he concluded his book with the solution he had learned from the scriptures. To enjoy true and lasting happiness, a person’s ultimate goal in life must be to fear God and keep His commandments. Jesus summarized the highest goal that a person can set for themselves, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27; Deuteronomy 11:1). King Solomon recognized that the goals we set must be consistent with and not contrary to God’s highest goal for everyone. Our Creator has demonstrated that He is worthy to receive our reverence, and others are worthy of our consideration. Rather than follow the unethical rule, “Each one should do what is best for himself;” we must love our neighbor, love them as we love ourselves, and do what is best for all concerned. — © Copyright 2011 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Thinking Further

1. How often do you hear people talking about the judgment of God? If often, why? If seldom, why?
2. What are some dangers people face if they allow anxiety a place in their minds?
3. Why does Solomon advise young people to remember their Creator?
4. What are some of the disadvantages of old age and how does obeying God help?
5. What commandments does the Bible and Jesus especially stress that we obey?

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