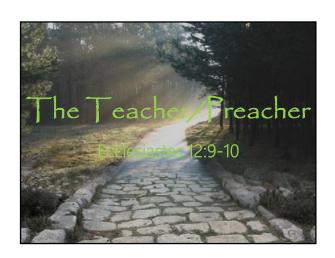
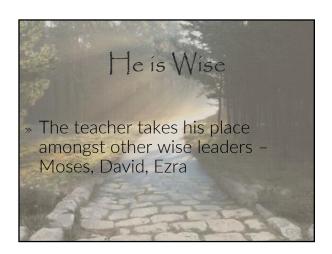
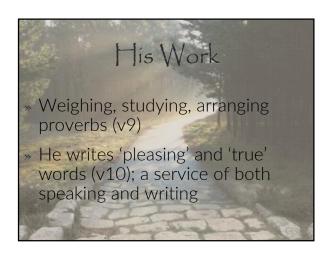


"Vanity of vanities," says the Teacher (12:8, 1:2) » A call to live well before God in a complex world » A call to live positively amidst the questions of life we do not understand



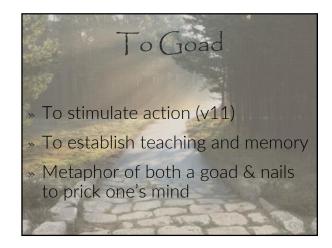




Let the wise also hear and gain in learning, and the discerning acquire skill, to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 1:5-7





To Shepherd To be a shepherd and guide the people (v11v) To follow the true Shepherd who is God and his Son, Jesus Jesus is the Good Shepherd - he becomes the face of God

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

We also have a work of shepherding (v12)
 All of us in our roles – with children – they look to us for guidance
 To provide the meta-narrative of life



1. The Locus

- » It is 'the end of the matter' (v13)
- "Fear God' revere, worship, trust, make God the centre of your life
- Such is the 'beginning of wisdom' (Proverbs 1:7, 2 Corinthians 7:1)

2. Keep His Commandments

- » Keeping the commandments follows from fearing (worshipping)
 God
- Saying yes to God in our everyday
 this is our fundamental duty
 (v13b)
- » This provides the meta-narrative for our lives

- » We will all stand before God
- » Accountability is part of a moral universe
- » Everyone stands before God (including the Christian) therefore live wisely
- History and creation have a purpose and meaning



We return to our initial thoughts:

- » How to live well in a complex world?
- » How to live positively amidst the guestions we do not understand?



What would it be like, asks the Preacher, if things were utterly different from what you thought? What if this world is not the ultimate one? What if God exists and is a rewarder of those who seek him? What if one of his supreme characteristics is his utter, incredible generosity, his willingness to give and give and give again, his utter acceptance of us just as we are?

Michael A. Eaton

