

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Why We Might Be Weary, and What We Can Do About It – Part I.*"

Here's the main idea...

We're going to contrast man's words – in **verse 12** – w/ God's Word in **verses 9** through **11**.

But I want to look at what Solomon said about man's words first, and then move into the discussion of God's Word, which means we're going to look at the verses out-of-order.

First look at **verse 12**...

Ecc 12:12 My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

Solomon was making a point about the amount of information that was available, and how overwhelming – and [**wearying**] – it could be.

- In Solomon's day information was mostly limited to books
- In our day information takes many other forms

If Solomon could say this – when there was no printing press, Internet, television, radio, and only a fraction of the books we have – what would he say if he lived in our day?

So here's the truth...

There is no time in all of history that these words have been more applicable...and this brings us to Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: MAN'S WORDS CAN BE (PART I) OVERWHELMING.

I want to give you an idea just how overwhelming.

Whenever someone sends an email, responds to an email, writes a blog, comments on a blog, posts on Facebook, responds to a post on Facebook, tweets, replies to a tweet, uploads a video, comments on a video, this creates data...and the amount of data we create each day is astonishing.

By 2025, it's estimated that 463 exabytes of data will be created each day.

Most of us – myself included – don't know how much one exabyte is, say nothing about 463 of them:

- A kilobyte is 1,000 bytes, or 1, with three zeroes after it.
- An exabyte is one quintillion kilobytes, or the number 1 with 18 zeroes after it...and that's how much data we create each day.

To give that some perspective, it's the equivalent of 212,765,957 DVDs of data...per day!ⁱ

Many of us are almost creating our own DVD each day!

This past week I read an article on Forbes titled, "*How Much Data Do We Create Every Day? The Mind-Blowing Stats Everyone Should Read.*"ⁱⁱ

Let me share one quote...

"[The] pace [that we create data] is only accelerating with the growth of the Internet. Over the last two years alone 90 percent of the data in the world was generated. This is worth re-reading!"

So let me re-read it...

Over the last two years alone 90 percent of the data in the world was generated.

If Solomon lived in our day, here's how he might write **verse 12**...

Of making many blogs...and podcasts...and online summits...and emails...and Facebook posts...and Twitter feeds...and interviews...and news stations...and Instagrams...and Snapchats...and LinkedIn feeds...and YouTube channels...there is no end, and much studying...and watching...and reading...and listening is a weariness of the flesh.

As helpful as all this information can be, there's no end to it.

We could spend thousands of lifetimes and never feel like we've:

- Read...
- Listened to...
- Studied...
- Or watched...

Everyone and everything we think we should read, listen to, study, or watch.

Now let me be perfectly clear...

The point is NOT that people shouldn't have blogs, podcasts, books, watch the news, or post on social media.

The point is that the amount of information available can be overwhelming and – as Solomon said – **wearying**.

And there's another important point...

It wasn't that long ago that if you wanted to address a certain topic – or let's say add data to the world – you had to have an amount of credibility. That's the only way you could:

- Get invited on a radio station to be interviewed...
- Get invited on a television show to give your opinion...
- Get a deal with a book publisher...

But now – within the matter of a few minutes – people can start a blog, podcast, or YouTube channel and act like an expert on anything...even if they have very little knowledge and no expertise.

Be patient w/ me while I share something that will illustrate the problem w/ the Coronavirus...it will take me a minute to get to my point, but I will get to it!

SEO is an acronym standing for “Search Engine Optimization.” It’s the science behind getting your product, whatever it is – a website, blog, podcast, image, book, video – to rank on search engines, and when I say search engines, I mean Google...b/c about 90% of searches take place on Google.

The idea is, if you’re on the second page of Google, you might as well be on the 20th page of Google.

Google uses algorithms that they keep secret to determine search rankings, and they change their algorithms to prevent people from gaming the system.

For example, keywords used to be a major ranking factor. Google would crawl websites, find the most prominent words and this would increase a page – or site’s – ranking for that keyword. Google figured if people mentioned a word often, they’re probably familiar w/ that topic.

When people learned this is what Google looked for when crawling websites, they started filling posts and pages w/ keywords they wanted to rank for. Maybe you’ve read something on the Internet and seen the same word, or phrase, repeated an awkward number of times. This is called, “keyword stuffing.”

Then Google changed their algorithms and penalized people for “keyword stuffing.” Suddenly people who were on the front page of Google found themselves on the 20th page.

In Google’s early years it focused almost entirely on relevance. Basically, Google tried to return search results that were the most relevant to the user.

But over the last few years, Google has been focusing on another major ranking factor, and that’s authority, or credibility:

- If you write about sports, Google wants to make sure you have some involvement in sports
- If you sell music products, Google wants to make sure you know something about quality music
- If you teach people how to do something, Google wants to make sure you have some experience in that area

Basically:

- Google started wanting to make sure that people who discussed a topic had some idea what they were talking about.
- It's almost like Google recognized how many people were talking about things...when they had no business talking about them.

Let me tell you about one specific core update to Google's algorithms to try to return better, more reliable results to people...

In August 2018 they released one of their largest and most significant changes to their algorithms, and – as is the case every time Google changes their algorithms – there was a huge shakeup in the search rankings: highly ranked websites were suddenly dropped, and low ranking websites, were promoted.

But for this update, there was one area that was hit particularly hard. Listen to this...

Around 50% of all the sites that saw a loss of traffic were medical sites...and I'm using the term "medical" loosely.ⁱⁱⁱ

Get this...

The update came to be known as "The Medical – or Medic – Update." This wasn't Google's name for the update. This was title it received, b/c of how much it hurt all these sites.^{iv}

Now here's the question...

Why would all these "medical" sites be hit so hard by an update that focuses on authority and credibility?

Because as soon as Google started looking for authority – or credibility – these sites didn't have any!

There were all these people talking about health and medicine...when they have no idea what they're talking about. There is no shortage of people who think they're experts on:

- Health
- Sickness
- Disease
- Well-being
- Nutrition

We should all think this is fantastic, b/c it's one thing when you're searching Google for advice on buying a car, but it's another thing entirely when you're searching Google to find advice for your sick child.

When I was growing up they discovered HIV. I remember how terrified people were wondering how they could and couldn't get it from others. Since the first recorded case was in 1981, they've been studying the virus for almost forty years, continuing to improve the way it's treated.

Now consider conservative estimates put the Coronavirus originating in humans at the end of 2019 or the beginning of 2020. This means doctors and scientists have been studying it for a few months.

When people claim to be experts on something that's only been around for a few months, that's almost a guarantee that they're not experts.

This reveals one of the other consequences of people so easily sharing their thoughts and opinions: it provides an amount of information that isn't just overwhelming, but is also untrustworthy...and this brings us to the next part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: MAN'S WORDS CAN BE (PART II) UNTRUSTWORTHY.

Do me a favor and look at **verse 12** again...

Ecc 12:12 My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

When Solomon says **these** he's referring to **the words of the wise** in **verse 11** which, in context, is God's Word.

To be clear, it's as though Solomon says **beware of anything beyond [God's Word]**.

What is **anything beyond [God's Word]**?

Man's words!

So the question is...

Why would Solomon – under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – give us this warning to **beware of anything beyond God's Word**?

Because man's words can be untrustworthy.

Now think about this...

If Solomon gave this warning in his day, how much more applicable would it be in our day...when everyone can be an expert?

So again, this is very applicable for us!

Consider this...

Two of the most important factors for determining the value of information are:

1. First, it's accuracy: if it's inaccurate, how valuable is it?
2. Second, it's unchanging nature: if you can't trust information tomorrow, next week, or next month, how valuable is it?

The reason I mention this is much of the information we receive from man is untrustworthy b/c it's inaccurate and it changes.

Let me provide three examples related to the current situation, although there are plenty more I could give you...

The first example is masks...

Let me ask: should we wear masks?

The answer is: it depends on the day.

- If it's before April 3rd, the CDC – the Center for Disease for Control – said not to wear masks.
- Then on April 3, President Trump announced that the CDC recommended wearing masks.^v

That's weird isn't it?

- One day we don't need masks.
- The next day they might save your life.

The second example is the economy...

President Trump has been predicting the economy is going to bounce back.^{vi} Maybe he doesn't have much credibility w/ you b/c he wants to be reelected, so let me tell you what a few other people said as well:

- I read an article on Nasdaq.com titled, "*The Dow Will Bounce Back. History Tells Us When.*"^{vii} The article stated, "Many events have knocked the Dow down, and more often than not, it bounces back quickly."
- Mark Cuban is the owner of the Dallas Mavericks and an American billionaire, entrepreneur, and investor. He has "absolute confidence" the nation will return to its pre-coronavirus boom.^{viii}

This sounds very optimistic about the economy recovering.

But listen to this...

Paul Singer is a multi-billionaire hedge fund manager and investor. In other words, he deals w/ the stock market for a living and does very well. In a Forbes article he said:

"America could be facing the deepest recession since the Great Depression."^{ix}

This sounds very pessimistic about the economy recovering.

So here's the good news and bad news:

- The good news is if you want to find information that tells you the economy is going to recover, you can
- The bad news is if you want to find information that tells you the economy is not going to recover, you can

And b/c of the amount of untrustworthy information available, this is pretty much the case w/ every topic you can imagine.

The problem is that if you want to learn about a certain topic:

- There seems to be an equal number of qualified, educated, intelligent people on both sides
- The more you read, the more confused you become
- Instead of learning more about the topic, you learn that everyone disagrees.

And this causes the **weariness** Solomon describes.

The third example is toilet paper...

We've been convinced that the reason every store has run out of toilet paper, is b/c greedy, selfish people are hoarding it. This past week I read an article that argued it's b/c so many people are at home, which means they're aren't going to the bathroom more...but they are going to the bathroom more at home...which means they're using more toilet paper at home. ^x

Here's the issue...

The toilet paper industry is split into two, separate markets:

- The commercial market, which is the toilet paper for public restrooms, such as those in workplaces, schools, restaurants, hotels, and airports. Because of the quarantine all this toilet paper is being unused.
- The consumer market, which is the toilet paper for people's homes...and this is what's missing from store shelves.

So you say, "Why can't we use all the unused toilet paper from the commercial market in the consumer market?"

The answer is, b/c they're different:

- The commercial toilet paper used in public restrooms is on huge rolls, too big to fit on most home dispensers. The paper itself is thinner and more practical. It comes individually wrapped and is on huge pallets.
- The consumer toilet paper for homes is in brightly branded packs of six or 12...so you can feel like you're buying pretty toilet paper.

I'm not really trying to educate you on toilet paper...although perhaps you found this interesting.

I'm trying to make the point that we can't even figure out why we're running out of toilet paper:

- Is it b/c we're selfish greedy consumers?
- Or is it b/c we have a supply chain and distribution issue?

So you say, *“Okay, when the dust settles, years from now, we'll be able to look back and see who was right and who was wrong about everything.”*

History proves that this doesn't happen w/ history!

People spend decades looking at the same information, but coming to completely different conclusions.

Here's what's probably going to happen when the quarantine is debated for decades to come....

On CNN's "State of the Union," Dr. Fauci – who has become the face of America's response to the virus – predicted that up to 2000,000 Americans would die if drastic steps weren't taken.^{xi} Since then estimates have dropped considerably:

- People in favor of the quarantine will say it saved tens of thousands of lives.
- People opposed to the quarantine will say, “See, the virus is no big deal. Hardly killed anyone. We didn't even need the quarantine.”

Look back at **verse 12**. The second half of the verse says...

Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

First, let me be clear that this isn't as literal as it sounds:

- God isn't discouraging us from reading anything but the Bible.
- There are plenty of wonderful Christian books that can help us grow.

So what is the point?

Solomon is saying we should make sure we don't let any earthly books rob of us of the Bible's wisdom. We don't want to spend so much time reading other books – even wonderful Christian books – that we neglect God's Word.

Let me use an illustration from when I used to be into weightlifting...

There's a saying that *“Muscles are made in the kitchen, not the gym.”*

The idea is you break muscles down when you work out, and then you feed them – in the kitchen – to make them grow. There's a lot of truth in this, b/c:

- The difference between most weightlifters isn't what happens in the gym, b/c most of them work out intensely.

- The difference is what happens in the kitchen...or how well they eat.

As a weightlifter, as soon as you learn that what you eat is super important, you go to your local GNC and spend hundreds – or thousands of dollars – on supplements. All the ads in magazines are filled w/ huge bodybuilders and you think you'll look like them if you take the supplements they're advertising.

But many bodybuilders track what they eat in journals and they'll make these journals available online. When you look at them, you see they don't use many supplements, b/c they need every edge they can get and they know whole food is better.

You'll talk to the most successful bodybuilders in the gym and they'll say the same thing. You ask them what supplements they're taking, and you find out it's hardly any.

They use supplements...but as supplements...to supplement their diets and cover the areas they have trouble meeting through whole food.

Then, typically, after lifting weights for a few years, you'll stop spending so much on supplements and spend more on whole food.

Sometimes I feel like Christians follow this same journey...

We get saved and spend lots of time on Christian books and devotionals. As Solomon says **of making many books there is no end.**

Then, after we've been Christians for some number of years, we recognize nothing compares w/ God's Word and we spend more time reading it.

The Bible is the whole food that should make up most of our diets.

There's a place for Christian books and devotionals. Maybe we want to:

- Learn more about a topic
- We want to grow in a certain area

Then we buy a book to supplement our Bible reading.

Spurgeon said, "*Visit many good books, but live in the Bible.*"

With everything happening w/ the Coronavirus this brings us to another temptation we face that can draw us away from God's Word. Before I share it, let me make one qualification...

I'm all for trying – as difficult as it is – to be educated and informed:

- I try to catch the White House briefings each day, and our governors briefings
- I've read lots of articles about the virus

- I've been part of four webinars – and I'll be part of another one this week – specifically for pastors discussing how to shepherd our congregations during this season

BUT...

There comes a point that we're reading, listening, and watching TOO much, b/c

- It's become an obsession
- And we're neglecting God's Word

So as your pastor, I just want to encourage you to examine:

- How much time you're spending learning about the virus
- And how much time you're spending in God's Word

Now all of us – myself included – are perhaps weary just thinking about all the overwhelming and untrustworthy information out there. So let's read some verses that can encourage us to spend the time we should in God's Word.

Look at **verse 9**...

Ecc 12:9 Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care.

The **Preacher** is Solomon and we have many of his **proverbs** in the Book of Proverbs.

Ecc 12:10 The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

And here's the important part...

Ecc 12:11 The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.

Verses 9 and 10 discuss Solomon – the **Preacher** – who sounds really good:

- He's **wise**: he **taught the people knowledge** and created **many proverbs**
- He **sought to find words of delight and he wrote words of truth.**

So you'd expect him to say the **words of the wise** came from him, but he said they're **given by one Shepherd.**

Who's this Shepherd?

In the OT the shepherd is identified as God:

- **Psa 23:1 The Lord is my Shepherd**

- **Psa 80:1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth.** We know who's enthroned upon the cherubim: that's God.

In the New Testament the Shepherd comes into clearer focus and we see He's Jesus:

- **John 10:11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.**
- **Heb 13:20 Our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep**
- **1 Pet 5:4 When the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.**

The greatest wisdom comes from Jesus, b/c despite how wise Solomon was in **Matt 12:42 [Jesus said], "The queen of the South...came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here,"** referring to Himself.

I mentioned this earlier, but it's worth mentioning again...

In **verse 11 the words of the wise given by the Shepherd** refer to the Word of God...b/c what Jesus said and taught is the Word of God.

If you briefly look back at **verse 11** the Shepherd's wise words – or the Word of God – are fittingly compared w/ two shepherds' tools: **goads and nails firmly fixed**...and this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: GOD'S WORD IS LIKE A (PART I) GOAD THAT DIRECTS.

Goads were long sticks w/ points on the end:

- Shepherds used to use them to poke animals and move them in the right direction...just like God's Word pokes us and moves us in the right direction.
- **Goads** were used to alert animals and wake them...just like God's Word alerts us and – spiritually speaking – wakes us.
- Finally, **goads** sting...just like God's Word can sometimes sting

The "sting" of God's Word is especially evident regarding it's teaching on trials.

Here's what I mean:

- We want to read that God will prevent trials, but instead we're told they're part of this life.
- We want to read that God will make trials easier, but instead we're told He'll give us the grace to endure them...which means they're not going away. Basically, God says *"I'll help you handle the trial just the way it is."*
- We want to read that God lets us feel sorry for ourselves during trials...but instead we're told to count trials as joy.

Here's the main point I want you to see...

Man's words are untrustworthy:

- You don't know whether they're accurate

- They might point you in the wrong direction.

God's Word is like a goad that is trustworthy – and even though it hurts sometimes – it always point us in the direction.

Second, in **verse 11** the **wise words** are compared w/ **nails firmly fixed**...and this brings us to the next part of Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: GOD'S WORD IS LIKE A (PART II) STAKE THAT PROTECTS.

The **nails firmly fixed** are the nails – or stakes – shepherds used to secure animals who might wander off into dangerous territory

- You can guess that animals wouldn't like this, but it protected them...just like we might not like everything God's Word says, but it protects us from wandering into dangerous territory
- The nails would keep the animals in place – fixed – and that's what God's Word does for us. It gives us a firm foundation.

Notice it says the **nails** are **firmly fixed**, which communicates that they're unmovable, or unchangeable...just like God's Word.

- **Psalm 119:89 Forever, O Lord, your word is FIRMLY FIXED in the heavens.**
- **Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.**
- **1 Peter 1:24 “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord remains forever.”**

Listen to what the Shepherd said about His words...

Matt 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

That's pretty firmly fixed, isn't it?

Unlike man's word – which changes – God's Word is firm and unchanging.

If you go anywhere else you'll get tossed around, but if you go to God's Word you're going to find security.

My hope for you is that you're being anchored in the Bible and not any of man's words you're reading, listening to, or watching.

We're grounded in Christ if we abide in Him. Let me conclude w/ these verses...

Heb 6:18 It is impossible for God to lie, [so] we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. 19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus

has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Our hope is not in the next blog post, book, or article. Our hope is in Jesus who has entered the Most Holy Place on our behalf.

If you want to avoid being weary, remember this...

Solomon said the reading of many books wearies us, but reading God's Word strengthens us.

Let's pray.

ⁱ <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/how-much-data-is-generated-each-day/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2018/05/21/how-much-data-do-we-create-every-day-the-mind-blowing-stats-everyone-should-read/>

ⁱⁱⁱ [https://www.growthmarketingpro.com/google-algorithm-updates/#Core Update known as the Medic Update August 2018](https://www.growthmarketingpro.com/google-algorithm-updates/#Core_Update_known_as_the_Medic_Update_August_2018)

^{iv} <https://www.wpromote.com/blog/seo/everything-need-know-google-medic-update>

^v <https://time.com/5815251/should-you-wear-a-mask-coronavirus/>

^{vi} <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-vows-coronavirus-wrecked-economy-will-come-back-despite-record-jobless-numbers>

^{vii} <https://www.nasdaq.com/articles/the-dow-will-bounce-back.-history-tells-us-when.-2020-03-08>

^{viii} <https://www.newsmax.com/us/cuban-economy-coronavirus/2020/04/15/id/963026/>

^{ix} <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/man-who-warned-of-the-coronavirus-crisis-months-ago-says-gut-tells-him-a-50-or-deeper-decline-in-stock-market-from-the-february-top-likely-2020-04-17>

^x <https://marker.medium.com/what-everyones-getting-wrong-about-the-toilet-paper-shortage-c812e1358fe0>

^{xi} <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/2003/29/sotu.01.html>