

What Do You Value? Part 2

Ecclesiastes 7

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Ecc 7:1-29 NKJV] [1] A good name is better than precious ointment, And the day of death than the day of one's birth; [2] Better to go to the house of mourning Than to go to the house of feasting, For that is the end of all men; And the living will take it to heart. [3] Sorrow is better than laughter, For by a sad countenance the heart is made better. [4] The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, But the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. [5] It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise Than for a man to hear the song of fools. [6] For like the crackling of thorns under a pot, So is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity. [7] Surely oppression destroys a wise man's reason, And a bribe debases the heart. [8] The end of a thing is better than its beginning; The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. [9] Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools. [10] Do not say, "Why were the former days better than these?" For you do not inquire wisely concerning this. [11] Wisdom is good with an inheritance, And profitable to those who see the sun. [12] For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, But the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it. [13] Consider the work of God; For who can make straight what He has made crooked? [14] In the day of prosperity be joyful, But in the day of adversity consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, So that man can find out nothing that will come after him. [15] I have seen everything in my days of vanity: There is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, And there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his

wickedness. [16] Do not be overly righteous, Nor be overly wise: Why should you destroy yourself? [17] Do not be overly wicked, Nor be foolish: Why should you die before your time? [18] It is good that you grasp this, And also not remove your hand from the other; For he who fears God will escape them all. [19] Wisdom strengthens the wise More than ten rulers of the city. [20] For there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin. [21] Also do not take to heart everything people say, Lest you hear your servant cursing you. [22] For many times, also, your own heart has known That even you have cursed others. [23] All this I have proved by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise"; But it was far from me. [24] As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep, Who can find it out? [25] I applied my heart to know, To search and seek out wisdom and the reason of things, To know the wickedness of folly, Even of foolishness and madness. [26] And I find more bitter than death The woman whose heart is snares and nets, Whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God shall escape from her, But the sinner shall be trapped by her. [27] "Here is what I have found," says the Preacher, "Adding one thing to the other to find out the reason, [28] Which my soul still seeks but I cannot find: One man among a thousand I have found, But a woman among all these I have not found. [29] Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes."

INTRODUCTION

11:03



- Solomon, the wisest and one of the wealthiest people to ever live is giving his treatise on the meaning of living "under the sun" or living on this earth as one day passes to the next.
- He's looking from the perspective of a man who has had it all, tried it all, and learned it all, only to come to the conclusion that without walking in the fear of God, life is meaningless, vanity, full of futility and unfairness and grasping for the wind.
- Each week, we've examined these observations of life under the sun, asking ourselves the bigger question: with Jesus, how do we gain a perspective of life "Above the Sun?"

APPLICATION

Theme of chapter 7 – the things one might initially consider the “negative” things of life, are actually the things that can be the most valuable. You'll see the phrase "is better" six times in this single chapter.

- It's a natural human tendency to avoid difficulty and run from topics or situations that force us to face reality.
- In Chapter 7, Solomon actually flips the script and reminds us that sometimes the things we avoid are actually the things we need to enrich our life under the sun.

1 The value of death

BIBLE PASSAGE

[1] A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth;

APPLICATION

We might describe Solomon's principle here using the word legacy. How you are remembered after you're gone can be more important than how people perceived you when you were alive.

It's been said that everyone has three names: The one your father gave you, the one others give you, and the one you give yourself. This third name, the one we craft for ourselves, holds the power to shape our legacy.

- Everyone might love who you appear to be when you're alive, but every future generation will remember you for who you really were after you died.
- History teaches us that many things can come out about a person after they die that make or break what they did in life.
- I read one story of a man who knew his grandfather was in the army but only realized after he died that he was a highly decorated war hero.

- I remember when I fully discovered what a womanizer Martin Luther King Jr. was. I was so disappointed to hear that a man who did so much good in the name of Jesus was living like a heathen behind the scenes.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY: The name you are creating based on your decisions today matters... It matters more than the precious things you might gain here and now. The day you bring, there is a blank slate; the day you die, the stories have been written.

- Solomon is not suggesting it's better to die than to be born, but rather of the two major events in everyone's life, You enter with a blank slate, and you exit with a written story.
 - The word for precious ointment or fragrant perfume is the Hebrew word (shemen) and is a play on words with the Hebrew word for good name (shem).
It's better to have a sweet smelling life than a sweet smelling body and a life that stinks!
- This is a little bit of a springboard, but I've also discovered that in this life, there will always be people who think evil of you, especially if you're following Christ and standing for His truth. Your name might be pulled through the mud, regardless of the good you do. You can't always control your reputation while you're alive. But God taught me something very valuable. Something we all need:

QUOTE

“ If you take care of your character, God will take care of your reputation.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[2] Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men; And the living will take it to heart.

APPLICATION

If you have the choice to go to a fiesta or a funeral, choose the funeral!

- It's better to keep the reality of death at the forefront of your mind than to forget it exists. You tend to change your viewpoint on things when you realize that life is fleeting.
- A funeral forces us to confront that which we seek to deny. Truly, the best way to live life is in light of death's reality.
- When you see a body in a casket or lower that casket into the ground, it's hard for anyone to deny that they will someday be in that exact same situation; at that point, you will not be able to change anyone's perspective on your life.

QUOTE

“ The time we have to make the most of our life is when we're alive!

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Mat 5:4 NKJV] [4] Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

For the one who takes an eternal perspective on life, the house of mourning can bring with it a comfort of the reality of Jesus' promise of resurrection life.

2 The Value of sorrow

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecc 7:3 NKJV - Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better.

Ecc 7:4 NKJV - The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

QUOTE

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

CS Lewis, The Problem of Pain

APPLICATION

The person who only chooses to see life as one big party or only chooses to engage life through ease, avoiding challenging or difficult situations, will never gain the depth of character, maturity, and experience that they could have if they embraced certain aspects of difficulty and pain.

- I don't believe Solomon is prescribing depression. It's not as if he's saying, "If you really want to get the most out of life, go find a way to be miserable."
- Rather, he's saying, "Don't avoid processing deep emotions that will ultimately make you a stronger, more empathetic, mature person. Don't run from the reality of sorrow; rather, learn how to grieve. Don't run from processing mourning by seeking another "good time"; learn how to grow from the difficulty."

QUOTE

“I walked a mile with Pleasure; she chatted all the way;

***But left me none the wiser for all she had to say.
I walked a mile with Sorrow, and ne'er a word said she;
But, oh! The things I learned from her when sorrow walked with
me.***

Robert Browning Hamilton

A SAD COUNTENANCE MAKES THE HEART BETTER

Not saying, "go be miserable to be happy."

When something sorrowful happens, and one closes their heart rather than processing the emotion, their heart never truly heals.

3 The Value of Rebuke

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecc 7:5 NKJV - It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than for a man to hear the song of fools.

Ecc 7:6 NKJV - For like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity.

ILLUSTRATION

Again, this goes against our natural inclinations.

- If I were to ask you, "Would you rather have me sing you a loud, stupid, mindless song or tell you all the problems you have?" Which one would you choose?
- When you surround yourself with foolish people who have nothing valuable to say, they might tell you what you want to hear, but eventually, you are going to grow weary of never hearing any truth.
- Like a crackling thorn in the fire, there's a lot of noise coming out of their mouths, but it lacks substance or long-term benefit.

Rebuke - Correction

The loving truth of a wise person in your life may, at first, be more difficult to stomach, but in the end produces greater character in your life.

[Pro 27:6 NKJV] [6] Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

But there is an important prerequisite here. In verse 5 he states that the only rebuke that is worth listening to is the one that comes from the wise.

- The only thing more painful than a rebuke from a wise person is a rebuke from a wise guy (a fool). If you were to listen to every criticism of everyone who has an opinion on how you're living your life, my friend, you would spend your life in a miserable state of walking on pins and needles.
- **So how do you discern the "rebuke of the wise" from "the songs of a fool?"**

A. A WISE REBUKE COMES FROM A WISE PERSON

When someone wants to speak into your life, take a look at theirs first:

- ***Do they fear God?***
- ***Do they have good fruit coming out of their life?***
- ***Do they know God's Word?***
- ***Are they humble?***
- ***Do they have a solid track record?***

B. A WISE REBUKE IS BASED ON TRUTH NOT ASSUMPTION

If someone you don't really know is coming to you and rebuking you for something they don't really know about, then chances are it is not from the Lord.

- If a person hasn't even taken the time to know the fullness of a situation or even taken the time to know you, then their rebuke is not based on experience or truth but on assumptions.
- If there is truth to the rebuke, the correct response is humility and repentance.

[Jhn 7:24 NKJV] [24] "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

C. A WISE REBUKE IS DONE IN HUMILITY

If a haughty attitude is present, then the spirit of a rebuke is misplaced. A rebuke should always be done with the motive of one's benefit, not one's destruction.

[Gal 6:1 NKJV] [1] Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

You see, there is a difference between rebuke and criticism.

- Rebuke is based on knowledge and truth; criticism is based on assumptions.
- Rebuke is done from love and with grace; criticism is done from selfishness and with a critical, self-righteous attitude.
- Rebuke states facts; criticism judges motives.
- Rebuke is done from a heart to restore; criticism comes from a desire to destroy.

4 The Value of Patience

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecc 7:7 NKJV - Surely oppression destroys a wise man's reason, and a bribe debases the heart.

Ecc 7:8 NKJV - The end of a thing is better than its beginning; The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

Ecc 7:9 NKJV – Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Notice that here, a patient is contrasted with a prideful spirit.

- Those who are patient and have a broader, long-term outlook on things, tend to have a better end to their efforts than those who operate off the impulses of their pride.
- The prideful heart will oppress and bribe in order to get an immediate result to their prideful ambition but will leave greater devastation in their wake.
- The prideful spirit is quickly angered and emotionally lashes out and destroys.

The patient in spirit:

- Is willing to wait for the right thing to bear the right fruit. They are willing to endure hardship and unfairness. They are willing to entrust themselves to the hand of God. They are willing to trust the process of righteousness.
- They have an ability to listen rather than speak, and, as James puts it, be slow to anger, for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

5 The Value of the Present

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecc 7:10 NKJV - Do not say, "Why were the former days better than these?" For you do not inquire wisely concerning this.

APPLICATION

Humans have a tendency to have a selective memory regarding the past. The good days are never as good as you remember because you only remember the good things.

QUOTE

“The Good old days are a combination of a bad memory and a good imagination.

- When someone is constantly looking with discontent at their present circumstances, wishing for the past, they run the risk of not only missing the good of the present, but having the faith and optimism to create a better future.
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ILLUSTRATION

I've experienced some incredible moments of ministry:

- I've pastored a church that saw two campuses reach thousands of people.
- I was part of baptizing over 1000 people in one day (We were in the ocean from morning until evening.)
- I've lived in some of the most beautiful places in this country.
- I've spent time with people that I won't name who are some of the greatest influencers and leaders of our time.

Do you know what I actively choose to be the most excited about? What is God doing right now in Saint Joseph, MO, and what are the lives he wants to touch and transform in the days ahead?

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Isa 43:18-19 NKJV] [18] "Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. [19] Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

6 The Value of Wisdom

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecc 7:11 NKJV - Wisdom is good with an inheritance, and profitable to those who see the sun.

Ecc 7:12 NKJV - For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, but the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it.

APPLICATION

Wisdom's benefits outweigh money's because wisdom provides true meaning and purpose to life. Money's great and needed. It can come in handy to provide a defense in this world when you need it. It comes in handy when you're in trouble, but if you could choose between money and wisdom, wisdom has a greater benefit. Not only will it provide you a

defense against the foolish, it also gives you life. Money can't buy you love, and it also can't give you life.

7 The Value of Adversity

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecc 7:13 NKJV - Consider the work of God; for who can make straight what He has made crooked?

Ecc 7:14 NKJV - In the day of prosperity, be joyful, but in the day of adversity, consider that God has appointed the one as well as the other so that man can find out nothing that will come after him.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Job 2:9-10 NKJV] [9] Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" [10] But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

QUOTE

“ In life, God allows both blessings and burdens. Blessing to keep us thankful and burdens to keep us humble.

APPLICATION

It's important to understand that with God, no moment is wasted. No, we can't always figure out what God is doing in his time and way, or why he may allow something that seems to us as the worst possible situation, but the worst thing we can do in times of adversity is take things into our own hands, become bitter at God, and harden our hearts to His instruction.

- What are you facing? Good or bad, consider that in all things you have the opportunity to grow, press into the Lord's will, become more like Jesus, and come out as pure gold refined in the fire.

8 The Value of Fearing God

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecc 7:15 NKJV - I have seen everything in my days of vanity: There is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness.

Ecc 7:16 NKJV - Do not be overly righteous, nor be overly wise: Why should you destroy yourself?

Ecc 7:17 NKJV - Do not be overly wicked, nor be foolish: Why should you die before your time?

Ecc 7:18 NKJV - It is good that you grasp this, and also not remove your hand from the other; For he who fears God will escape them all.

APPLICATION

He is not encouraging a life on the fence. “Just be a decent guy and party on the weekend.” He adds a prerequisite in verse 18 – whatever you do, do it with the fear of God always in mind.

- We might translate this over today by saying, ***"If you walk in self-righteousness, it will get you into trouble. If you walk in foolish unrighteousness, it will get you into trouble."***
- Moses thought he was operating in righteousness when he killed the Egyptian guard, but in reality, his zeal was foolishly implemented. The people despised him for it, and the Egyptians wanted to kill him. It wasn't until Moses gained humility that he could walk in confident, bold righteousness with the Lord's favor.
 - ***Solomon will end the chapter by stating there is no one who does good, so he's not talking about true righteousness here, but the pride that comes with thinking one is more righteous than one truly are.***

Just live in the fear of the Lord and enjoy the life God has given you. Don't let standards of holiness created by man chain you down into a miserable life. Instead, embrace the freedom and empowerment that comes from letting God's Word be your guide and the Holy Spirit's conviction lead you in how you conduct your life.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecc 7:19 NKJV - Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city.

Ecc 7:20 NKJV - For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.

APPLICATION

One of the values of wisdom is that through the fear of the Lord, you might be prone to avoid sin... because sin is everywhere, and a sinful tendency and nature are also in you. All

have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God. There is none who does good and none who seek God.

9 The Value of Perspective

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecc 7:21 NKJV - Also do not take to heart everything people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you.

Ecc 7:22 NKJV - For many times, also, your own heart has known that even you have cursed others.

APPLICATION

You can't shut people's mouths, but you can shut your own ears.

- People can say all sorts of things, sometimes false and sometimes true. You don't want to hear something someone says about you on accident because it might hinder your ability to love them. It can really hurt to hear someone else's honest opinion of you when you're not looking. Trust me, ashamed I admit that in my life, I've been on the other end of a pastoral roast behind closed doors after the pastor's sermon or a decision I didn't understand or agree with. Sometimes, I've had to make some difficult and humble confessions and ask for forgiveness for the lack of restraint on my lips.

Proverbs 26:20 NLT - Fire goes out without wood, and quarrels disappear when gossip stops.

And before you get in a hissy fit that someone has said something about you, remember that you yourself have been guilty of the same!

QUOTE

“ If someone is willing to talk about others behind their back to you, they are willing to talk about you behind their back to others.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecc 7:23 NKJV - All this I have proved by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise"; But it was far from me.

Ecc 7:24 NKJV - As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep, who can find it out?

Ecc 7:25 NKJV - I applied my heart to know, to search and seek out wisdom and the reason of things, to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness.

10 The Value of Purity

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecc 7:26 NKJV - And I find more bitter than death The woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be trapped by her.

APPLICATION

One thing Solomon knew is that in a moment of a man's weakness, women can trump wisdom!

- ***A seductive woman can turn the wisest man into a blubbering fool.***
- ***The language is that of a hunter - seduction is a satanic lure intended to snare, net, and imprison those who take the bait.***

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecc 7:27 NKJV - "Here is what I have found," says the Preacher, "Adding one thing to the other to find out the reason,

Ecc 7:28 NKJV - Which my soul still seeks but I cannot find: One man among a thousand I have found, but a woman among all these I have not found.

APPLICATION

Solomon's experiences have put a bitter taste in his mouth about women.

- **Ecc 7:27 NLT - "This is my conclusion," says the Teacher. "I came to this result after looking into the matter from every possible angle Ecc 7:28 NLT - Just one out of every thousand men I interviewed can be said to be upright, but not one woman!**
 - Now realize this is not God's view, but let this be a lesson to any single women.
 - 1000 women at Solomon's disposal
 - You can give a man all the free sex he can handle, and it will not increase his respect for women. This man had a terrible view of women.
 - When men use women for sex, they don't respect them, they use them.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[29] Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes."

APPLICATION

The story of mankind "Under the Sun," is that we started in one place, a good place (Adam and Eve), and due to our proclivity to sin and rebellion against God, end up finding ways to ruin the good that God has created.

- With each "progressive" step we take forward as a species, we end up taking that step further and further away from God and His wisdom.
 - But those who anchor themselves to godly wisdom will have the ability to navigate this life and world in a way that moves them closer to what God intended them to be.
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