

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 3RD, 2019 // BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

REFLECT (ECCLESIASTES 7:1-4)

DID YOU KNOW?

Solomon tells us that a "good name is better than fine perfume." Another version says, "a good reputation."

- We can church it up, smell good, and look good. But do we know who we are and where we stand with God?

THIS CHAPTER IS ALL ABOUT EVALUATION

Friends. God. Our Heart. The World.

DEATH > LIFE

The beginning of Chapter 7 is quite morbid. Here's what Solomon argues:

- Death is better than birth.
- Funerals are better than parties.
- Grief is better than laughter.
- **Thinking of death is better than thinking of pleasure.**

MORBID BUT TRUE

Solomon is pointing this out because we are much more reflective when it comes to death and funerals. Why wait until death?

- We don't consider our own mortality at a kid's birthday party. According to Solomon, maybe we should.
- **We must reflect and know where we stand with others, God, and ourselves.**

GOOD COMPANY (ECCLESIASTES 7:5-12)

HANG WITH THE WISE, RUN FROM THE FOOLS

When it comes to evaluation, one of the first things this chapter says we should evaluate is who we hang with. **We should listen to and watch the wise and run from those who are foolish.**

- **Are the people you spend the most time with right now wise or foolish? How do we know?**

IDENTIFYING THE WRONG COMPANY (FOOLS)

- Those who are unjust, cruel, and corrupt (**dishonest practices**)
- Those who are impulsive
- Those who have a quick, biting **temper**
- **Those who are ungrateful and complain: "the former days were better than these."**
- "Crackling of burning thorns" – won't last

IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT COMPANY (THE WISE)

The wise are those who exercise prudence, patience, and encouragement. Being around those who are wise has eternal value and literally "preserves the life of its owner."

- **If you are around those who are "foolish" it will literally suck the life out of you. The wise fill you up.**

EVALUATE: THE COMPANY YOU KEEP

- Who do you watch and take advice from? Is it sound advice? How do you know?
- Who do you look up to and admire as a leader, servant, and Jesus Follower?
- **Who are you allowing to invest and speak into your life?** Are they wise or foolish? Are they patient or impulsive?
- Do you keep the company of fools?

TRUST (ECCLESIASTES 7:13-18)

EVALUATE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Solomon tells us to also "**consider the work of God**" because God is worthy to be trusted. **We trust God because He is the architect of life and has the answers.**

- We don't have the answers. Even Solomon admits that it's frustrating to see the good die young and the wicked live a long time. That is hard!

THEODICY

For a lot of people this causes unbelief. How can we trust in a God who would allow evil to happen?

- It's ok to not have all the answers. **It takes more faith to admit you aren't sure and yet still believe than it does to think you have it all figured out.** Solomon says you shouldn't! (v.16)

AVOID THE EXTREMES

We also can't moralize ourselves to God like a Pharisee ("**excessively righteous**"). But, it doesn't mean we live like there is no God either ("**excessively wicked**").

- Trust isn't having all the answers or trying to do all the "right" religious things. It's about the fear of God. Fear means **we won't lower God's standard.**

EVALUATE: YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- Do you trust God?
- Do you believe in a **God who created and sustains life** or are you running?
- Do you **trust in a good God** despite the evil in this world? Or does that trip you up?
- Do you trust more in your own **religious actions** than God?
- Are you fearfully following God's standard?

YOUR HEART (ECCLESIASTES 7:19-24)

THE GOOD LIFE

The life of God (Wisdom) is the best possible life, but it's hard to live it out because of how rampant sin is. There is "no one righteous."

- **The remedy for our broken world isn't us sitting back and pointing out how broken it is. The remedy is for each of us to allow God to evaluate our own hearts.**

JUDGE NOT

Two themes are clear in The Bible: **we are all sinners and we cannot achieve goodness without God**, yet Jesus tells us not to judge others. That doesn't mean we aren't supposed to help people address their sin.

- **Before we can help anyone, we must deal with the junk in our own hearts – no matter how small.**

EVALUATE: YOUR HEART

- Are you living in the wisdom of God?
- Do you constantly look around and judge other people's actions and lives?
- **Do you know where you fall short in your life?** Are you addressing it?
- **Are you hiding sin in your heart but pretending like everything is fine?**
- Are you relying on God to help you?

THE WORLD (ECCLESIASTES 7:25-29)

PURE MADNESS

The world is a broken place. Solomon searched and saw the world was filled with "wickedness," "madness," and "seduction." That's not a whole lot different than today.

- Yet God's purpose for us is to be "upright." Despite sin, we were created to live holy lives. **God wants our hearts and minds to be pure!**

CLEAN IN A DIRTY WORLD

How do we live pure? Should we completely remove ourselves? That's not what Jesus taught us. **He ran to the brokenness.** (Luke 7:34) – "Glutton and "drunkard"

- **We have to balance living and loving in a broken world and remaining pure. "Wisdom is shown to be right by the lives of those who follow it." (Lk 7:35)**

EVALUATE: YOUR HEART

- What kind of **temptation** do you allow in your life? Are you playing with fire?
- Do you put yourself in **compromising situations** at work or on the computer?
- Are you careful about the way you are allowing the world to influence your family?
- **Are you having more of an impact on the world than it is having on you?**

THE SCORECARD

It's time to pull the scorecard out. Let's see how we are all doing.

- What grade would you give yourself? The **company** you keep?
- Your **trust** in God?
- What you are carrying in **your heart**?
- How you are engaging in **the world**?

Our own path will fail us!

- **You need God to make the grade.** Solomon tells us we are created to be pure, but we pursue "**many schemes.**" Our own efforts will betray us every time because we tend to wander.
- **We have a Father who loves us and wants to help us.** We simply have to let him.