



LIVING LIFE BACKWARD

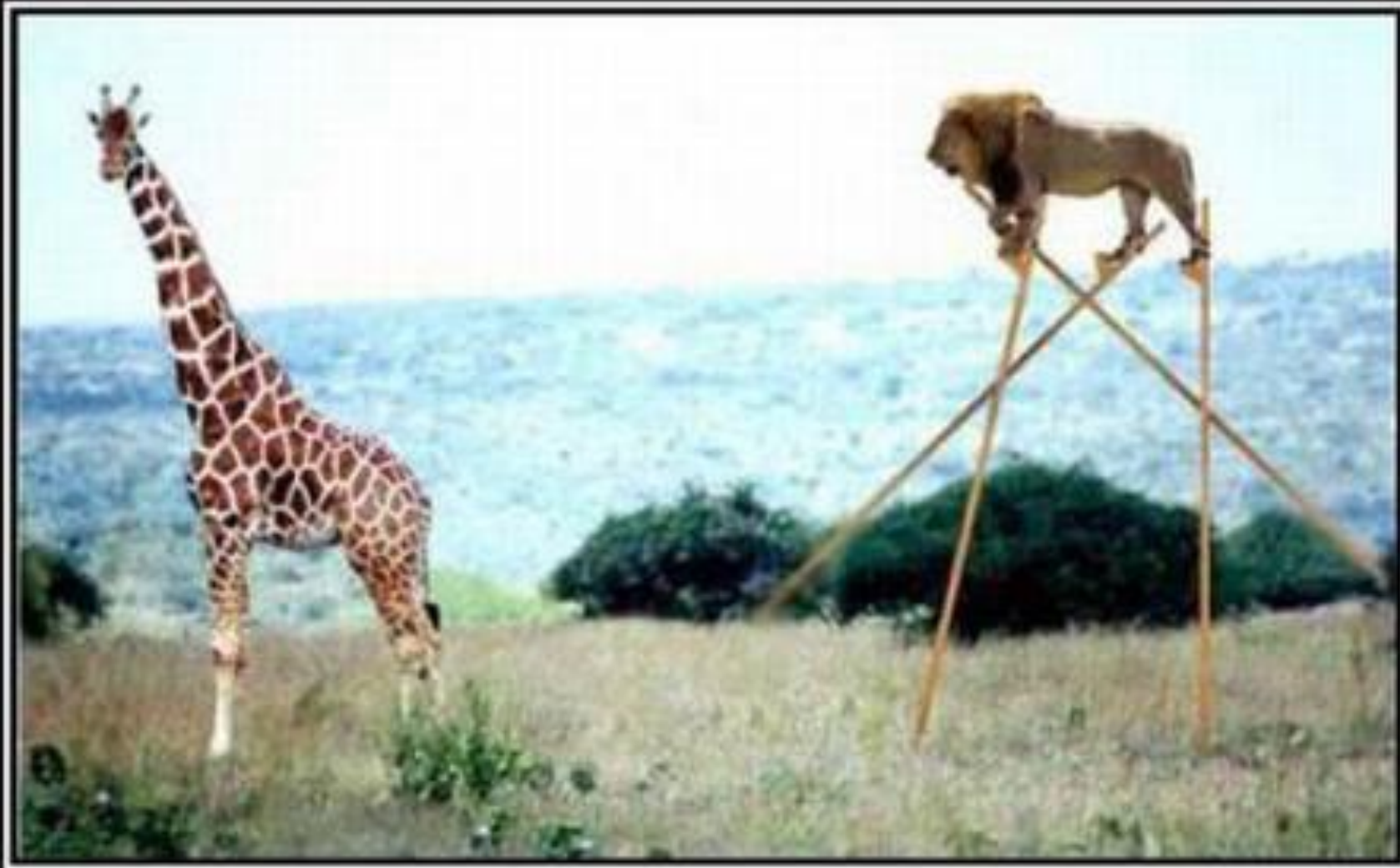
How Ecclesiastes Teaches Us to Live Life in Light of the End

ECCLESIASTES REVIEW

- Chapter 1:
 - Chapter 2:
 - Chapter 3:
 - Chapter 4:
 - Chapter 5:
 - Chapter 6:
 - Chapter 7:
- A. Reality of oppression and struggle for significance
 - B. “Vanity [breath] of vanities...”
 - C. God is the giver of all gifts (life, wealth, honor) and He alone satisfies and knows their purpose.
 - D. God seeks undivided worshippers
 - E. Nothing Satisfies (Wisdom, Pleasure, Work, Wealth)
 - F. There is a time (a season) for everything
 - G. Wisdom has limitations, and it is good to realize this

ECCLESIASTES REVIEW

- Chapter 1: (B) “Vanity [breath] of vanities...”
- Chapter 2: (E) Nothing Satisfies (Wisdom, Pleasure, Work, Wealth)
- Chapter 3: (F) There is a time (a season) for everything
- Chapter 4: (A) Reality of oppression and struggle for significance
- Chapter 5: (D) God seeks undivided worshippers
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- Chapter 7: (G) Wisdom has limitations & it is good to realize this



DETERMINATION

Anything is possible if you have the Intelligence and willpower to make it happen!



DISCOURAGEMENT

BECAUSE THERE'S NOTHING STANDING BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR GOAL BUT
A TOTAL LACK OF TALENT AND COMPLETE FAILURE OF WILL.

ECCLESIASTES 7:1-25

The Hues of Reality that the preacher used to paint the picture

- Life is transient, fleeting
- Death can not be escape
- Justice is elusive and rarely seen
- The same END comes to all
- The purpose & meaning of life seems unknowable
- Wisdom is worth pursuing, but is it obtainable?

Ecclesiastes 6:12

¹² For who knows what is good for a man during *his* lifetime, *during* the few years of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow. For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?

HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE?

ECCLESIASTES 7:1-25

From Chapter 7:

Knowing that life in this world eludes our control, what are some ways people try to deal with this reality?

How does the Preacher get our attention and then tells us to live?

ECCLESIASTES 7:1-6

WHAT IS BETTER?

V 1a). A good name is better than precious ointment,

Proverbs 22:1a

A good name is to be more desired than great wealth

Hebrew wordplay: “Fair fame is better than fine perfume”

What is the point of the Preacher?

- Application (2 Corinthians 2:14-16)

ECCLESIASTES 7:1-6

WHAT IS BETTER?

V 1b). and the day of death than the day of birth.

How do we read this statement?

- Dark & cynical (emptiness of our existence)?
Ecclesiastes 6:3-6
- Or more positively – both is good, one is better?

ECCLESIASTES 7:1-6

WHAT IS BETTER?

V 1b). and the day of death than the day of birth.

Positive Read = A Better Statement

1. Preceding statement (both positive; one better)
2. Birth is all about potential, but death, for the believer, is all about fulfillment
3. The believers dying day is the best because it is “the end and termination of evil”
4. Thomas Boston: “In the day of his birth he was born to die, but in the day of his death he dies to live”
5. Philippians 1:21-23 Paul writes, “For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain”

ECCLESIASTES 7:1-6

WHAT IS BETTER?

V 2-4). It is better to go to the house of mourning
than to go to the house of feasting,
for this is the end of all mankind,
and the living will lay it to heart.
Sorrow is better than laughter,
for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.
The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,
but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

WHY IS IT BETTER?

ECCLESIASTES 7:1-6

WHAT IS BETTER?

- “house of mourning” better than “house of feasting”
- “Sorrow” better than “laughter”

WHY IS IT BETTER?

1. It will do you more good to go to a funeral than to a party
2. Psalm 90:12 “So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom”
3. V.4 = literally reads “by sadness the heart is made better”

ECCLESIASTES 7:1-6

WHAT IS BETTER?

V 5-6). It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to **hear the song of fools**.

For as the **crackling of thorns** under a **pot**,
so is the laughter of the fools; this also is vanity.

Hebrew Word Play: “like nettles crackling under kettles”

“Life’s a jest, and all things show it.
I thought so once, and now I know it” (John Gray)

WHY IS IT BETTER?

ECCLESIASTES 7:8,10

WHAT IS BETTER?

V 8). Better is the end of a thing than **its beginning**,
and the patient in spirit is better than **the proud in spirit**.

V 10). Say not, "Why were the former days better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.

V. 10). Restated: The present and the future is better than **the past**.

*If the temptation in verse 8 was pessimism about the future,
the temptation for verse 10 is nostalgia for the past.*

WHY IS IT BETTER?

ECCLESIASTES 7:7,9,21,22

WISDOM WHEN LIFE IS TOUGH

V 7). Surely oppression drives the wise into madness,
and a bribe corrupts the heart

V 9). Be not quick in your spirit to become angry,
for anger lodges in the heart of fools.

- Proverbs 14:17 “A man of quick temper acts foolishly”
- Proverbs 14:29 “he who has a hasty temper exalts folly”

V 21,22). Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others.

ECCLESIASTES 7:11-25

WISDOM IS GOOD

1. Wisdom is good to have in this world

(v.11) Wisdom is good with an inheritance,
an advantage to those who see the sun.

(v.12) For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money,
and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom
preserves the life of him who has it.

(v.19) Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers
who are in a city

ECCLESIASTES 7:11-25
THE LIMITATION OF WISDOM

1. But ... Wisdom is Limited:
It cannot explain everything.

(v.13) Consider the work of God:
who can make straight what he has made crooked?
Compare with (v.1:15)

What point is the preacher making?

ECCLESIASTES 7:11-25

THE LIMITATION OF WISDOM

Since Wisdom can't explain everything, how should we then live?

(v.14) In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.

Embracing Fatalism vs Trusting God's Sovereignty

“Trusting in the sovereign goodness of God helps us know how to respond to all the joys and trials of life”

(see also Job 2:10)

ECCLESIASTES 7:11-25

THE LIMITATION OF WISDOM

Practical Advice from the Preacher ... ?

(vs.15-18) In my vain life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing. 16 Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? 17 Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time? 18 It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them.

What is he not saying?

What is the point & application for us today?

ECCLESIASTES 7:11-25

THE LIMITATION OF WISDOM

Practical Advice from the Preacher ... (vs. 15-18)

What is he *not* saying?

- “middle of the road approach to life”

What is the point & application for us today?

- Warning against self-righteousness that “stands ready to challenge God for His failure to reward us as we think we deserve.”

Two dangers: temptation toward self-righteousness and temptation toward wickedness – both leading to destruction.

To avoid these dangers = live in the fear of God.

“Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.”
(v. 7:20)

ECCLESIASTES 7:11-25

THE LIMITATION OF WISDOM

The Preacher is unable to obtain wisdom

23 All this I have tested by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise," but it was far from me. 24 That which has been is far off, and deep, very deep; who can find it out?

25 I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness.

ECCLESIASTES 7:1-25 IN SUMMARY

1. There are specific events, experiences that are better than others, and there is a reason why.
2. Keep pursuing & embracing wisdom even through temptations & trials.
3. You will never be “all wise” and “understand all things”.
4. Learn to live (in peace & joy) with the limitations of life by fearing God and trusting Him.

ECCLESIASTES 7:1-25 CONCLUDING APPLICATION

1. Turn Your Eyes Away from Self & Look to Christ
2. Consider His Accomplished Work
3. Repent & Believe
4. Trust & Obey

I Corinthians 1:18-31

30 And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."