

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Ecclesiastes Chapter 7 — Wisdom, Mortality, and the Limits of Man

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Ecclesiastes Chapter 7 turns toward practical wisdom.

The Preacher has already examined:

Pleasure.

Wealth.

Work.

Time.

Companionship.

Contentment.

Human desire.

Now he asks:

What kind of wisdom helps a person live well in a temporary and uncertain world?

The answers are often surprising.

He says:

A funeral can teach more than a feast.

Sorrow can teach more than laughter.

Correction can help more than flattery.

Patience is better than pride.

Wisdom is better than money because wisdom can preserve life.

But this chapter also teaches that even wisdom has limits.

The righteous may suffer.

The wicked may prosper.

Human beings cannot fully understand everything God is doing.

No one on earth lives without sin.

The search for complete understanding eventually reaches a boundary.

That boundary should lead us toward:

Humility.

Reverence.

Patience.

Fear of God.

The chapter also warns against two dangerous extremes.

One is self-righteousness.

The other is reckless wickedness.

The answer is not moral compromise.

The answer is humble dependence upon God.

The Preacher ends the chapter with one of the clearest statements about the human condition:

“God made mankind upright, but they have gone in search of many schemes.”

The problem with humanity is not that God created people evil.

The problem is that human beings departed from the uprightness God intended.

The central truth of Ecclesiastes 7 is:

Wisdom grows through humility, correction, patience, mortality, and the fear of God, while human sinfulness and limited understanding remind us that only God possesses perfect wisdom.

I. A GOOD NAME IS BETTER THAN PERFUME

Ecclesiastes 7:1 — Character Outlasts Fragrance

“A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth.”

In the ancient world, expensive perfume represented:

Luxury.

Honor.

Beauty.

Celebration.

But the Preacher says:

A good name is better.

Character is more valuable than appearance.

Reputation built through integrity carries greater value than outward luxury.

The second statement is more difficult.

How can the day of death be better than the day of birth?

At birth, the course of a life is still unknown.

At death, a faithful life has been completed.

The value of a life can then be seen more clearly.

Cross References

Proverbs 22:1

A good reputation should be chosen over great riches, and being respected is more valuable than possessing large amounts of silver and gold.

Philippians 1:21

For me, living means serving Christ, and dying means entering something even better because I will be with Him.

Psalms 116:15

The death of those who belong faithfully to the Lord is precious and deeply significant in His sight.

Spiritual Principle

Character is more valuable than appearance, wealth, or status.

Key Truth

A life should be measured not only by how it begins, but by how faithfully it ends.

II. THE HOUSE OF MOURNING CAN TEACH WISDOM

Ecclesiastes 7:2 — Death Should Be Taken to Heart

“It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart.”

Most people prefer celebrations over funerals.

But the Preacher says a funeral can teach something a feast often cannot.

A funeral reminds us:

Life is brief.

Death is certain.

Time is limited.

Priorities matter.

The wise person does not avoid thinking about mortality.

He allows mortality to teach him how to live.

Cross References

Ecclesiastes 7:4

The heart of a wise person seriously considers sorrow and death, while foolish people continually search only for places of amusement and pleasure.

Luke 6:25

How serious it is for those who laugh carelessly now while ignoring God, because a time will come when sorrow and mourning will overtake them.

James 4:9

Take sin seriously. Grieve over what is wrong. Let careless laughter turn into mourning and shallow celebration into humility before God.

Spiritual Principle

Remembering death can produce wiser living.

Application

Do not live as though your earthly life will never end.

Let mortality clarify what truly matters.

III. SORROW CAN IMPROVE THE HEART

Ecclesiastes 7:3 — A Sad Face Can Produce Wisdom

“Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad face the heart is made better.”

The Preacher is not condemning joy.

He is saying sorrow can accomplish spiritual work that constant amusement cannot.

Sorrow can produce:

Reflection.

Humility.

Repentance.

Compassion.

Dependence upon God.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 7:10

Godly sorrow produces repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow produces only despair and death.

Matthew 5:4

Blessed are those who mourn, because God will comfort them.

Proverbs 14:13

Even while a person laughs, the heart may still be hurting, and when the laughter ends, sadness may remain.

Spiritual Principle

Pain can teach lessons pleasure often avoids.

IV. THE WISE THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT LIFE

Ecclesiastes 7:4 — Mourning Versus Pleasure

“The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.”

The wise person does not spend life trying to escape every serious thought.

He is willing to think about:

Mortality.

Sin.

Responsibility.

Eternity.

The fool wants only distraction.

Cross References

Ecclesiastes 7:2

It is better to enter a place of mourning than a place of celebration, because death eventually comes to every person, and the living should think seriously about that truth.

Proverbs 14:13

A person may laugh while still carrying pain inside, and joy can end with sorrow.

Luke 6:25

How serious it is for those who live only for present laughter, because a time of mourning can come when earthly pleasures disappear.

Spiritual Principle

Wisdom faces reality instead of constantly escaping from it.

V. WISE CORRECTION IS BETTER THAN FOOLISH PRAISE

Ecclesiastes 7:5 — Hear the Rebuke of the Wise

“It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than to listen to the song of fools.”

Correction is rarely pleasant.

But wise correction can protect a person from:

Pride.

Sin.

Failure.

Self-deception.

Foolish praise feels good.

Wise rebuke does good.

Cross References

Proverbs 13:1

A wise son listens to his father’s correction, but a proud person who mocks others refuses to listen when he is rebuked.

Proverbs 15:31

The person who listens to life-giving correction will remain among those who are wise.

Psalms 141:5

Let a righteous person correct me with kindness. Let him rebuke me, because such correction is like healing oil and should not be rejected.

Spiritual Principle

The person who can receive correction can continue growing.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A friend who tells you the truth may help you more than a crowd that only applauds.

VI. THE LAUGHTER OF FOOLS IS SHORT-LIVED

Ecclesiastes 7:6 — Crackling Thorns

“Like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of fools. This too is meaningless.”

Dry thorns burn loudly.

They crackle.

They flare up.

Then disappear quickly.

That is the Preacher’s picture of foolish laughter.

It may be:

Loud.

Exciting.

Entertaining.

But temporary.

Cross References

Psalm 118:12

My enemies surrounded me like bees, but they disappeared quickly like dry thorns burning in a fire, because in the Lord’s name I overcame them.

Proverbs 14:13

Even in laughter the heart may still hurt, and when the entertainment ends, grief may remain.

Isaiah 33:12

The nations will become like thorns cut down and thrown into a fire, burning rapidly and disappearing.

Spiritual Principle

Noise should never be mistaken for meaning.

VII. OPPRESSION AND BRIBERY CORRUPT

Ecclesiastes 7:7 — Pressure Can Distort Wisdom

“Oppression can drive the wise into madness, and a bribe corrupts the heart.”

Even a wise person can become distorted under prolonged oppression.

Pressure can:

Exhaust.

Confuse.

Discourage.

Provoke.

Bribery creates another danger.

It corrupts judgment.

A person who accepts a bribe begins seeing decisions through the value of personal gain rather than truth.

Cross References

Exodus 23:8

Do not accept a bribe, because a bribe blinds people who should see clearly and twists the words and judgment of honest people.

Deuteronomy 16:19

Do not pervert justice or show favoritism. Do not accept a bribe, because bribery blinds the eyes of the wise and distorts the words of righteous people.

Proverbs 15:27

The greedy person brings trouble upon his own household, but the person who refuses bribes will preserve his life.

Spiritual Principle

Integrity becomes especially important when pressure or personal gain tries to influence judgment.

VIII. THE END CAN BE BETTER THAN THE BEGINNING

Ecclesiastes 7:8 — Patience Over Pride

“The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride.”

Beginnings can be exciting.

But beginnings do not prove faithfulness.

The real question is:

How does it end?

A person may start:

A ministry.

A marriage.

A project.

A calling.

A commitment.

But perseverance matters.

Patience is better than pride because patience is willing to endure the process.

Cross References

Proverbs 16:32

The person who controls his temper is stronger than a mighty warrior, and the person who rules his own spirit is greater than someone who conquers a city.

James 5:11

We call those blessed who continued faithfully through suffering. You have heard about Job’s endurance and have seen how the Lord finally worked in his life, showing that the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

Philippians 1:6

I am confident that the God who began a good work in you will continue carrying it forward until it is completed in the day of Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Finishing faithfully is more important than beginning impressively.

IX. DO NOT BECOME QUICKLY ANGRY

Ecclesiastes 7:9 — Anger and Foolishness

“Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger rests in the lap of fools.”

The Preacher warns against a short temper.

Quick anger often produces:

Words later regretted.

Broken relationships.

Poor decisions.

Unnecessary conflict.

The fool carries anger like something resting comfortably in his lap.

Cross References

Proverbs 14:29

A patient person shows great understanding, but the person with a quick temper displays foolishness openly.

James 1:19

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

Ephesians 4:26

If you become angry, do not allow that anger to lead you into sin, and do not let the day end while you are still holding onto it.

Spiritual Principle

Anger is dangerous when it becomes a residence rather than a temporary emotion.

X. DO NOT ROMANTICIZE THE PAST

Ecclesiastes 7:10 — “Why Were the Old Days Better?”

“Do not say, ‘Why were the old days better than these?’ It is not wise to ask such questions.”

People often remember the past selectively.

We remember:

The pleasant parts.

The familiar parts.

The comfortable parts.

And forget:

The problems.

The pain.

The conflicts.

The difficulties.

Nostalgia can distort reality.

Cross References

Isaiah 43:18

Do not keep living in the past or constantly dwelling on former things.

Philippians 3:13

Brothers and sisters, I do not claim that I have already reached the goal, but I do this one thing: I leave what is behind and reach forward toward what is ahead.

Ecclesiastes 1:9

What has happened before will happen again, and many patterns of human life continue repeating under the sun.

Spiritual Principle

Wisdom learns from the past without trying to live there.

XI. WISDOM IS A GOOD INHERITANCE

Ecclesiastes 7:11 — Wisdom Benefits the Living

“Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing and benefits those who see the sun.”

An inheritance can provide:

Resources.

Opportunity.

Security.

Wisdom provides similar benefits.

But unlike money, wisdom can guide how resources are used.

Cross References

Proverbs 3:14

The profit gained from wisdom is better than the profit gained from silver, and what wisdom produces is more valuable than gold.

Proverbs 8:11

Wisdom is better than precious jewels, and nothing a person could desire should be compared with it.

Job 28:18

Coral and crystal cannot compare with wisdom, and wisdom is worth far more than precious jewels.

Spiritual Principle

Wisdom is one of the greatest inheritances a person can receive or leave behind.

XII. WISDOM OFFERS PROTECTION

Ecclesiastes 7:12 — Wisdom Preserves Life

“For wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: wisdom preserves the life of the one who has it.”

Money can protect in certain situations.

Wisdom can also protect.

But wisdom has an advantage.

Wisdom helps a person:

Recognize danger.

Avoid foolish choices.

Understand consequences.

Choose better paths.

Cross References

Proverbs 2:7

God stores up sound wisdom for upright people and becomes a shield for those who walk with integrity.

Proverbs 4:7

Wisdom is the most important thing, so pursue wisdom. Whatever else you gain, make sure you gain understanding.

Proverbs 3:16

Wisdom holds long life in one hand and riches and honor in the other.

Spiritual Principle

Money may protect circumstances.

Wisdom protects decisions.

XIII. CONSIDER THE WORK OF GOD

Ecclesiastes 7:13 — What God Has Made Crooked

“Consider the work of God: Who can straighten what He has made crooked?”

Some circumstances cannot be changed by human effort.

The Preacher reminds us that God remains sovereign.

There are situations we must:

Accept.

Endure.

Learn from.

Trust God through.

Cross References

Ecclesiastes 1:15

What has become crooked cannot always be straightened by human effort, and what is missing cannot always be counted or replaced.

Job 12:14

When God tears something down, no one can rebuild it unless He allows it. When He shuts someone in, no human being can force the way open.

Romans 9:20

But who are you, as a human being, to argue against God? Can something that has been made say to its Maker, “Why did You make me this way?”

Spiritual Principle

Wisdom recognizes the difference between what we can change and what we must trust God with.

XIV. TRUST GOD IN GOOD DAYS AND BAD DAYS

Ecclesiastes 7:14 — Prosperity and Adversity

“When times are good, be joyful; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that no man can discover what comes after him.”

Life contains:

Prosperity.

Adversity.

The wise response to prosperity is:

Joy.

The wise response to adversity is:

Reflection.

Both seasons can teach us.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 8:2

Remember the entire journey the Lord your God led you through in the wilderness. He used those years to humble you, test you, and reveal what was truly in your heart.

Philippians 4:12

I know how to live with little, and I know how to live with plenty. In every circumstance I have learned how to be content, whether well fed or hungry, whether having much or having little.

Job 2:10

Job said, “Should we receive only good things from God and refuse to accept hardship?” In all this, Job did not sin with his lips.

Spiritual Principle

Prosperity and adversity both belong in the classroom of faith.

XV. THE RIGHTEOUS MAY SUFFER WHILE THE WICKED PROSPER

Ecclesiastes 7:15 — Life Does Not Always Appear Fair

“In this meaningless life of mine I have seen it all: a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness.”

The Preacher observes something troubling.

Sometimes righteous people suffer.

Sometimes wicked people prosper.

Life under the sun does not always show immediate justice.

Cross References

Psalms 73:3

I became jealous when I looked at arrogant people and saw how well the wicked seemed to prosper.

Job 21:7

Why do wicked people sometimes continue living, become old, and grow increasingly powerful?

Habakkuk 1:13

Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, so why do You allow treacherous people to continue? Why do You remain silent when wicked people swallow up those more righteous than themselves?

Spiritual Principle

Temporary circumstances are not the final measurement of God’s justice.

XVI. DO NOT BECOME SELF-RIGHTEOUS

Ecclesiastes 7:16 — The Danger of Proud Righteousness

“Do not be overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise—why destroy yourself?”

This verse does not teach:

“Do not become too holy.”

Scripture never warns against genuine righteousness.

The warning is against:

Self-righteousness.

Religious pride.

Pretending to possess perfect wisdom.

Trying to establish superiority over others.

Cross References

Romans 12:3

Do not think of yourself more highly than you should. Instead, think with sober judgment according to the measure God has given you.

Isaiah 65:5

Some people say, “Stay away from me. Do not come near me, because I am holier than you.” God says such self-righteous pride is offensive before Him.

Galatians 6:3

If anyone thinks he is something important when he is really nothing, he deceives himself.

Spiritual Principle

True righteousness produces humility.

Self-righteousness produces pride.

XVII. DO NOT PRACTICE RECKLESS WICKEDNESS

Ecclesiastes 7:17 — Sin Has Consequences

“Do not be overly wicked, and do not be a fool—why die before your time?”

The Preacher now warns against the opposite extreme.

Some may reason:

“If righteousness does not always bring immediate reward, why not live wickedly?”

The answer is:

Sin destroys.

Foolishness has consequences.

Cross References

Romans 6:1

What should we say then? Should we continue living in sin so that grace can increase? Certainly not.

Proverbs 10:27

Reverence for the Lord tends to lengthen life, but wicked living can shorten a person’s days.

Galatians 6:7

Do not deceive yourself: God cannot be mocked. A person will eventually harvest the same kind of seed he has chosen to plant.

Spiritual Principle

Grace is never permission to live foolishly.

XVIII. FEAR GOD AND AVOID THE EXTREMES

Ecclesiastes 7:18 — Hold to Wisdom

“It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The one who fears God will avoid all extremes.”

The Preacher’s solution is:

Fear God.

The fear of God protects a person from:

Proud self-righteousness.

Reckless wickedness.

Human arrogance.

Moral carelessness.

Cross References

Ecclesiastes 12:13

After everything has been considered, here is the final conclusion: fear God and keep His commands, because this is the responsibility of every person.

Proverbs 3:7

Do not think you are wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.

Psalms 34:11

Come, children, listen to me, and I will teach you what it means to fear the Lord.

Spiritual Principle

The fear of God produces balance, humility, and obedience.

XIX. WISDOM IS STRONGER THAN MANY RULERS

Ecclesiastes 7:19 — The Power of Wisdom

“Wisdom makes one wise person more powerful than ten rulers in a city.”

Wisdom provides strength that position alone cannot give.

Ten leaders without wisdom may accomplish less than one truly wise person.

Cross References

Proverbs 21:22

A wise person can overcome a city defended by mighty warriors and bring down the strong defenses in which they trusted.

Proverbs 24:5

A wise person is strong, and a person with knowledge continually increases in strength.

Ecclesiastes 9:16

I concluded that wisdom is better than strength, even though the wisdom of a poor person may sometimes be ignored and his words forgotten.

Spiritual Principle

Wisdom can accomplish what raw power cannot.

XX. EVERY HUMAN BEING SINS

Ecclesiastes 7:20 — No One Is Sinless

“Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.”

This verse destroys self-righteousness.

No one lives a completely sinless life.

Every person needs:

Grace.

Mercy.

Forgiveness.

Cross References

Romans 3:10

As Scripture says, there is no one who is completely righteous on his own—not even one.

1 Kings 8:46

If Your people sin against You—and there is no human being who never sins—and You become angry with them and allow consequences to come,

1 John 1:8

If we claim that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not operating honestly within us.

Spiritual Principle

Humility grows when we remember our own need for grace.

XXI. DO NOT LISTEN TO EVERY COMMENT

Ecclesiastes 7:21 — Guard Your Heart from Every Word

“Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you.”

Not every comment deserves attention.

If you listen to every opinion about yourself, you will live in constant frustration.

People say things.

Sometimes carelessly.

Sometimes emotionally.

Sometimes unfairly.

Wisdom knows when to let words pass.

Cross References

Proverbs 30:10

Do not falsely accuse or slander a servant before his master, or he may curse you and you may be found guilty.

Ecclesiastes 10:20

Do not curse the king even in your thoughts, and do not curse the rich even in your private room, because words can travel in unexpected ways.

Matthew 7:1

Do not judge others with a self-righteous spirit, or you will place yourself under the same standard of judgment.

Spiritual Principle

Not every criticism deserves a response.

XXII. REMEMBER YOUR OWN WORDS

Ecclesiastes 7:22 — You Have Done the Same

“For you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.”

The Preacher immediately gives the reason for patience.

Before becoming angry about what someone said about you, remember:

You have also spoken wrongly.

This produces humility.

Cross References

Matthew 7:3

Why do you focus on the small speck in your brother’s eye while ignoring the much larger problem in your own?

James 3:9

With the tongue we bless the Lord and Father, and with that same tongue we sometimes speak evil about people who were made in God’s likeness.

Romans 2:1

You have no excuse when you condemn someone else while practicing similar things yourself. By judging another person, you expose your own guilt.

Spiritual Principle

Remembering our own failures makes us less eager to condemn others.

XXIII. WISDOM REMAINS BEYOND COMPLETE HUMAN REACH

Ecclesiastes 7:23 — “It Was Beyond Me”

“I tested all this with wisdom and said, ‘I am determined to be wise’—but it was beyond me.”

The Preacher pursued wisdom intensely.

Yet he finally admitted:

There are limits.

Human intelligence cannot fully understand everything.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 1:19

God says, “I will bring the wisdom of the worldly wise to nothing, and I will expose the limits of human intelligence.”

Job 28:12

But where can true wisdom be found? Where is the place where genuine understanding lives?

Romans 11:33

How deep are the riches of God’s wisdom and knowledge! His judgments are beyond our complete understanding, and His ways cannot be fully traced by human minds.

Spiritual Principle

True wisdom includes knowing where human wisdom ends.

XXIV. GOD’S WAYS ARE DEEP

Ecclesiastes 7:24 — Who Can Discover It?

“Whatever exists is far off and most profound—who can discover it?”

Some truths are deeper than human investigation can reach.

God has revealed much.

But God has not revealed everything.

Cross References

Job 11:7

Can you fully discover the depths of God? Can you reach the complete limits of the Almighty’s knowledge and power?

Romans 11:33

How deep are the riches of God’s wisdom and knowledge! His decisions are beyond our complete understanding, and His ways cannot be fully traced.

Isaiah 55:9

Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts are higher than your thoughts.

Spiritual Principle

Mystery should produce humility rather than arrogance.

XXV. THE SEARCH FOR WISDOM CONTINUES

Ecclesiastes 7:25 — Investigating Wisdom and Folly

“So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things, and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly.”

Although wisdom has limits, the Preacher does not stop pursuing it.

Humility does not mean abandoning learning.

It means learning without pretending to know everything.

Cross References

Proverbs 2:4

Search for wisdom as eagerly as people search for silver, and pursue understanding as though you were searching for hidden treasure.

Ecclesiastes 1:17

I devoted myself to understanding wisdom, madness, and foolishness, but I discovered that even this pursuit could become like chasing the wind.

1 Kings 4:29

God gave Solomon extraordinary wisdom, understanding, and a breadth of knowledge greater than ordinary human ability.

Spiritual Principle

The limits of wisdom should make us humble, not intellectually lazy.

XXVI. THE SNARE OF IMMORAL SEDUCTION

Ecclesiastes 7:26 — A Trap More Bitter Than Death

“I found more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap, and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God will escape her, but the sinner will be ensnared.”

The Preacher warns about destructive seduction.

This is not a condemnation of women in general.

The picture is of an immoral seducer whose influence traps a person in sin.

Similar warnings appear throughout Proverbs.

Cross References

Proverbs 5:3

The words of an immoral woman may sound sweet like honey, and her speech may seem smooth like oil.

Proverbs 22:14

The mouth of an immoral woman is like a deep pit. A person who rejects God’s wisdom may fall into it.

Proverbs 2:16

Wisdom will rescue you from the immoral woman and from the seductive words of someone who is unfaithful.

Spiritual Principle

Temptation often appears attractive before its chains become visible.

Application

Do not ask only:

“Does this feel good?”

Ask:

“Where will this lead?”

XXVII. THE PREACHER ADDS ONE DISCOVERY TO ANOTHER

Ecclesiastes 7:27 — Searching for the Pattern

“‘Look,’ says the Preacher, ‘this is what I have discovered, adding one thing to another to find the scheme of things—’”

The Preacher describes his method.

He studies.

Compares.

Observes.

Adds one conclusion to another.

He is attempting to understand the larger pattern of human life.

Cross References

Ecclesiastes 1:2

The Preacher says, “Everything under the sun is fleeting and temporary when treated as the ultimate meaning of life.”

Ecclesiastes 12:9

Because the Preacher was wise, he continued teaching the people knowledge. He carefully examined, arranged, and set in order many proverbs.

1 Kings 4:32

Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs and composed one thousand and five songs.

Spiritual Principle

Wisdom grows through careful observation, comparison, and reflection.

XXVIII. UPRIGHTNESS IS RARE

Ecclesiastes 7:28 — The Search Continues

“Which my soul still seeks but has not found. One upright man among a thousand I have found, but not one upright woman among them all.”

This verse reflects the Preacher's own observation and experience.

It should not be read as a universal declaration that men are morally superior to women.

The wider biblical teaching is clear:

All humanity is sinful.

Both men and women need grace.

The verse emphasizes how difficult genuine uprightness was for the Preacher to find.

Cross References

Psalms 12:1

Help us, Lord, because godly people seem to be disappearing, and faithfulness has become rare among humanity.

Job 33:23

If there is a messenger among a thousand who can explain to a person what is right,

Romans 3:10

As Scripture declares, no human being is completely righteous on his own—not even one.

Spiritual Principle

Faithful character is rare enough that it should never be taken for granted.

XXIX. GOD MADE HUMANITY UPRIGHT

Ecclesiastes 7:29 — Humanity Chose Many Schemes

“This only have I found: God made mankind upright, but they have gone in search of many schemes.”

The chapter ends by identifying the real human problem.

God is not responsible for human corruption.

God made humanity upright.

Human beings departed from that condition.

We created:

Schemes.

Rebellion.

Selfish plans.

Sinful alternatives to God's design.

Cross References

Genesis 1:27

God created humanity in His own image. In the image of God He created them; He created male and female.

Genesis 3:6

When the woman saw that the fruit looked good for food, was attractive to the eyes, and seemed desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Romans 3:23

Every person has sinned and falls short of the glory and holy standard of God.

Spiritual Principle

Human sin is not the result of defective creation.

It is the result of human rebellion.

Key Truth

God made humanity upright.

Humanity chose crooked paths.

XXX. EIGHT GREAT LESSONS FROM ECCLESIASTES 7

1. Character Is Better Than Appearance

A good name is better than expensive perfume.

Principle:

Who you are matters more than how impressive you appear.

2. Mortality Can Teach Wisdom

A funeral reminds us:

Life is short.

Time matters.

Eternity is real.

Principle:

Remembering death can improve how we live.

3. Correction Is Better Than Flattery

Wise rebuke may hurt.

But it can help.

Principle:

Truth that corrects you is more valuable than praise that deceives you.

4. Patience Is Better Than Pride

Beginnings are easy.

Endurance is harder.

Principle:

Finishing well requires patience.

5. Anger Must Be Controlled

Quick anger reveals foolishness.

Principle:

Do not allow emotion to govern judgment.

6. Wisdom Has Great Value but Real Limits

Wisdom protects.

Wisdom guides.

But wisdom cannot explain everything.

Principle:

The wisest human being still needs God.

7. No Human Being Is Sinless

Everyone fails.

Everyone needs grace.

Principle:

Remembering your own sin should make you both humble and merciful.

8. Humanity's Problem Is Sin

God made humanity upright.

Human beings pursued their own schemes.

Principle:

The deepest human problem is not ignorance alone but rebellion against God.

XXXI. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 7 TEACHES ABOUT DEATH

Death is not presented merely as something frightening.

It can become a teacher.

It reminds us that:

Time is limited.

Pride is foolish.

Possessions are temporary.

Relationships matter.

Character matters.

God matters.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A wise person thinks about death not because he hates life, but because he wants to live life correctly.

XXXII. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 7 TEACHES ABOUT CORRECTION

Most people naturally prefer praise.

But praise can hide faults.

Correction exposes them.

A wise person asks:

Is this criticism true?

Is there something I need to change?

Spiritual Principle

Defensiveness prevents growth.

Teachability creates it.

XXXIII. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 7 TEACHES ABOUT PATIENCE

Patience waits for the end of the matter.

Pride demands immediate results.

Patience says:

“God is still working.”

Pride says:

“This should already be finished.”

Key Truth

Some things can only be understood after enough time has passed.

XXXIV. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 7 TEACHES ABOUT ANGER

Anger itself is not always sinful.

But quick, uncontrolled anger is dangerous.

It can distort:

Speech.

Judgment.

Relationships.

Decision-making.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Never make a permanent decision while controlled by a temporary emotion.

XXXV. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 7 TEACHES ABOUT THE PAST

The past contains lessons.

But the past should not become a prison.

Saying:

“Everything used to be better”

often ignores the difficulties of former times.

Spiritual Principle

Learn from yesterday.

Live in today.

Trust God with tomorrow.

XXXVI. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 7 TEACHES ABOUT RIGHTEOUSNESS

The warning against being “overly righteous” is not a warning against holiness.

It warns against:

Self-righteousness.

Legalistic pride.

Spiritual superiority.

Pretending to know everything.

Key Truth

Genuine righteousness makes a person humble because genuine righteousness recognizes dependence upon God.

XXXVII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why is a good name better than expensive perfume?

Because character and reputation have greater lasting value than outward appearance or luxury.

Question 2

How can the day of death be better than the day of birth?

At birth, the direction of a life is unknown.

At death, a faithful life has been completed, and its character can be evaluated.

Question 3

Why can mourning teach more than feasting?

Mourning forces us to face:

Mortality.

Priorities.

The brevity of life.

Feasting can easily distract us from these realities.

Question 4

Why is wise rebuke valuable?

Because correction can expose problems we may not recognize in ourselves.

Question 5

What does the crackling of thorns illustrate?

It pictures foolish laughter that is:

Loud.

Brief.

Shallow.

Temporary.

Question 6

Why is patience better than pride?

Patience is willing to wait for the completion of a matter.

Pride demands control and immediate results.

Question 7

Why is anger dangerous?

Quick anger can produce:

Foolish speech.

Wrong decisions.

Broken relationships.

Sinful reactions.

Question 8

Is it wrong to remember the past?

No.

The warning is against romanticizing the past and assuming everything was automatically better before.

Question 9

What does it mean not to be “overly righteous”?

It warns against self-righteousness and religious pride, not genuine obedience to God.

Question 10

Why does verse 20 matter so much?

It reminds us that no human being lives completely without sin.

Therefore, no one has grounds for spiritual pride.

Question 11

Why should we not pay attention to every criticism?

Because people sometimes speak carelessly, and because we ourselves have also spoken wrongly about others.

Question 12

What does the final verse teach about humanity?

God created humanity upright.

Human beings departed from God’s design and pursued sinful schemes.

XXXVIII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Ecclesiastes 7 asks several searching questions.

What Kind of Name Am I Building?

Will people associate my life with:

Integrity?

Faithfulness?

Kindness?

Truth?

Am I Willing to Think About Mortality?

Does the reality of death shape my priorities?

Can I Receive Correction?

Or do I immediately become defensive?

Am I Patient?

Can I wait for God to finish what He has begun?

Am I Quick to Become Angry?

Does anger control my words?

Am I Romanticizing the Past?

Am I missing what God is doing now because I keep wishing for yesterday?

Am I Self-Righteous?

Do I compare my righteousness with other people instead of recognizing my dependence upon grace?

Do I Listen to Every Opinion About Me?

Have I allowed criticism to control my peace?

Do I Recognize My Own Sinfulness?

Does that recognition make me humble?

XXXIX. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“A Wise Person Learns from What a Fool Tries to Avoid”

The fool wants:

Constant laughter.

Constant comfort.

Constant praise.

Constant entertainment.

The wise person is willing to face:

Correction.

Sorrow.

Mortality.

Adversity.

Hard truth.

Why?

Because difficult things often teach the deepest lessons.

Principle:

Do not ask God only to make life easy. Ask Him to make you wise.

XL. THE SCHOOL OF MORTALITY

A funeral has a way of making questions clearer.

What mattered?

What did not?

What survives?

What disappears?

Money gets left behind.

Possessions change hands.

Titles disappear.

But:

Character matters.

Faith matters.

Relationships matter.

Truth matters.

God matters.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Death is a terrible master but a powerful teacher.

XLI. THE BALANCE OF GODLY WISDOM

Ecclesiastes 7 refuses two false paths.

One path says:

“I am better than everyone.”

That is self-righteousness.

The other says:

“Nothing matters, so I will live however I want.”

That is wickedness.

The wise path says:

“I fear God.”

Fear of God produces:

Humility.

Obedience.

Balance.

Discernment.

Spiritual Principle

Wisdom avoids both prideful religion and reckless rebellion.

XLII. FINAL APPLICATION

Ecclesiastes Chapter 7 teaches us that wisdom often grows in places we would not naturally choose.

We would choose:

The feast.

The chapter says:

Consider the funeral.

We would choose:

Laughter.

The chapter says:

Sorrow can teach.

We would choose:

Praise.

The chapter says:

Listen to correction.

We would choose:

Immediate results.

The chapter says:

Be patient.

We would choose:

Control.

The chapter says:

Consider the work of God.

We would choose:

Perfect explanations.

The chapter says:

Some things are too deep for us.

Wisdom therefore begins with humility.

You do not know everything.

You cannot control everything.

You are not sinless.

You need correction.

You need patience.

You need grace.

You need God.

Do not waste your life pretending otherwise.

Build a good name.

Receive wise rebuke.

Control anger.

Stop worshiping the past.

Be patient through difficult seasons.

Accept that some questions may remain unanswered.

Do not become self-righteous.

Do not become morally careless.

Fear God.

Remember:

Everyone sins.

Therefore:

Show grace.

Remember:

People will say things about you.

Do not allow every word to become a wound.

Remember your own failures before condemning someone else.

And above all:

Recognize the condition of humanity.

God made mankind upright.

Human beings pursued many schemes.

That explains much of the brokenness we see.

The answer is not greater human pride.

The answer is returning humbly to God.

Therefore:

Seek wisdom.

But do not worship your own intelligence.

Pursue righteousness.

But reject self-righteousness.

Receive correction.

Control anger.

Endure patiently.

Remember mortality.

Fear God.

And allow every difficult lesson of life to make you:

Wiser.

Humbler.

More faithful.

More dependent upon Him.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the wisdom found in Your Word.

Teach us to value character more than appearance.

Help us build a good name through lives of integrity.

Remind us that our earthly lives are brief.

Give us courage to think seriously about mortality so that we may live wisely.

When sorrow enters our lives, do not allow us to waste the lesson it can teach.

Use difficult seasons to make our hearts:

Softer.

Wiser.

More compassionate.

More dependent upon You.

Give us teachable hearts.

Help us receive correction without pride.

When someone speaks truth we need to hear, give us humility to listen.

Protect us from foolish anger.

Teach us to be:

Quick to listen.

Slow to speak.

Slow to become angry.

Keep us from romanticizing the past.

Help us learn from yesterday without trying to live there.

Give us wisdom for today.

Father, teach us to trust Your sovereignty.

When circumstances cannot be changed, give us grace to trust You.

When days are good, help us rejoice.

When days are difficult, help us reflect and remain faithful.

Protect us from self-righteousness.

Keep us from thinking we are spiritually superior to others.

Remind us that no one lives without sin.

Keep us close to Your grace.

Protect us also from reckless wickedness.

Do not let us misuse grace as an excuse for sin.

Teach us to fear You.

Father, help us not to become controlled by the opinions of others.

Give us wisdom to know which words deserve attention and which words should be released.

When others fail, remind us of our own failures.

Make us merciful.

Make us humble.

Give us wisdom.

But also remind us that our wisdom has limits.

When we reach questions we cannot answer, help us trust Your infinite understanding.

You see what we cannot see.

You know what we cannot know.

You understand what we cannot understand.

Thank You that You created humanity upright.

Forgive us for the sinful schemes we pursue.

Lead us away from crooked paths.

Bring our hearts back to You.

Make us wise.

Make us patient.

Make us humble.

Make us faithful.

And may every season of life draw us closer to You.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Key Verse

**"Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins." —
Ecclesiastes 7:20**

Central Truth

True wisdom grows through mortality, correction, patience, humility, and the fear of God, while the limits of human understanding and the universal reality of sin remind us that perfect wisdom and righteousness belong to God alone.

Ecclesiastes 7 in One Sentence

The Preacher teaches that character, mortality, correction, patience, humility, and godly wisdom are more valuable than shallow pleasure, pride, anger, and self-righteousness, while reminding us that humanity is sinful, human understanding is limited, and the fear of God is the path of wisdom.