

Wisdom for Today from Ecclesiastes

Some of the content of Ecclesiastes is a bit depressing as Solomon explores the so-called vanities of life. But from this exploration, Solomon drew some very good conclusions. His goal was to “see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives” (2:3). Without elevating the importance of one part of Scripture over another,¹ here are some of those conclusions, including the “judicious enjoyment of life” motif that is common throughout the book.

2:13 Wisdom excels folly, as light excels darkness.

2:24-25 Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight...

Eccl 3:12-13 I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God.

3:22 So I perceived that nothing is better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage.

4:6 Better a handful with quietness than both hands full, together with toil and grasping for the wind.

4:13 Better a poor and wise youth, than an old and foolish king...

5:1-2 Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few.

5:4, 6 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it...Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin...

5:12 The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much.

5:18-20 Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him;

¹ There is a lot of wisdom throughout the book of Ecclesiastes that I have not thought of as a “conclusion” or “big” principle to pull out. That judgment is indeed a judgment call. You may carry out a similar study and pick out some different verses or additional ones. Go for it!

for it is his heritage. As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God. For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart.

7:1 A good name is better than precious ointment.

7:2 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.

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

7:9 Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry.

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

7:14 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...

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

7:21 Do not take to heart everything people say...

8:2 A man’s wisdom makes his face shine...

8:8 No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, and no one has power in the day of death.

8:11 Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. [See also 9:3.]

8:12-13 ... It will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. But it will not be well with the wicked...

8:15 So I commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labor all the days of his life which God gives him under the sun. [This is not hedonistic enjoyment; it considers the fear of God three verses earlier!]

9:7-10 Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works. 8 Let your garments always be white, and let your head lack no oil. 9 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you

perform under the sun. 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

9:16-18 Wisdom is better than strength, nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard. 17 Words of the wise spoken quietly, should be heard rather than the shout of a ruler of fools. 18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war.

10:9 He who quarries stones may be hurt by them, and he who splits wood may be endangered by it. [Uncertainties]

10:10 If the ax is dull, and one does not sharpen the edge, then he must use more strength; but wisdom brings success. [As MacArthur says, "wise living usually produces a good outcome."]

10:18 Because of laziness the building decays, and through idleness of hands the house leaks.

11:2 Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, for you do not know what evil will be on the earth. [I have understood this to refer to a diversification principle—in activities you choose to do, in investment ventures. But the word "give" must not be forgotten as well. See 11:6.]

11:4 He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap. [Work, don't make excuses of why you cannot work.]

11:6 In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; for you do not know which will prosper, either this or that, or whether both alike will be good. [Diversification of efforts to protect against life's hazards.]

11:8-9 But if a man lives many years and rejoices in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many...Rejoice O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart...but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.

12:1 Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, I have no pleasure in them.

12:13-14 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.