



The Oaks
Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

Lesson Leader:

James Haymon

Class Leader:

Joe Liles

PERSPECTIVES

ECCL 7 and 8

Like a beautiful diamond, character is formed by pressure and polished by friction. A person doesn't wake up one morning as a man or woman of character. Character doesn't evolve out of osmosis. **Character is developed by adversity** or what many have called "the school of hard knocks." Indeed, there is no education like adversity. Yet, adversity has the potential to create greatness in a person. Thus, Solomon says, "Adversity is better than prosperity." How can this be? Why is adversity better than prosperity? In Eccl 7:1-14, Solomon gives two reasons: **adversity stimulates an eternal perspective and godly character. Our heavenly Father provides wise counsel** and we can read His profitable words in the writings of the Bible. And who can't benefit from a bit more wisdom? In Eccl 7:15-29 Solomon says, "Wise up by going low." By this he means biblical wisdom comes through humility. In this passage, Solomon offers three provisions of wisdom: **Wisdom provides humility, strength and insight.** There are two days in our lives when our name is prominent: the day we receive our name, at birth, and the day our name appears in the obituary column. What happens between those two days determines whether our name is a lovely ointment or a foul stench. Have you ever noticed the way we mark a person's life span? We will write a person's name, and below it will put something like this: 1934-2008. We list the year of birth and a year of death. Between the two is what? A dash. Solomon might agree that this life is a quick dash between birth and death—just a vapor.

In Eccl 8:1-17, Solomon shares that **in the midst of life we must trust that God is in control of those things we don't understand.** This requires humility and wisdom. I am reminded of an old country song by Mac Davis, "It's Hard to Be Humble." I would suggest, "It's easier to be humble when you submit to authority." In this chapter, Solomon gives two simple tips for living with humility (and wisdom): **respect human authority and Divine authority.** Faith is not a complex process. It is not the result of years of education, pilgrimages, or flashy supernatural experiences. The door to belief is ready to open and is locked only in the minds of those who choose to believe it is. God wants you and me to stop trying to figure this life out. He just wants us to humble ourselves and submit to Him. Will you trust God in the midst of this unstable and uncertain life? Will you choose to believe that He is bigger and wiser than you are?

(Adapted from "Ecclesiastes" by Keith Krell)

What is the Purpose of Life A Study of Ecclesiastes

Date	Lesson	Text
05/02	Introduction	
05/09	Trivial Pursuits	Chap 1-2
05/16	Expectations	Chap 3-4
05/23	Satisfaction	Chap 5-6
05/30	Perspectives	Chap 7-8
06/06	Guest Teacher	Bro. Smarto
06/13	Live Wisely	Chap 9-10
06/20	Final Exam	Chap 11-12
06/27	Summary & Review	

Food for Thought

Perspective

We worship a God who is greater than our greatest problem. The problems that we face each day Can seem too much to bear Until we turn our eyes to Christ And trust His tender care.

Who has understood the mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counselor?

(Isa 40:13 NIV)

(From "Our Daily Bread" Oct 29, 2008)

Key Themes:

1. This life is full of **adversity**, yet life's difficulties have the potential to awaken a spiritual dimension in us. Sorrow makes us think about life, its meaning, and our priorities. Sorrow and suffering often brings one to God
2. **Wisdom** will bring illumination. Our heavenly Father provides wise counsel. Obey God and what you know, trust Him in what you don't.
3. Solomon urges us to **respect authorities**. We ought to remember that any authority under which we find ourselves is a God-ordained authority and should be obeyed.

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Chapter 7

Adversity stimulates an eternal perspective (7:1-4)

(Phil 1:21-24) 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

(Ps 90:12) 12 So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.

Adversity cultivates godly character (7:5-14)

(1 Peter 2:20) 20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

(James 1:2-4) 2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Wisdom provides humility (7:15-18)

(1 Cor 10:12) 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.

(Rom 6:16) 16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

Wisdom provides strength (7:19-22)

(Prov 24:3-5) 3 By wisdom a house is built, And by understanding it is established; 4 And by knowledge the rooms are filled With all precious and pleasant riches. 5 A wise man is strong, And a man of knowledge increases power.

Wisdom provides insight (7:23-8:1)

(Prov 2:2-6) 2 Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; 3 For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; 4 If you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures; 5 Then you will discern the fear of the Lord And discover the knowledge of God. 6 For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

(Matt 7:7-8) 7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Chapter 8

Respect human authority (8:1-9)

(Rom 13:1) 13 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

(Eph 6:5-9) 5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; 6 not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. 9 And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Respect divine authority (8:10-17)

(Ps 112:1) 1 Praise the Lord! How blessed is the man who fears the Lord, Who greatly delights in His commandments.

(Matt 10:28) 28 "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

(Rom 11:33-36) 33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? 35 or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again?