Crossroads International Church Dr. Rick Griffith

19 October 2014 Message 13 of 17

NLT 40 Minutes

**Guaranteed Success**

Title

***Ecclesiastes 9:11–10:11***

**Topic:** Success

**Subject:** Wisdom doesn’t guarantee success

**Complement:** because life is unfair and uncertain

**Purpose:** The listeners *will trust God instead of wisdom* to guarantee success.

**Meditation:** God’s Reliability

**Song:** “The Perfect Wisdom of Our God” (Keith Getty)

# Introduction

### Interest: Every one of us wants to me successful in life. But how can you *guarantee* success? I suspect you would agree with me that human strategies won’t work, as they are too simplistic—and, after all, we are Christians who don’t buy into these things.

How?

### Need: Is *wisdom* a guarantee for success?

Wisdom Needed?

#### If you're wise, will you *soon* be at the top?

#### If you're wise, will you *eventually* succeed then?

#### If we are honest, we will admit that wisdom doesn’t always guarantee success. In fact, the “Peter Principle” may be true!

Peter Drucker

##### Peter Drucker is known as the father of modern management.

##### His “Peter Principle” states that, “In a hierarchy, employees tend to rise to their levels of incompetence.”

Triangle

##### This is “the theory that employees within an organization will advance to their highest level of competence and then be promoted to and remain at a level at which they are incompetent.”

Peter Principle

##### Yet, I submit to you, that whether Drucker is right or not, even genuine wisdom doesn’t always guarantee success. But…

### Subject: Why doesn’t wisdom always guarantee success?

Subject

### Background: Solomon has already told us that wisdom doesn’t always ensure success.

#### Solomon was convinced regarding the benefits of wisdom.

Wisdom

##### He recorded many proverbs to help people be wise.

##### Throughout Ecclesiastes he encourages us to be wise—even though it doesn’t ultimately last, it is still good to have wisdom.

Series

##### Joseph (Gen. 37–50) and Daniel (Dan. 1–2) and Nehemiah (Neh. 1–2) are great examples how wisdom brings success. If you look carefully, you will see each of these stories notes that “God was with Joseph or Daniel or Nehemiah…”

Ladder

#### Solomon knew that even wisdom wouldn’t assure success since there are many other variables in life.

### Preview: Today we’ll see *two reasons that wisdom doesn’t guarantee success*.

2 Reasons

### Text: Ecclesiastes 9:11–10:11 tells why wisdom can’t safeguard victory with two reasons.

• Text

(The first reason that *wisdom doesn’t guarantee success* is...)

#  I. Life is unfair (9:11–10:7).

MP

Restated

 [The *inequities* of life afflict the wise as well s the rest of us.]

## *Chance* can hinder wisdom (9:11-12).

Chance

### Hardships can prevent very able people from succeeding (9:11).

#### The fastest don't always win the race (9:11a).

Runners

Wrestlers

Plate

#### The strongest don't always win the fight (9:11b).

#### The wise sometimes go hungry (9:11c).

Coins

Boy

#### The skilled aren't always the richest (9:11d).

#### The educated don't always get the breaks (9:11e).

##### Sometimes those educated aren’t related to the people with power—so they don’t get the position and it goes to the son of the leader. Nepotism is described by despair.com as “We promote family values here—almost as often as we promote family members”!

Nepotism

##### A blogger named Ketan Joshi noted (http://ketanj.blogspot.com/2011/12/thing-about-nepotism.html),

Nephew

###### “One interesting thing I learned today is that the word ‘Nepotism’ is derived from the Latin word ‘Nepos’ or ‘nepotis’ which means ‘nephew’.

###### Um....Nepotism means favouritism granted to relatives regardless of merit. So why specifically nephew, rather than son?

###### The answer is very interesting. This word came about in the middle ages, when the church clergy—specifically the Catholic clergy—had to take an oath of chastity, and could not (legally) father any children. So these dudes gave their nephews such positions of preference, as would normally be given to a son. Hence the word ‘Nepotism’. (Nephewism, if you wish)”

12

Shoes tied

#### Bad timing and misfortune affect us all (9:11f).

### Trials come when we don’t expect them (9:12).

(An example of how wisdom has an uncertain future is seen in the next section where we find an illustration of how people quickly forget the positive results of one who uses wisdom.)

## *Negligence* can hinder wisdom (9:13-16).

16

13-15

Negligence

### A poor, wise man was forgotten and unrewarded (9:13-15).

### Wisdom is superior to strength but despised from the poor (9:16).

(The value of wisdom doesn’t take a lot to undo it!)

## *Foolishness* can hinder wisdom (9:17–10:1).

Danger

Leaders

17

Foolish

### Fools prefer a despot instead of a wise, quiet counselor (9:17).

### Wisdom is better than weapons but fools still hinder it (9:18).

18

1

### Fools hinder wisdom like flies hinder perfume (10:1).

(Another example of how a little foolishness nullifies the great value of wisdom is when a foolish superior doesn't recognize the wisdom of one under him. How?)

## *Foolish leaders* can hinder wisdom (10:2-7).

Foolish leaders

### Wisdom can keep you from danger (10:2-4).

#### Wisdom leads us to right decisions (10:2).

2

##### Ps. 16:8 says, “I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken” (NAU).

Conserve v. Liberal

##### Jesus is at the right hand of God now, and the right side has long been deemed to be the better side.

#### Foolishness is obvious to all (10:3).

3

#### Wisdom calms us before an angry leader (10:4).

4

### Foolish leaders often promote the wrong people (10:5-7).

#### Politicians can elevate fools over the intelligent (10:5-6).

5-6

##### This is why the “Peter Principle” notes that people climb to their level of incompetence. It is leadership that allows this to happen!

Climb ladder

##### Drucker also distinguishes between efficiency (doing things right) and effectiveness (doing the right things). Foolish leaders seek efficiency!

Effective

#### Politicians can give no attention to competence (10:7).

7

MPI

(Why doesn’t wisdom guarantee success? One reason is because life is unfair. The second reason that *wisdom doesn’t guarantee success* is...)

Subj

# II. Life is uncertain (10:8-11).

MP

[The *unreliable nature* of life hinders wisdom.]

## *Accidents* can hinder wisdom (10:8-10).

Accidents

### You can fall into a pit that you actually dug (10:8a).

8a

8b

### You can get snakebites while working hard (10:8b).

9a

### You can get hurt while quarrying rock (10:9a).

Assisi

Trust God

• Counsel

• Timing

• Noticed

• Silly

• Unreward

Questions

MI

11

10b

10a

Timing

9b

### You can get hurt from logs that you split (10:9b).

## *Bad timing* can hinder wisdom (10:10-11).

### Time spent to sharpen your ax is worth it (10:10a).

### Wisdom in all situations brings more chance of success (10:10b).

### Wisdom has no gain unless used at the proper time (10:11).

(So *why* doesn’t wisdom always guarantee success?)

Subj

# Conclusion

### Wisdom doesn’t guarantee success because life is unfair and uncertain (MI).

MI

### Wisdom won’t assure victory as it may be nullified by inequities and uncertainties (MI restated).

Questions

### Which question is most relevant to you today:

#### How has your wisdom gone *unrewarded*?

• Unreward

#### How can you avoid *silly mistakes* that ruin what you accomplish by wisdom?

• Silly

#### What should you do when your *boss doesn’t notice* your great insights?

• Noticed

#### How is *bad timing* hindering the good you do?

• Timing

#### How would God counsel you in this situation?

• Counsel

### Don’t trust wisdom—trust God!

Trust God

#### Let God use your present trial to see your need for Him.

#### Embrace Jesus, since “in [Christ] lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3 NLT).

Col. 2:3

### The prayer of St. Francis of Assisi sums up this passage:

Assisi

"Lord, grant me

the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

the strength to change the things I can,

and the wisdom to know the difference."

### Prayer

Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### The preceding verses tell us that only death is certain in life!

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### We should pursue wisdom, but we can become so enamored with wisdom that we become unrealistic about its value.

### This passage warns us that other factors in life can hinder wisdom.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

# Questions

### What is "his time" (Heb: "his hour") referring to in verse 12?

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Text

# Possible Illustrations

### Text

RIGHT do what is right

UPS drivers only make right turns--fact of fiction?

Fact…mostly.

The truth is, in 2004 UPS enacted a policy for their drivers to avoid ALL left hand turns whenever possible and practicable. The result is that UPS drivers make right hand turns more than 90% of the time, turning left only in sparsely populated residential neighborhoods or when right turns are otherwise unavailable or impractical. UPS explains the strategy:

Years ago ... UPS engineers [began] to devise route-optimization plans to increase efficiency, reduce fuel consumption and get drivers back to their centers earlier. They came up with a simple rule. Minimize – or sometimes, eliminate – left-hand turns. It's simple but effective.

Since 2004 UPS has saved an estimated 10 million gallons of gas.

Carbon emissions were reduced by 100,000 metric tons – the equivalent of 5,300 cars off the road for an entire year. ...

Even if this meant traveling a greater distance, results showed that more packages could be delivered in less time with reduced emissions by driving in a series of right-hand loops. It helped the bottom line, met consumer demands and increased safety.

"Left turns are unsafe for everyone," [reports the WASHINGTON POST](http://illustrationexchange.us2.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=181c69bf3d2275e6dc9157a34&id=d5a481014f&e=aa849ca33b):

Federal data have shown that 53.1 percent of crossing-path crashes involve left turns, but only 5.7 percent involve right turns. That’s almost 10 times as many crashes involving left turns as right. A study by New York City’s transportation planners concluded that left-hand turns were three times as likely to cause a deadly crash involving a pedestrian as right-hand turns. And 36 percent of fatal accidents involving a motorcycle involve a left-hand turn in front of a motorcycle, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Association.

“Left turns create some concerns when it comes to generating potential for congestion, back-up traffic flow, safety, accident situations,” said Phil Caruso, the deputy executive director for technical programs at the Institute of Transportation Engineers.

**Application:**

Choosing to only make *right* turns is a bit like choosing to only ever do the *right* thing. Sure, there are plenty of left turns that would get you where you want to go more directly, but at what cost?

Following God's way--the *right* way--will certainly take you on a more circuitous route, but you can be sure that you will avoid a lot of unnecessary troubles along the way.

"But for those who are righteous, the way is not steep and rough. You are a God who does what is right, and you smooth out the path ahead of them" (Isaiah 26:7, NLT).

Author: [Illustration Exchange](http://illustrationexchange.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=181c69bf3d2275e6dc9157a34&id=6f30defdb5&e=aa849ca33b)

Scripture: Isaiah 26:7

Source: "When in doubt: UPS avoids left turns. How a simple rule increased our drivers' efficiency," posted UPS COMPASS, July 2012

[Visit the source](http://illustrationexchange.us2.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=181c69bf3d2275e6dc9157a34&id=063f846870&e=aa849ca33b)

# Possible Applications

### Text

**Guaranteed Success**

***Ecclesiastes 9:11–10:11***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*: The reason wisdom doesn’t guarantee success is because it can be nullified by life's inequities and uncertainties (9:11–10:11).

# I. The reason wisdom doesn’t guarantee success is because it can be nullified by life's *inequities* (9:11–10:7).

## *Chance* can hinder wisdom (9:11-12).

### Hardships can prevent very able people from succeeding (9:11).

#### The fastest don't always win the race (9:11a).

#### The strongest don't always win the fight (9:11b).

#### The wise sometimes go hungry (9:11c).

#### The skilled aren't always the richest (9:11d).

#### The educated don't always get the breaks (9:11e).

#### Bad timing and misfortune affect us all (9:11f).

### Trials come when we don’t expect them (9:12).

## *Negligence* can hinder wisdom (9:13-16).

### A poor, wise man was forgotten and unrewarded (9:13-15).

### Wisdom is superior to strength but despised from the poor (9:16).

## *Foolishness* can hinder wisdom (9:17–10:1).

### Fools prefer a despot instead of a wise, quiet counselor (9:17).

### Wisdom is better than weapons but fools still hinder it (9:18).

### Fools hinder wisdom like flies hinder perfume (10:1).

## *Foolish leaders* can hinder wisdom (10:2-7).

### Wisdom can keep you from danger (10:2-4).

#### Wisdom leads us to right decisions (10:2; cf. Ps. 16:8).

#### Foolishness is obvious to all (10:3).

#### Wisdom calms us before an angry leader (10:4).

### Foolish leaders often promote the wrong people (10:5-7).

#### Politicians can elevate fools over the intelligent (10:5-6).

#### Politicians can give no attention to competence (10:7).

# II. The reason wisdom doesn’t guarantee success is because it can be nullified by life's *uncertainties* (10:8-11).

## *Accidents* can hinder wisdom (10:8-10).

### You can fall into a pit that you actually dug (10:8a).

### You can get snakebites while working hard (10:8b).

### You can get hurt while quarrying rock (10:9a).

### You can get hurt from logs that you split (10:9b).

## *Bad timing* can hinder wisdom (10:10-11).

### Time spent to sharpen your ax is worth it (10:10a).

### Wisdom in all situations brings more chance of success (10:10b).

### Wisdom has no gain unless used at the proper time (10:11).

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners *will trust God instead of wisdom* to guarantee success.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: How can you *guarantee* success?

### Need: Is *wisdom* a guarantee for success?

### Subject: Why doesn’t wisdom always guarantee success?

### Background: Solomon has already told us that wisdom doesn’t always ensure success.

### Preview: Today in Ecclesiastes 9:11–10:11 we’ll see *two reasons that wisdom doesn’t guarantee success*.

#  I. Life is unfair (9:11–10:7).

## *Chance* can hinder wisdom (9:11-12).

### Hardships can prevent very able people from succeeding (9:11).

#### The fastest don't always win the race (9:11a).

#### The strongest don't always win the fight (9:11b).

#### The wise sometimes go hungry (9:11c).

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#### The educated don't always get the breaks (9:11e).

#### Bad timing and misfortune affect us all (9:11f).

### Trials come when we don’t expect them (9:12).

## *Negligence* can hinder wisdom (9:13-16).

### A poor, wise man was forgotten and unrewarded (9:13-15).

### Wisdom is superior to strength but despised from the poor (9:16).

## *Foolishness* can hinder wisdom (9:17–10:1).

### Fools prefer a despot instead of a wise, quiet counselor (9:17).

### Wisdom is better than weapons but fools still hinder it (9:18).

### Fools hinder wisdom like flies hinder perfume (10:1).

## *Foolish leaders* can hinder wisdom (10:2-7).

### Wisdom can keep you from danger (10:2-4).

#### Wisdom leads us to right decisions (10:2; cf. Ps. 16:8).

#### Foolishness is obvious to all (10:3).

#### Wisdom calms us before an angry leader (10:4).

### Foolish leaders often promote the wrong people (10:5-7).

#### Politicians can elevate fools over the intelligent (10:5-6).

#### Politicians can give no attention to competence (10:7).

# II. Life is uncertain (10:8-11).

## *Accidents* can hinder wisdom (10:8-10).

### You can fall into a pit that you actually dug (10:8a).

### You can get snakebites while working hard (10:8b).

### You can get hurt while quarrying rock (10:9a).

### You can get hurt from logs that you split (10:9b).

## *Bad timing* can hinder wisdom (10:10-11).

### Time spent to sharpen your ax is worth it (10:10a).

### Wisdom in all situations brings more chance of success (10:10b).

### Wisdom has no gain unless used at the proper time (10:11).

# Conclusion

### Wisdom doesn’t guarantee success because life is unfair and uncertain (MI).

### Which question is most relevant to you today:

#### How has your wisdom gone *unrewarded*?

#### How can you avoid *silly mistakes* that ruin what you accomplish by wisdom?

#### What should you do when your *boss doesn’t notice* your great insights?

#### How is *bad timing* hindering the good you do?

#### How would God counsel you in this situation?

### Don’t trust wisdom—trust God!

#### Let God use your present trial to see your need for Him.

#### Embrace Jesus, since “in [Christ] lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3 NLT).

### The prayer of St. Francis of Assisi sums up this passage:

"Lord, grant me

the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

the strength to change the things I can,

and the wisdom to know the difference."



**Rick Griffith**

19 October 2014

Message 13 of 17

 **Guaranteed Success**

***Ecclesiastes 9:11–10:11***

# Introduction

### How can you *guarantee* success?

### \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Why doesn’t wisdom always guarantee success?

# I. Life is unfair \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (9:11–10:7).

## *Chance* *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* can hinder wisdom (9:11-12).

### Hardships can prevent very able people from succeeding (9:11).

#### The fastest don't always win the race (9:11a).

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#### Bad timing and misfortune affect us all (9:11f).

### Trials come when we don’t expect them (9:12).

## *Negligence* *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* can hinder wisdom (9:13-16).

### A poor, wise man was forgotten and unrewarded (9:13-15).

### Wisdom is superior to strength but despised from the poor (9:16).

## *Foolishness* *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* can hinder wisdom (9:17–10:1).

### Fools prefer a despot instead of a wise, quiet counselor (9:17).

### Wisdom is better than weapons but fools still hinder it (9:18).

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## *Foolish leaders* *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* can hinder wisdom (10:2-7).

### Wisdom can keep you from danger (10:2-4).

#### Wisdom leads us to right decisions (10:2; cf. Ps. 16:8).

#### Foolishness is obvious to all (10:3).

#### Wisdom calms us before an angry leader (10:4).

### Foolish leaders often promote the wrong people (10:5-7).

# II. Life is uncertain \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (10:8-11).

## *Accidents \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* can hinder wisdom (10:8-10).

### You can fall into a pit that you actually dug (10:8a).

### You can get snakebites while working hard (10:8b).

### You can get hurt while quarrying rock (10:9a).

### You can get hurt from logs that you split (10:9b).

## *Bad timing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* can hinder wisdom (10:10-11).

### Time spent to sharpen your ax is worth it (10:10a).

### Wisdom in all situations brings more chance of success (10:10b).

### Wisdom has no gain unless used at the proper time (10:11).

# Conclusion

### Wisdom doesn’t guarantee success because life is unfair and uncertain (Main Idea).

### Which question is most relevant to you today?

#### How has your wisdom gone *unrewarded*?

#### How can you avoid *silly mistakes* that ruin what you accomplish by wisdom?

#### What should you do when your *boss doesn’t notice* your great insights?

#### How is *bad timing* hindering the good you do?

#### How would God counsel you in this situation?

### Don’t trust wisdom—trust God!

### The prayer of St. Francis of Assisi sums up this passage:

"Lord, grant me

the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

the strength to change the things I can,

and the wisdom to know the difference."

**Thought Questions**

1. Notice the five examples of human abilities that fail (9:11). Have any of these been true of your life that you want to share?
2. Is it really true that "time and chance overtake them all" (v. 11b)? Why or why not?
3. What's the point of the story about the deliverance of the city (9:13-15)? Can you think of a similar example of when you observed a situation like this?
4. What verse in 9:11–10:11 relates most to your own Christian experience? How?