Crossroads International Church Dr. Rick Griffith

21 September 2014 Message 9 of 17

NLT 40 Minutes

**Wisdom in the Ups & Downs**

Title

***Ecclesiastes 6:10–7:14***

**Topic:** Wisdom

**Subject:** Trust God’s wise plan

**Complement:** because his plan is unchanging and you are ignorant of it.

**Purpose:** The listeners will rest in what they don’t know.

**Main Idea:** Wisdom enables us to trust in God’s plan.

# Introduction

### Interest: If you could, would you like to know what would happen in the next year of your life? In the next 30 seconds, tell the person next you either “yes” or “no” and why.

Know future?

### Need: Do you think that knowing your future would make you more secure, more peaceful, and more joyful?

Crystal Ball

#### That future will include some *pleasant* things—the joy you will experience, maybe a pay raise, or reconciled relationship—but you won’t experience that right now.

#### That future also will include some *tough* times—perhaps grief, maybe some difficult relationships, sickness, or heartache—and if you knew right now that these difficulties were coming, I suspect you might live more anxiously today.

#### Isn’t living in ignorance better? We think that knowledge brings blessing, so we try to increase our knowledge. However, there is a rest that comes from *not* knowing not the details of our future, but knowing that we can trust God with our lives.

### Subject: Of course, most people don’t entrust themselves to God, and we don’t want to be like them. But why should we trust in God’s plan for our lives?

Subject

### Background: We're halfway through our journey in the book of Ecclesiastes today.

Book   
Chart

#### Structure: We are moving into the second major section on wisdom.

Work

##### The emphasis in the book up to this point has been to speak a lot about work.

Materialism

##### Solomon has told us that a life pursuit of only work, projects, and money is futile. He has warned of being a workaholic and materialist.

#### So why is this latter part of the book on wisdom in the Bible?

##### Some might think, “I agree. Life is more important than just work. What really makes life worthwhile is wisdom!” So now the topic shifts to addressing wisdom itself—but it will surprise you!

Won’t last

Wisdom

##### Glenn, in the *BKC*, 1:991 says, "This section is characterized the repetition of the phrases 'do(es) not/cannot know' (6:12; 9:1, 12: 10:14; 11:2, 6) and 'do(es) not/cannot discover' (7:14, 24,28; 8:17). As many commentators note, this section is characterized by many imperatives, recommendations, and commendations (e.g., "it is good," 7:18; or "X is better than Y"; 7:2, 5; 9:16, 19). This second half of the book thus contains much practical advice on how to live. However, this advice is given in the light of constant reminders of man's ignorance of the providence of God (i.e., "What God has done," 7:13; cf. 8:17) and what the future holds (e.g., 9:1; 10:14; 11:2). This advice is intended to encourage people to fear God (7:18; 8:12; 12:13) and lead lives that please Him (7:26; cf. 2:26).”

Phrases  
• 8x

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

Heroes

##### Today we idolize people who can put a ball through a net better than others, or can run faster or lift more weight, or whatever sport it might be. We also idolize people who make a living pretending to be someone else. That’s called being an actor or actress.

• Actors

• Balls

##### However, the Ancient Near East had a prominent emphasis on wisdom. Each society prided itself on its “aged sages”—men of wisdom who declared and wrote literature that helped people with life’s thorny issues. Ecclesiastes is a prime example of such wisdom, and…

• ANE

### Preview: Today's text gives *two reasons* we should trust in God’s plan for our lives.

2 Reasons

### Text: Solomon's wise insights can be found in Ecclesiastes 6:10–7:14.

(So why trust in God’s plan for your life? Because…)

# I. God has planned all events and won’t change them (6:10-12).

MP

[You can try to change many things in your life, but God ultimately decides.]

## God won’t change His plan despite our arguing with Him (6:10-11).

10-11

### The world constantly tells us that we are masters of our destinies. The mantras of our day are many:

#### This is a key lie of our age…

The Lie  
(7 slides)

#### “You can be whatever you want!” Really? Then why aren’t we all happy? Don’t all people want to be happy?

#### “Be what you want to be!” Really? Can I be the best shot-putter in the world? I don’t think so! God hasn’t given me the muscle mass.

### None of us really believes that we can control our lives.

#### The Greek philosopher Epictetus said it well: ““Happiness and freedom begin with a clear understanding of one principle. Some things are within your control. And some things are not.”

Epictetus

#### Doesn’t that make sense? It can keep you from a lifetime of chasing unrealistic dreams. How much better to ask *God* what his plan is for your life! Why?

## We are fleeting and ignorant of the future (6:12).

12

### None of knows the future—and it’s a good thing!

No one knows…

### If we knew the difficulties ahead, then we would live dreading the future.

### If we knew the blessings ahead, I doubt we would enjoy life now.

(So why trust God? Solomon has said we should trust him because he has planned all events and won’t change them. Now he gives a second reason to trust God’s plans for our lives…)

MPI

Subj.

# II. We don't know why easy and tough times come our way (7:1-14).

MP

[Trust God, even though you can’t explain why "good times roll" and "not-so-good times roll."]

## The wise *gain wisdom from adversity* (7:1-10).

Owl

### The wise know that *character is better* than outward characteristics (7:1a).

1a

#### Wow, I better be careful here since two of our key members are managers with Chanel! Of course, I think that Valentin and Jieun would agree that…

#### Having a good reputation is more important than just smelling nice.

### The wise *reflect upon the brevity of their lives* (7:1b-4).

1b-2

#### One's death day is better than one's birthday (7:1b).

#### Attending a funeral is better than gorging at a feast because this reminder of one's own end prompts him to soberness and wisdom (7:2; cf. Ps. 90:12).

#### Sorrow is better than laughter since inner joy results from seriously looking at life (7:3).

3-4

#### The wise deal with death but fools ignore death and think only of pleasure (7:4).

#### I don’t have many regrets in raising my three sons, but one is that I wish I took them out of school to go to funerals.

Girl at casket

### The wise *listen to rebuke* (7:5-6).

5-6

#### Listening to a wise person’s rebuke is better than listening to a fool's song (7:5).

5

##### Teens, listen to your parents. I wish I had done this more in my early years! I almost made a tragic mistake of marrying the wrong person by not listening!

Listen to parents

##### Proverbs 27:5 says, “Open rebuke is better than hidden love.”

Prov. 27:5

##### James 1:19 is similar: “Be quick to listen [and] slow to speak.” Why?

James 1:19

#### One should heed wise rebuke because a fool's laughter is empty (7:6).

6

### The wise *submit to both prosperous and adverse circumstances* (7:7-10).

Roller coaster

7-10

#### Life is a roller coaster, so enjoy the ride!

#### An oppressive situation can tempt one to anger and greed (7:7).

7

##### Martin Luther King noted, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

MLK

Shark

##### Why? Because “this is the most dangerous animal in the world. It is responsible for MILLIONS of deaths every year. By its side, a great white shark swims peacefully.” Man is dangerous!

##### This is why we must avoid bribes. Our hearts can become very corrupt from bribes! A Philippine policeman once stopped our truck with a harp on the roof for supposedly violating a top load permit law. So we showed him our top load permit. He told us, “That is not valid. You can pay me the fine now or wait three hours in line down at the police station and pay it there.” We looked closely at his badge to get his police identity number. Then he covered it and said, “I let you by just this one time!”

Bribe

#### A finished product is better than just a dream about it (7:8a).

8a

#### A patient disposition is better than a proud disposition (7:8b).

• 8b

#### A quick temper reveals a person to be a fool (7:9).

9

#### A wise person won’t complain that "the 'good-ole days' were better than today" just because of some present difficulty (7:10).

10

## The wise benefit from prosperity (7:11-12).

Tree

### Wisdom plus prosperity is good (7:11).

### Wisdom and prosperity both provide protection (7:12a).

### Wisdom is superior to prosperity since generally a wise man lives longer than does a [rich] fool (7:12b; cf. 7:17; Prov. 13:14).

11-12

## The wise rest in God's plan for prosperity and adversity (7:13-14).

### Although people find fault with God's ways they can't change them (7:13).

13

### Rejoice in prosperity (7:14a).

14

### Recognize God's sovereignty in adversity (7:14b).

Roads

### God made prosperity and adversity so our ignorance of the future will cause us to trust God (7:14c).

Subject

(So wisdom enables us to trust in God’s plan—but *why* trust in God’s plan?)

# Conclusion

### God’s plan is unchanging and you are ignorant of it (MI).

MI

### Trust the Lord’s will even though you can’t figure it out (MI restated)! Blessed ignorance!

### Trust God’s wise plan because *his plan is already set* (MPI restated).

MPI

### Trust God’s wise plan because *you don’t know your future*—whether the good times or the bad times in life (MPII restated)

MPII

### To trust in God’s plan means to rest in your future:

Rest in Future

#### God has planned the future, so wisdom finds refuge in trusting in plan.

##### Wise people rest about their future marriage partner.

##### Wise people rest about their future ministry.

##### Wise people rest about their children’s future.

#### Rest in Your Future Trials and Good Times: Since God is author of both the good times and the bad times, wisdom trusts that God has purposes beyond human understanding.

Rest in Trials & Good

##### The wise person learns what God wanted from trials.

##### The wise person sees that the present good times also come from God.

Rest!

### *How* is God telling you to rest in your ignorance of your future?

Black

### Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

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

### The emphasis in the book up to this point has been to speak much on wisdom about work.

### Solomon has told us that a life pursuit of only work, projects, and money is futile. He has warned or being a workaholic and materialist.

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### Some might think, “I agree. Life is more important than just work. What really makes life worthwhile is wisdom!” So now the topic shifts to addressing wisdom itself—but it will surprise you!

### What is wisdom? This is one of the most important questions we can ask, so without chapter 7, we would be the poorer.

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

### Today we idolize people who can put a ball through a net better than others, or can run faster or lift more weight, or whatever sport it might be. We also idolize people who make a living pretending to be someone else. That’s called being an actor or actress.

### However, the Ancient Near East had a prominent emphasis on wisdom. Each society prided itself on its “aged sages”—men of wisdom who declared and wrote literature that helped people with life’s thorny issues.

# Questions

### Has God ordained for evil things to happen (10)? If so, how could he be a good God?

#### God is not the ultimate cause of evil, as he does not cause it.

#### However, he could stop it and often does not. Does that then mean he is the author of evil? No, we ourselves are the evil ones.

#### What this verse is saying is that God makes many decisions for us without asking our permission—our sex, nationality, background, gifting, social status, etc. We should be satisfied that God does it right.

### To whom are the words spoken (11)? The context in the preceding verse says man shouldn't argue with God.

### How are our lives like a shadow (12)? Shadows are real, but only reveal part of reality. No one completely understands anything! No one also can accurately predict what will happen even tomorrow, let alone after we die.

### Should Christians never offer or accept bribes (7)? Sounds like it! We might have to pay a price, but that price is worth it.

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

# Solomon demonstrates the meaninglessness of human wisdom and recommends enjoyment of life and fear of God to warn others not to follow his empty pursuit of wisdom in itself (6:10–11:6).

## Man is ignorant so he must rely upon the immutable and wise plan of God (7:1–9:10).

**II. We don't know the significance of prosperity and adversity (7:1-14).**

A.The wise gain wisdom from adversity (7:1-10).

1.Character and integrity are better than outward qualities (7:1a).

(Having a good reputation is more important than just smelling nice!")

2.The wise reflect upon the brevity of their lives (7:1b-4).

a.One's deathday is better than one's birthday (7:1b).

"It is better to come to the end of life with a good reputation (good name) than to have a joyful and auspicious beginning which, because of folly, might result in nothing" (Donald R. Glenn, *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1:992).

b.Attending a funeral is better than gorging at a feast because this reminder of our own end prompts us to soberness and wisdom (7:2; cf. Ps 90:12).

c.Sorrow is better than laughter since inner joy results from seriously looking at life (7:3). ("Such sober reflection can lead to moral improvement"- *BKC* )

d.The wise deal with death but fools ignore death and only think of pleasure (7:4).

3.The wise listen to rebuke (7:5-7).

a.Listening to a wise man's rebuke is better than listening to a fool's song (7:5).

b.We should heed wise rebuke because a fool's laughter is empty (7:6).

c.We should heed wise rebuke because even the wise can succumb to the pressures of adversity or prosperity through a bribe (7:7).

4.The wise submit to their present circumstances (7:7-10).

a.A finished product is better than a dream (7:8a).

b.A patient disposition is better than a proud disposition (7:8b).

c.A quick temper reveals a man to be a fool (7:9).

d.A complaint saying, "The 'good-ole days' were better than today" does not stem from wisdom (7:10).

B.Wisdom steers us from human pitfalls (7:11-12).

1.Wisdom plus prosperity is good (7:11)

2.Wisdom and prosperity both provide protection (7:12a).

3.Wisdom is superior to prosperity since generally a wise man lives longer than does a fool (7:12b).

C.Wisdom gives us God's perspective (7:13-14).

1.Although people find fault with God's ways they can't change them! (7:13).

2.Rejoice in prosperity (7:14a).

3.Recognize God's sovereignty in adversity (7:14b).

# Possible Illustrations

### Text

# Possible Applications

### Text

**Wisdom in the Ups & Downs**

***Ecclesiastes 6:10–7:14***

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

# *Exegetical Idea*: The reason we should trust in God’s plan is because it is unchanging and we are ignorant of it anyway.

# I. One reason we should trust in God’s plan is because God has planned all events and will not change them (6:10-12).

## God won’t change His plan despite our arguing with Him (6:10-11).

## We are fleeting and ignorant of the future (6:12).

# II. Another reason we should trust in God’s plan is because man is ignorant of the significance of prosperity and adversity (7:1-14).

## The wise *gain wisdom from adversity* (7:1-10).

### The wise know that *character is better* than outward characteristics (7:1a).

### The wise reflect upon the brevity of their lives (7:1b-4).

#### One's death day is better than one's birthday (7:1b).

#### Attending a funeral is better than gorging at a feast because this reminder of one's own end prompts him to soberness and wisdom (7:2; cf. Ps 90:12).

#### Sorrow is better than laughter since inner joy results from seriously looking at life (7:3).

#### The wise deal with death but fools ignore death and think only of pleasure (7:4).

### The wise *listen to rebuke* (7:5-6).

#### Listening to a wise person’s rebuke is better than listening to a fool's song (7:5).

#### One should heed wise rebuke because a fool's laughter is empty (7:6).

### The wise *submit to both prosperous and adverse circumstances* (7:7-10).

#### An oppressive situation can tempt one to anger and greed (7:7).

#### A finished product is better than just a dream about it (7:8a).

#### A patient disposition is better than a proud disposition (7:8b).

#### A quick temper reveals a person to be a fool (7:9).

#### A wise person won’t complain that "the 'good-ole days' were better than today" just because of some present difficulty.

## The wise *benefit from prosperity* (7:11-12).

### Wisdom plus prosperity is good (7:11).

### Wisdom and prosperity both provide protection (7:12a).

### Wisdom is superior to prosperity since generally a wise man lives longer than does a [rich] fool (7:12b; cf. 7:17; Prov. 13:14).

## The wise *rest in God's plan* for prosperity and adversity (7:13-14).

### Although people find fault with God's ways they can't change them (7:13).

### Rejoice in prosperity (7:14a).

### Recognize God's sovereignty in adversity (7:14b).

### God made prosperity and adversity so our ignorance of the future will cause us to trust God (7:14c).

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

The listeners will rest in God’s plan for them.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: Would you like to know what would happen in the next year of your life?

### Need: Do you think that knowing your future would make you more secure, more peaceful, and more joyful?

### Subject: Why should we trust in God’s plan for our lives?

### Background: We're halfway through our journey in the book of Ecclesiastes and moving into the second major section on wisdom.

### Preview: Today's text gives *two reasons* we should trust in God’s plan for our lives.

### Text: Solomon's insights can be found in Ecclesiastes 6:10–7:14.

(So why trust in God’s plan for your life? Because…)

# I. God has planned all events and won’t change them (6:10-12).

## God won’t change His plan despite our arguing with Him (6:10-11).

## We are fleeting and ignorant of the future (6:12).

# II. We don't know why easy and tough times come our way (7:1-14).

## The wise *gain wisdom from adversity* (7:1-10).

### The wise know that *character is better* than outward characteristics (7:1a).

### The wise reflect upon the brevity of their lives (7:1b-4).

#### One's death day is better than one's birthday (7:1b).

#### Attending a funeral is better than gorging at a feast because this reminder of one's own end prompts him to soberness and wisdom (7:2; cf. Ps 90:12).

#### Sorrow is better than laughter since inner joy results from seriously looking at life (7:3).

#### The wise deal with death but fools ignore death and think only of pleasure (7:4).

### The wise *listen to rebuke* (7:5-6).

#### Listening to a wise person’s rebuke is better than listening to a fool's song (7:5).

#### One should heed wise rebuke because a fool's laughter is empty (7:6).

### The wise *submit to both prosperous and adverse circumstances* (7:7-10).

#### An oppressive situation can tempt one to anger and greed (7:7).

#### A finished product is better than just a dream about it (7:8a).

#### A patient disposition is better than a proud disposition (7:8b).

#### A quick temper reveals a person to be a fool (7:9).

#### A wise person won’t complain that "the 'good-ole days' were better than today" just because of some present difficulty.

## The wise *benefit from prosperity* (7:11-12).

### Wisdom plus prosperity is good (7:11).

### Wisdom and prosperity both provide protection (7:12a).

### Wisdom is superior to prosperity since generally a wise man lives longer than does a [rich] fool (7:12b; cf. 7:17; Prov. 13:14).

## The wise *rest in God's plan* for prosperity and adversity (7:13-14).

### Although people find fault with God's ways they can't change them (7:13).

### Rejoice in prosperity (7:14a).

### Recognize God's sovereignty in adversity (7:14b).

### God made prosperity and adversity so our ignorance of the future will cause us to trust God (7:14c).

(So wisdom enables us to trust in God’s plan—but *why* trust in God’s plan?)

# Conclusion

### God’s plan is unchanging and you are ignorant of it (MI).

### To trust in God’s plan means to rest in your future.

### *How* is God telling you to rest in your ignorance of your future?



**Rick Griffith**

21 September 2014

Message 9 of 17

**Wisdom in the Ups & Downs**

***Ecclesiastes 6:10–7:14***

# Introduction

### Would you like to know what would happen in the next year of your life?

### Do you think that knowing your future would make you more secure, more peaceful, and more joyful?

### Why should we trust in God’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ plan for our lives? Today we’ll see two reasons…

# I. God has \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ planned all events and won’t \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ change them (6:10-12).

## God won’t change His plan despite our arguing with Him (6:10-11).

## We are fleeting and ignorant of the future (6:12).

# II. We don't know why \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ easy and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ tough times come our way (7:1-14).

## The wise *gain wisdom from adversity* (7:1-10).

### The wise know that *character is better* than outward characteristics (7:1a).

### The wise reflect upon the brevity of their lives (7:1b-4).

### The wise *listen to rebuke* (7:5-6).

### The wise *submit to both prosperous and adverse circumstances* (7:7-10).

#### An oppressive situation can tempt one to anger and greed (7:7).

#### A finished product is better than just a dream about it (7:8a).

#### A patient disposition is better than a proud disposition (7:8b).

#### A quick temper reveals a person to be a fool (7:9).

#### A wise person won’t complain that "the 'good-ole days' were better than today" due to some present difficulty.

## The wise *benefit from prosperity* (7:11-12).

## The wise *rest in God's plan* for prosperity and adversity (7:13-14).

(So *why* trust in God’s plan?)

# Conclusion

### God’s plan is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ unchanging and you are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ignorant of it (Main Idea).

### To trust in God’s plan means to rest in your future.

### *How* is God telling you to rest in your ignorance of your future?

**Thought Questions**

1. Read 6:10–7:14 aloud. The first half of Ecclesiastes spoke primarily of labor. In what way does 6:10 seem to be a turning point to begin the second half concerning wisdom?

At this point in the book, it begins to talk about what man does not know

All people are ignorant of the future, but the wise know to entrust it to the Lord

1. What common thread can you discern between all the sayings in 7:1-14?

The phrase “better than” is repeated again and again

The wise is contrasted with the fool in that he knows correct priorities

The fool takes the easy way while the wise take the hard but correct path

1. In what specific “up” or “down” area of your life do you need more wisdom? Pray about this with someone else.

What book of the Scripture should I preach next year? Hebrews? 1-2 Peter?

Text