Crossroads International Church Dr. Rick Griffith

28 September 2014 Message 10 of 17

NLT 40 Minutes

**Signs of Real Wisdom**

Title

***Ecclesiastes 7:15-29***

**Topic:** Wisdom

**Subject:** What are the qualities of wisdom?

**Complement:** Wisdom is balanced, strong, and insightful.

**Purpose:** The listeners will show wisdom that is balanced, strong and insightful.

**Song:** Keith & Kristyn Getty’s “The Perfect Wisdom of Our God” at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSnzYnOe6kI

# Introduction

### Interest: [People differ in their goals in life—but hardly anyone says they want wisdom!]

Goal

#### What is your main goal in life? In the next 30 seconds, tell the person next to you.

#### Some people say their chief goal is happiness—money—retirement—marriage—grandkids (forget the kids, just go straight to grandkids!)—whatever.

#### Christians might have a more spiritual answer as to their chief objective in life—reaching the lost, becoming like Christ, living for God, investing in eternity, etc.

#### But I wonder how many of us said that our main goal is wisdom?

Solomon

##### God once told Solomon that he would give him anything he wanted.

##### Solomon was wise enough to ask for wisdom!

### Need: The Bible says to value wisdom above all—do you?

Jewel

#### How often do you *pray* for wisdom?

#### How often do you *seek counsel* to do the wise thing?

#### How much do you really *seek* wisdom today?

#### What is wisdom, anyway?

### Subject: Today we are going to look at some characteristics of wisdom. What are the qualities of wisdom?

Pearl

#### Wisdom is intensely practical—not theoretical! Someone has said, “Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it into a fruit salad.”

Tomato

#### The OT scholar, Roy Zuck, notes, “Biblical wisdom includes the art of being skillful and successful in one’s relationships and responsibilities in life… An individual is ‘successful’ as he directs his life in accord with God’s divine design, His plans for the world” (Zuck, *A Biblical Theology of the OT*, 213).

Zuck   
quote

### Background: To discover wisdom, let’s dust off the Bible and see that Ecclesiastes can help us discover this practical wisdom.

Dusty Bible

#### Last week we asked why we should trust in God’s plan for our lives—and we saw that we don’t really know why some people have life easy while others have it tough.

Unchanged ignorant

Why trust?

##### Some teach that the godless always have troubles (as a sign of God's anger) and the righteous always experience prosperity (as a sign of God's pleasure).

##### However, Solomon told us in Ecclesiastes 6:10—7:14 that it just isn't that simple. We covered that last week.

Judge

###### It’s like Uncle Sam asking the fortune teller, “Can you tell me about my future?” She responds, “Hmmm…. I *would*, but I can’t read Chinese!”

Uncle Sam

###### Or the judge who says to one who broke the law, “Ignorance of the law is no excuse” and he replies, “I didn’t know that either…”

###### There are so many things that we don’t know in life—so we should rest in the One who does know!

#### Today’s text continues in verse 15 where it says that we also don’t know much about righteousness and wisdom.

Subject

### Preview: So today’s text gives us *three characteristics of wisdom*.

• 3 characteristics

### Text: Ecclesiastes 7:15-29 will provide three identifying markers of wisdom.

(The first quality of wisdom is that…)

# I. Wisdom is balanced: Avoid the extremes of depending on righteousness and living in sin (7:15-18).

Wicked & Godly

MP

[Godly understanding doesn’t put its hopes in living purely or wickedly.]

## A Paradox: Sometimes the wicked live longer than the righteous (7:15).

15

### The *righteous* living a *short* life seems to contradict Scripture (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 4:40; Ps. 91:16).

Righteous

### The *wicked* living a *long* life seems to contradict Scripture (Pss. 55:23; 58:3-9; 73:18).

Wicked

#### [There are consequences of the evil lifestyle.[[1]](#footnote-1)]

##### A doctor on his morning walk, noticed an older lady sitting on her front step smoking a cigar, so he walked up to her and said, “I couldn’t help but notice how happy you look! What is your secret?”

##### “I smoke ten cigars a day,” she said. “Before I go to bed, I smoke a nice big joint. Apart from that, I drink a whole bottle of Jack Daniels every week, and eat only junk food. On weekends, I pop pills, get laid, and don’t exercise at all.”

##### “That is absolutely amazing! How old are you?”

##### “Thirty-four,” she replied.

##### There are consequences of the evil lifestyle.

#### [Yet sometimes the evil live a long life.]

##### But once I sat next to an elderly man on a plane. He was amazingly spry—he spoke with a lot of energy, was fit as can be, and very lively to talk to. I asked him, “How old are you?” “88,” he replied. “And what profession have you had all your life?” I asked. He replied, “I worked 40 years as a bookie!”

Plane

##### I thought of Ecclesiastes right there. Here was this man who had managed thousands of horse races and likely destroyed countless homes. Instead of dying early, he was healthy, wealthy and not-so-wise.

(The paradox is that sometimes the wicked live longer than the righteous. But here is…)

## The Solution: Don't depend on righteousness or sinfulness (7:16-18).

Solution

### Don’t depend upon righteousness or wisdom since this will disappoint you (7:16).

16

#### Does verse 16 discourage us from being zealous for holiness (cf. 1 Tim. 4:7; 6:11)?

##### What does it mean to be "excessively righteous" and "overly wise?"

##### Can a person really be too righteous? I don’t think so.

##### It just means not to naïvely depend on your godly attitude solving everything.

#### How does being “excessively righteous” ruin yourself (16)?

• BKC

##### "Though almost universally interpreted [translated] in the sense of "destroy [NIV] or ruin [NASB] oneself,' the verb in this form never means this elsewhere. Instead it means 'to be appalled or astounded' (cf. Dan. 8:27, 'appalled'; Ps. 143:4, 'dismayed')" (Glenn, *BKC*, 994).

##### In my first pastorate in 1987, I naïvely thought that, if I did everything right, I wouldn’t be disappointed. Less than a year later, I had to resign. I got five years of experience all in one year! I saw that my wisdom wasn’t appreciated due to my young age of 29.

1987

##### That same year Susan and I became parents. At that time I thought that raising our sons in a godly way would guarantee that they would walk with God. Now I see that it is God’s grace and prayer that is more important than any strategy!

(But someone may ask, "If the wicked sometimes live longer than the righteous, why don't I go out and 'sin up a storm?' What's to keep me from a life of sin? Verse 17 answers…)

### Don’t live wickedly since this may prompt God to take your life (7:17).

17

#### What is meant by being "excessively wicked” (17)? Does that mean that a little wickedness is OK? No.

#### The fact that God does not punish wickedness in some cases [v. 15b] does not give us license to sin, especially since living wickedly may result in a premature death.

### Fear God by avoiding both extremes: depending upon righteousness and living in sin (7:18).

18

MPI

(So Solomon says first that true wisdom is *balanced*, avoiding the extremes of depending on righteousness or wickedness. Now he continues with a second characteristic about wisdom…)

# II. Wisdom is strong: Avoid the weakness from blindness to your own faults (7:19-22).

MP

Title

Title

Title

Title

Title

Title

Title

Title

Title

[Godly understanding has strength of character that recognizes its limitations.]

## The Proposition: Wisdom gives more strength than civil authority (7:19).

19

## The Proof: Wisdom gives strength to see our weaknesses (7:20-22).

See weakness

### Wisdom avoids perfectionism (7:20).

• 20

### Wisdom handles criticism without judging (7:21-22).

• 21-22

MP

MP

(Not only is wisdom balanced and strong, but it shows a limited amount of insight…)

# III. Wisdom is insightful: Avoid thinking you have all the answers but still show insight (7:23-29).

MP

23-24  
NLT

[Godly understanding shows discernment but is still humble.]

## Wisdom *can’t* find out everything (7:23-24).

### The NAU is more specific: Wisdom doesn’t know why God prospers some and troubles others (7:23), which takes into consideration the context about life’s perplexities.

• 23-24  
NAU

### Wisdom can’t understand the past (7:24).

#### The word “wisdom” doesn’t appear in verse 24 as in the NIV and NLT. The NAU is better in verse 24 too, saying that wisdom can’t understand the past (7:24).

#### “The NIV wrongly adds the word **wisdom** to verse 24 (the Heb. phrase hDyDhRÚv-hAm means ‘what has happened’ or ‘what exists,’ as in 1:9; 3:15; 6:10)” (Glenn, *BKC*).

#### This means, then, that even those with wisdom don’t have insight into all the events of the past.

## Wisdom *can* find some things (7:25-29).

25 NLT

### The NLT is more general, but the NAU notes wisdom knows about three things: wisdom, foolishness, and mental illness (7:25).

• 25 NAU

### Wisdom avoids sex outside of marriage (7:26).

Wedding

26

### Wisdom realizes that nobody has real wisdom (7:27-29).

27-28a

#### Solomon didn’t grasp full wisdom (7:27-28a).

#### Hardly one man in a thousand is wise (7:28b).

• 28b-29

#### Not one in a thousand has true wisdom (7:28c).

#### What kind of man/woman did Solomon find/not find in verse 28? Here are some explanations:

##### Solomon looked at a thousand people and found one man and no women (NAU). *So what sex were the other 999?*

• NAU

##### Solomon found one upright man and no upright women in a thousand (NIV; v. 29). *So he wasn’t looking very hard?*

• NIV

##### Solomon found only one man in a thousand who could answer his questions and no women who could provide him fulfillment (Swindoll, *LOTRE Study Guide*, 73). *So where is the idea of fulfillment here?*

• Swindoll

##### Solomon found only one in a thousand wise men but not a single wise woman in his harem of one thousand pagan wives and concubines (cf. 1 Kings 11:1-11). *So would he expect wise women if they only won beauty contests?*

Harem

Title

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##### Solomon isn't comparing men and women at all but only drawing a complementary parallelism. This makes sense to me.

• Parallel

###### The word here is not the normal word *ish* for "man/husband" but it’s *adam*, generic for "man[kind].” So one *human being* in a thousand is truly wise (7:28b).

BKC

###### Not one in a thousand has true wisdom (7:28c).

###### The climax of the point is that "such people—both men and women—are not only scarce but are nonexistent… This is supported by the fact that 'men' in Ecclesiastes 7:29 is 'they' in Hebrew (i.e., both men and women)" (Glenn, *BKC*, 1:996).

29

### Wisdom knows that our sinfulness is *our* fault, not God's (7:29).

Subj

(At the beginning, I said that this text tells us three qualities of wisdom. So what are they?)

# Conclusion

### Wisdom is balanced, strong, and insightful (Main Idea).

MI

### Consider three questions (Swindoll, *LOTRE Study Guide*, 73):

#### Balance: Is wisdom guarding me from *extremes*?

#### Strength: Is wisdom keeping me *stable*?

#### Insight: Is wisdom *clearing my mind* to see reality?

### "The ragged-edge question is not: Will His wisdom work? But rather: Are we putting His wisdom to work?" (Swindoll, *LOTRE*, 218).

Sunset

#### We can’t have Christ’s wisdom without first having Christ. Do you know him?

#### In what area of your life do you need balance, strength, or insight? Identify it and ask God’s wisdom and courage to put this wisdom to work!

### Keith & Kristyn Getty’s “The Perfect Wisdom of Our God” at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSnzYnOe6kI

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

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

### Ecclesiastes 7:1-14 shows that man is ignorant of the significance of adversity and prosperity.

### In other words, we don’t really know why some have life easy while others have it tough.

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### We might think that if we just had *wisdom* then all will be well.

### Yet that is not true.

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

### God once told Solomon that he would give him anything he wanted.

### Solomon was wise enough to ask for wisdom!

# Questions

### Does verse 16 discourage us from being zealous for holiness (cf. 1 Tim. 4:7; 6:11)? What does it mean to be "excessively righteous" and "overly wise?"

### How does being “excessively righteous” ruin yourself (17)?

#### "Though almost universally interpreted [translated] in the sense of "destroy [NIV] or ruin [NASB] oneself,' the verb in this form never means this elsewhere. Instead it means 'to be appalled or astounded' (cf. Dan. 8:27, 'appalled'; Ps. 143:4, 'dismayed')" (*BKC*, 994).

### What is meant by being "excessively wicked” (17)?

### How does wisdom strengthen someone more than ten rulers in a city (19)?

### How do verses 19-22 verses relate to one another?

### Who is the woman of verse 26? How does this verse relate to wisdom?

### What kind of man/woman did Solomon find/not find in verse 28? Here are some explanations:

#### Solomon, in looking at a thousand people, found one man and no women (NASB).

#### Solomon found one upright man and no upright women in a thousand (NIV; v. 29).

#### Solomon found only one man and no women pleasing to God in a thousand (v. 26).

#### Solomon found only one man in a thousand who could answer his questions and no women who could provide him fulfillment (Swindoll, *LOTRE Study Guide*, 73).

#### Solomon found very few wise men (one in a thousand) but not a single wise woman in his harem of one thousand pagan wives and concubines (cf. 1 Kings 11:1-11).

#### Solomon isn't comparing men and women at all but only drawing a complementary parallelism:

##### Solomon experienced unsuccessful attempts to explain [life?] (7:27-28a).

##### One human being (*adam*, generic for "man[kind]," and not *ish*, "man/husband") in a thousand is truly wise (7:28b).

##### Not one in a thousand has true wisdom (7:28c).

##### The climax of the point is that "such people—both men and women—are not only scarce but are nonexistent… This is supported by the fact that 'men' in Ecclesiastes 7:29 is 'they' in Hebrew (i.e., both men and women)" (*BKC*, 1:996).

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

**Subject:** We don’t know the significance of righteousness and wisdom

**Complement:** so we must rely on the wisdom of God.

MI: Put God’s wisdom to work

# Possible Illustrations

### Text

# Possible Applications

### Text

**Signs of Real Wisdom**

***Ecclesiastes 7:15-29***

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

# *Exegetical Idea: The balanced, strong, and insightful nature of wisdom exhorts the godly to a humble, insightful lifestyle that avoids extremes.*

# I. Wisdom is balanced: Avoid the extremes of depending on righteousness and living in sin (7:15-18).

## A Paradox: Sometimes the wicked live longer than the righteous (7:15).

### The *righteous* living a *short* life seems to contradict Scripture (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 4:40; Ps. 91:16).

### The *wicked* living a *long* life seems to contradict Scripture (Pss. 55:23; 58:3-9; 73:18).

## The Solution: Don't depend on righteousness or sinfulness (7:16-18).

### Don’t depend upon righteousness or wisdom since this will disappoint you (7:16).

### Don’t live wickedly since this may prompt God to take your life (7:17).

### Fear God by avoiding both extremes: depending upon righteousness and living in sin (7:18).

# II. Wisdom is strong: Avoid the weakness from blindness to your own faults (7:19-22).

## The Proposition: Wisdom gives more strength than civil authority (7:19).

## The Proof: Wisdom gives strength to see our weaknesses (7:20-22).

### Wisdom avoids perfectionism (7:20).

### Wisdom handles criticism without judging (7:21-22).

# III. Wisdom is insightful: Avoid thinking you have all the answers but still show insight (7:23-29).

## Wisdom *can’t* find out everything (7:23-24).

### Wisdom doesn’t know why God prospers some and troubles others (7:23).

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#### Solomon didn’t grasp full wisdom (7:27-28a).

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#### Not one in a thousand has true wisdom (7:28c).

### Wisdom knows that our sinfulness is *our* fault, not God's (7:29).

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

The listeners will show wisdom that is balanced, strong and insightful.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: People differ in their goals in life—but hardly anyone says they want wisdom!

### Need: The Bible says to value wisdom above all—do you?

### Subject: What are the qualities of wisdom?

### Background: Ecclesiastes can help us discover wisdom.

### Preview: Our text gives us *three characteristics of wisdom*.

### Text: Ecclesiastes 7:15-29 will provide three identifying markers of wisdom.

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#### Solomon didn’t grasp full wisdom (7:27-28a).

#### Hardly one man in a thousand is wise (7:28b).

#### Not one in a thousand has true wisdom (7:28c).

### Wisdom knows that our sinfulness is *our* fault, not God's (7:29).

# Conclusion

### Wisdom is balanced, strong, and insightful (Main Idea).

### Today we've seen three characteristics of wisdom…

#### Wisdom is balanced (7:15-18).

#### Wisdom is strong (7:19-22).

#### Wisdom is insightful (7:23-29).

### Consider three questions (Swindoll, *LOTRE Study Guide*, 73):

#### Balance: Is wisdom guarding me from *extremes*?

#### Strength: Is wisdom keeping me *stable*?

#### Insight: Is wisdom *clearing my mind* to see reality?

### "The ragged-edge question is not: Will His wisdom work? But rather: Are we putting His wisdom to work?" (Swindoll, *LOTRE*, 218).

### In what area of your life do you need balance, strength, or insight? Identify it and ask God’s wisdom and courage to put this wisdom to work!

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**Rick Griffith**

28 September 2014

Message 10 of 17

**Signs of Real Wisdom**

***Ecclesiastes 7:15-29***

# Introduction

### What is your chief goal in life?

### People differ in their goals in life—but hardly anyone says they want wisdom!

### What are the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of wisdom?

# I. Wisdom is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: Avoid the extremes of depending on righteousness and living in sin (7:15-18).

## A Paradox: Sometimes the wicked live longer than the righteous (7:15).

### The *righteous* living a *short* life seems to contradict Scripture (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 4:40; Ps. 91:16).

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#### Solomon didn’t grasp full wisdom (7:27-28a).

#### Hardly one man in a thousand is wise (7:28b).

#### Not one in a thousand has true wisdom (7:28c).

### Wisdom knows that our sinfulness is *our* fault, not God's (7:29).

# Conclusion

### Wisdom is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Main Idea).

#### Balance: Is wisdom guarding me from *extremes*?

#### Strength: Is wisdom keeping me *stable*?

#### Insight: Is wisdom *clearing my mind* to see reality?

### In what area of your life do you need balance, strength, or insight? Identify it and ask God’s wisdom and courage to put this wisdom to work!

### Keith & Kristyn Getty: “The Perfect Wisdom of Our God” (YouTube)

**Thought Questions**

1. Read the passage aloud. What benefits of wisdom can you discover in these verses?
2. To what extent can you solve the riddles of life with reason?

Text

1. Where do you most need wisdom now? How can you get it?

Text

1. http://onemansblog.com/2009/06/11/the-secret-to-a-long-life/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)