

**CHASING THE WIND**  
*“The Great Race” Ecclesiastes 7*  
June 11, 2023

**INTRO.:** How many have heard of the show, *The Amazing Race*? Armed with a limited budget, 12 teams of two embark on a race around the world (picture of a globe) that rewards \$1 million dollars to the first team to reach the final destination. In each show some of the teams are eliminated until there are only two teams left for the final leg of the journey. I’ve only watched the show a few times, but this fall it will begin its 35<sup>th</sup> season. This trek around the world takes approximately 25 days. Besides electronics, phones, and navigation equipment ... you can bring whatever you want as long as you can carry it. As host Phil Keoghan so frequently says, The Amazing Race requires a unique combination of brains and brawn, plus an impeccable sense of teamwork. We have been following the journey of Solomon as he tried to find the meaning and purpose of life. He searched in many places and attempted many things to bring satisfaction. He looked for it in pleasure, partying, great building projects (houses, vineyards, fruit trees, reservoirs), and possessions (he collected herds and flocks, silver and gold, singers, and servants). How diligent was his search?

**Ecclesiastes 2:10** I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor.

What was his conclusion after doing all this searching?

**Ecclesiastes 2:11** Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

*“meaningless:”* This word can mean vapor, breath, like a puff of smoke coming from a fire or your breath on a cold winter morning.

*“chasing the wind:”* can you ever truly catch the wind? It reminds me of lemon meringue pie. I have yet to figure out two things: how they get it to be pronounced meringue and how they get the meringue to develop the consistency where, when you bite it, you feel like you’re getting short-changed. As Solomon chases all these things, he begins to realize they don’t provide the satisfaction he had hoped for.

*“nothing was gained under the sun:”* this refers to the here and now, apart from God. When God is taken out of the equation of life, we are left with nothing of lasting value.

After finding that everything he attempted to find meaning and purpose to life was empty and without value, he now turns to finding wisdom as the potential solution. This morning we’re going to look at what is wisdom, who needs wisdom, where do I get wisdom, and when do I need wisdom. We’ll begin by reading sections of Ecclesiastes 7 together.

**Ecclesiastes 7:4-6** The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure. **5** It is better to heed a wise man’s rebuke than to listen to the song of fools. Like the crackling of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of fools. This too is meaningless.

**Ecclesiastes 7:11–12** Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing and benefits those who see the sun. Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: that wisdom preserves the life of its possessor.

**Ecclesiastes 7:19–25** Wisdom makes one wise man more powerful than ten rulers in a city. There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins. Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you— for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others. All this I tested by wisdom and I said, “I am determined to be wise”— but this was beyond me. Whatever wisdom may be, it is far off and most profound— who can discover it? So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly.

## **WHAT IS WISDOM?**

Is it just knowledge or information?

Knowledge does not necessarily equal wisdom! But you do need some knowledge to have wisdom.

Webster’s Dictionary:

\*ability to discern inner qualities and relationships: insight

- \*good sense: judgment
- \*generally accepted belief
- \*accumulated philosophical or scientific learning: knowledge

In his letter to the church at Corinth, Paul speaks of wisdom from the world and wisdom from God. As we observed communion this morning, we were reminded of how some view the cross.

**1 Corinthians 1:18–21** For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **19** For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” **20** Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? **21** For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

Years ago, I was given this definition of wisdom: “Seeing and responding to life’s situations from God’s frame of reference.”

This definition begs the question, “Where do I discover God’s frame of reference?” We are going to explore this question later.

### **WHO NEEDS WISDOM?**

Solomon is going to answer this question as he discusses the character of each one of us. What does he observe concerning everyone’s character?

**Ecclesiastes 7:20** There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

Look what the psalmist has to say:

**Psalms 14:2–3** The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. **3** All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

**Romans 3:10–11** As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.

There are some who would like to say it is just because of the environment. Given a better environment people would fare better. Let’s take a moment and go back to the first man and woman. What do we see about how they, and the environment they were placed in, in Genesis.

**Genesis 1:27** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

**Genesis 1:31** God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

There was all this great food for them to feast on and God only gave them one restriction.

**Genesis 2:16–17** And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

The only ones in the garden of Eden were Adam, Eve, God, and the serpent. Sin had not yet entered the world, but the serpent comes along, tells them so many lies, and what is the result?

**Genesis 3:6** When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

### **RESULT:**

**Romans 5:12** Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—

Our judgment is FOREVER marred because of our sin nature!!! There is no getting around this!!! The mantras of the day: “Do what you think is right.” “Follow your heart.” “Do what comes natural.” That’s exactly why we’re in the mess we’re in.

**Proverbs 14:12** There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

## WHERE DO I GET WISDOM?

**Ecclesiastes 7:23-24** All this I tested by wisdom and I said, “I am determined to be wise”— but this was beyond me. Whatever wisdom may be, it is far off and most profound— who can discover it?

Solomon was determined to be wise, but it was beyond him. He realized that he couldn't be the source of wisdom, and neither can you and me.

**James 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask (present, imperative) God, who gives (present, active, participle) generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

**Proverbs 2:1–6** My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, **2** turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, **3** and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, **4** and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, **5** then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. **6** For the **LORD gives wisdom**, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

**Proverbs 9:10** “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

In 1980 there was a country song released, *Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places*, which describes the dead-end road of trying to find love in the wrong places. It seems to me that people are looking for wisdom in all the wrong places.

Finding wisdom begins with a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. As we develop that relationship through time with Him in prayer and reading/studying/meditating on His Word, the Bible, then we can find wisdom. The wisest people I ever met had a close personal relationship with the Lord and knew His Word.

Read Psalm 119 and see how David refers to the Word of God.

**Psalm 119:9–11** How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. **10** I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. **11** I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Some of you are aware that I am directionally challenged. Has anyone ever seen one of these? (hold up a map) What is it? What is its purpose? How many people don't know how to use a map? Why is that? I plug in my phone in my car, type in the address, and it tells me where to go. Does it always get it right?

There is no shortcut to gaining wisdom. It's not just an app. It's not AI. What is the believer's roadmap to wisdom? The Bible!!!

## WHEN DO I NEED WISDOM?

Are you breathing?

Solomon mentions some different scenarios and some of what he says is a little puzzling at first glance. Let's take some time to look at them.

\*Teaches me how to live

**Ecclesiastes 7:4** The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.

How can it be better to be in the “house of mourning?” This phrase “*house of mourning*” refers to visiting a home where someone has died. When you and I are confronted with someone's death we are forced to think about, “*What's next?*” It teaches us to be wise in the way we live and prepare to die.

Virginia Morris, *Talking About Death Won't Kill You*, “Hanging on the edge of a precipice, engulfed by terror, is not the time or place to learn about emergency rock-climbing procedures; you have to learn about them before you start the expedition. Likewise, we have to learn about death now, while we are still healthy... before we are blinded by denial and fighting valiantly for hope,”

Many look at life as just a series of good and bad events but that isn't how God views life. Look at what Solomon says in verses 13 & 14.

**Ecclesiastes 7:13–14** Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked? **14** When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.

God wants to point us to the future, and, in doing so, cause us to live in the presence with eternity in mind.

**C.S. Lewis, in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, “We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”**

\*I need it as long as I am alive

**Ecclesiastes 7:11** Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing and benefits those who see the sun.

Who sees the sun? Only those who are alive. When you and I wake up in the morning and see the sun that should be our reminder to cry out to God for wisdom.

**Ecclesiastes 7:12** Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: that wisdom preserves the life of its possessor.

Solomon makes an interesting comparison here. Both wisdom and money are a shelter. Money can get you a home, provide food, give some of the comforts of life but wisdom does much more than that. Wisdom preserves our lives. Let me give you a practical application from the book of Proverbs.

**Proverbs 2:12–18** Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, **13** who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways, **14** who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, **15** whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways. **16** It will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words, **17** who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God. **18** For her house leads down to death and her paths to the spirits of the dead.

In a world that says morality doesn't matter, you can have sex with whoever you want, wisdom screams, “Don't do it!” It's because God wants that part of your life to be the best that it can be which is between a man and a woman who are married.

So, let me ask you this morning, “Are you breathing?” If you are, you need wisdom: God's wisdom!!

**SO WHAT???**

\*Do I have a personal relationship with the ONE who is the source of true wisdom?

\*Am I seeking His wisdom as I pray, spend time in the Bible, and learn from others who have walked with Jesus longer than me?

I need wisdom to:

\*to speak the truth in love to a world that has redefined truth

\*to live in right relationship with God and others

\*to be able to answer the confusion in the world today (morality, sex, life beginning at conception, gender, money, heaven, hell)

\*to forgive as God in Christ has forgiven me

\*Live out the meaning and purpose that Jesus brings to my life

**ILLUS.:** Some of you may not know that this past week the Oklahoma University Women's softball team won the NCAA national championship for the third straight year. They finished the season with a record of 61-1, winning their last 53 games in a row. Two days before they won the championship, they were interviewed by ESPN. The reporter asked them, “How do you handle the unique pressure and keep the joy of the game?”

Here are some of the responses of the three players interviewed.

Player #1: “The only way you can have joy that doesn't fade away is through the Lord. Any other joy is happiness that comes through circumstances and outcomes. The joy of the Lord is the only thing that can keep you motivated no matter the outcome. Softball can't bring you that joy.”

Player #2: “I was so happy my freshman year that we won the college world series. I didn't know what to do the next day. I didn't feel joy. I didn't feel filled. I had to find Christ. Our life is in Christ and that's all that matters.

Player #3: “Eyes up: fixing our eyes on Christ. You can't find fulfillment in an outcome, good or bad. This game is giving us an opportunity to glorify God. Once I turned to Jesus and realized how He changed my outlook on life. How awesome it is to play for something bigger. This isn't our home. We have an eternity of joy with our Father.