

THE FEAR OF GOD IS . . .

THE PATH OF LIFE UPON WHICH GOD LEADS US **THROUGH** THE TURMOIL OF LIFE AND **BEYOND** OUR WAYS OF DEATH.



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- (Proverbs 14:12 NLT) There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.
 - (Proverbs 19:23 ESV) The fear of the LORD leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.
 - (Proverbs 14:27 ESV) The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.
 - (Psalm 16:11 ESV) You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
 - (Jeremiah 21:8 ESV) And to this people you shall say: “Thus says the Lord: Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.”
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(Ecclesiastes 7:15–29 ESV)

1. TO SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATE THE PITFALLS OF LIFE UNDER THE SUN AND REMAIN ON COURSE FOR THE GLORY OF GOD WE MUST SET OUR HEADING ON THE FEAR OF GOD, 7:15-18.

- (Ecclesiastes 7:15–18 ESV) In my vain life I have seen everything. **There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness**, and **there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing**. 16 **Be not overly righteous**, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? 17 **Be not overly wicked**, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time? 18 It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, **for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them**.

In his vain (hebel) existence under the sun Qoheleth has seen the emptiness, arbitrariness and unpredictability of life ... the nonsensical pitfalls, the mind-numbing monotonies and the dangers ... and he sighs ... “I’ve seen it all” ...

- A. The reality of life under the sun is that righteousness sometimes fails and wickedness sometimes thrives.
- B. Trying to be righteous enough to satisfy our deep, inner thirst for righteousness is an exercise in futility, an unwinnable war.
- C. We will always fall short of the glory of God and all illegitimate attempts to “*be righteous*” may destroy/damage our mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.
- D. A person cannot become more righteous and wise “under the sun” in any way that matters before God.
- E. The only way to win—to “come out from” the mess of a sin ravaged world—is to live on the upward path of the fear of God.
 - (Proverbs 15:24 NLT) **The path of life leads upward for the wise**; they leave the grave behind.
- F. Living in the fear of God we have no need to pretend but hold onto (and do not let go of) the reality that this world is a contradictory, confusing, disappointing mess.
- G. The person who fears God grows in trust and quiet confidence in the capable nature of God to lovingly, sovereignly rule over the mess.

EXCURSUS: *THE FEAR OF GOD WILL LEAD US ON A PATH OF BLESSING THROUGH THE WILDERNESS WE CALL LIFE AND OUT THE OTHER SIDE INTO GLORY.*

THE BLESSED PATH OF THE FEAR OF THE LORD ...

■ **THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS WISDOM.**

(Job 28:28 ESV) And he said to man, “**Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom**, and to turn away from evil is understanding.”

■ **THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS CLEAN AND PURE AND LASTS FOREVER.**

(Psalm 19:9 ESV) **The fear of the LORD is** clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.

■ **THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM.**

(Psalm 111:10 ESV) **The fear of the LORD is** the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

■ **THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE.**

(Proverbs 1:7 ESV) **The fear of the LORD is** the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

■ **THROUGH UNDERSTANDING THE FEAR OF THE LORD WE FIND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD FOR THE LORD GIVES US WISDOM.**

(Proverbs 2:5–10 ESV) **Then you will understand the fear of the LORD** and find the knowledge of God. 6 **For the LORD gives wisdom**; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; 7 he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, 8 guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. 9 **Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity**, every good path; 10 **for wisdom will come into your heart**, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

■ **THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS A HATRED OF EVIL—OUR PRIDE, ARROGANCE AND EVIL SPEECH.**

(Proverbs 8:13 ESV) **The fear of the LORD is** hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.

■ **THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY ONE.**

(Proverbs 9:10 ESV) **The fear of the LORD is** the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

■ **THE FEAR OF THE LORD PROVIDES STRONG CONFIDENCE.**

(Proverbs 14:26 ESV) **In the fear of the LORD** one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.

■ **THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS A FOUNTAIN OF LIFE.**

(Proverbs 14:27 ESV) **The fear of the LORD is** a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.

■ **THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS INSTRUCTION IN WISDOM.**

(Proverbs 15:33 ESV) **The fear of the LORD is** instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor.

■ **BY THE FEAR OF THE LORD WE TURN AWAY FROM EVIL.**

(Proverbs 16:6 ESV) By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, **and by the fear of the LORD** one turns away from evil.

■ **THE FEAR OF THE LORD LEADS TO LIFE AND SATISFIED REST.**

(Proverbs 19:23 ESV) **The fear of the LORD leads to life**, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.

END EXCURSUS

2. **AS WE STAY THE COURSE AND MAINTAIN OUR HEADING SET ON THE FEAR OF GOD, GOD WILL PROVIDE THE HUMILITY, STRENGTH AND WISDOM NECESSARY TO OVERCOME OUR SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PRIDE AND KEEP US ON THE LIFE PATH OF GLORY TO GOD, 7:19-24.**

- (Ecclesiastes 7:19–24 ESV) Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. 20 **Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.** 21 Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. 22 Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others. 23 **All this I have tested by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise," but it was far from me.** 24 That which has been is far off, and deep, very deep; **who can find it out?**

- A. Human wisdom does provide some benefit—strength in the natural realm under the sun.
- B. True wisdom is unobtainable by human effort or

righteousness as no one qualifies.

- C. Wisdom acquired apart from the fear of God is not the true wisdom of God and is illegitimate and inadequate.
- D. The person who believes he can achieve wisdom is self-deceived and self-righteous as no one is good enough escape the restraints of life under the sun.
- E. A biblical (thus realistic) perspective constrains and humbles us so that we know that God's ways are beyond us—too deep and unsearchable.
 - (Romans 11:33 NASB 2020) Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! **How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!**
- F. Wisdom is beyond everyone—no one will ever find the far off, deep, very deep answers of life apart from God.
- G. That means we must seek the Lord because he is the one who gives wisdom.
 - (Proverbs 2:6 ESV) **For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.**
 - (1 Chronicles 16:11 ESV) **Seek the LORD** and his strength; seek his presence continually!
 - (1 Chronicles 22:19a ESV) **Now set your mind and heart to seek the LORD your God.**
 - (2 Chronicles 11:16a ESV) **And those who had set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel ...**
 - (Proverbs 28:5 ESV) Evil men do not understand justice, **but those who seek the LORD understand it completely.**
 - (Hosea 10:12 ESV) Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for **it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.**
 - (Amos 5:6 ESV) **Seek the LORD and live.**
 - (Zephaniah 2:3 ESV) **Seek the LORD**, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; **seek righteousness; seek humility**; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the LORD.
- H. Even when we are told to "get wisdom" this is not self-effort as we will still be directed to seek the LORD in not turning away from the words of God.
 - (Proverbs 4:5–7 ESV) **Get wisdom**; get

insight; do not forget, and **do not turn away from the words of my mouth**. 6 Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. 7 **The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom**, and whatever you get, get insight.

- i. There is not a righteous man (or woman) on earth who does good and never sins—including you and me.
- ii. Our self-righteous attempts to “be wise” will end in foolishness.
- iii. Wisdom always comes from God as he is the source and the giver of wisdom **to those who seek him**.

3. **NO MATTER HOW DETERMINED AND SINCERE WE ARE IN OUR EFFORT TO SEEK WISDOM AND UNDERSTAND LIFE—“THE SCHEME OF THINGS”—WE MUST NEVER CHANGE OUR HEADING FROM THE FEAR OF GOD OR WE WILL FALL PREY TO ONE (OR MORE) OF OUR MANY SCHEMES, 7:25-29.**

- (Ecclesiastes 7:25–29 ESV) **I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things**, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness. 26 **And I find something more bitter than death: the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her**. 27 Behold, this is what I found, says the Preacher, while adding one thing to another to find the scheme of things— 28 which my soul has sought repeatedly, but I have not found. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found. 29 **See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.**

- A. Qoheleth had seen everything, cf. 7:15.
 - (Ecclesiastes 7:15a ESV) In my vain life I have seen everything.
- B. → **Plan A:** A determined effort to seek wisdom and to find an explanation for the scheme of things—a statement or account that made life under the sun comprehensible.
- C. → **Plan B: Solomon settled ...** Not finding an answer for the insanity of life under the sun he rerouted his passion to the joy and satisfaction of sexual pleasure.

ECCLESIASTES MESSAGE 14 - The Fear of God - The Path of Life - Ecclesiastes 7-15-29 - ffc - Dave Scott - 042422 - STUDY SHEETS
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- (Ecclesiastes 2:8b ESV) ... **many concubines, the delight of the sons of man**.
 - (1 Kings 11:1a, 3 ESV) **Now King Solomon loved many foreign women ... He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart.**
 - (Nehemiah 13:26 ESV) **Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women?** ... Nevertheless, **foreign women made even him to sin**.
 - (Ecclesiastes 7:28 AMP) Which I am still seeking but have not found—one upright man among a thousand have I found, **but an upright woman among all those one thousand in my harem have I not found**.
- D. Solomon's failure and frustration on the path of self-effort led him to sexual temptation as personified in this woman.
 - (Proverbs 2:16 NLT) **Wisdom will save you from the immoral woman**, from the seductive words of the promiscuous woman.
 - (Proverbs 5:3–4a ESV) For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, 4 **but in the end she is bitter as wormwood**.
 - E. To escape settling for the delight of sex over walking in the glory of God we must walk in a way that pleases God.
 - F. To please God we must walk in the fear of God.
 - G. Qoheleth does not solve the riddle of life but does discover the general cause for the riddle—the scheming nature of humans.
 - H. God made humans upright but humans seek many schemes to avoid the way of God.
 - I. People come up with their own scheme or statement to explain life, to make life comprehensible.
 - (Isaiah 53:6a NLT) All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. **We have left God's paths to follow our own**.
 - (Hosea 10:13 ESV) You have plowed iniquity; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. **Because you have trusted in your own way**.