



WISDOM FOR THE JOURNEY

“A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel.”

– *Proverbs 1:5*

Men have always needed wisdom. We need help to make decisions about work; all relationships – in speech and conduct; who to trust - or avoid; along with being measured by the plumb line of true character. Wisdom from Proverbs offers insight into the concrete experiences of human life that help us take charge of our lives.

Proverbs is about **how to** live out your faith in God. There is no true wisdom apart from Jesus. Fools are those who rely on their own knowledge to navigate life.

In this study, we will look and listen to hear God’s voice and see his Son shining through the book of Proverbs. We will be equipped in every way for our journey! So, let’s dig in!

Highland Colony Men’s Roundtable

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WISDOM FOR THE JOURNEY: ORDER SHATTERED!

A man needs wisdom for his journey. We can find that wisdom in Proverbs as we are pointed to Jesus.

Mar 08, 2024

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 2:15,16; Ecclesiastes 1:1-19; II Corinthians 4:16-18; Ecclesiastes 2:20-23; Ecclesiastes 2:1-3; Ecclesiastes 2:11; Ecclesiastes 9:1-3; Ecclesiastes 11:7-10; Romans 8:18-20

Music: Leonard Cohen - You Want It Darker - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQOpeJ8YHrE>

Video: The best scene of Forrest Gump - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFvASiMTDz0>

Resources - GOD’S WISDOM for NAVIGATING LIFE by Timothy Keller

PROVERBS FOR YOU by Kathleen Nielson

GOD’S ORDER SHATTERED!

1. _____ – **Ecclesiastes 2:15,16** → The relationship between behavior and reward is—not completely but to a significant degree—disrupted or shattered. It’s possible to overread Proverbs to teach that “good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people.” But here in Ecclesiastes we are reminded that often a good, wise person is no more honored than a fool. In our broken world good behavior does not always lead to favorable outcomes.
2. _____ – **Ecclesiastes 1:1-11** → The author is observing that we reach so few of our goals, and the goals we do reach are not nearly as fulfilling as we thought. There seems to be no gain. The author asks us to imagine trying to live under the sun—with no God or eternity beyond this world. This world is separated from God by the sin of the human race, so it does not function as it was created to, and that therefore even believers encounter a great deal of human life’s vanity or meaninglessness. We must anchor our lives in the eternal (II Cor. 4:16-18).
3. _____ – **Ecclesiastes 1:9-11** → Ecclesiastes asks us to imagine how fulfilling things can possible be if what we see in this world and life is “all that is or ever was or ever will be.” This is devastating insight. It means that if life under the sun is all that there is, then whether you spend your life helping people or killing people, in the end it makes not a whit of difference. The fleeting pleasures of life are senseless, useless, and insignificant if we try to live without reference and gratitude to God.

ORDERED SHATTERED – MEANINGLESSNESS

1. _____ – **Ecclesiastes 2:20-23** → Proverbs points to the satisfaction work can bring, but Ecclesiastes reminds us that we often feel the “thorns and thistles,” the grinding frustration that is the curse on work in a fallen world (Gen. 3:17-19). Work and achievement, without the peace of God in our lives through the Spirit, will never be enough.
2. _____ – **Ecclesiastes 2:1-3,11** → Ecclesiastes explores the way of hedonism and self-expression as a solution to the futility of life. Pleasure in Hebrew (*simha*) are meaningless and vain in their own terms. In this world, pleasures are fleeting. The more you look to the things of this world to give you your deepest pleasures and satisfactions, the more frustrating they will be.
3. _____ – **Ecclesiastes 1:12-19** → This almost by definition is the scientific enterprise—the effort to find a natural (not supernatural) cause for absolutely everything. But this project is proclaimed a failure. We can’t fix human problems with mere technology and knowledge—what is crooked cannot be straightened (Eccl. 1:15). Science can’t change the heart.
4. _____ – **Ecclesiastes 9:1-3** → The sinful human race does indeed have the world it deserves, in which good and bad behavior are not rewarded neatly and appropriately. Through the work of the Christ all the areas of death, decay, and evil that still need to be addressed in your own heart.

ORDER SHATTERED – ORDER RESTORED!

1. _____ – **Ecclesiastes 11:7-10** → In these verses, we are given a set of practical guidelines for enjoying life despite it all. How do we do that?
 1. _____ → First, be realistic. We should expect not only times of sorrow but also that, even believing in God, life will sometimes feel meaningless (Romans 8:18).
 2. _____ → Remember God’s judgment. Enjoy yourself, but don’t do things you cannot justify before God. Enjoy yourself but keep your conscience clear.
 3. _____ → Don’t mourn over youth and vigor when they fade.

ACTION: JOURNAL THIS!

1. What are the most profound challenges of your life?
2. What attempts have you made to make your life work?
3. Do you find yourself stuck in self-pity or being a victim because of the hardship of life?



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SCRIPTURE

Ecclesiastes 2:15,16 - 15 When I realized that my fate's the same as the fool's, I had to ask myself, "So why bother being wise?" It's all smoke, nothing but smoke.**16** The smart and the stupid both disappear out of sight. In a day or two they're both forgotten. Yes, both the smart and the stupid die, and that's it.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-19 - 1 These are the words of the Quester, David's son and king in Jerusalem:**2** Smoke, nothing but smoke. [That's what the Quester says.] There's nothing to anything - it's all smoke.**3** What's there to show for a lifetime of work, a lifetime of working your fingers to the bone?**4** One generation goes its way, the next one arrives, but nothing changes - it's business as usual for old planet earth.**5** The sun comes up and the sun goes down, then does it again, and again - the same old round.**6** The wind blows south, the wind blows north. Around and around and around it blows, blowing this way, then that - the whirling, erratic wind.**7** All the rivers flow into the sea, but the sea never fills up. The rivers keep flowing to the same old place, and then start all over and do it again.**8** Everything's boring, utterly boring - no one can find any meaning in it. Boring to the eye, boring to the ear.**9** What was will be again, what happened will happen again. There's nothing new on this earth. Year after year it's the same old thing.**10** Does someone call out, "Hey, this is new"? Don't get excited - it's the same old story.**11** Nobody remembers what happened yesterday. And the things that will happen tomorrow? Nobody'll remember them either. Don't count on being remembered.**12** Call me "the Quester." I've been king over Israel in Jerusalem.**13** I looked most carefully into everything, searched out all that is done on this earth. And let me tell you, there's not much to write home about. God hasn't made it easy for us.**14** I've seen it all and it's nothing but smoke - smoke, and spitting into the wind.**15** Life's a corkscrew that can't be straightened, A minus that won't add up.**16** I said to myself, "I know more and I'm wiser than anyone before me in Jerusalem. I've stockpiled wisdom and knowledge."**17** What I've finally concluded is that so-called wisdom and knowledge are mindless and witless - nothing but spitting into the wind.**18** Much learning earns you much trouble. The more you know, the more you hurt.

II Corinthians 4:16-18 - 16 So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace.**17** These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us.**18** There's far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can't see now will last forever.

Ecclesiastes 2:20-23 - 20 That's when I called it quits, gave up on anything that could be hoped for on this earth.**21** What's the point of working your fingers to the bone if you hand over what you worked for to someone who never lifted a finger for it? Smoke, that's what it is. A bad business from start to finish.**22** So what do you get from a life of hard labor?**23** Pain and grief from dawn to dusk. Never a decent night's rest. Nothing but smoke.

Ecclesiastes 2:1-3 - 1 I said to myself, "Let's go for it - experiment with pleasure, have a good time!" But there was nothing to it, nothing but smoke.**2** What do I think of the fun-filled life? Insane! Inane! My verdict on the pursuit of happiness? Who needs it?**3** With the help of a bottle of wine and all the wisdom I could muster, I tried my level best to penetrate the absurdity of life. I wanted to get a handle on anything useful we mortals might do during the years we spend on this earth. I Never Said No to Myself

Ecclesiastes 2:11 - 11 Then I took a good look at everything I'd done, looked at all the sweat and hard work. But when I looked, I saw nothing but smoke. Smoke and spitting into the wind. There was nothing to any of it. Nothing.

Ecclesiastes 9:1-3 - 1 Well, I took all this in and thought it through, inside and out. Here's what I understood: The good, the wise, and all that they do are in God's hands - but, day by day, whether it's love or hate they're dealing with, they don't know.**2** It's one fate for everybody - righteous and wicked, good people, bad people, the nice and the nasty, worshipers and non-worshipers, committed and uncommitted.**3** I find this outrageous - the worst thing about living on this earth - that everyone's lumped together in one fate. Is it any wonder that so many people are obsessed with evil? Is it any wonder that people go crazy right and left? Life leads to death. That's it.

Ecclesiastes 11:7-10 - 7 Oh, how sweet the light of day, And how wonderful to live in the sunshine!**8** Even if you live a long time, don't take a single day for granted. Take delight in each light-filled hour, Remembering that there will also be many dark days And that most of what comes your way is smoke.**9** You who are young, make the most of your youth. Relish your youthful vigor. Follow the impulses of your heart. If something looks good to you, pursue it. But know also that not just anything goes; You have to answer to God for every last bit of it.**10** Live footloose and fancy free - You won't be young forever. Youth lasts about as long as smoke

Romans 8:18-20 - 18 That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times.**19** The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next.**20** Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in

"You Want It Darker" By Leonard Cohen

<p>If you are the dealer, I'm out of the game If you are the healer, it means I'm broken and lame If Thine is the glory, then mine must be the shame You want it darker We kill the flame Magnified, sanctified, be Thy holy name Vilified, crucified, in the human frame A million candles burning for the help that never came You want it darker Hineni, hineni I'm ready, my Lord</p>	<p>There's a lover in the story But the story's still the same There's a lullaby for suffering And a paradox to blame But it's written in the Scriptures And it's not some idle claim You want it darker We kill the flame They're lining up the prisoners And the guards are taking aim I struggled with some demons They were middle class and tame I didn't know I had permission to murder and to maim You want it darker</p>	<p>Hineni, hineni I'm ready, my Lord Magnified, sanctified, be Thy holy name Vilified, crucified, in the human frame A million candles burning for the love that never came You want it darker We kill the flame If you are the dealer, let me out of the game If you are the healer, I'm broken and lame If Thine is the glory, mine must be the shame You want it darker Hineni, hineni Hineni, hineni I'm ready, my Lord Hineni Hineni, hineni Hineni</p>
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