

THINK—CONSIDERING THE VALUE OF WISDOM ECCLESIASTES 7:10-29

In 1968 Aretha Franklin released a song title Think, which is about freedom and respect for women. One of the key lines in the song is “You better think (think) about what you are trying to do to me.” In Ecclesiastes 7:10-29 Solomon uses the words “wise” or “wisdom” eight times, he is trying to get his reader to think about the value of wisdom in several different settings.

THINK ABOUT LIVING A FULL LIFE IN THE PRESENT (7:10)

Say not thou, What is *the cause* that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this. It is not a wise thing to wish for the old days. Life moves on and we must do the same. Someone has wisely said, “Ten years from now today will be the good old days.” In addition, the one who thinks about the days of old only remember the good things about it forgetting that there were times of adversity also. The psalmist said, “This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps. 118:24).

THINK ABOUT THE PROFIT THAT COMES FROM WISDOM AND PROSPERITY (7:11-12)

Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun. For those who live on the earth, there is great profit to exercise wisdom with an inheritance. The combination of the two is a great blessing to the possessor. In the next verse he further expands on this thought by making two points:

Wisdom and Money Provide Protection

For wisdom is a defence (Hebrew *tsale* shade), and money is a defence: (Hebrew *tsale* shade). Like shade provides protection from the sun, wisdom and money provide protection in life. The one who possesses money can be protected from the evils of poverty when he exercises wisdom with it.

Wisdom Does Not Lead to the Path of Destruction

but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it. Even though both wisdom and money provide protection, “wisdom preserves those who have it” (NIV). It is wisdom alone that preserves (Hebrew *khaw-yaw*) allows one to use it in such a way that it energizes life and keeps one from allowing money to lead down the path of destruction.

THINK ABOUT WHAT GOD MADE CROOKED (7:13)

Consider the work of God: for who can make *that* straight, which he hath made crooked? If God created something that is bent or crooked, who can straighten it out. Solomon says that

when we meet adversities in life that are ordained by the sovereign hand of God, it is not our job to make them straight but to make the best of it.

THINK ABOUT THE DAYS OF PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY (7:14)

In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him. A person should enjoy the good days in life. When the adverse days happen, he should consider that God is in control and allows prosperity and adversity to happen. It is a wise conclusion to come to that man has no control over his future. **to the end that man should find nothing after him.** No one can forecast what will happen to them in the future, but the wise will prepare for it.

THINK ABOUT THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED (7:15-18)

All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just *man* that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked *man* that longeth *his life* in his wickedness. Solomon observed a strange thing in his life of chasing the wind on this earth. He saw a man who was living a righteous life die early in his righteousness while the wicked man lived a long life in his wickedness. Based on this Solomon offers the following advice. **Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?** A person should not be too righteous. This statement appears to be a bit odd, it seems every person should strive to be a righteous as possible. Perhaps the thought here is not to have a Pharisaical righteousness, that is a righteousness based on pride. Notice that he says it leads to self-destruction, **why shouldest thou destroy thyself.** On the other hand, it is not good to be too wicked or foolish because this can lead to an early death. **It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand:** Solomon advises that a person take hold of one thing (consider righteousness) and not let go of the other (consider wickedness) by doing this, he will avoid both extremes. **For he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.** Fearing God will give one wisdom to avoid being overly righteous or overly wicked.

THINK—CONSIDERING THE VALUE OF WISDOM (PART-2) ECCLESIASTES 7:10-29

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THINK ABOUT THE PREEMINENCE OF WISDOM (7:19)

Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty *men* which are in the city.

Wisdom far surpasses any military might. Solomon echoes this verse in Proverbs 21:22, “The wise conquer the city of the strong and level the fortress in which they trust” (NTL). This verse demonstrates the preeminence of wisdom. A person should seek wisdom before anything else because it will save a lot of energy and effort.

THINK ABOUT HOW WISDOM AIDS SINNERS (7:20)

For *there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.* What a powerful truth, there is not a person on the earth who is perfect and never sins. This truth is emphasized over and over in the Scriptures (Isa. 53:6; Rom. 3:23). This demonstrates the need for people to exercise wisdom

THINK ABOUT HOW WISDOM CAN CAUSE A PERSON TO CHECK THEMSELVES (7:21-22)

**Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee:
For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.**

Solomon admonishes masters not to eavesdrop on their servant’s conversation because the servant may be saying something negative about the master. He then states a reality that all realize but few want to confess—we all talk about others in their absence. I try not to quote from the message too much since it is a paraphrase and not a translation but I think Eugene Peterson hit the nail on the head with this one. “Don’t eavesdrop on the conversation of others. What if the gossip’s about you and you’d rather not hear it? You’ve done that a few times, haven’t you—said things Behind someone’s back you wouldn’t say to his face?” One commentator has written, “If we get upset when people talk about us, we are holding them to a higher standard that we hold ourselves to, because we are prone to do the same thing.”

THINK ABOUT THE THINGS WISDOM CAN PROVE (7:23-25)

All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it *was* far from me. Solomon tested his theories with wisdom and determined that he would be wise, but it was unattainable for

him. Notice what he says next, **That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?** He says that some things are too far away and too deep to ascertain. **I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness:** He then set out on a diligent search for wisdom and the rationale for things. He even searched to know about the wickedness of folly, foolishness and madness.

THINK ABOUT HOW MANY WISE PEOPLE YOU
HAVE CROSSED PATHS WITH IN LIFE (7:26-28)

And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: This passage has several interpretations: 1.) It is a reference to foolishness personified as a woman. 2.) It is a reference to the strange woman found in the Book of Proverbs (2:16; 5:3; 7:5). 3.) It is a reference to women he came into contact with in his search for wisdom. **Whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.** The one who pleases God will escape her tyrannical grasp but the undiscerning sinner will be taken by her. **Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account:** Solomon said in his search he unraveled things clue by clue, he came to the following conclusion. **Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found.** There have been many commentators who have taken a stab at explaining this sensitive verse. From stating that Solomon only found one in every thousand men who were wise and no wise women to he was using a figure of speech to say that he scarcely found a wise person among men and women while he was searching.

THINK ABOUT HOW MANY HAVE SOUGHT SIN INSTEAD OF WISDOM (7:29)

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions. God created human beings without sin, but they have chosen many inventions or devices that lead away from God's original model.

THINK ABOUT THE BENEFIT OF WISDOM (8:1)

Who is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? A wise man is able to look at life and have the proper perspective on things. **A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine,** in other words, the wisdom on the inside expresses itself on the outside. Wisdom cause one to have a glow of holiness and not the dark cloud of foolishness. **And the boldness of his face shall be changed.** Wisdom changes the hardened face into one that is open and welcoming.