

games during the holidays and it was my first Christmas away from home and he and I were playing a game of H.O.R.S.E. down in the gym. And he was getting ready to leave to go be with his family and he died that night. And we were very, very close friends.

I always remember my professor saying “Saints are immortal until their work on earth is done.” And that next week when we got back to classes, the Greek professor told us we could take any verse in the Bible and study it.

And I took that verse in Philippians 1:23 where Paul says “I am having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.” And I studied the word “depart.” Do you know what that word means? “I have a desire to depart to be with Christ.” It means to pull up the tent stakes, fold up the tent and go to the house. You’re on vacation here. You’re a pilgrim. The time comes when you pull up the tent stakes and you fold up the tent and you head to the house.

He says I’ve got a desire to do that because “eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things which the Lord hath prepared for them that love Him.” (1 Cor. 2:9)

Friend, absent from the body, present with the Lord.

For me to live is Christ while I’m here, but to die is to gain more of Christ because I’m going to be with Him, instantaneously.

forget it. Let's go on today and make it something pretty super and special.

You know, as I started thinking along that line I went back—one of the advantages I have in my Bible study and I do it for this reason is I plaster my desk with a chart. In fact, my big desk has got John 13-17 spread all over it from clear down to this end, to clear down to that end. And every time I walk into that office, I'm living John 13-17. I'm washing the disciples feet and I'm listening to the Lord say "stop being troubled in your hearts." And I'm listening to him pray in John 17. Every time I hit my office, that's where my study is right now.

I have Ecclesiastes on my desk a couple of years ago. And so every time I walk in, I'm hitting one of these verses. And I marked in blue all of the positive statements. And you know, I came up with a bunch of them. Here they are.

Interspersed in this, are those little glimpses of the solution to the crisis.

Ecclesiastes 2:24

A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work.

Ecclesiastes 3:12

I know there is nothing better for man than to be happy and do good while they live.

Ecclesiastes 3:22

I saw there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work...

Ecclesiastes 5:18

Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor...

Ecclesiastes 6:12

For who knows what is good for a man in life, during the few and meaningless days he passes through like a shadow? Who can tell him what will happen after he is gone?

Ecclesiastes 8:15

So I commend the enjoyment of life because nothing is better for a man under heaven...

He's telling you enjoy it!

We so often take that statement "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die" and we plaster that on the guy who's not a Christian. And we say "this is the way the guy lives who's not a Christian because he's just grabbing for everything he can get." I'm saying that's a great verse for a Christian when you

see it in its right perspective.

You ought to be eating and drinking and being merry because tomorrow you are going to die! But He came to give you life and life more abundant! That verse really fits us if we're on top of it and we're cooperating with the sovereign purpose. He came to give us life and enjoy it and not to take it away! Some people just get the feeling that God comes as a joy-robber and takes everything away that's fun.

You know, I tell everybody when I get to go skiing and I get to play racquetball and I get to run and I get to go to all these places and do all these things. Boy, it's terrible to be a Christian. You never get to have any fun.

It's just incredible what the Lord has taken out of my life. Oh, I'm so sad. I never have any fun! Man, I'm looking forward to dying because I'm one of the most unfulfilled individuals in the world as far as what God has given me and what I'm enjoying in life.

Verse 8.

v. 8 Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil.

“Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil.”

WHITE GARMENTS are symbols of PURITY and

FESTIVITY.

And the OIL is the symbol of JOY.

Alright, he says “eat.”

And then he says “enjoy.”

But look at verse 9.

v. 9 Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun.

“Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun.”

Some of you guys are single tonight and you’re saying “Hey, I can’t fill that one.”

Well, I’ve got to tell you, in the Hebrew text this says “Enjoy life with a wife.” So you single guys realize get out there and find it, you know. That’s what you’re supposed to do.

1. First you’re supposed to “EAT”!

2. Then you're supposed to "ENJOY life with a wife." God brought that woman into your life to be enjoyable.

Remember chapter 3, verse 11?

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He makes all things beautiful in His time.

Here: "whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life."

Why are women so special and why are they supposed to make life so beautiful and why are you supposed to enjoy it?

I was reading Jim Elliot's memoirs and his diary. I just picked it up. And as a junior in high school, he's talking about he's reading a passage in Genesis about Abraham's servant going to get a bride. And he says:

Lord, I can't give her jewels. She's got to live in a tent and bring me comfort.

(source unknown)

And of course we understand that he became a missionary to the Aucas in 1956 along with four other guys, gave his life trying to reach those Indians. But he had some definite objectives in view of how this woman was to function in his life to meet his needs.

I got the THREE B's gals. If you're functioning in the man's

life:

1. you're a BLESSING,
2. you're BEARABLE, and
3. you're BEAUTIFUL.

That's the way you function.

Some women can get so selfishly involved in all the activities of the children and the community and neglect the greatest responsibility. And that's to help her man through a mid-life crisis. And many times out of mid-life crisis comes an awareness on the part of the woman of the fact that she has a very, very important function in the life of her husband which she has always taken for granted, and realizes in the midst of the struggle, that she has really failed to be these things to him.

A man should have one place that he can go where he can really enjoy life. And that is, life with his wife.

Bask in the sunshine of her love. Be something that is very, very special. This is your portion in life.

Now look at verse 10.

v.10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there

is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.”

Alright, what’s the third thing?

3. Your WORK—your vocation.

I mean:

1. eat your meals with gladness,
2. “enjoy life with a wife,”

and then:

3. go for it in your work.

And I tell you how to go for it in you work and that’s realize that that’s sacred just as much as everything else is.

When you personalize your work and you realize that that is what God wants you to do, it makes all the difference in the world.

I try to teach kids in camp that there’s no division between the sacred and the secular. And for kids, this just blew them

away.

You are no more spiritual riding that horse than you are sitting in a Bible class. Of course they love my philosophy and it's true. Whatever you do, you do to the glory of God. Whether you're paddling a canoe or you're eating a meal with a counselor or you're sitting in a Bible study. In God's sight, that's all sacred.

And what he's saying here is, if it's worth doing, "do it with all your might."

Colossians 3:23

Whatever you do, do your work heartily as for the Lord rather than for men.

Dr. Pentecost says:

With the will you can obey the master. With the heart you can love the Lord. He says whatever you do, do it as to the Lord, from the heart for you serve the Lord Christ. Housewife, as you work in your home, do all the dusting [and] cooking because you are the Lord's servant and this is the Lord's will. You serve the Lord Christ. If it is God's will for you to be a housewife, then you are tested on how you perform a housewife's function. [If] it is God's will for you to be a secretary, you are tested by what kind of a secretary you are. (source unknown)

If in his will, you are a student, you are tested by what God's will is for you today, what you do in school. [If] it is God's will for you to be in business, you are tested by what you did at the office. You are there as a servant of the Lord, no matter what He gives you to do and your love for Him should transform that which is routine and burdensome and monotonous so that it becomes your joy.

One of the secrets of dealing with monotony is to personalize that which you are doing. If you doing it for an organization, that's one thing. If you are doing it to please a person, that's something entirely different.
(source unknown)

And so he says personalize it. Make it something very special. Do it the very best you can.

Alright:

1. "eat,"
2. "enjoy life with your wife,"

and the third one:

3. endure enthusiastically what you have to do.

Now I realize some guys turn that around.

They eat and they endure enthusiastically their lives with

their wives and they enjoy their work and become workaholics. But that's not what he says here. He says [it] the other way around.

There's a little poem that goes so well when it talks about doing it with all your might and it's like this:

If you can't be a pine on the top of the hill,
Be a scrub in the valley,
but be the best little scrub
by the side of the rill.

Be a bush if you can't be a tree.
And if you can't be a bush, be a bit of grass
And some highway happier make.
If you can't be a musky, then just be a bass,
But the liveliest bass in the lake.

We can't all be captains, some have to be crew.
There's something for all of us here.
There's work to be done, we've all got to do
Our part in a way that's sincere.

If you can't be a highway, then just be a trail,
If you can't be the sun, be a star.
It isn't by size that you win or fail.
Be the best of whatever you are.
(source unknown)

Since the future is determined and death is coming, I'm to do

THREE THINGS:

1. “eat,”
2. “enjoy life with my wife,” and
3. endure enthusiastically the work that I have to perform—
“do it with all my might.”

Verse 11.

v.11 I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.

“I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.”

Ok, he makes FIVE STATEMENTS there. And he says I’ve been observing this.

1. He says the race is not always won by the swift.

I mean, you just have to run a few races to realize that some guys start off like a house of fire and they end up [losing] their cookies about two or three miles out. And some of the others

just flat don't make it because they get exhausted and they burn it all up early. And it isn't to the swift.

It's interesting that Paul comes over in the New Testament and he makes life as a Christian like a race. You know, I'm going to write a book on that some day.

Ann Kiemel wrote that one *Run to Win*. She took all my verses when she wrote it.

And after I run Boston in '84 I'm going to run mine and I'm going to call mine *The Finisher*. I just thought of that the other day when I got through. I think that I can take the 2 Timothy passage and come up with something better than hers.

(source unknown)

2. The battle to the strong!

Ephesians chapter 6—the battle to the strong.

Take the whole armor of God.

3. “...nor does food come to the wise”—no, you've got to work for it.

4. “...or wealth to the brilliant”—not necessarily.

“You seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” and then He'll take care of that.

5. “...or favor to the learned”—no, rather to the obedient.

“...time and chance happen to them all.”

You know, time depletes your strength, it reveals your priority and it releases you of certain goals that you have because you realize you just aren't going to make it.

Verse 12.

v.12 Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.

“Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.”

You don't know when your hour is going to come. Christ is the only One!

He says “my hour is not yet come....my hour is not yet come.” In John 13 he says to those guys: “My hour has come. It's here. I'm going to die.”

You don't know. I mean, just during this tour I've had the funeral for a little 3 ½ year old boy. I've had a funeral for a guy who's 43. Both of them gone to be with the Lord.

The queen died at 50. Little baby was crushed by a pet python here in a crib not too long ago. All of these things happen. We don't know!

And just like the fish is caught in the trap and the bird's caught by the snare, so evil times fall unexpected. We can't explain it. But we know our lives are in His hands.

v.13 I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me:

“I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me:”

What is wisdom? Wisdom is rightly relating to God's eternal purpose. That's what wisdom is. And so he's going to talk about that now for just a second.

v.14 There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siegeworks against it.

“There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siegeworks against it.”

v.15 Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man.

“Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man.”

v.16 So I said, “Wisdom is better than strength.” But the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.

“So I said, ‘Wisdom is better than strength.’ But the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.”

Why? We’re impressed with strength not with wisdom!

Ok, I’m going to say three letters and then I’m going to say three more letters. And tell me which one you would come to listen to.

Here’s the first one: P-H-D.

Here’s the second one: N-F-L.

You’re impressed with strength. Man, if they were playing right now. You’d be here. I mean, everybody wants to hear somebody from the NFL.

PhD—dime a dozen.

Got a little bit he wants to share, man it’ll be boring I know it.

Phd—Piled Higher and Deeper. You know, I mean, that’s all that is.

Don’t want to listen to any of that stuff.

We’re just like that you know. It’s the strength, it’s not the wisdom. This poor guy saved the city by his wisdom. Everybody forgot him! Rejoicing in the fact of their salvation.

Verse 17.

v.17 The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools.

“The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools.”

v.18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

“Wisdom is better than the weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.”

I love this next verse.

10:v. 1 As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

“As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.”

As he moves into chapter 10, he's saying you know a fool can destroy more than a wise guy can put together. And in the Bible you see that is true.

I mean you see Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5 get blown out of the tub.

You see Adam in the garden.

You see Achin at the time of the destruction of the city of Jericho—keep them from winning the battle at Ai and it has to be dealt with before it's taken care of.

“As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.”

How did dead flies get in the perfume? And why does it make something that's supposed to smell so pretty, stink so bad? Somebody left the cap off. And a little bit of that goes a long way. And because of the carelessness that happens.

You know, one of the most impressive things about Solomon is in his relationship with Shulamith in the Song of Solomon, there is a statement that is classic for every couple.

Solomon says to Shulamith: “Honey”—I'm putting this in terminology that you can relate to—“we've got to catch the foxes before they spoil the vine.”

“Little foxes” is what’s translated.

What he’s saying is, “Honey there are going to be a lot of things in our lives that can spoil the vine that is blossoming of love before us. And we’ve got to catch those foxes before they spoil it.”

In other words, we’ve got to be careful to deal with the little things that ruin and take away the sweetness and make it stink and make it sour.

I remember I was teaching this back in 1980 and I came to my office one day and I walked into Pearl’s office and on her desk was Pearl’s Ecclesiastes and I thought oh my gosh, she’s going through a mid-life crisis. And she started a little article by saying “Home isn’t the way it used to be.” And then underneath it she had three things that ate my lunch.

1. Running,
2. racquetball, and
3. hundreds of activities.

That was preached to me and left not by chance on the desk.

Home’s not like it used to be because of some little things that became big things that were more important, creating a tension and a crisis.

What he's saying here is just a little carelessness, just some things that seem to be more important than they really are can create some tremendous difficulty.

I thought of the Arab poem called "The Camel's Nose." It's classic but it just describes exactly what I'm saying. Have you ever heard it?

The Camel's Nose

Once in his shop a workman wrought
With languid head and listless thought,
When through the open window space,
Behold, a camel thrust his face.

"My nose is cold," he meekly cried.
"Oh let me warm it by thy side."
Since no denial word was said,
In came the nose, in came the head.

As sure as sermon follows text,
The long and scraggly neck came next.
And then as falls the threatening storm,
In leapt the whole ungainly form.

Aghast, the owner gazed around
And on the ugly invader frowned.
Convinced as closer still he pressed,
There was no room for such a guest.

Yet more astonished heard him say,
“If thou art troubled, go your way,
For in this place I choose to stay.”

O youthful hearts to gladness born,
Treat not this Arab lore with scorn.

To evil habits earliest wile
Lend neither ear nor glance nor smile
Choke the dark fountain ‘ere it flows
Nor e’en admit the camel’s nose.

(source unknown)

1 Corinthians 5:6 says:

1 Corinthians 5:6

...a little leaven has a tendency to leaven the whole lump.

I was driving down the road yesterday afternoon to Temple and I happened to see a two-toned pussy cat that had been run over laying in the middle of the road and a little bit of that goes a long way. I want to tell you, I carried that smell with me in the car at least for 10 or 15 miles. And I thought of this verse. The dead flies can cause a real stink. And that’s what he’s saying. You’ve got to be careful about that.

Verse 2.

v. 2 The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left.

“The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left.”

Now this is not a political verse.

Some of you already got that didn't you. Huh?

Somebody said that when Reagan took office, he put two right wings on the eagle of the president's emblem.

What does he mean by that?

“The heart of the wise inclines to the right”—that is, he learns how to live comfortably with authority.

Authority, sovereignty, right and wrong are real issues in a mid-life crisis. And he says:

“The heart of the wise [person] inclines toward the right...”

“[And] the heart of the fool toward the left.”

He still keeps on fighting it. You see, he's beginning to solve his own problem now by being a wise person or a fool.

Verse 3.

v. 3 Even as he walks along the road, the fool lacks sense and shows everyone how stupid he is.

“Even as he walks along the road, the fool lacks sense and shows everyone how stupid he is.”

You just have to see the way a person walks sometimes, you can tell whether they got their head together or not.

v. 4 If a ruler’s anger rises against you, do not leave your post; calmness can lay great errors to rest.

“If a ruler’s anger rises against you, do not leave your post; calmness can lay great errors to rest.”

What do you do in wisdom when authority gets mad at you? I mean, how do you handle that?

Well don’t act prematurely. Don’t take your toys and go to the house.

Wisdom’s strength is always in control.

Now remember that with your kids. Rather than react, respond to the circumstances with a child. It’s so easy to react, put them on restriction and probation, and take away all the joy that you’re going to have because you’re going to have to live with it.

Don’t react—respond under control and handle the

circumstance. Wisdom is on your side. Calmness can lay some great errors to rest.

And I always give James 1:19-20:

James 1:19-20

This you know, my beloved brethren, but let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, [Guys that will work great with your wives too] But anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

Verse 5.

v. 5 There is an evil I have seen under the sun, the sort of error that arises from a ruler:

“There is an evil I have seen under the sun, the sort of error that arises from a ruler:”

v. 6 Fools are put in many high positions, while the rich occupy the low ones.

“Fools are put in many high positions, while the rich occupy the low ones.”

v. 7 I have seen slaves on horseback, while princes go on foot like slaves.

“I have seen slaves on horseback, while princes go on foot like

slaves.”

This is the misuse and mistakes of authority because of who you know.

v. 8 Whoever digs a pit may fall into it; whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake.

“Whoever digs a pit may fall into it; whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake.”

v. 9 Whoever quarries stones may be injured by them; whoever splits logs may be endangered by them.

“Whoever quarries stones may be injured by them; whoever splits logs may be endangered by them.”

We never know what’s going to happen to us.

v.10 If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed but skill will bring success.

“If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed but skill will bring success.”

Sharpen the thing before you go out there.

v.11 If a snake bites before it is charmed, there is no profit for the charmer.

“If the snake bites before it is charmed, there is no profit for the charmer.”

That’s for sure.

He doesn’t make any money if he bites somebody before he’s charmed. Probably lose his life in the process.

v.12 Words from a wise man’s mouth are gracious, but a fool is consumed by his own lips.

“Words from a wise man’s mouth are gracious, but a fool is consumed by his own lips.”

Just always talking.

v.13 At the beginning his words are folly; at the end they are wicked madness—

“At the beginning his words are folly; and at the end they are wicked madness—”

v.14 and the fool multiplies words. No one knows what is coming—who can tell him what will happen after him?

“and the fool multiplies words. No one knows what is coming—who can tell him what will happen after him?”

Fools rush in where wise men fear to tread. Huh?

v.15 A fool's work wearies him; he does not know the way to town.

“A fool's work wearies him; he does not know the way to town.”

Or we use it this way, he doesn't have enough sense to come in out of the rain.

v.16 Woe to you, O land whose king was a servant and whose princes feast in the morning.

“Woe to you, O land”—after you turn the page, huh? Is it time to turn? Turn it!

“Woe to you, O land whose king was a servant and whose princes feast in the morning.”

What does that mean? Lazy leaders. They're taking their privilege. They're taking their power and they're taking their personal advantage and that issues in pleasure.

There is a process in leadership that goes like this:

1. first POWER,
2. then PRIVILEGE,
3. then PERSONAL ADVANTAGE, and

4. then PLEASURE.

Woe to a land that's got its princes eating in the morning, having a big time and not doing their work.

v.17 Blessed are you, O land whose king is of noble birth and whose princes eat at a proper time—for strength and not for drunkenness.

“Blessed are you, O land whose king is of noble birth and whose princes eat at a proper time—for strength and not for drunkenness.”

v.18 If a man is lazy, the rafters sag; if his hands are idle, the house leaks.

“If a man is lazy, the rafters sag; if his hands are idle, the house leaks.”

You know, God has a great sense of humor.

I always speak in the Northwest in the month of August and we get to stay in the missionary cabin and it is really a missionary cabin.

I was sitting in one of the—there's four bedrooms in it and I always make one of them into a study and I have this great big piece of plywood laying out on the bed and its got my Ecclesiastes on it see, and I'm sitting there and I'm reading

and I come down to this verse and its pouring down rain outside. And just a few minutes before I have put buckets under all the places and we've got 7 or 8 bottles tingling and pinging in the background and I come to this verse. And it says "If a man is lazy, the rafters sag; and if his hands are idle, the house leaks." And then "ping, ping, ping, ping" in the background. All of it taking place with the buckets and I'm thinking, boy what message is coming across here. I need to share this with the maintenance man of this place.

v.19 A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes life merry, but money is the answer for everything.

"A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes life merry, but money is the answer for everything."

Boy, that's what some people think.

v.20 Do not revile the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird of the air may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say.

"Do not revile the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird of the air may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say."

Careful what you say about the king.

I was thinking of in 2 Kings chapter 6 it's so cute.

Elisha the prophet knows what the king of Assyria is going to do so when the king of Assyria sends his troops down, Elisha says “Hey, king of Israel, don’t let the people go that way because the king of Assyria. Come this way.” And so this is the dialogue in 2 Kings 6:12. It’s so good.

2 Kings 6:12

And one of his servants said “No, my lord, O king, but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.”

I mean, he knows all about you! And he knows exactly what you said and he tells the king everything.

Honor the king. Be careful that you’re wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove.

I got these six lessons out of the study.

Lesson #1: The righteous and the wise and what they do are in God’s hands.

The righteous and the wise and what they do are in God’s hands.

His sovereign purpose is determined for our lives.

Lesson #2: Eat your food with gladness. Enjoy life with a wife.

And what your hands find to do, do it with all your might.

Eat your food with gladness. Enjoy life with your wife. And what your hand finds to do, do with all your might.

Lesson #3: Big Ben is just about over there.

Lesson #3: No man knows when his hour will come.

And you can put that in two perspectives.

No man knows when his hour will come for trial or for death.

You don't know when that emergency's going to hit you.

No man knows when the hour of his trial or the hour of his death will come.

Lesson #4: The quiet words of the wise are more important than the shouts of the fool.

The quiet words of the wise are more important than the shouts of the fool.

Lesson #5: A little folly spoils the whole life.

A little folly spoils the whole life.

That's what is meant by that dead flies spoil the perfume.

A little folly spoils the whole life.

And the last one:

Lesson #6: Do not revile the authority that is over you.

Do not revile the authority that is over you.

You realize that you're rebelling against authority on this level is only revealing a rebellion against the authority on that level. And that, in essence, that's what he's talking about in this study tonight.

The solution to the crisis is to submit to the determinations of a sovereign God who is working it together for good and He loves you. Now trust Him.

You know, I want to share something with you tonight. It's almost ironic how this happens and yet it's not. Some of His sovereign purpose.

As I came down in my notes, I wrote these notes originally in 1980 and of course I've had two years to work on them now.

When I wrote them originally I had down at the bottom of my paper—Duane. He came to know Christ the other night in a class in a west Texas city. This is what Duane said:

Mine was just a problem of acceptance. I have heard the gospel a lot but I know that last Tuesday was different.

He and I sat together in the office after the study and he invited Christ into his life. He's a vice-president of a savings and loan. [He] invited Christ into his life.

I have not seen that guy other than I have sent him materials and kept in touch with him through the newsletter until this week I got this letter and I love it.

It has been a long time since we last talked—almost two years. I'm not sure if you even remember who I am, [But I do] but even if you don't it is not really important. During your visits to [our town] I gave my life to Christ. I had a long way to go but fortunately the Lord is patient and was willing to spend some time on me. Sometimes I think the Lord has to run us into a brick wall to knock some sense into our head. At least that is the way it happened with me. About three months ago after months of struggling with my job, I was fired. It was a devastating experience and frankly I felt like the Lord had deserted me. I suffered through a couple of weeks until I realized that in all of my prayers I was trying to manipulate the Lord. I was disappointed when things didn't go my way which at the time I thought was the only way. Finally I hit my knees and asked for forgiveness. I asked that the Lord's will be done regardless of what I thought about it. I pledged to trust in Him no matter what happened. From that moment I have experienced a peace that I have never experienced before.

A few days after that I took a job selling real estate. I haven't

sold anything yet and I am flat broke but I am working hard and I have never been happier. The Lord is with me, He loves me, and He provides for me.

I tell you all of this because I believe that night I was with you and confessed the Lord Jesus was a pivotal point in my life.
(letter from anonymous friend)

And he goes on to thank God for that experience of Christian love.

You know to me a letter came across all those miles to get on my desk so that I saw it Sunday that perfectly fits tonight's study. He really, really has been through everything we've looked at in this study. He comes down to the end of it and he says I'm flat broke but I'm working hard and I've never been happier and the Lord is with me.

And that's what it's all about friend. That's a guy telling you at gut level and layman's terminology what Solomon's been trying to tell you through the whole thing. And if you're going through it, it's your own fault. Surrender—Yield—Give up and allow God to begin to work in your life.

Father, if there's someone here tonight that really doesn't have it together with You yet, I would pray that Your Holy Spirit would really convict them and they wouldn't put this off any longer, that we might slip together in one of the back bedrooms and just have an opportunity to pray and share. Or if that's embarrassing that one of the little booklets could be

taken on how to have a happy and meaningful life and that prayer could be prayed at home by themselves or with their wives or with other members of the family. Lord, it's just a matter of surrendering ourselves to You and to Your purpose and Your will for our lives. And I pray that You'll teach us that that's the way out and that's the solution to the mid-life crisis. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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Study Number Seven – Eat, Drink, and Be Merry: For Tomorrow We Die – Ecclesiastes 9:1-10:20

NOTES

v. 1 So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no man knows whether love or hate awaits him.

v. 2 All share a common destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not. As it is with the good man, so with the sinner; as it is with those who take oaths, so with those who are afraid to take them.

v. 3 This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of men, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead.

v. 4 Anyone who is among the living has hope—even a live dog is better off than a dead lion!

v. 5 For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten.

v. 6 Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.

v. 7 Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favors what you do.

v. 8 Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil.

v. 9 Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun.

v.10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

v.11 I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.

v.12 Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.

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v.13 I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me:

v.14 There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siegeworks against it.

v.15 Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man.

v.16 So I said, “Wisdom is better than strength.” But the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.

v.17 The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools.

v.18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

10:v. 1 As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

v. 2 The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left.

v. 3 Even as he walks along the road, the fool lacks sense and shows everyone how stupid he is.

v. 4 If a ruler’s anger rises against you, do not leave your post; calmness can lay great errors to rest.

v. 5 There is an evil I have seen under the sun, the sort of error that arises from a ruler:

v. 6 Fools are put in many high positions, while the rich occupy the low ones.

v. 7 I have seen slaves on horseback, while princes go on foot like slaves.

v. 8 Whoever digs a pit may fall into it; whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake.

v. 9 Whoever quarries stones may be injured by them; whoever splits logs may be endangered by them.

v.10 If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed but skill will bring success.

v.11 If a snake bites before it is charmed, there is no profit for the charmer.

v.12 Words from a wise man’s mouth are gracious, but a fool is consumed by his own lips.

v.13 At the beginning his words are folly; at the end they are wicked madness—

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v.14 and the fool multiplies words. No one knows what is coming—who can tell him what will happen after him?

v.15 A fool's work wearies him; he does not know the way to town.

v.16 Woe to you, O land whose king was a servant and whose princes feast in the morning.

v.17 Blessed are you, O land whose king is of noble birth and whose princes eat at a proper time—for strength and not for drunkenness.

v.18 If a man is lazy, the rafters sag; if his hands are idle, the house leaks.

v.19 A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes life merry, but money is the answer for everything.

v.20 Do not revile the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird of the air may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Ecclesiastes 9:1-10:20 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. Summarize Solomon's conclusions in chapter 9:1-3.

3. Find the three commands that are stated in verses 7-10.

4. What are Solomon's observations in verse 11?

5. What is Solomon's illustration of wisdom in verses 13-16?

6. What can calmness do, according to chapter 10:4?

7. State the verdict and the question in verse 14.

8. What are we asked not to do in verse 20?

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands.

LESSON #2: Eat your food with gladness, enjoy life with your wife, and what your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.

LESSON #3: No man knows when his hour will come, either of trial or death.

LESSON #4: The quiet words of the wise are to be heeded more than the shouts of the fool.

LESSON #5: A little folly spoils the whole life.

LESSON #6: Do not revile the authority that is over you.