

## SESSION #1 - "Time-Wise"

### "Get Wisdom... Because Life Has Different Times and Seasons"

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." Prov 14:12

#### Our Historic Moment...



#### The INFO AGE

*...Ushered in a LOT of "Ways" that Seem Right!*

*...Ushered in an Historic Shifting PARADIGM!!*

—History: Facts → Faith → Feelings

...Today: FEELINGS → Faith → Facts

### Get Wisdom!

**Wisdom** (def.) - Cambridge: the ability to use your knowledge and experience to make good decisions and judgments ... Webster: insight

*..."Wisdom" isn't merely "knowledge" ...it's not merely "data" or "information" ...the Information Age can make us "knowledgeable"—but that doesn't mean we're WISE!*

### "Get Wisdom"

Proverbs 4:1, 5-7 <sup>1</sup> Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight...

<sup>5</sup> Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.

<sup>6</sup> Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.

<sup>7</sup> The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.

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...**v. 7**...the Starting Point of Wisdom—Determine to Get Wisdom ...make a decision to be intentional about HOW you formulate your approach to your life and your decisions. ...ie, DON'T Just DO LIFE!! Think about How to Do Life!!

...3 times - "insight" biynāh (Heb.) = understanding, meaning, discernment

### MEET Our Wisdom Tour-guide (He'll be taking us on a Guided Tour of Ecc.)

1 **Kings 4:29-31** And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, <sup>30</sup> so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. <sup>31</sup> For he was wiser than all other men,

**Ecc 1:12-18** | the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. <sup>14</sup> I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.

<sup>15</sup> What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.

<sup>16</sup> I said in my heart, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge." <sup>17</sup> And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind.

<sup>18</sup> For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

### ...RAW & REAL ...

- **The THEME of Ecc.** ... "**VANITY**" ('hebel' (Heb.) Used 38 times) = *emptiness or vanity; something transitory and unsatisfactory; breath, vapor* (Enhanced Strong's Dictionary) ...*something with no substance, meaninglessness, futility* (Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words)
- **The Vocabulary of Ecc.** ...Words from Chapter 1: *Vanity ...weariness ...unsatisfying ...unfilled ...unhappy ...crooked ...madness ...folly ...vexation ...sorrow*

...These are "FEELING WORDS"!! ...this is a book about How Life on Earth Can FEEL!!

### Why a Study of Ecc??

...for many people—the recent world has become a "DISORIENTING" place and their experience in life just "FEELS" Off!!

...Ecc is not an easy read ...nor does it answer well to a preferred appetite of "the glass is half full"!! ...but it is the Word of God!

Ecclesiastes lets us hear the voice of an older pastor/disciple-maker. He is a sage mentor speaking to his students not only as a giver of words, but also as a companion for living so that the young can learn (Eccl. 12:1). ...We are surprised then when this sage mentor tells us that he "hated life" (Eccl. 2:17) and that gaining wisdom and knowledge does nothing but stress us out and make us sad (Eccl. 1:18). ...We might think to ourselves, "This guy just doesn't sound like Isaiah, Jeremiah, or John or Peter. More importantly, he doesn't sound like Jesus."<sup>10</sup> These thoughts make sense when we recognize that the Preacher of Ecclesiastes offers a different category of sermon than what Isaiah, Jeremiah, John, or Peter offered to us.

"The same God who inspired the Psalms and the Gospels speaks here too. These inspired words which disturb us reveal aspects of God too often neglected by us. ...one of the ways that God leads us to know him is by making us pay attention to ourselves. He reveals himself by recovery of our humanity. He shows us what we were made for and then bids us to look at what has become of us. This is what you will want to admit about Ecclesiastes. ...in Ecclesiastes God intends you to know him by requiring you to look plainly and without polish at yourself, your neighbors, and the world in which you and I live. God puts himself in the background, as it were, in order to place self-concern front and center. "We are prompted by our own ills," says Calvin, "to contemplate the good things of God."<sup>6</sup> In the Spirit's hands, Ecclesiastes confronts us with our own ills in order that by knowing ourselves as we are we might come to know God as he is." **Zack Eswine**, "Recovering Eden", p. 14, 1

**Wisdom is NOT a "One-size-fits-all" concept! It is not like the doctrine of justification or one's need to be Born-Again or the clear commands concerning adultery or murder...**

...wisdom for your marriage ...for your education ...for your career ...for your finances ...for your daily routines ...for your diet ...for your medications ...for your friendships—ALL These May Be Different from Person to Person!

## **[TIME-WISE] – What Time is it For You?**

**GET WISDOM - for The Season/Time You are Traveling Through [INSIGHT: Life is Lived in Different Seasons & Times... and These Times Won't All FEEL the Same]**

**Ecc 3:1-14** <sup>1</sup> For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

<sup>2</sup> a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

<sup>3</sup> a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

<sup>4</sup> a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

<sup>5</sup> a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

<sup>6</sup> a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

<sup>7</sup> a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

<sup>8</sup> a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

<sup>9</sup> What gain has the worker from his toil? <sup>10</sup> I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. <sup>11</sup> He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. <sup>12</sup> I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; <sup>13</sup> also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man.

<sup>14</sup> I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him.

**v. 1, 10-11 ...My Life is NOT Random ...It has a SOVEREIGN SCHEDULE!**

Dan 2:20-21. <sup>20</sup> Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. <sup>21</sup> He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;

**v. 2-8** ...My Life will have Significantly Different Moments/Settings—that Need me to "GET Wisdom"

**v. 9-14** ...God IS PRESENT—amidst the Pervasive, Persistent VANITY!

"...in Ecclesiastes God intends you to know him by requiring you to look plainly and without polish at yourself, your neighbors, and the world in which you and I live. God puts himself in the background, as it were, in order to place self-concern front and center. ...In the Spirit's hands, Ecclesiastes confronts us with our own ills in order that by knowing ourselves as we are we might come to know God as he is." **Zack Eswine**, "Recovering Eden", p. 1

**...What Brings Me to Ecc. (particularly Ecc. 3)**

- (1) Pastoral Ministry Has had to Walk with People when—Suddenly Life FEELS Hauntingly Different  
(tragedy ...troubled ...EMPTY!! Or Unrewarding/Unfulfilling! ...what's the point??)

Ecclesiastes will also confront us with the language of questions—and many without answers. ... Many of us have little capacity to do a day with unanswered questions. The spokesman for God calls us into this discomfort and wants us to see that God is there. In all of this, his language unsettles us. As we have seen, not only does life have no meaning, this spokesman for God will describe the life God gives to each of us as an "unhappy business" (Eccl. 1:13). He will reveal to us that he "hated life" (Eccl. 2:17) and that some of us would have been better off had we never been born (Eccl. 6:3). Many of us might want to believe that such statements reveal an absence of faith. Our temptation is to quote a Bible verse or two and to resist the person saying such things. But Ecclesiastes will show us that such statements are made, in this case, on the basis of the fear of God. , **Zack Eswine**, *Recovering Eden: The Gospel According to Ecclesiastes*, pp. 26-27

...Our Tour Guide with the His Divine PhD in Wisdom—Had Some Tough Moments  
with the Way Life Can FEEL!!

- (2) My Own NEED! ...2 Noticeably Profound Moments when I've Visited Ecc.

**...My Moment**—When My Family all died (in a 2 year stretch)

Some of us resist lament and therefore do not like this Preacher's method. For others of us, if we do lament, our tears are tantrums like the five-year-old who weeps and moans because she did not get the "Happy Meal" toy she wanted at McDonalds and is wounded because no one will satisfy her demand to get her a different toy. Some of us as adults still only know this kind of lament. But Ecclesiastes is no tantrum. Nor is it the kind of lament that our addictions or idols stir up, like the loved one who wails because her bottle of bourbon, or gallon of ice cream, or damaging relationship,

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was removed from her. We cry not for ourselves in this case. We are lamenting the loss of something that wisdom would give thanks to be without.

Ecclesiastes does not invite us to the lament of folly. Instead, wisdom teaches us that tears, at their best, pay tribute to something lost that was once cherished and it was wise to cherish it. We lament the loss of a genuine good. This is why we ache when we look at the empty chair at our Christmas table and remember the one we loved who once sat there in tandem with us, but eats with us no more. The spokesman of Ecclesiastes likewise looks at what the created world has become. His language rises deep from an intense longing for what it was meant to be but is not. ... What God created and purposed was legitimate and original good. To lose this good is pain. There are things worth crying about. To learn such tears for the Eden that once was is to learn how to cry like the wise we are meant to become." **Eswine, Zack W.** Recovering Eden: The Gospel According to Ecclesiastes (Gospel According to the Old Testament Book 14) (pp. 28-29)

### ...My Moment—at 57 yrs old

(1) I did not like (or understand) the Way Life Was FEELING!!

(2) I Needed to "GET Wisdom" for Changing Seasons!

**What About You?** (...and Not Just You—but Also the People In Your Life) **...What does it look like for you to:**

(1) Get Wisdom for the Way Your Life (or Others Lives) Currently FEELS ...

(2) Get Wisdom for the Particular Season You (or others) are IN, are EXITING, or are ENTERING?

...Remember, Wisdom isn't some "Generic Principle" ...it is specific about YOU and for THIS moment

## Getting Wisdom for Unique "Times & Seasons"

- **Teen Years...** GET WISDOM!
- **Young Adulthood...** GET WISDOM! ...Departing Adolescent Patterns and Settling into Adult Ones
- **30's & 40's ...** GET WISDOM!
- **50's & 60's ...** GET WISDOM!
- **70+ ...** GET WISDOM!

**Get Wisdom...** Because there are going to be some moments/times that Don't FEEL Right!! ...and if you lack wisdom, you may give up on your job ...your wife/marriage ...your church ...your friendships, etc.!! All of the significant categories of your existence are FALLEN! ...They're being described in Ecc 1 (Tomorrow)! ...You will need Wisdom to navigate those moments/times of life!

[illegible]

## **SESSION 1 – EXERCISE/ASSIGNMENT**

... "Get Wisdom" implies—It's Not Automatic! We're capable of doing the times/seasons of our lives without being in touch with what time it is.

...What Time is it and what kind of "wisdom" do I need for this "time/season"?

**Dan 2:20-23.** <sup>20</sup> Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. <sup>21</sup> He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; <sup>22</sup> he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. <sup>23</sup> To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."

... "He changes times and seasons"    ... "He gives wisdom"    ...He reveals deep and hidden things  
...He knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with him"

### **(1) What Time is it For You?**

- The Most Fundamental & Defining Question... Where are you at this moment in your relationship with God? Is it time to change the posture of your life toward God?
  - A Time of Being Dead (I really don't have a relationship with God)
  - A Time of Delay? (Putting off getting right; putting off repentance; putting off fully yielding and being willing)
  - A Time of Dullness and Distance? (A season of going through the motions; not growing; not going deeper)
  - A Time of Dedication & Delight?
  - A Time of Discovery? (Sensing God drawing near to you and stirring your heart toward something)
- Considering Ecc. the Seasons of Life Content from Ecc. 3:1-8 (beginnings/endings, etc.) also Consider the Age Specific Seasons of Life Content (Teen, young adult, 30's & 40's, etc.)
  - What "season" are you currently in?
    - If you had to create a "Movie Title" for this season of your life--what would that title be?
    - As you look back on seasons of your life, what do you identify from your past that had a significant impact on the life you are seeking to live today, in this season? (It may be that certain "limitations" or "wounds" or "neglects" or "favor" is touching your life in a way that you need to be wise about)
      - How might these be touching your approach to things or the way you speak to your wife/children or your hesitance to take risks, etc.? Do you need some greater wisdom in understanding yourself in this area?
  - What sticks out for you right now about this season? What are you "feeling" right now that might need to be better understood and better informed by wisdom?
  - What's easy for you in this season and what have you found hard?

## (2) What Time is it for the People in Your Life?

- Considering Ecc. the Seasons of Life Content (Teen, young adult, 30's & 40's, etc.) ... "Get Wisdom for Others in Your Life" who are navigating a particular season with its unique "feel".
  - Who are the people in your life that you are responsible to "Get Wisdom" for, as you do life with them? (List those people by name)
  - What "season" are they currently in?
  - How does this time/season "feel" for them? What's easy and what's hard? What do they struggle with?
  - We are called to "get wisdom" and we are called to be "understanding" as we relate to others. What wisdom and understanding do you need to seek for the sake of walking with the people around you that you have relational responsibility for?
- What Time/Season is Your Marriage in?
  - Early development
  - High-Speed, High-Intensity C<sup>2</sup> Season
    - What Particular Needs do You and Your Wife have in this season?
    - What discouragement and struggle and weaknesses might uniquely sit in this season?
  - Distance & Dullness; Going Thru the Motions
  - Transition/Empty Nest Season
  - Retirement Season