

# When Life Just Doesn't Make Sense

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 26 June 2022

Preacher: Bill Story

[ 0 : 00 ]     How we doing? Good. Take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to Ecclesiastes chapter 7.

Find it right after Proverbs, where you just were, if you had your Bibles open there, which is also after Psalms, so it's fairly easy to find. Open your Bible right to the middle, you'll probably be in the Psalms.

Go to the right, you'll have Proverbs, and a little bit more right, and you'll have Ecclesiastes. Chapter 7, Ecclesiastes is asking the hard questions in life.

In fact, Ecclesiastes is not shy at all about bringing up issues that are difficult. And Ecclesiastes does not want the simple Sunday school answer.

It wants a real answer. And this Solomon person, if it is Solomon or Solomon-like person, is very frustrated in his search.

[ 1 : 19 ]     I was reminded as Rick was reading Proverbs 3, how different Proverbs 3 sounds from Ecclesiastes. Very different.

So, we struggle with it a little bit, as James said, we struggle with it a little bit, because it's not giving us that, just give us the right answer. He's raising the issue and struggling with it, and he leaves it to us in a sense to find the nugget in there that will lead us to Christ.

Okay, we must ask as we read through Ecclesiastes, where is Jesus here? What would he say? Okay, so, it's good for us in that way.

And one of the things I've discovered is he's, because he raises these questions, he's forcing us to look at some of these things. We'd rather not. We'd rather not talk about the inconsistencies and the difficult questions and the emptiness kind of things we have in life.

But that's what real people ask. That's what real people are dealing with. So, it is valuable for us. Even if you're not there, to understand where other people are struggling, where our world is struggling.

[ 2 : 44 ]     I see our world in the middle of these verses. So, it's good for us to know, for our compassion. All right, let's read the text, and then we'll pray, and then we'll jump in.

So, if you're able, please stand as I read from Ecclesiastes chapter 7, beginning at verse 15, and we'll finish this chapter. Oh, boy, finish. All right, so 7:15.

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 evil doing.

Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool.

Why should you die before your time? It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand.

[ 3 : 52 ]     For the one who fears God shall come out from both of them. wisdom gives strength to the wise men, more than ten rulers who are in the city.

Surely, there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you.

Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others. All this I have tested by wisdom.

I said, I will be wise. But it was far from me. That which has been is far off, and deep, very deep.

Who can find it out? I turn 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.

[ 5 : 01 ] And I find something. I find something more bitter than death. That 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. Behold, this is what I found, says the preacher, while adding one thing to another, to find the scheme of things, 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. See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

So it reads. Let's pray. Father, grant us your wisdom, your eyes, to see and understand what the preacher is getting at here.

It's a bit awkward in language. It's not as smooth as Proverbs. But help us understand.

[ 6 : 22 ] He has a valuable point to understand. So grant us eyes, to see and ears, to hear, and ultimately help us hear what Jesus says. We pray in Christ's name.

Amen. Please be seated. So a paradox. Anybody know what a paradox is? It's like a pair of socks that aren't matched.

If you have a pair of socks that don't match, it's a paradox. A paradox is a contradiction. Correct. It is an inconsistency.

It is something in life that just don't make no sense. So let me give you some examples. Come and spend money here.

You'll save money. Save money by buying, right? By spending. If I know one thing, it's that I know nothing. This is the beginning of the end.

[ 7 : 26 ] Well, which is it? Deep down, you're really shallow. I lie all the time.

So, right? Here's George Bernard Shaw. What a pity that youth must be wasted on the young. Oscar Wilde said, I can resist anything but temptation.

Here are the rules. Ignore all rules. Nobody goes... I love this one. This is Yogi Bear. I love Yogi Bear. Nobody goes to that restaurant.

It's too crowded. I love Yogi Bear. Don't go near the water until you've learned how to swim. All right?

Let God Almighty create a stone which He's not capable of lifting. Can God make a one-ended stick?

[ 8 : 41 ] Okay. All right. So, the Christian life is full of paradoxes. Jesus spoke in paradoxes all the time. Blessed are the poor in spirit. They shall be...

Or they... Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the hungry. Blessed are... Right? The persecuted. That doesn't make sense.

Christian life is full of paradoxes. We see unseen things. We conquer by... Yielding. We find rest...

Under the yoke of Jesus. Take my yoke. Right? We reign. We reign by serving.

We are exalted when we are humbled. We are great by becoming small. We are wise by being fools for Christ's sake. We are made free by becoming bond slaves.

- [ 9 : 43 ] We gain strength when we are weak. We triumph through defeat. We find victory by glorying in our infirmities.
- We live by dying. Paradox. Paradox. Paradox. What? What? What? That just don't make no sense.
- So, here in verse 15, chapter 7, he brings up a paradox. Here is something that just doesn't make sense. There is a righteous man who perishes, who dies in his righteousness.
- And then there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness. That shouldn't be that way.
- Right? The righteous shall live long. We just read it in Proverbs 3. Long life is in the wise man's hand. And the wicked, they deserve to die.
- [ 10 : 50 ] The righteous man does not deserve to have a short life, does he? Right? So, it doesn't make sense. It's not right. What else doesn't make sense?
- He's going to bring up something in the second part of chapter 7 here that doesn't make sense. I try my best to correct bad choices. I try to escape temptation.
- I try to overcome it. I still fail. I try to fix myself. I try to fix my issues. And it often makes it worse. And I continue to crash.
- It doesn't make sense. I'm trying. Why can't I fix myself? Why can't I overcome my weakness? And yet, Jesus says this is good news.
- He says, blessed are the broken, not the righteous. Blessed is the one who cannot fix himself. He's the one that belongs in the kingdom of heaven.
- [ 11 : 51 ] I came not for the righteous. I came not for the man that has it all. I came for the broken. I came for the sinner. I came for the sick. Almost sounds like a rat, right?
- Yeah, what? Sorry. No, I won't say it. It's about as bad as it gets, huh? So, paradox.
- So, he addresses this kind of hard question. When life doesn't make sense, why does bad happen to good people? People ask that question all the time.
- People in the world ask that question all the time. Why do bad things happen to good people? They don't deserve it. And why do bad people get away with it? They don't deserve it. It's unfair.
- It's unjust. It doesn't make sense. It's not the way it should be. Now, some will take this whole argument about bad happening to good people as an argument against God's existence.
- [ 12 : 52 ] Or at least against God's involvement. If he's good, would he not remove evil? Why does he allow it? Why does he let it go on? It's not right.
- Right? I hear that. We hear that all the time. That's a basic argument against God. Evil. The existence of evil. But there's a problem with that.
- Let's think about this. There's a problem about that. And this text raises that issue. If God were to remove evil, where do you want him to draw the line?
- Where is he going to draw the line? Well, the really bad. Well, who are those? Who's evil? Who's not? If he's getting rid of evil, wait a minute.
- Don't look at me. Right? Well, but I'm not as evil as that guy. That's the one I'm talking about. Okay, you want to draw that line. Well, where does that line go?
- [ 13 : 57 ] This deed, but not that deed? This perversion, but not that perversion? Where do you want to draw that line? Who makes that decision to draw that line?
- Well, we just know it's not right. Gotcha. Understand. So, then think about this.

God has removed evil before. Now, we got to go back a ways. He has removed evil. In Genesis chapter 6, the world got so evil, God said, I am sorry that I made man.

Every thought of man is evil only continually. That's all they think about. So, I'm getting rid of them. So, God brought a flood. What happened?

Who's left, by the way? How many made it? Eight people. Because of Noah. Noah and his family.

[ 14 : 55 ] Noah, Mrs. Noah. Shem. Shem. Curly. Shep. I don't know.

Ham. Ham. Spam. All right. Excuse me. Sorry, guys. You're okay. So, then.

Okay. Then Sodom and Gomorrah. Okay. We got to talk about Sodom and Gomorrah. That place was so wicked, he's got to destroy it. Right? Abraham has a problem with that. Right? God comes and says, we got to tell Abraham what we're going to do.

So, Abraham, we're going to go destroy that. And Abraham's real bothered. Well, Lord, what about the righteous there? There's got to be good people there. Right? Would you destroy it for 50? No, I won't destroy it for 50.

How about 40? No. 30, 20, 10. How about for 10? If there's 10 righteous people, would you destroy it? No. So, wait a minute. You're still going to destroy it? That means. In fact, who gets out of Sodom and Gomorrah?

[ 15 : 59 ] Lot? Mrs. Lot? A lot? A more? And the two daughters, right? And then Mrs. Lot gets out but looks back and says she doesn't make it.

So, what's left? Look at the next scene. You go to the wilderness. How many made it out of the wilderness from Israel? Yeah.

Okay. One hand again. We got Moses. Mrs. Moses. Right? No. She had a name. I don't remember. She wasn't liked by Moses.

Never mind. Anyway. Joshua Caleb. Right? Moses. Well, Moses didn't make it either. He got to look. But he didn't get to go.

Even Moses didn't make it. One temper tantrum. And he's out. So, where do you want God to draw the line?

[ 16 : 59 ] He's going to get rid of evil. Whereas there's not much left. Right? So. Okay.

So, how do we live with this? So, there's evil. So, I see. Okay. God's not willing to wipe us all out. Okay. That says something. He's patient.

We don't like how the bad, really, really evil people, you know, when we grade on our curve. Those folks. You know, as long as it's great and current, I'm okay. Okay.

So, how do we live with this? So, here it is. When God doesn't remove evil, what's the paradigm? How do we live, then, in this world that doesn't always make sense?

So, he has two answers here. He's going to give a bottom line to both of these. He's going to bring up issues. Okay. We're going to get lost in his verbiage.

[ 18 : 02 ] But he has two bottom lines that stand out. In verse 18, he says, here's what it is. It's about fearing God. The one who fears God shall come out of it.

Okay. Whatever he means there, that's a bottom line. And then, again, in verse 26, he talks about God once again. He brings God into this. And the issue there is pleasing God.

The one who pleases God escapes the difficult temptation. Okay. Not everybody can escape temptation. But the one who pleases God gets out of it.

The one who fears God comes out of this difficult life where it doesn't make sense. Okay. So, there's two bottom lines. We're going to kind of hang our thoughts on those things. So, two answers.

So, first answer is this. And this is, he's kind of struggling through this. He finds some things. He doesn't find other things. He's raising the hard questions. He's doing the work. He's trying to figure it out.

[ 19 : 07 ] But he can't figure it all out. Which is honest. Which is where we all are. So, he's got a bottom line.

First response is this. First answer is this. Ultimately. In this world that doesn't make sense, fear God. The one fearing God gets out of it. Why?

Because the one who fears God knows something. He knows that he can never earn his blessing. He can never earn God's blessing.

No matter. The righteous man should live a long life. But the one who fears God knows that that isn't a guarantee. He knows that he himself, no matter how righteous he is, does not gain a blessing from his righteousness.

Because a man can be righteous and still perish in his righteousness. And a man can be wicked and still prolong his life in his wickedness.

[ 20 : 07 ] Don't make sense. But fearing God takes that element in. That fearing God recognizes, I don't make that decision. And ultimately, I am a sinner.

So, I do not deserve to have a long life, even if I'm very, very righteous. Because if I've sinned, then I don't deserve long life.

I deserve one thing. Even if I'm Mother Teresa and all these righteous things. And maybe just had one bad thought. Right? In ten years, I don't know what, you know.

She was a very humble and godly kind of person. It's hard to imagine her as a sinner. And yet, if she just had one bad thought a day, oh, give her a week.

Over 80 years, how many sins is that? Does she deserve? No. So, that's the point.

[ 21 : 09 ] That's the bottom line. Fearing God, in this life that doesn't make sense, recognizes and knows that I can never earn his blessing.

That kind of puts me back in my place. So, here, he makes an observation. He gives an answer. And then he adds something to the perspective. So, first of all, he talks about a contradiction.

This paradox. This paradox. Why the good die young? Only the good die young. No Billy Joel fans? I looked it up.

I thought that might be a good illustration. And then I read the words. I'm like, no, it's not a good illustration. You don't want to bring that up. Billy can play piano, but. So, it's especially an issue from a biblical perspective because God blesses the righteous.

It's in the scriptures. It's in the Psalms. It's in the Proverbs. It's in the Torah. So, you go back to Deuteronomy. Go to Exodus, Deuteronomy.

[ 22 : 12 ] And it says, if you faithfully obey the Lord, your life will, God will give you fruitfulness. He will give you health and wealth and prosperity. He will give you a long life.

He will give you security from your enemies. He will take care of you. You will live long in the land. On and on and on. Okay? That's a blessing. By the way, if you don't obey him, yeah, all the opposite of that.

And how did Israel do with that? Didn't even make it through the wilderness. Okay. How many keep the Ten Commandments? Right?

I'm not talking about Jesus' commandments because those are higher. Right? The Ten Commandments talk about don't steal. Don't commit adultery.

Right? Don't lie. Jesus says, okay, you're talking about murder. I'm talking about, okay, just saying something naughty to your neighbor. You're just as guilty. You talk about adultery.

[ 23 : 11 ] I'm just talking about, well, it's in your heart. If you just have the thought and the look and the lust in your heart, you've already... So Jesus is harder. So that's harder. Let's just go to the Ten Commandments.

Just the, you know, it's harder to murder someone than the lust. Right? Yeah. It takes more effort to murder someone. It takes more...

Yeah. So anyway. So how many are good on that? Anybody murdered? You should probably be careful, aren't you? Unlikely.

Unlikely. But we've all probably said some cursing things toward another person. We've done the Raka thing, which is probably, you know, the one-finger salute out the window on the highway.

We don't know what Raka means. It's something that they understood. Like flying the bird, we all understand what that is. You know, 200 years, they won't know.

[ 24 : 15 ] What in the world are they talking about? Right? So, okay. I haven't done adultery. I haven't done murder. I haven't...

I've stolen. Okay. Okay. What else? Lie. Haven't been in court and lied. Got to slip through that one.

Then you get to the coveting thing. Dang it. Done. Done. Then you get to the first ones, which are about God.

You know, the... Not any other idols before him. Right? Okay. I had a Datsun 240Z. That was pretty important. Had a dog. That was pretty important.

It's like, you know, okay. I'm done. Done. Okay. So what are you going to do? Good. So, but if you faithfully...

[ 25 : 11 ] So here's that issue. So what about guys like Job? Job was righteous. God even bragged how righteous he was. And even said to the devil, go ahead.

Go try. Go ahead. Yeah. That was God's idea, by the way. Job's going, thank you very much. How about Jeremiah?

A faithful prophet of God did not have a happy day in his life. He would have some major issues with Mr. Joel Osteen. Not your best life now.

Not even close. Okay. What about Christ? Christ. Righteous as you can be.

And yet, he perishes in his righteousness. At a very young... He wasn't even old enough to be an elder in the community. Wasn't even 40 years old.

[ 26 : 12 ] Okay. So you got that. That happens. So what is his... What's his solution? Don't you like this verse 16? I bet people today would love this solution. Okay.

Don't be over-righteous. Don't overdo it. Don't be nuts. Don't be nuts. Just kind of, you know, just be moderate righteous. You know, don't go over to the board on the wisdom thing.

And then, oh, and don't be over-wicked. Which means what? Be just a little bit. You know, just, you know. Kind of, you know, go ahead and sin a little bit.

It's okay. Don't go nuts. Is that what he's talking about? Sure sounds like it, isn't it? Don't be overly righteous. What's over-righteous?

Isn't righteous righteous? And wicked wicked? Yeah. Can you overdo it? Well, we see people that are much more wicked than others.

[ 27 : 11 ] So, yeah, I guess we say that. What about righteous? So, I get the don't be wicked, although I don't get the don't be over-wicked. Just don't be wicked, right? You think, what's over-righteous?

Is that self-righteous? Is that, right? Could be. But whatever it means, don't be over-righteous, has to be parallel with the don't be over-wicked. So, if it's self-righteous, you know, I'm depending on myself for righteousness, then is that what wickedness means?

Don't be over-wicked. Don't be self-wicked. I don't know what that means. So, anyway, it's a little ambiguous. Okay, I think maybe it has to do with the paradox that he brings up in verse 15.

The paradox about the righteous. It's about righteous and wicked, right? So, the righteous. So, if you want to be the righteous man who lives a long life, if you want some kind of guarantee, you can't have it.

So, don't be over-righteous. It ain't going to earn you anything. Don't be over-wicked because, well, he says what?

[ 28 : 19 ] He asks a question. Don't be over-righteous. Don't be too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? So, if you're sacrificing, you're doing all this stuff, you know, like the Pharisees, you're making more laws so that you don't break any laws, then you're just going to ruin yourself.

You're going to be miserable. And then if you're overly wicked, well, that's a fool. Then you're going to die before your time, even though he just said in verse 15, some wicked people prolong their life in their wickedness.

So, where's he going? I haven't got a clue where he's going. I think he is hinting at being over-righteous is somehow I can earn it.

If I'm righteous enough, I'll live a long life. If I'm righteous enough, God will bless me. If I'm righteous enough, God will give me riches and God will keep me healthy.

And God will heal my body. There are many that believe that today. How they do it. It doesn't square with Scripture.

[ 29 : 31 ] So, what's the crux? What's the bottom line? Verse 18. It is good that you should take hold of this and from that not withhold your hand.

Take hold of the, you know, be moderately righteous and, you know, don't withhold your hand from some wickedness. Apparently, that's what you mean. But what's the bottom line?

For the one who fears God shall come out of both of them. There's the bottom line. Whatever he means. Fearing God is the one that will be okay. Fearing God, it has something to do with how I think and how I think about myself and how I act.

How I, what motivates me. Fearing God is not some, this terrifying thing of him. It is a recognition of him to take him serious and to recognize that he's God I'm not.

He says, I don't. He determines, I don't. He says, I don't. Right? That even if I live my life abandoned, which Jesus does call us to do.

[ 30 : 48 ] If I live my life abandoned to him, does not guarantee health, wealth, material possessions, long life. In fact, Jesus lets us in on the other side.

No, no, no. If you follow me, they will hate you. They will hate you. And all who desire to give godly will be hunted down.

With this abortion thing and the right to life and the overturning of the Roe Wade thing. Look at what's coming out. And all if you're a politician that supports life, you are dead meat.

Right? How dare you? We don't believe in that anymore. Moral isn't the issue. It's culture. It's what's relevant.

What makes people happy. So, then finally he gives a consideration of verse 19 and 20. He talks about wisdom. You know, I'm seeking wisdom.

[ 32 : 06 ] Wisdom gives strength. There's a greatness to wisdom. What else does wisdom recognize? Verse 20. Wisdom recognizes. Because wisdom's taking everything in, observing everything. Looking at causes and consequences.

That's what wisdom does. I make a right choice because I know what the causes and the consequences are. So, here's what wisdom recognizes. Verse 20. That there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

A wise man recognizes it. We recognize there's no sinless people. There's no righteousness that's perfect. There's no one that earns a long life.

No one deserves anything but death. Right? That's what he recognizes. No one is sinless.

Gives an example. Let me give you an example. Verse 21 and 22. Don't take to heart all the things that people say. People say stuff about us. We overhear it. It makes us, you know, sometimes they're kind of negative on me.

[ 33 : 09 ] Right? So, I get kind of upset. And she's, don't take it to heart. They're people. They're people. And by the way, they're just like you. Look what he said.

So, don't take to heart all the things people say. They're saying stuff. Lest you hear your servant cursing you. Oh, I'm going to get that guy.

Then, what does he say? Verse 22. You know. Your heart knows. You know deep down. You know your intentions. You know your thoughts.

You maybe haven't said that. So, I mean. You know. Your heart knows that you, many times, by the way. Many times, you yourself have cursed others.

So, it's like Jesus said. Judge not lest you be judged. Right? What'd Jesus mean by that? Judge not lest you.

[ 34 : 07 ] So, people throw that at Christians all the time. Don't judge. He said, judge not lest you be judged. Well, Jesus didn't say don't make judgments. He said, be careful about how you judge.

So, if you judge your brother speck in their eye. And you got a telephone pole in your eye. You're an idiot.

You're a hypocrite. That's what Jesus says. Judge not lest you be judged. So, if you're going to judge. The judgment's going to come back on you. Okay? That's all he's saying. So, what do you do?

So, if you're going to make a judgment. You're going to help your brother. You're going to want to get that speck out of his eye. What do you do? Okay? You're going to do a little surgery. Right? You're going to take that log out of your eye. You've got to get real humble.

You've got to get real. Okay. Yeah. Who am I? Who am I to tell them? Right? Then I can, as another humble beggar, come to my brother and say, hey.

[ 35 : 04 ] I do that all the time. You see the log I took out of my eye. Right? That's what he's talking about. So, the answer is fear God.

And all of this, in dealing with this, when life doesn't make sense, at the end of the day, I fear God. Recognizing I don't earn anything either.

Nobody earns long life. Nobody deserves God's blessings. Right? I might think in this world I deserve a more than that person.



But what scale am I using? What line am I drawing? The Pharisees think they're okay. What did Jesus tell them?

You're not okay. Which of you have kept the law? Really? Oh, you look all pretty on the outside.

[ 36 : 06 ] You all dress up for your Sunday best. Or Saturday, I guess, Sabbath best. You know, you look good. You say the right word. You come to synagogue. And you pray. And you do all that stuff.

And he says, I know your heart. I know your inside. You're full of dead man's bones. You're full of evil and wickedness. Because you're a man. Because you're a woman.

Because you're a human. So, how does scripture answer this? If we're not happy with Solomon's answer here, how does scripture answer this? When life doesn't make sense.

Let's read a little clearer text in Psalm 73. Here is the psalmist dealing with the same issue. The evil people prospering. Here's what he says. Behold, these are the wicked.

Always at ease. They increase in riches. See, they're getting away with it. They're wicked people. They're increasing. They're getting richer. Rich get richer. What's his response? His response is very similar to Ecclesiastes.

[ 37 : 03 ] He says, all in vain. They prosper. All in vain. I kept my heart clean. And washed my hands in innocence. What has it got me?

I'm ruining my life. And they live and I don't. They get rich. I don't. For all the day long, I've been stricken and rebuked every morning. If I had said, I will speak thus, I would have betrayed the generation of your children.

But, so here he's going to try to answer this. But when I thought how to understand this, this paradox, this life not making sense, it seemed to me a wearisome task.

Who can answer that? Until, ah, that's what I like to hear. Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then I discovered their end.

Then I saw the real truth. I saw the big picture in the little picture. Truly. Truly. See, now it's about God.

[ 38 : 14 ] Truly you. Now he talks to God. Okay? He's talking about it. Now he's talking to God. Truly you, Lord, set them in slippery places. You make them fall to ruin.

How they are destroyed in a moment. Swept away utterly by terrors. Like a dream when one awakes. Oh, Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms.

When my soul was embittered. Now he's reflecting back on himself. His response. When my soul was embittered, I'm seeing the wicked get away with it. When I was pricked in heart, I was, what?

Brutish. Like an animal. I'm not thinking. I was brutish and ignorant. I was like a beast toward you. See, I wasn't thinking.

I was just seeing the little picture. I was just seeing the temporary scene. But I went into the sanctuary. It made me look bigger. Made me think about God in this.

[ 39 : 17 ] So, I am continually with you, Lord. You hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel. And afterward, you will receive me to glory.

Suffer now, glory later. Big picture. What was his natural response to the wicked gain? He's exasperated. He's bitter. He's empty. He thinks it's pointless.

But if I'm a believer, how do I respond to when life does not make sense? I want a higher view than that. I want a bigger view than that. Yes, I see the senselessness under the sun.

I want a bigger view. I want to, I believe who God is. I trust what God says. He is just. He is good. And nobody earns his blessing. He gives it as a gift to those who have relationship with him.

Period. Period. So, that's the first issue. Fearing God. Now he's going to talk about pleasing God in verses 23 through 29.

[ 40 : 26 ] And this is a little bit different issue. Now he's going to bring up temptations as the issue. The first part, he's talking about this paradox thing that doesn't make sense. Now he's going to talk about temptation.

We all deal with temptation. And that's an issue. And he's going to talk about the few that escape temptation. And then the most people that get trapped and snared and basically addicted to it.

Right? So, that's a mystery. How do you escape? Even if you try, how do you escape? So, here's the summary, bottom line of the second response.

Is this, pleasing God. Pleasing God means that I trust him when I don't know all the answers. I believe that when he tells me, you don't need to know that.

Why do the righteous die young? Why do the good die young? You don't need to know that. Because you all deserve to die. So, you don't need to know that.

[ 41 : 34 ] So, pleasing God means this kind of humble attitude of, okay, I don't get to have the answer to that. I don't even get to maybe understand it.

But I'm okay. Because if God's got it, then I'm okay. That's pleasing God. Isn't that interesting? Pleasing God is not about doing something so much as accepting something about him.

That's hard. Okay? So, he makes some, he's going to make another observation. Verse 22 and 23. He's going to make an observation about our limits. He's going to make a discovery in 25 and 26 about our temptations.

And then he's going to come down to the root issue in verses 27 to 29 about the bottom root issue is our own imaginations. So, the limits quickly.

Verse 23 and 24. He says, there's a limit here. He says, all this I have tested by wisdom. I said, I will be wise. But it was too far from me.

[ 42 : 41 ] That which has been is far off and deep. Very deep. Who can find it? So, he acknowledges there's limits. I can't know it all. I can't find all the answers.

There's some things that are just way too deep. Way too far. God has not revealed it. So, why do the good die young? He hasn't revealed that to me.

Other than the fact that everyone is a sinner. And the wages of sin is death. For everyone.

No curve. No curve. God's just. How do I get out of that? That's the other.

That's the good news. The people in trouble get the good news. So, then he talks about this discovery of temptation. Verse 25 and 26.

[ 43 : 40 ] He says, he's looking for things, right? 25, he's doing this search. He's trying to know, to search out, to seek wisdom. And the scheme of things. What's the scheme of things?

Some of your Bibles will have the explanation of things. Maybe. The solution to things. This word scheme of things. And he's going to use it three times here. Means kind of, he's trying to find the sum of all.

He's trying to find what's the meaning of life. What's the bottom line of everything? What is it all about? What's the scheme? What's the answer? What's the solution?

What's the explanation? Okay. So, and he's going to be an honest researcher. So, he wants to know the positive things. He wants to know wisdom in the scheme of things.

And then, also, he wants to know wickedness and folly and foolishness. So, I got to, you know, I got to experience both sides to really know the truth. Right? So, I got to be good and wise. And then, I got to sin a little bit so I know what that's like.

[ 44 : 38 ] Right? That's what he's doing. I need to know foolishness. I got to try it. See what's in it. That's what he's doing. We learned all about that back in chapter two. Right?

He's done all these. I've tried pleasure. I've tried possessions. I've tried women. I've tried everything. I've tried everything. Is there any joy in any of it? Right?

He says, no. Oh, it's temporary joy. Some fun. But it doesn't last. In fact, it leaves you empty. Right? So, he's made that discovery.

We can trust him. He's tried it all. Right? So, here he goes. So, 26. What did he find out? In all of this search, I found something.

Verse 20. I found something more bitter than death. This is worse than death. This is horrible. What I found was something so disturbing. I found the woman. He's not talking about women in general.

[ 45 : 35 ] He says, I found that particular woman. That Solomon in Proverbs talks a lot about. She's that strange woman. She's the one that you follow her road.

Right? You end up a loaf of bread. That woman. Right? The one he tells you, don't go there. And then, of course, who's Solomon to tell you that? So, he's talking about that woman.

That woman whose heart is what? This is not every woman. This is a particular kind of woman. Who has snares and nets. And whose hands are fetters.

She's the harlot. She's the seductress. She's the temptress. And it doesn't necessarily have to be a woman. It's... The woman is a figure for temptation.

Something that snares people. Something that... Then when you get snared, you're fettered. You're bound. You're... You're... Addicted. Isn't that a picture of addiction?

[ 46 : 38 ] I can't break that chain. I just keep doing it. I can't stop. And then he says, He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her.

So, whoever pleases God escapes, and whoever the sinner is, that's everybody, is trapped by her, taken by her. So, why do some escape?

Here's his mystery. Why do some escape temptation and others don't? Who can escape the traps and the bonds and the addictions? He says he finds just one kind of person.

The person who pleases God escapes. Well, what does pleasing God mean? Does that mean... Is he going back to being super righteous?

Is that the pleasing God? What's pleasing God? What is good to God? What makes him pleased in us? It can't be our works because our works are always going to fall short.

[ 47 : 45 ] So, what pleases him? What we think of him, what we accept of him, do we really accept his word, whether we understand it or not?

Right? The one who looks to God for the help. The one who relies on God to overcome temptation. AA recognizes this, do they not?

The one of the first steps to overcoming things is recognizing, I can't do it alone. I need help. I need not just any kind of help. I need a higher power to get me out of this.

I need something outside of me because I can't fix myself. That's a huge discovery because what's ingrained in us is that, no, I just got to try harder.

I can fix this. I can fix this. I'm better than this. I should be better than this. And we drive ourselves nuts. Really? Not just AA.

[ 48 : 54 ] We all do that. AA's got the wisdom to see that. All of us are there. We're all broken. Whether your addiction's an obvious one or not.

We're bound in sin. We're slaves to sin. That's called addiction. Okay? We want to see it our way. We want to fix it ourselves.

That started from day one. Right? So, so what's the root issue? Verse 27, 28.

He talks about finding and not finding. He's trying to find out the meaning to life. So verse 27. Behold, this is what I found. Here's what I found. Says the preacher, while adding one thing to another to find the answer, the scheme, the meaning of life, which my soul has sought repeatedly.

I find, I gotta find that meaning, but I have not found. So I've sought it out, but I've not found it. I looked for it, and looked for it, and looked for it, but not found it. I don't know the answer. Does that sound like Solomon?

[ 50 : 04 ] Because you read Proverbs, sounds like you found it. This guy, I can't find it. I know it has something to do with God, because he keeps coming back to God, but I can't find it.

Then he makes this really ambiguous statement that we're all, that way too many pages on commentaries were wasted about. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found.

Oh, we gotta talk about this guy. Oh, he hates women. Good night. Like, he's already an idiot, so, you know, why waste the paper? Not an idiot, but he is, at the end of the day, a wise man who hasn't figured out where real wisdom is, even though he's got it right in his hand.

He keeps saying, God, God, God, God. But he doesn't believe it, because he's trying to find his own answer. He's trying to find his own scheme.

So watch this, what he does. Yeah, he doesn't get women. Yeah, he joined the club. All right. Sorry, I don't think he, yeah. Then who knows, what does he mean?

[ 51 : 18 ] One man among a thousand I found. Found what? What is that one man? Does that mean that one guy figured out the meaning of life? Does that mean one man that was righteous?

What is it? Nobody knows what he means. So it's like, okay, just cross that line out, because it, here's the bottom line, verse 29. Here's what he wants you to see. Here's the one thing he found.

See, this alone I found. Here's the bottom line. Here's the root issue. This is the explanation. Okay? It is this.

Part one. God made man upright. Genesis one. Genesis two. He made all things. He made man from dust. He is good. Good. Good. Oh, wait.

Not alone. No. Now put a pair. Oh, now he's very good. He's good. He's good. Good. Good. Right? Pure. Innocent. No baggage.

[ 52 : 11 ] He's good. But, God made him upright. So it's not God's fault, in other words. God made him upright. But man, they, Adam, Eve, have sought out many schemes, answers, explanations.

Did Adam and Eve accept God's explanation in the garden about the tree? No. The snake said, that's not a snake, it was a dragon.

The serpent said to him, what? Has God said? You really trust what God said? Right? Yeah, you're right.

So what do we got to do? Well, the food, she sees the fruit, which was, what was it? You say it's an apple, I'd say it's a pomegranate, maybe a passion fruit, I don't know.

Maybe a kiwi. What's an ugly? So, she saw it was good for food, she saw that it was, it could make one wise.

[ 53 : 22 ] I can give one more answers than what God's saying, because I'm not satisfied with God's answer. You can have all this, but you can't have that. I want to know why I can't have that. I can't have that.

Well, that one will give you knowledge. I want knowledge. I want knowledge. Yeah, you want that knowledge? That knowledge is not just good, but it's also evil.

Now you're going to know evil. I want to know that. I think I should know that. they freely chose that.

What are they choosing? They're choosing another answer. They're looking for another scheme. What does man always do? We all do this. All we like sheep have gone astray.

Every one of us has turned to his, what? Own way. Because my way's got to be the right way. What is fearing God?

[ 54 : 21 ] Proverbs 3. Trust in the Lord. We just read this this morning. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Okay? Okay, it's trust. Then what? Lean not on my understanding.

Well, but I got to understand it. No, no, no, no. What's next? In all your ways, acknowledge him. He'll make you pass straight.

Right? In all your ways, acknowledge him. Then what? Do not be wise. Do not be wise. Oh, there it is again. Don't be wise in your own eyes, but fear the Lord.

What's fear of the Lord? Not wise in my own eyes. Accept what he says and don't trust what I think. Wait a minute.

Aren't we supposed to trust ourselves? That's what the culture says. We've got to trust ourselves. We've got to believe in ourselves. We've got to love ourselves. Jesus did not hate your soul in this life. So you can say that don't trust yourself.

[ 55 : 23 ] Do not trust your soul. That's so paradoxical. That's so anti. But why?

Because we will go our own way. That's our problem. That's why we're unsatisfied. We want our own answers. Got to be something more than what God says.

Because if I go God's way, I know I'm not going to be happy. I know I'm going to be restricted. I know it's going to be a sad and lonely life. And he might send me to Africa.

Right? Where's Jenny? I mean, you know, because God, you know, he's going to spoil everything.

Where do we hear that? God never said that. Where do we hear that? So, what does God say?

[ 56 : 24 ] Pleasing God means believing it's okay if I don't know all the answers. Okay? I'm content. I don't have all the answers. I want the answers, but learning, pleasing God means I'm learning to accept.

I don't get it. That's hard. Why don't you answer my prayer? What's the Lauren Daigle song? When I want you to move the mountains, something like that?

When you don't move the mountains, I need you to move. When you don't part the waters, I wish I could walk through. When you don't, when you don't answer when I cry out to you, right?

What will I do then? It's beautiful. I will trust. What else can I do? I will trust. I will trust. I will trust. I don't get it. You're not giving me what I want.

I will trust. That's fearing God. So I love the words in her song. They just nail it. At least, she's not perfect.

[ 57 : 31 ] Don't worry. I'm not, I'm not, I'm not analyzing. I just appreciate. Appreciate. So what does God say? So Isaiah 55, why doesn't God explain all his ways?

How does he answer this question? Here's what he says. Isaiah 55, come. He invites us. Come. Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. He who has no money, come.

Buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

See, we want satisfaction. We want satisfaction. But we keep pursuing things that don't give us satisfaction. So God says, listen diligently to me and eat what's good.

Delight yourself in rich food. See, God, he's not going to give me the bland. He's going to give me the, yeah, the savory. Doing my Isaac into him.

[ 58 : 39 ] Savory. Okay, nevermind. Incline your ear. Come to me here. Why? So that your soul may live. I will make you an everlasting covenant.

My steadfast, sure love of David. Seek the Lord. When? While he may be found. Call upon him. While he is near.

By the way, he's near right now. Let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord. Why? That he may have compassion on him.

And to our God. Why? That for he will abundantly pardon. Hey, what'd I do to earn that? Nothing. I just came to him. I just came to him.

Why would he pardon me? I don't deserve that. Because he has compassion on the one who comes. The broken person. Why? Why will he abundantly pardon?

[ 59 : 36 ] For my thoughts are not your thoughts. What's that have to do with forgiveness? I think different about that than you do.

You think about deserving and earning, and I think about giving, forgiving, healing. I don't think like you.

You think that guy cut me off. What do I need to do? I need to go cut him off. I cut God off, and he says, let me give you more room.

Probably not a good illustration. My thoughts are not your thoughts. My ways are not your ways. Why is it that I don't understand all his ways?

Because he's way higher than me. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. And, by the way, as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return, but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth.

[ 60 : 57 ] It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that for which I purpose. It shall succeed in the thing which I send. So when I say to you, come, you will come.

And when I say, forgiven, it doesn't come back. It's done. When I say, water that dry soul, water.

When it's that, I take that bitter, depressed soul, and I give it some relief. I give it some life. Because that's what I do.

I give to the one that does not deserve. God doesn't have to explain his ways. He's higher beyond us. And frankly, we don't need to know all those answers.

We're wired to want to know them, but he has designed it so that we have to trust him. But he does do this.

[ 62 : 10 ] He does call us to find him. And he calls us to him freely. Not earn, not jump through hoops. Just come. Just come. And there we will find satisfying life.

We'll find freedom. We'll find forgiveness. We'll find shame removed. We'll find doubts lifted. Do you thirst for true life? Are you tired of pursuing things that don't fulfill?

Are you weary of trying to fix yourself? Well, your creator, your God, your Lord invites you, woos you, calls you, welcomes you to come to him.

So seek him. Why do you keep seeking things in life that don't satisfy? They're only temporary. They're short-lived.

They're ultimately so disappointing. Why? Jesus said, come to me and I will give you rest.

[ 63 : 23 ] What kind? Rest for your soul. The kind you can't make rest for. Come to me. I'll give you rest for your soul.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the word. We thank you for the hope, Lord. We thank you for this word that makes us look at the hard questions.

They're real questions. They're important questions. They're questions that the people in this world are asking. We all ask at some point in our life, what's the meaning?

Why am I here? And why is there evil? And who controls all this? And so, Father, give us wisdom through this to be able to better speak to those around us who have not yet discovered what we have discovered.

The answer in you. Give us compassion. Give us grace. And Father, I pray for any today, Lord, that are in that unsatisfied, empty existence.

[ 64 : 28 ] Lord, that you would draw them to yourself. Help them to hear your voice and come to you and you give them life. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.