

When Life Gets Twisted: *What's Good in a Bad Situation?*

Jerry Cisar — June 14, 2020

Text: Ecclesiastes 6:12 – 7:14 NCK: Keyword: **Good**

Introduction (6:12)

LIVE THE STORY

The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community.

The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- Eion shared why he has really enjoyed the Ecclesiastes series. How has it benefited you?
- How do the questions of Ecclesiastes 6:12 connect to the whole of 7:1-14?
- Why is a good name better than a good perfume?
- Why is the day of death better than the day of birth?
- In what circumstances could frustration (vexation, anger) be better than laughter? Or good for the heart? (7:3)
- Do you think in verses 3-6 that there is also a warning about anger? How might the Psalms help us to properly deal with anger?
- Discuss the Václav Havel quote on pg. 2 of this outline.
- How does wisdom teach us to patiently trust God in the midst of injustice while, at the same time, teach us to still be engaged for the sake of justice?
- Discuss the Scougal quote on the previous page.

I. Reputation or Aroma? (7:1-2)

- A. A good name is better than a good perfume!

- B. Why is the day of death better than the day of birth?

- C. Now to the audience (2).

- D. Your character once sealed reveals your true aroma, true reputation... whether good or bad.

II. Frustration or Folly? (7:3-6)

- A. "Vexation is better than laughter because an (lit.) evil face is good for the heart."

B. Is there a hidden rebuke here?

- i. Don't focus on the song of fools, the prosperity of the wicked.

- ii. Vexation/Frustration is only better if it turns us to God for answers and into right actions with our neighbor.

III. Waiting or Worrying? (7:7-10)

- A. The danger for the wise person who is vexed in his spirit
 - i. "Surely oppression drives the wise into madness..." (7:7 ESV)
 - a) The anger of point two that was good comes with its own set of temptations toward evil.

Václav Havel: "The line [between good and evil] did not run clearly between 'them' and 'us,' but through each person. No one was simply a victim; everyone was in some measure co-responsible. . . . Many people were on both sides."

b) Jeremiah 17:9

- ii. By bringing it to God and submitting it to Him, we can be guided into right actions which will produce a real presence of God's just kingdom, even if just a taste.
- B. What's good for a person is to wait for the end of a matter rather than jumping to conclusions and reacting hastily.

C. No Romantic Reminiscing

- i. Why isn't it wise?

- ii. "Things have gotten so much worse..."

IV. Wisdom and Well-being (7:11-14)

A. Wisdom allow us to be at peace in the midst of tension.

- i. Like money, it can't solve everything, but it is kind of helpful along the way.

- ii. Wisdom has a preserving quality to it, even if it doesn't always work out.

B. Wisdom teaches me that I can't control the ways of God that are beyond my grasp.

Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*: "A soul controlled by this divine love, will be enlarged toward all mankind in its sincere and limitless concern because of the relation they have to God, being his creatures and having something of his image stamped upon them.... Under [this divine love], all the parts of justice and all the duties we owe to our neighbor are clearly included. He who truly loves the entire world will be equally concerned about the interests of everyone. Such a person will be so far from wronging or injuring anyone, that he will resent anything suffered by another, as if it happened to himself."

Conclusion