

DON'T GO QUIET

GM // new // online listeners

B4 we start ... Happy Bday to the Marine Corps!!!

Turn to Ecclesiastes 7 ...

Ecclesiastes is the philosophers guide to the Bible.

It asks the deepest questions.

Challenges our assumptions.

What is life?

How much control do you and I have over its outcomes?

Buddhists / Dahli Llama / Jordan Peterson / Ecclesiastes all sum up life this way ...

“Life is suffering.”

(no one's buying that fridge magnet)

If you think about what it means to live as a creature ... it is to live with limited power.

Now, we often agree to that on some level, but rarely do we wrestle with its implications.

If you and I are limited in power ... then we can never have total control.

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To say it differently ... the life we live is quite often different to the life we want.

Now, there are two ways we can live in response to this:
And that is what the next part of Ecclesiastes is about.

Ecclesiastes 7:1-6

- 1 A good name is better than precious ointment,
and the day of death than the day of birth.**
- 2 It is better to go to the house of mourning
than to go to the house of feasting,
for this is the end of all mankind,
and the living will lay it to heart.**
- 3 Sorrow is better than laughter,
for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.**
- 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,
but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.**
- 5 It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise
than to hear the song of fools.**
- 6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot,
so is the laughter of the fools;
this also is vanity.**

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You probably noticed the comparisons made between pleasure and pain.

And here is what the writer is getting at.

It is better to embrace that life is suffering than to deny it.

See, by default we are pleasure seekers.

We want to dwell in the house of mirth and feasting and laughter.

We try to cover over the stench of life's B.O. with the perfume of revelry.

But that isn't the reality of life.

Sometimes life stinks ... it's hard and painful.

While the wise learn to embrace it; the fool runs from it.

Why is that?

Humans are wired for pleasure.

We want to permanent park in the fun-house where we can laugh it up and eat and drink forever.

Now it's okay to have fun and laugh and eat and drink.

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But that's not all that life is.

We can't make that our life's goal.

But why not?

B/C it has real world consequences.

We're all familiar with Peter Pan syndrome.

Young men who refuse to grow up into responsible adults.

What is the common trait in these men stuck in adolescence?

They live for fun.

They want to camp out in the fun-house.

But all they do is play at life ... and leave the burden or responsibility for others to bear.

And in the end they don't turn into something good.

They become like what happened to the boys in Pinocchio who lived it up on Pleasure Island ... JACK-ASS!

Now, I'm not only picking on them ...

B/C that is every single one of us.

We are adverse to pain and trial.

We want to live on pleasure island.

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Sigmund Freud said humans operate at their deepest subconscious level by the pleasure principle.

The “id” [aka soul/heart of man] ... seeks immediate gratification of all needs, wants and urges. In other words, the pleasure principle strives to fulfill our most basic and primitive urges, including hunger, thirst, anger, and sex. This is done in order to avoid or reduce anxiety or tension. - Sigmund Freud

It's funny that one of Freud's groundbreaking discoveries was already written about 3,000 years earlier in Ecclesiastes 7.

Our basic instinct is to maximize pleasure and minimize pain.

There are other ways that we avoid pain beside refusing to grow up and take on responsibility.

This is where you need to do some soul searching for yourself.

When trauma hits and you feel anxious or tension what do you turn to?

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We run to what the world calls co-dependencies, and what Christians call functional-saviors.

This can be escape through fantasy worlds on our screens ... Netflix, Fortnite, Porn, Instagram.

Or it can be escape through sex, alcohol, drugs (legal or prescription), or simply food.

[mine was porn ... now its coffee and Netflix]

[we create sin categories of acceptable and unacceptable].

Ultimately, as we binge on these functional-saviors more and more we become, as Pink Floyd sang, "Comfortably Numb."

And that's the big lie ...

We believe suffering will rob us of happiness // rob us of life.

But in actuality some of the deepest human experience is found in suffering.

But this doesn't mean we live to suffer.

But we shouldn't fear it.

I think most of us do b/c we think it will crush us.

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And it can if we don't know God's grace.

See, God gave us the gift of grief to get us through suffering.

The wise embrace grief as a gift from God.

Wait ... did you just say grief is a gift?

Yes, let me explain.

See, so many of us treat grief like it's the ebola virus.

Don't want to catch that!

But the Bible doesn't see grief this way.

In the Bible grief was an intentional process that brought healing to the suffering soul.

Ecclesiastes repeatedly says its better to go the house of mourning ... notice ... not the closet or prison of mourning.

The first rule in grief is that it is a community project.

Grieving is meant to be done together.

See, we got it all wrong today when it comes to dealing with our emotions.

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We keep them in. We deal with them privately. OR not at all.

Jobs exposed to death or suffering produce broken people:

- **cops / firemen / military**
- **Lots of divorce / anger / abuse / heavy drinking coming out of those vocations.**
- **But the leaders are starting to wake up that something is wrong.**
- **Used to be ... suck it up ... you got a job to do.**

But in the Bible it wasn't that way.

The bigger the loss the longer the grieving process.

Israelites would take a week to grieve someone who died.

The town would come to your house, to cry with you.

They would play sad songs that represented what the heart was feeling.

Which was the goal of grieving together.

To recognize and work through the hurt.

Grief honors that our emotions which brings emotional health.

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This is Captain Obvious stuff ...

Our six year old daughters learned this from Frozen.

“Conceal don't feel ... “ [not ashamed ... I have a daughter]

“Avoiding emotions, such as sadness, keeps us from processing what is going on. It keeps us from being able to accept and move past the event. Negative emotions are useful, especially sadness. Sadness can improve your judgment and motivation. Those who allow themselves to experience sadness can use this emotion as a catalyst to push them out of their comfort zone and do more to start to feel better. In fact, those who process their sadness also show greater perseverance.”

A.J. Marsden, PhD, assistant professor of psychology at Beacon College in Leesburg, Florida

This isn't ground breaking stuff.

And many of us would agree.

But agreement doesn't lead to practice.

See, we may not purposefully conceal how we are feeling.

But we have a more widely accepted practice of avoiding our emotions.

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And that is hurry.

See, before we can find out what we are feeling we have to slow down to listen and process what we are feeling.

Don't rush the grieving process.

There isn't a verse in the Bible that says "For 1 day thou shalt grieve, but on the 2nd day shutteth it downeth."

There isn't a rule offered from psychology or science either.

What we know is that you aren't meant to stay in it permanently ... that isn't healthy ... BUT you shouldn't hurry through it.

At some point we all have to get back to living.

But we can't use that as an excuse to avoid grieving.

So, what is the right amount?

That isn't the right question b/c there isn't a **formula**.

Grief isn't a formula it's a **process**.

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That is why a popping a pill won't take away your negative emotions ... only covers them. [caveat: broken brains]

But that is what we do in our modern fast-paced world.

We try to reduce our problems to a formula.

Science has told us we can fix our grief problem by chemical inhibitors to keep the brain from doing what it wants to do. The other side is to trick the brain into releasing chemicals that make us feel good.

**You remember the line in the first Predator movie?
[Arny!!!]**

Jesse Ventura is bleeding on his arm after a gun battle.

Someone points out, "Your bleeding."

**Then comes one of the greatest and cheesiest
one-liners of male bravado ever, [tobacco spit] "I ain't
got time to bleed." [had to be a Marine]**

**For many of us that is our gut reaction to dealing with
suffering ...**

"I ain't got time to grieve."

The root of that isn't courage ... It's pride.

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And we shouldn't skirt around this like its no big deal.

It's actually a huge deal.

B/C pride leads to all sorts of problems.

Ecclesiastes 7:7-10

7 Surely oppression [extortion] drives the wise into madness,

and a bribe corrupts the heart.

8 Better is the end of a thing than its beginning,

and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

9 Be not quick in your spirit to become angry,

for anger lodges in the heart of fools.

10 Say not, "Why were the former days better than these?"

For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.

A proud person is a dangerous person.

If we don't slow down and deal with hurt and pain...

If we don't take time to recognize that inside our soul we are not okay.

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If we bottle it up and try to put a lid on it...

Eventually, it is going to leak out in other ways.

And eventually, the hurt inside that we ignore starts to hurt others. → we aren't safe to be around.

Look at what an article said in a medical journal on depression, addiction, and denial:

“When pain and sadness is kept inside and not dealt with, it can slowly surface in the future through other behaviors *including* anger, overeating, and difficulties with others...We pass judgment on others because it's easier to deal with other people's faults rather than our own.”

This passage talks about oppression, bribery, quickness to anger, or fantasizing about the good old days.

These are poor substitutes to cope with setbacks, disappointment, or pain.

But these offer quick solutions to our suffering.

And the proud spirit wants quick change.

It looks for the easy balm to soothe itself b/c its feeling heart-burn of the soul.

V9B ... anger lodges in the heart of fools.

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It's like Tommy Boy ... "grabbing bear claws that get lodged right in here."

Have you ever wondered why its so easy to get revved up with anger/outrage ... but its sooooo hard to get to a genuine place of repentance where you apologize with sincerity?!

It's b/c pride is a lot more convenient than patience.

Now, the comparison of pride and patience seems a bit odd at first.

"Isn't humility the opposite of pride?"

And that is true ... but you can't be humble without being patient. → humble are patient ... the proud are hurried.

Pride feeds on instant gratification ... its short sighted ... it loves the shortcut.

"It ain't got time to bleed."

So it looks for the shortcut through grief.

It looks for the shortcut to wealth.

It looks for the shortcut to happiness.

That's why a proud person can be good at starting things.

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They are good at making big promises ...

They are just bad at following through.

We all have pride in us ... so I'm not pointing the finger at everyone else.

We all have the potential of becoming proud and dangerous.

WEDDING vs. MARRIAGE

Weddings are fun and flashy.

It's the start of something new and amazing.

We make vows, eat food, dance, give gifts.

But a wedding is only one day.

Marriage is a lifetime.

Bill and Carolyn Warner just celebrated 46 years of marriage.

And they still love each other.

But talk to them about what those 46 years were like.

It was a lot harder than the wedding.

Their wedding day vows were put to the test.

Lots of opportunity to be unfaithful // impatient // angry.

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Patience sees that the end is better than the beginning.

Pride wants the wedding day ... or to be single again, or life w4 kids ...

Pride always wants to take us backwards...

V10 “Why were the former days better than these?”

Who is that question directed at? ... In the context of these verses it's God.

We have to realize that most of our complaining, anger, anxiety is really directed toward God.

Think of Israel in the wilderness complaining.

“Why did Moses bring us out here to die of starvation/thirst? Wish we were back in Egypt living it up!!!”

[Wish I was single]

They thought they were complaining at Moses. God said they were complaining at him.

When we idolize the past we condemn God and blame him for what our current reality is.

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Why can't marriage be like our wedding day?

Why are my kids not following Jesus?

Why did I get passed over for that promotion?

We are going to ask those questions.

In a marriage, family, career, in your walk with Jesus.

Even for us, together in this church.

Just announced losing permanent building.

Next space could be less ideal than this one.

Pride will tempt us to be upset ... OR long for the "better past."

But the patient spirit rests in whatever situation it finds itself in.

The patient spirit accepts that everything good or bad comes from God.

Patience is the attribute of the unhurried / unworried soul.

The patient spirit isn't prone to bad decisions driven by haste and hurry.

Which makes us safe for others as well as ourselves.

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Ecclesiastes 7:11-12

**11 Wisdom is good with an inheritance,
an advantage to those who see the sun.**

**12 For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of
money,
and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom
preserves the life of him who has it.**

V12 can be read that wisdom is like a shelter ... it preserves the life of him who has it.

It doesn't promise that our life will be longer.

But it promises that we won't live half-way.

We won't live running from suffering and pretending that life isn't hard.

We live fully embracing reality.

But how do we do this?

Is there some magic wand or 10 steps to becoming patient?

No.

The answer isn't found in us ... it's found in God.

Ecclesiastes 7:13-14

13 Consider the work of God:

who can make straight what he has made crooked?

14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.

In short, the wise live by faith in God.

A wise person is patient and surrendered to God's will.

Wisdom doesn't demand that God explain his ways.

It's comfortable in the mystery.

It doesn't try to solve what is unsolvable.

We want everything to work like a formula. Nice and predictable.

That's what karma is. It's a cosmic formula where everything balances out.

But life isn't that way.

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You can be perfect but still you will experience the days of adversity.

You can be bad and experience the days of prosperity.

The good may die young.

The bad may live long.

The reality of life shatters the hope of any karmic formula.

So, if there isn't some invisible force balancing it all out ... what are we left with?

Two options:

- Denial -- party, live it up, Pleasure Island
- OR ... Faith in God

The writer invites us to "Consider the work of God."

But what does that mean? What are we to consider???

"Who can make straight what he has made crooked?"

That is kind of weird. Did the writer have dyslexia?

Surely he meant "who can make crooked what God has made straight."

But he didn't say that and for good reason.

He wants us to stop and scratch our heads.

B/C we are comfortable believing God makes crooked things straight.

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It's easier to humble yourself and patiently submit to a God like that.

But we aren't comfortable considering that God also made things crooked.

That is another level of surrender.

Now, let me be clear ... this isn't talking about evil.

This is talking about trial ... suffering.

God is good ... he doesn't make evil ... but he does make the trial.

There are trials we want straightened out right now ... but God hasn't intended for them to be straight.

Maybe that's for our whole life or maybe that's just for a season.

The point is that He's made some stuff crooked.

The rain falls on the just and unjust.

The sun warms and comforts the righteous and the evil.

Prosperity and adversity come to good and bad people alike.

Now, we look at that and think, "Hmm ... that's crooked."

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But how would you make that straight?

In all your wisdom, how would you make that better?

Maybe you think you can ... you wouldn't be the first person who thought they could.

Buddha, Marx, Kant, Nietzsche and plenty of others tried to crack the code and failed.

But Christianity doesn't tell us that we can solve that problem.

[surrender to our weakness and inability]

The gospel says God came down to earth to make what was crooked straight.

Man can't make straight what God made crooked.

But God did through Jesus.

We are about to take communion and b4 we do I want us to consider God.

Communion reminds us that Jesus endured patiently through the greatest suffering.

He was a man of sorrow, acquainted with grief. [lived in the house of mourning].

Jesus was the most righteous man, but he was made crooked for us!

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And he stood in our place so we could be straightened out.

While we live this life under the sun we will spend plenty of time in the house of mourning.

But one day that will all end b/c of Jesus' resurrection.

And heaven, Jesus' kingdom, isn't a house of mourning.

There is only feasting, singing, joy, laughter.

By God's grace we get a taste of that now.

Following Jesus is good, even though we still suffer.

So we endure with patience ... embracing all of life ... together ... longing for heaven.

Consider what God is calling you to surrender to today.

Then come and take.

PRAY

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