

## WISDOM ABOUT WEALTH

**Intro:** Many people today believe, as they always have, that the key to the good life is the accumulation and attainment of material things and the purchase of life's pleasures. It is for this that so many people exhaust themselves day to day. But is it true?

If there was anyone qualified to answer this question, it was Solomon. The prophet-historian of 1 Kings reminds us of the fabulous wealth of Solomon (10:14ff). But Solomon reveals a surprisingly different attitude about material wealth from what one might expect. Let's consider his "wisdom about wealth".

### **I. THE QUEST FOR WEALTH IS VANITY**

*A. If there ever was a man qualified to try that Solomon was the man. Solomon describes his own experiment in which through the use of his wealth he provided every possible pleasure. He was very rich! (2:4-8) Yet, it did not satisfy him; instead he said, "All is vanity!"*

*B. Later Solomon revealed more about why the quest for wealth is vain: 5:10-6:6*

#### **1. You never have enough!**

*He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity. (Ecclesiastes 5:10)*

#### **2. More wealth brings greater responsibility. You sit and watch what you have accumulated being consumed by those who attach themselves to the wealthy!**

*When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their owners except to look on? (Ecclesiastes 5:11)*

#### **3. But wouldn't it be wonderful to just relax and let everybody provide for you? Not necessarily says Solomon:**

*The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much. But the full stomach of the rich man does not allow him to sleep. (Ecclesiastes 5:12)*

#### **4. Wealth is often hoarded and not used--5:13**

*There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: riches being hoarded by their owner to his hurt. (Ecclesiastes 5:13)*

#### **5. And they can be lost through bad investment--5:14**

*When those riches were lost through a bad investment and he had fathered a son, then there was nothing to support him. (Ecclesiastes 5:14)*

#### **6. You can't take them with you.**

*As he had come naked from his mother's womb, so will he return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand. And this also is a grievous evil—exactly as a man is born, thus will he die. So, what is the advantage to him who toils for the wind? (Ecclesiastes 5:15-16)*

**7. A wealthy man is not exempt from vexation, anger, or sickness. All the wealth in the world cannot forestall the evils that may befall all who live.**

*Throughout his life he also eats in darkness with great vexation, sickness and anger. (Ecclesiastes 5:17)*

**8. Some who are wealthy don't have the power to enjoy what they have. Solomon says, for such a man it would have been better to have died before birth!**

*There is an evil which I have seen under the sun and it is prevalent among men—a man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor so that his soul lacks nothing of all that he desires, but God has not empowered him to eat from them, for a foreigner enjoys them. This is vanity and a severe affliction. If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, however many they be, but his soul is not satisfied with good things, and he does not even have a proper burial, then I say, “Better the miscarriage than he, for it comes in futility and goes into obscurity; and its name is covered in obscurity. “It never sees the sun and it never knows anything; it is better off than he. “Even if the other man lives a thousand years twice and does not enjoy good things—do not all go to one place?” (Ecclesiastes 6:1-6)*

## **II. WISDOM ABOUT WEALTH AND PLEASURE IN LIFE**

**A. Enjoy what you have. Don't be so preoccupied with attaining more that you can't enjoy what you have!**

*Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward. Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. For he will not often consider the years of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart. (Ecclesiastes 5:18-20)*

**B. Remember that how you live is more important than what you have!**

*A good name is better than a good ointment, and the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth. (Ecclesiastes 7:1)*

**C. Temper your fun with soberness. Life is not mere frivolity. There is more to life than making and spending money! We need regular reminders that death is coming for us.**

*It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for when a face is sad a heart may be happy. The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, while the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure.*

**And it more important to receive rebuke that makes us better than to be entertained by someone without wisdom!**

*It is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man than for one to listen to the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorn bushes under a pot, So is the laughter of the fool, and this too is futility. (Ecclesiastes 7:2-6)*

**D. Never accumulate wealth at the expense of principle. Get whatever you attain by lawful means. Solomon speaks of the spirituality destructive damage of moral compromise. When it takes hold it leads to madness, and to a loss of understanding.**

*For oppression makes a wise man mad, and a bribe corrupts the heart. (Ecclesiastes 7:7)*

**E. Finish what you start!**

*The end of a matter is better than its beginning; patience of spirit is better than haughtiness of spirit. (Ecclesiastes 7:8)*

**Do not allow a haughty spirit to govern one's action and force your way to prosperity rather than patiently waiting on God's blessing (Keil). Or, Don't let prosperity go to you head! Money never gave anyone the right to look down on others or to vent abusive anger on others.**

**G. Don't be so infatuated with the past that you can't enjoy the present. Avoid the "good ol' days syndrome".**

*Do not say, "Why is it that the former days were better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this. (Ecclesiastes 7:10)*

**H. Make effort not only for earthly gain but for spiritual enrichment.**

*For wisdom is protection just as money is protection. But the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors. (Ecclesiastes 7:12)*

**I. There is not a guarantee of prosperity in the providence of God. Be thankful for what you have; be aware that you can lose it. This serves God's purpose; He is more interested in our living right than living in luxury.**

*Consider the work of God, for who is able to straighten what He has bent? In the day of prosperity be happy, but in the day of adversity consider—God has made the one as well as the other so that man may not discover anything that will be after him. (Ecclesiastes 7:13-14)*

**Conclusion: Paul gives the most perfect prescription for real gain: "godliness" with "contentment" is gain. A "consistent, authentic, walk with God" plus "an attitude of satisfaction and peace within (regardless of money)" is "great gain".**