

Ecclesiastes 8

The Game of Life

WISDOM Teacher needs to KNOW the RIGHT TIME for RIGHT ACTIONS

Ch 5 > How to relate to GOD

Ch 8 > How to relate to GOVERNMENT

Qohelet > Advice for CITIZENS – How to Behave before AUTHORITY

v. 1 Who is like the wise man? Who knows the explanation of things? Wisdom brightens a man's face and changes its hard appearance.

PROVERB > WISE Person changes STERN Expression into a SMILE

v. 1 Wisdom brightens a man's face and changes its hard appearance.

SARCASTIC Exclamation of FRUSTRATION > ‘I WISH I Could SMILE!’

PAIN of HARD EARNED Money going into GREEDY Hand of Corrupt Official

A glowering countenance in the royal court will do no good and may bring great personal danger. It is not wise to show one's disapproval of a despotic monarch.

Iain Provan

Every person over forty is responsible for his own face. Abraham Lincoln

1. Put on the Happy Face – Trying to Protect your Life

a. Swear

v. 2 Obey the king's command, I say, because *you took an oath* before God.

DIRECT: Elected to POLITICAL OFFICE or Enlist in MILITARY SERVICE

INDIRECT: Pledge ALLEGIANCE to Flag, Sing National ANTHEM, Pay TAXES

MOST People would ONLY SEE > KING'S REPRESENTATIVE at BEST

Even TOP Administrators would have VERY LITTLE Contact with KING

DIFFERENT FORMS of Gov'ts in WORLD > Very SIMILAR ISSUES

Man lords it over others to his own hurt. Under capitalism man exploits man; under communism, it is exactly the reverse. John Kenneth Galbraith

b. Stay v. 3a *Do not be in a hurry* to leave the king's presence.

IF in HURRY to LEAVE him > Sign of DISSATISFACTION or DISLOYALTY

Do NOT be HASTY: Familiar Words of WISDOM by Qohelet --- PLAY IT SAFE

Do not be quick with your mouth, Ecclesiastes 5:2

Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit Ecclesiastes 7:9

Fear the LORD and the king, my son, and do not join with the rebellious, for those two will send sudden destruction upon them, and who knows what calamities they can bring? Proverbs 24:21-22

c. Stoop v. 3b Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases.

Warning AGAINST > RESISTANCE, REBELLION, REVOLUTION

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and *did not humble himself... He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar*

2 Chronicles 36:11-13

Joseph & Esther > Show Living under TYRANTS is FREQUENTLY COMPLEX

FINE LINE between ACCOMMODATION and COMPROMISE

DANIEL: Even the RIGHTEOUS face PERSECUTION when TRYING to OBEY

FOCUS on Extent of Royal Power > THEME of Passage is POWER

v. 4 a king's word is supreme v. 9 a man lords it over others

v. 8 power over the wind...power over the day of his death

We are like office boys who sit in the boss's chair after hours and swivel ourselves in a fantasy that pictures us as masters of all we survey. Scarcely anything bubbles to the head faster than power.
David Allan Hubbard

Power Corrupts > Absolute Power Corrupts Absolutely

IF WISE Man at COURT of FOOLISH RULER > HIDE your TRUE FEELINGS

d. Silence

v. 4 Since a *king's word is supreme*, who can say to him, "What are you doing?"

ISRAEL Warned >> Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day." But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles." When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. The LORD answered, "Listen to them and give them a king."
1 Samuel 8:10-22

The greatest joy is to conquer one's enemies, to pursue them, to seize their property, to see their family in tears, to ride their horses and to possess their daughters and wives.
Genghis Khan which means '*Universal Ruler*'

WISE will be TEMPTED to QUESTION Wrong & Foolish Decisions of POWER

v. 4 Since a king's word is supreme, who can say to him, "*What are you doing?*"

Way of SAFETY > PATH of LEAST RESISTANCE > KEEP your Mouth SHUT!

e. Submit

v. 5 Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the *proper time and procedure*.

Few WISE Kings > Be a WISE SUBJECT > Know RIGHT TIME & WORDS

POMPOUS are FELLED by FLATTERY > PUSHED Around by PRAISE

The more the lion on the throne stands rampant to cow his subjects the more susceptible he may become to those who scratch his back like a pussycat's.

David Allan Hubbard

f. Surrender

v. 6 For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a man's misery weighs heavily upon him.

HUMAN FRUSTRATION at BURDEN of Life

Qohelet acknowledges > There is RIGHT TIME > ORDAINED by GOD
There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven
Ecclesiastes 3:1

EVEN Knowing TIME and CUSTOM > has NO Ultimate BENEFIT

v. 7 Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come?

KEY to Human Problem > FRUSTRATION & IGNORANCE re. FUTURE

Find in STARS? TEA LEAVES? CHICKEN INTESTINES? Gypsy in BAZAAR?

Qoheleth > Referring to IGNORANCE of EVERYMAN concerning the FUTURE
 PLANS of Man will VANISH > POWER of God will be VICTORIOUS

v. 8 No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death. As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it. >> 4 Examples of HUMAN IMPOTENCE

CanNOT Control WIND, Prevent DEATH, Escape BATTLE, RESCUE from EVIL
 WATCHED Firemen in Hawaii tried to STOP FLOWING LAVA! w/ Waterhoses!
 LAVA > FLOWING River of Fire 2000 degrees! > Over 150 Houses BURNED

KING HEROD'S PROUDEST Moment > FINAL Moments

On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God continued to increase and spread. Acts 12:21-24

Kingly Authority MEETS ITS MATCH in DEATH > King NOT THAT Great!

2. Behind the Happy Face – Trying to Probe the Meaning of Life

vs. 9-14 Qohelet considers the INJUSTICES of LIFE > Is there ANY JUSTICE?

a. Deterrent to Crime

v. 11 When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong.

IF LONG Time between CRIME – SENTENCE – PUNISHMENT > Faint of Heart
 PUNISHMENT is DETERRENT to MORE Crime >> It SHOULD BE SO...

vs. 12 Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God.

GROSS SINNERS NOT SUPPOSED to LIVE a LONG TIME
But then HOW DO they FIND TIME to COMMIT 100 Crimes??

FEAR of God: Raging TERROR before Powerful, Dangerous, Unpredictable God

b. Delayed in Coming

v. 13 Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.

ALMOST Seems like Qohelet GETS SAVED HERE > Comes to EDGE of Cliff
SEES down to TRUTH and JUSTICE of God who should be FEARED
BUT does NOT Jump > ACKNOWLEDGES God and His Truth NOT Accept

LIFE of WICKED > FLEETING and UNSUBSTANTIAL, Does NOT LAST Long
SHADOW > As DAY LENGTHENS so do Shadows > ONLY APPEARANCE
Live UNDER SUN > Sun SETS > SHADOW is GONE

When there is a DELAY in JUDGMENT >> leads to DENIAL of GOD >
They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 2 Peter 3.4

Isn't it strange, though, that people who don't believe in God still believe in something called "justice," or "injustice," "unfairness?" Why should you be bothered with unfairness if there is no God, if there is no order, if there is no structure, if life is simply the random collocation of atoms, if it's just the luck of the draw, the roll of the dice?
Derek Thomas

c. Denied to Citizens

v. 14 There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: righteous men who get what the wicked deserve, and wicked men who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless.

CONTRASTS with Previous Verses > NO ONE GETS WHAT THEY DESERVE!
 JUSTICE seems TOPSY-TURVY >> Justice DELAYED is Justice DENIED

He is thrown into a quandary of doubt, so much doubt, indeed, that he repeats his conclusion that the situation is meaningless. Tremper Longman III

v. 9 All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything done under the sun. There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own hurt.

Sees FULL RANGE of Life > HURT to KING'S VICTIMS and KING HIMSELF

Qohelet > Distinction between RIGHTEOUS and WICKED BLURRED

v. 10 Then too, I saw the wicked buried-those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless.

Then I saw the wicked approaching and entering the place of holiness and doing so frequently, while the righteous were forgotten in the very city where they did the right things. This also is vanity. Hubbard Translation of v. 10

Preacher is TROUBLED by HONOR that comes to the WICKED

WICKED DIE but are PRAISED in CITY where DID their EVIL DEEDS

3. Living with a Happy Face – Trying to Pass through Life

a. Occasional Enjoyment > STRIDENT DESPERATION > RESIGNATION

v. 15 So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun.

Best SOLUTION for PRESENT WOES is HEDONISM

Go to the MALL and SHOP, SHOP, SHOP till you DROP, DROP, DROP
 SIMPLE Pleasures of Eating & Drinking to NUMB the MEANINGLESSNESS

“Gather ye rosebuds while ye may. Old time is still a flying. And the same flower that smiles today, tomorrow will be a dying.” Robert Herrick’s poem *Hesperides*

b. Ongoing Exhaustion

v. 16 When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe man's labor on earth-his eyes not seeing sleep day or night

Problems > RESTLESS Days and SLEEPLESS Nights / Over-all Puzzle of Life
He CANNOT FIND Wisdom, Justice, Truth, and PEACE > EAGERLY LOOKED

v. 10 I saw / v. 12 I know / v. 14 I said / v. 15 I commended

v. 16 I applied my heart / v. 17 I saw

All this I tested by wisdom and I said, "I am determined to be wise" - but this was beyond me. Whatever wisdom may be, it is far off and most profound - who can discover it?
Ecclesiastes 7:23-24

He wants to KNOW WISDOM > Conclusion is EXTREMELY EXHAUSTING

c. Overall Ambiguity

v. 17 then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it.

All Efforts at FINDING FULL UNDERSTANDING of Life have FAILED
Perplexed with the Enigma of Life > NOT EVEN the WISE can FIGURE Out God
Wise men make excessive claims, they too will be baffled. Michael A. Eaton

ULTIMATE Justice MAY be on HORIZON > NOT SURE When or HOW

SEARCH Described by **BOB DYLAN** > ‘Every Grain of Sand’ GOOD ENDING

4. The Present of Life – More than Just a Happy Face

- Cannot Determine God's Plan

v. 1 Who is like the wise man? Who knows the explanation of things?

- Cannot Derive God's Power

v. 8 No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death.

- Cannot Discover God's Permanence

v. 15 all the days of the life God has given him under the sun

- Cannot Delight in God's Peace

v. 6 a man's misery weighs heavily upon him

v. 14 There is something else meaningless... This too, I say, is meaningless

UNCERTAINTY Under the Sun > Need MESSAGE from BEYOND the SUN

One GREATER than SOLOMON > Made ASTOUNDING CLAIMS

Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:25-28

We have FATHER in HEAVEN > know by REVELATION of SON OF GOD

GULF of MYSTERY spanned by CHRIST

Death's LEASE on Human LIFE has been BROKEN by Power of CROSS

	Qohelet <i>Ecclesiastes 8</i>	Jesus <i>Matthew 11</i>
God's Plan	No one can comprehend	revealed...to little children
God's Power	no one has power over the day of his death	All things have been committed to me by my Father
God's Permanence	all the days of the life God has given him under the sun	No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.
God's Peace	a man's misery weighs heavily upon him ...his eyes not seeing sleep day or night	I will give you rest

- Reached Down with God's Plan

v. 25 Father, Lord of heaven and earth...you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children...

God's Purpose NOT Found by RESEARCH but by REVELATION
NOT by WISDOM of SEARCHER but by WITNESS of SCRIPTURE

KINGDOM REVEALED through SIMPLE FAITH / NOT by SCHOLARSHIP

- Robed in God's Power

v. 27 All things have been committed to me by my Father

ALL POWER in Heaven and Earth ENTRUSTED to the RISEN SON

CONQUERS by the EMPTY CROSS > Power to RAISE DEAD > NEW LIFE

- Rewards with God's Permanence

v. 27 No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

KNOWING Father thru Son AND Son thru Father > Enter ETERNAL Fellowship

Our ULTIMATE HOME is with the EVERLASTING GOD > NOW & Forever

- Rejoice in God's Peace

v. 28 I will give you rest > Jesus ENDS the SEARCH of Qohelet > SHALOM

QOHELET gives INSIGHTFUL ANALYSIS of LIFE

JESUS gives INSPIRED ANSWERS to Questions of LIFE > Under & Beyond Sun

HIS PEACE is NOT ABSENCE of PAIN and PROBLEMS

Peace in PRESENCE and PROMISES of God in MIDST of our Pain & Problems

Who is like the wise man? Who knows the explanation of things? Wisdom brightens a man's face and changes its hard appearance. Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God. Do not be in a hurry to leave the king's presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases. Since a king's word is supreme, who can say to him, "What are you doing?" Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a man's misery weighs heavily upon him. Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come? No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death. As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it. All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything done under the sun. There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own hurt. Then too, I saw the wicked buried-those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless. When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong. Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God. Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow. There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: righteous men who get what the wicked deserve, and wicked men who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless. So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun. When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe man's labor on earth-his eyes not seeing sleep day or night- then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it.