

## You Are Here – part 9

1. Last week, we set up chapter 7 and explained that it is more like the Book of Proverbs in that one verse doesn't necessarily link to the next one. Still, there is a unity of theme here that is important to see as it weaves a worldview for those who lived 930yrs before Jesus' birth.
2. **Eccl. 7:5-6**. The Teacher is very interested in using the time we have wisely. This is also a Christian concept: **Eph. 5:8-17**. Back to **Ecclesiastes 7:5-6**. You will never learn and never grow until and unless you listen to or examine voices outside your inner circle. We do not grow if we are surrounded by "yes men." I think the history of royal families show us that. The Teacher does not ask us to love being rebuked but, rather, listen to the rebuke of a wise person.
3. A. Wise. Person. Be careful little ears what you hear. Our time is limited. We always need to ask to whom are we listening. To live is to grow – or it should be.
4. The same theme is found here: **Eccl. 7:7-9**. The Teacher is very interested in you staying in the game. Do not get knocked off the board. Do not become distracted like a second grader in the outfield who chases butterflies instead of fly balls. The three distractions he names are: money, impatience, and anger.
5. That second grader chasing a gum wrapper is no different from us. We tend to chase after shiny, glittering things. God knows this and reminds us again and again to focus on Christ. Elijah had to be taught about the still, small voice in **1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19:11-13**. If you hear shouting, you are not hearing the voice of God and you are not hearing wisdom. Truth does not need to shout. Truth and wisdom are not advanced by anger. Truth moves at its own pace and it will take patience to stick with truth, to ride out the search for wisdom.
6. The great English writer, Jonathan Swift, wrote "Falsehood flies and Truth comes limping after." There are many versions of this out there and one is attributed to Mark Twain (but wrongly), "A lie travels halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes." This is certainly true but do you know why? Because we are wired to see the dangerous, the critical, the drama filled moment. A lie that is

dramatic and scary – or one that confirms our fears and judgments – leaps around the world while truth can take a lifetime to process. False news items are retweeted thousands of times. Corrections rarely get retweeted a hundred times. But truth will win in God's timing.

7. Anger does not move God's work forward unless we are moving with God in the moment. **Eph. 4:26** – take what action you can when you can and then lay it aside. Anger is an energy to be used appropriately. It is not sinful in itself. It is all about the application. Be a person, not a pinball: think.
8. **Eccl. 7:10-12**. All of us old people are hereby busted. Were there things in our past that were wonderful and we miss them? Absolutely! But the good old days were not always good for everyone. And, besides, would you like to go back to 1950s style medicine? Appliances? Cars? Don't live in the past. You can't drive while staring at the rear view mirror. **I have a past, but I don't live there anymore.**
9. The Teacher is very concerned about what we will leave behind us when we are gone. Most of us think of money but the Teacher, while acknowledging that wealth can be a shelter, tells us that continually gaining knowledge while staying wise in how we use it is a greater inheritance to leave behind. As Crosby, Stills and Nash taught us: Teach your children well.
10. Let's have a quick look at this section: **Eccl. 7:13-18**. Wow. Just...wow. First things first: we are creatures, not the Creator. We need to remember that God does what He does and we are to do what we are to do. That's a hard lesson and one we need to continually teach ourselves.
11. Mankind can be evil and there can be dark, dark times in our history, but God continues to own the calendar. He controls the movement of the universe. It will be okay.
12. I love verses 16-18. The world – culture and governments, fads and beliefs – swing like a pendulum. Don't do that. God is not impressed by you trying to be overly righteous (think: Pharisees, legalists, law makers). He knows you are a sinner but don't go nuts

about that, either. Get better. Hold on to God while acknowledging your own reality – that we are saved people who sometimes fail. We are saved people who still have fault lines in our hearts and minds. He knew that going in and He still went in.

13. **“Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes.”** If you can be defined by a tick on a box denoting political party, race, gender, or age...you’re doing life wrong. The universe is complex and so are you. Allow room for nuance, change, growth, consolidation, and prepare to annoy the world when it comes at you with a box. We are believers. We are children of God. If He’s not going in a box, we aren’t either.