



WISDOM LIVING
UNDER THE SUN AND BEFORE THE FEAR OF GOD



**DON'T BE IMPRESSED WITH YOUR OWN WISDOM.
INSTEAD, FEAR THE LORD AND TURN AWAY FROM EVIL.**

(PROVERBS 3:7 NLT)

OUTLINE ... (Ecclesiastes 8:1-17 ESV)

1. THE WISE PERSON WHO KNOWS GOD IS WITHOUT PEER (UNEQUALED, UNRIVALED) IN HIS PERSPECTIVE OF LIFE, 8:1.

- (Ecclesiastes 8:1 ESV) Who is like the wise? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? **A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed.**

Charles Bridges ... The wisdom, here so highly commended, as a mere intellectual quality has no practical influence. But as a heavenly principle, it makes the face to shine from intercourse with a brighter world. ... One display of this Divine transformation may be seen in the change of the boldness of our face. **Once** it was hard and stern loftiness. **Now**, without losing one atom of its firmness, it melts down into humility. ... It is however only when the face shines under heavenly influence, that the sturdiness of Christian confidence will be fully set out. The combination is perfect—'heaven upon earth to have a man's mind **move** in charity, **rest** in Providence, and **turn upon** the poles of truth.' [Bridges, C. (1860). *An Exposition of the Book of Ecclesiastes* (pp. 230-231). Robert Carter & Brothers.]

■ THE WISE PERSON WHO DOES NOT KNOW GOD ...



There is a wise person who unconsciously lives by the laws of God's created order under the sun **but does not know God**.

- (Romans 2:14-15 NLT) Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, **show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it.** 15 **They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right.**

a. The wise person who lives under the sun **who does not know God** does know that some things can be known and other things cannot be known.

b. He accepts (and thrives in) his lot in life under the sun—the lot in life that God has given him.

- (Ecclesiastes 3:22 NLT) So I saw that there is nothing better for people than to be happy in their work. **That is our lot in life.** And no one can bring us back to see what happens after we die.
- (Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 NLT) Even so, I have noticed one thing, at least, that is good. **It is good for people to eat, drink, and enjoy their work under the sun during the short life God has given them, and to accept their lot in life.** 19 **And it**

is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work **and accept your lot in life—this is indeed a gift from God.** 20 God keeps such people so busy enjoying life that they take no time to brood over the past.

- (Ecclesiastes 9:9-10 NIV) **Enjoy life** with your wife, whom you love, **all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun**—all your meaningless days. **For this is your lot in life** and in your toilsome labor under the sun. 10 **Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might**, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

c. The wise person who lives under the sun often recognizes the blessing of his "lot in life" but remains blind to the source of this blessing.

d. The wise person under the sun lives under God's sovereign care and common grace but apart from a true, saving knowledge of God.

e. The fruit yielded by even this lesser understanding of life under the sun overcomes the hardness and harshness of life and changes his face.

- (Ecclesiastes 8:1 GW) Who is really wise? Who knows how to explain things? **Wisdom makes one's face shine, and it changes one's grim look.**

f. Often the wise person who lives under the sun is a religious person who misunderstands the blessing of common grace and the acknowledgement of a deity with the blessing of saving grace.

g. The wise, religious person who lives under the sun acknowledges God in a variety of forms but does not live in reverence before the God of Scripture.

h. This explains why a wise, religious person who lives under the sun is more open (read deceived) to other religions and other gospels—**there is no sincere and pure devotion to Christ.**

- (2 Corinthians 11:3-4 ESV) But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, **your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.** 4 For if someone comes and proclaims **another Jesus** than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive **a different spirit** from the one you received, or if you accept **a different gospel** from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

■ THE WISE PERSON WHO DOES KNOW GOD . . .



- a. The wise person who lives under the sun and knows God interprets and understands life through revelation from God—the Bible.
- b. The wise person who lives under the sun and knows God does not seek out other schemes or solutions to life apart from revelation.
 - (Ecclesiastes 7:29 ESV) See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.
- c. The wise person who lives under the sun and knows God believes God for what can be known and trusts God for what cannot be known.
- d. The wise person who knows God accepts his lot in life under the sun as from the sovereign hand of God and according to his eternal purpose.

The wise person who knows God not only recognizes and lives by the universal principles of life that bring grace to one's life but he praises God and gives God the glory as the source of all such grace and blessings.

- (1 Peter 5:6–7 ESV) Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.
- e. The transformation of the wise person who fears and knows God is so powerful that it can be seen in his outward appearance—his face.
 - (2 Corinthians 4:6–7 NLT) For God, who said, “Let there be light in the darkness,” has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.
 - f. The Holy Spirit produces the fruit of the wisdom from above in the wise person who knows God and this is evidenced by his honorable life.
 - (James 3:13–18 NLT) If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. 15 For jealousy and

selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. 16 For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. 17 But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. 18 And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.

2. THE WISE PERSON WHO KNOWS GOD TRUSTS GOD TO GUIDE HIM THROUGH A WORLD WHERE PEOPLE HAVE THE POWER TO HURT OTHER PEOPLE—SPECIFICALLY GOVERNMENTS, 8:2-9.

- (Ecclesiastes 8:2–9 NLT) Obey the king since you vowed to God that you would. 3 Don't try to avoid doing your duty, and don't stand with those who plot evil, for the king can do whatever he wants. 4 His command is backed by great power. No one can resist or question it. 5 Those who obey him will not be punished. Those who are wise will find a time and a way to do what is right, 6 for there is a time and a way for everything, even when a person is in trouble. 7 Indeed, how can people avoid what they don't know is going to happen? 8 None of us can hold back our spirit from departing. None of us has the power to prevent the day of our death. There is no escaping that obligation, that dark battle. And in the face of death, wickedness will certainly not rescue the wicked. 9 I have thought deeply about all that goes on here under the sun, where people have the power to hurt each other.

The wise person—even the wise person who only lives under the sun and does not know God—knows that it is beneficial to live by certain principles in a world in which people have the power to hurt other people.

PRINCIPLES FOR LIVING IN A WORLD WHERE PEOPLE HAVE THE POWER TO HURT EACH OTHER:

- a. Submit to the governing authorities.
- b. Don't try to avoid your duty but never stand with those who do evil.
- c. Respect the power and authority that God has given to governing authorities.
- d. Do everything possible to do the right thing.

- e. Understand that ultimately we do not have certainty as to what will happen under the sun.
- f. Do not live only to protect or prolong your life because that is not within our power.
- g. Know for certain that wickedness will not rescue the wicked.

3. THE WISE PERSON WHO KNOWS GOD UNDERSTANDS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOING WELL NOW AND FOREVER AND LIVING IN FEAR BEFORE GOD UNDER THE SUN, 8:10-13.

- (Ecclesiastes 8:10–13 ESV) **Then I saw the wicked buried.** They used to go in and out of the holy place and were praised in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity. 11 Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil. 12 **Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him.** 13 But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

PRINCIPLES FOR LIVING AMONG THE WICKED OF EARTH:

a. Live knowing that the wicked ultimately lose.

We are not to take joy in this, but the fact is that the wicked will be buried. And when they are buried their winning formula for life is buried with them as they lose everything and stand before God in judgment.

b. Live knowing that the righteous ultimately win.

The true winning formula for life is to live before God **in** fear and **by** faith.

- (1 John 5:4 NIV) For everyone born of God overcomes the world. **This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.**
- (Deuteronomy 8:16 ESV) Who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, **that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.**
- (Romans 8:28 ESV) **And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,** for those who are called according to his purpose.

4. THE WISE PERSON WHO KNOWS GOD KNOWS HE MUST TRUST THE BUSINESS OF LIFE ON EARTH TO GOD, 8:14-17.

- (Ecclesiastes 8:14–17 ESV) There is a vanity that takes place on earth, **that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked,** and **there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous.** I said that this also is vanity. 15 And I commend joy, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through **the days of his life that God has given him under the sun.** 16 **When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth,** how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, 17 **then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun.** However much man may toil in seeking, **he will not find it out.** Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.
- (Ecclesiastes 1:13 ESV) And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. **It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.**
- (Ecclesiastes 2:26 ESV) For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given **the business of gathering and collecting,** only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.
- (Ecclesiastes 3:10–13 ESV) **I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.** 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. 12 I perceived that **there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live;** 13 also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—**this is God's gift to man.**
- (Ecclesiastes 4:8b ESV) His eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?" **This also is vanity and an unhappy business.**