The Many 'Faces' of Wisdom

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Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0:00] It's good to be in the company of the holy, isn't it? We'll share heaven together. Thank the Lord. And it'll be a blessed time around the throne of God's grace in Jesus.

Where we'll see Him as He is. And rejoice in Him. Well, I've told you that we'll be in Ecclesiastes this morning. Again, I've done this a couple times where I'll use what's going on in Genesis and bounce into Ecclesiastes to kind of fill out the picture a little bit about how another part of Scripture describes some of this.
And so let me see if I can get this. Yes, the many faces of wisdom is what we'll be talking about this morning as the text will bring it out to us.
So Ecclesiastes chapter 8, beloved, is where we'll be together. Ecclesiastes 8. As I read down through this with you, because we'll do the entire chapter this morning.
We'll be here till about 1.30. But as I do the entire chapter, there will be some of this that will seem enigmatic to you. Don't worry about that. We'll see if we can unpack it as we dive in.
[1:14] Okay? So he asked, Who is like the wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a matter? A man's wisdom illumines him. A man's wisdom causes his stern face to change.

To change how? To beam. God's wisdom can do that. It's like the rays of His goodness and wisdom are coming out of your heart through your eyes, your face, the smile, the calm, the peace behind the eyes.
God's wisdom does that. It settles you in the Lord. Verse 2. I say, Keep the command of the king because of the oath before God. Do not be in a hurry to leave him.
Do not join in an evil matter. For he will do whatever he pleases. He's speaking about the king, the earthly king here. Since the word of the king is authoritative, who will say to him, What are you doing?
He who keeps a royal command experiences no trouble, no issue. For a wise heart knows the proper time and procedure. For there is a proper time and procedure for every delight, though a man's trouble is heavy upon him.
[2:26] If no one knows what will happen, who can tell him when it will happen? No man has authority to restrain the wind with the wind, or authority over the day of death.

And there is no discharge in the time of war. Evil will not deliver those who practice it. Now all this I have seen.
And I've applied my mind to every deed that has been done under the sun, wherein a man has exercised authority over another man to his hurt. So then I have seen the wicked buried.
Those who used to go in and out from the holy place, well, they are soon forgotten in the city where they did thus. This too is futility.
Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil. Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life, still I know that it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly.
[3:40] But it will not be well for the evil man, and he will not lengthen his days like a shadow, because he does not fear God. Now there is futility which is done on the earth.

That is, there are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked. On the other hand, there are evil men to whom it happens according to the deeds of righteousness.
I say that this too is futility. You can hear dripping in this the sense that he has of this just doesn't always make sense.
And so verse 15, I commend pleasure, or I commended it. For there is nothing good for a man under the sun except to eat and to drink and to be merry.

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And this will stand by him in his toils throughout the days of his life. Now here is the key to understanding what he just commended. Which God has given him under the sun.
[4:45] That's a very key and important concept. When I gave my heart to know wisdom and to see the task which has been done on the earth, even though one should never sleep day or night, and I saw every work of God, what did he conclude?

I concluded that man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun. Even though man should seek it laboriously, he will not discover.
And though the wise man should say, oh I know, he cannot discover. That's kind of power packed, isn't it? Well we need to talk about the many faces then of wisdom.
Now I want to start out by sharing with you, here's how one commentator sees the main point. his opinion of Solomon's main point as he looks back on his own life, Solomon's own life, and reflects on the meaning of life.
So Solomon here, what I'm about to share with you in this commentator's quote about this, Solomon, he's not saying, isn't weighing in on what he thinks the meaning of life is. He's saying, I have discovered what the meaning of life is by the wisdom of Almighty God.
[6:01] Now here it is. For all of us, not just for my life. And so this commentator summed it up this way. The main point then is that finding purpose in life apart from God is futile.

The things of this world, pleasure, work, achievement, possessions, friends, etc. are all, notice, meaningless. When pursued as ends unto themselves, true purpose and joy in life is found in God. True purpose and joy in life is found in God. You could say God alone. We know the pleasures of this life. We know some of the joys of this life.
Marriage can be of great pleasure and joy and should be in the Lord. Children, same. Working your job, same. But none of that stuff in and of itself is going to bring pleasure or a sense of purpose or meaning apart from God.
We're just marking time. Whatever isn't done to the glory of God and the delight of God, the fear of the Lord for Christians is going to produce wood, hay, and stubble.
[7:14] It's going to be burned up. Only what we do in the Lord is going to be rewarded and last, right? We as Christians will escape judgment because Jesus took our judgment, our condemnation.

But that doesn't mean that all we do will be accepted by the Lord. He has to separate that out. And that's how we're called to live. Now, the why of life, the when of life, the where, the what, the how of God working in the matters of your life are beyond your human discovery and full understanding.
So don't waste your time trying to figure God out. We need to deal with what He's revealed to us. We've got plenty to keep us occupied in what He has shown us.
Right? So don't waste your time trying to read between the lines in the white spaces. Just stay with what God has said. This is Abraham. I'm all over Abraham right now.
Yet, yet, I want to share this with you. If you look at the screen. Here it is. When all has been heard, what Solomon says matters most about the matter of life is this.
[8:37] Fear God and keep His commandments because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act, I just said this, to judgment.

Everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. God will not judge you as a Christian, but He will judge your works. He will judge what you did with your life.
Now, I need to know that you hear the difference there. Christians will not be judged, but your works will be judged. Your life will be judged.
So this is why Pastor Jeff and Pastor Greg continue to encourage you, edify you, build you up, guide you in, building your treasure in heaven, not here.
We all have to work. We all have to relate. We all have to get through life. But there's a difference between you building treasure in heaven and building treasure here. Your treasure is Jesus.
[9:35] Where is Jesus? And so what does Colossians chapter 3 tell us? Set your mind not on earthly things, but on the things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of the Father.

Set your mind on those things. Give your heart to those things. Alright? Fear God and keep His commandments. That applies to every person. Believer and unbeliever.
The differences between a believer and an unbeliever is an unbeliever cannot do that. But they're still under the command because God made them. And they're still accountable to the Lord.
Now listen to this statement. Life is bound up in fearing God. Only a Christian can know that and live that. Life is bound up in fearing God.

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Author and theologian, the late John Murray said this, The fear of God is the soul of godliness. What is the very soul and heartbeat of a godly life?
[10:41] Godliness means godlike. What is the very heartbeat of a godlike life? It's the fear of the Lord. I think John Murray is spot on and I think the Bible brings that out.

Now I asked you this very penetrating question last Sunday and then I expounded on it. Here's the question up on the screen. Are you a god-fearer? Are you a god-fearer?
If life is bound up in fearing the Lord, are you a god-fearer? As a Christian, fearing God should be a clear spiritual distinctive of your life.
It should be. And it should be something you're cultivating. Notice this series of verses then that I want to share with you just to give you kind of a compounded view.
I gave you a list like this last week and it's inexhaustive. Folks, you can't exhaust this. There are so many passages in the Bible that either directly or indirectly speak to this issue of having a high and holy reverence for God as the defining factor of your life.
[11:48] You are so awed by God in His salvation of you in Jesus Christ His Son that that constantly defines how you think, how you live, how you prioritize, how you spend your resources on this planet, how you relate to your spouse, your kids, other people, all of it.

Now, look at this verse first here. But the loving kindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. What does that mean? For eternity. On who?
On those who fear Him. That is only true about those who fear the Lord, who have a high and holy reverence, an awe, of Almighty God for who He is, for who He is and for what He's done in their life.
How about this one? So, the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace. Alright? And what was that peace about? Because they were being built up and going on in the fear of the Lord.
Now, that should be the number one characteristic defining and displaying who we are to each other and to a watching world.
[13:02] That we are a church who fears the Lord. We are a people who fears the Lord. Who have a high, shared high and holy reverence for who God is.

How about this one? Therefore, having these precious promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, self, perfecting holiness in what?
The fear of the Lord. Perfecting holiness, that is, perfecting a walk, nurturing a walk with God that sees us growing in Christ-likeness, continuing to take on, to deepen ourselves in, and to display the character of the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives.
That is holiness lived out. That is sanctification being set apart under the Lord. And then this, honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honor the King.
That is exactly consistent from Peter with what we are reading in Ecclesiastes 8 about the King.
And then finally, this one. Isaiah said of Jesus, the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge, and notice how he ends, the fear of the Lord.
[14:32] Jesus had the fear of the Lord. He told the entire world the primary motive, the primary desire, the primary reason behind everything Jesus said that I do is my love for the Father.

The fear that he had of the Father. High and holy reverence. Everything I speak and do is done to glorify my Father. Did he not say that? Yes, throughout the book of John.
So, your Lord and Savior feared the Lord. He feared God. He had a high and holy reverence for his Father. So much so that he didn't want one misstep in his life in anything that he thought, said, or did.
And so, we are in good company when we are in the company of the Lord Jesus fearing Almighty God. Now, one other thing here. This deep reverence for God that I'm referring to as the fear of the Lord, this deep reverence for God is protection.
Hear me now, folks. It is protection for you. Protection from what, Pastor? Protection from both spiritual deception and self-deception.
[15:47] which we are prone to. The fear of the Lord is also provision. It is protection and it is provision. What do you mean by that?

It is provision for your longing heart. Your heart longs to worship. Your heart was created to worship. And worship you will.

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Do you remember that from last week? Your heart longs for it. Your heart longs to be attached to something. And it will always seek to be attached to something.
If it's one thing the human soul cannot tolerate, cannot stand, cannot continue to live without, or live with, is loneliness.
A lonely heart is a broken heart. A lonely heart is a desperate heart. A lonely heart is a sad heart. fear of the Lord is provision for your heart.
[16:51] The fear of the Lord gives your heart direction. The fear of the Lord gives you an object for your heart to worship that is worthy of your heart's worship.

And that's Jesus. Amen. So you get provision and you get protection. You were designed by God to fear. Did you hear me say that? You were designed by God to fear.
Every human being is designed by God, it is in their DNA to fear. When I use the word fear, I'm talking about reverence. You will reverence something or someone.
There will be something or someone or both in your life that you turn to for what you should require God to give you. You may feel lonely.
You may feel desperate. You may feel like your life's spinning out of control. You might feel like the wheels are coming off. You might be struggling with a sense of purpose or meaning or whatever. You find all of that in your relationship with God as a Christian.
[17:54] Unbelievers don't have that. Unbelievers are constantly grabbing things from the world to try and do that and stick in there. And fill that thing up. And you know what that's like. I do too.

And it doesn't work. There are all kinds of good things on the earth that are given by the hand of God that we turn into bad things because we require those things to do for us only what God can do.
My wife, as beautiful as she is inside and out, cannot replace Jesus in my life. If I ask my wife, demand of my wife, require of my wife, to give me what only God can give me, I miss the blessing of her and I miss the blessing of God's gift to me in her.
And so God loses and she loses and then I ultimately lose. You with me? We were not created to worship ourselves or people. We were created to worship God.
And when we get that messed up, we're headed for a bad train wreck. And you see people train wreck their lives in this. How many times have you heard stories about people who got married because they thought getting married would fulfill them?
[19:08] How did that turn out? I've spent 30-something years in the pastorate dealing with these very issues.

This is why Pastor Greg spoke to you this morning very lovingly and kindly explaining to you that this gospel treason book that we're going to do on Wednesday night will help you identify these kinds of things in your life, some of them that are good things in and of themselves, not necessarily bad, but that we end up elevating to a place that is inordinate, disproportionate to where they should be in our life as we walk with the Lord.
And that becomes a problem. We need to help you identify those things and then learn how to repent of them and what to replace them with.
All right? Let me share this quote with you. Let me make sure I said everything I wanted to in that. Yes. Oh, let me say this. I've hit all around it. Sin, self, and Satan will constantly work to aim your fear, the worship of your heart, toward people, circumstances, and the unknown.
I don't want to skip that part. Because your heart was designed to worship, you will find that your own self, your own heart's default to self, which you constantly have to fight, the pride of life, and that kind of thing.
[20:38] And Satan himself, your arch-spiritual enemy, the world, all of that, sin, self, and Satan, will constantly work to aim the worship of your heart at people, at circumstances, at things, at the unknown.

We're good at worshiping the unknown. We're good at letting the unknown control us when we think that we're in control. We want to control all of the outcomes because the unknown is too much for us to handle.
The insecurities of our own life well up and we start living out of the insecurity rather than the security we have in Jesus. It becomes a big red flag.
I'm not finding my security in Jesus. I'm finding it in me or something else and that is really insecurity. Okay?

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Now let me share this quote with you. You understand this is all for free. We're not in the text yet. Alright. The fear of God implies our constant God consciousness is the way I'm going to say it of relation to God.
[21:50] God, our primary relationship now please look at the highlights here. Our primary relationship is to God and all other relationships are determined by and to be interpreted in terms of our relation to Him.

Now let me tell you what's at stake if we get this wrong and I'm going to use marriage as an example because all of us who are married or are aspiring or in hopes that we will be married need to deal with this reality.
Your enemy, your enemy will exploit the default of your heart and he will take your marriage and he will use it for nefarious devices, schemes, and purposes every chance he can get.
I have 46 years. Am I telling the truth here, brother? In every way he will seek to exploit. See, we need to grab a hold of people like this, you younger people and the folks that are just getting started.
Grab a hold the folks like this and let them speak into your life about how to manage all of these things we're talking about that happen when two sinners come together in an intimate way.
[23:00] Right? Marriage is intimate. The whole thing is intimate. You share moments of intimacy with each other on varying levels. Marriage is soul union in Jesus Christ.

It is two souls being made into one. It's a one flesh relationship. Boy, I tell you what, you take two sinners and put them together. You've got some volatility. Yeah.
Yeah. And fortunately now we have a God whose grace is bigger than that volatility. Bigger than that self. And so God forges you together into a new identity.
And it comes with a lot of wiggling and squiggling and all that kind of stuff. But if you'll allow the Lord to do it. Let me say this again. The fear of the Lord having a high reverence and an awe of God. Standing in awe of the Lord in your heart. He says in this quote, that implies our constant consciousness of relation to God. I have a front lobe awareness that the primary relationship of my life is my relationship to Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.
[24:09] And that relationship should define all my other relationships. and even in a marriage when you get this wrong what can happen is this.

You start living in that marriage in a way that sets your spouse up for failure. Once again, how does that happen? You cannot make your primary relationship on the earth your spouse.
God is your primary relationship. If you want to talk in human terms then okay, I'll flex with you there. But that human relationship, whatever it is, needs to be defined by the Lord.
Now let me go one step further because we are seeing this just overrun our nation. Overrun it. Please, hear your pastor's heart in this.
You cannot, as a married couple, live for your children. That is a huge, huge mistake.
[25:19] Now listen carefully. You are called by God to live with your children, not for them. And brother, I'm looking at you and going, I got grandbabies and you got grandbabies and I might change that for the grandbabies.

No, I'm joking, of course. As tempting as it is to live for the grandbabies, we got to be careful. The primary relationship for you as a married couple is your spouse.
Period. That's in the scripture. So you live as a couple putting the primacy on your own walk with God, husband, and then as you turn in that walk with God to live in the real world and interact with the real world, your wife should be your highest relational priority beyond the Lord.
The highest. Wife, your husband should be the highest spiritual relational priority in your life as you walk with the Lord, not your children.
If you make the mistake of living for your children, either one of you or both of you, what's going to happen when the children grow up and launch? Because that's what they should do.
[26:42] We raise them to launch. We raise them to leave. And then it's just you and your spouse. Now what are you going to do? Are you going to spend how much time trying to figure out who each other are?

I can't tell you how many times I've been in a counseling situation where the marriage is all but done. The children are ready to launch or have launched and they come to me and they sit down and they say, yeah, we have nothing.

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We did not cultivate the priority of our marriage. And we found that in our children we had our identities. What's even more sad is if they launch and you continue to live like that.
Folks, please don't succumb to the devil's tricks under that. We love our children. God, help us. They are gifts from the Lord. We love these beautiful kids.
We love them when they're brats and we love them when they're being beautiful as the Lord loves us. But we cannot live for our kids. We live for Christ and we cultivate an intimacy and a priority with our soulmate.
[27:52] There's only one person on the earth that carries the kind of weight that our spouse does in our life and that is designed by God. Your kids become...

Okay. Your kids become the most blessed people on the planet when your kids are watching you and your spouse live together for Jesus Christ because it takes the power of God's grace in the life of two sinners trying to live that intimately together to overcome sin, self, and Satan so that you can give that picture to the world of how much Jesus loves his bride.
Ephesians 5. So your marriage becomes the picture of Jesus' love for his bride and how his bride is to love him back. The priority of that relationship is what defines human marriage.
It has to. There's more at stake in this than the happiness of your marriage. It's the holiness of your marriage. And all married people face this challenge.
Is that not right, Pastor Greg? We all face it. Please don't think pastors are immune to this. I think we're more targets for it because I think we can use ministry and doing the work of God as an excuse to not nurture our marriage the way we should.
[29:25] Anything can get in the way of that. your marriage has to be that kind of a priority. And the stronger that we have marriages in this room, the stronger and more holy and more God-fearing our marriages are.

Where I have a husband and a wife fearing God together. Nurturing the reverence of God together and not letting anything get in between.
Nothing, nothing, because it's going to try. It's going to work hard to get in there. And friends, husband and wife, you have to work hard and steady to keep that thing cemented like it needs to be.
Or I promise you it will dissolve. Please don't think you're immune. You can stay married and it be miserable. You can stay married and it be empty.
the best gift you can give your kids is a marriage that is sold out to Jesus Christ as you show them what it's like for two souls to come together in Him and overcome the issues of the world to love one another in Christ.
[30:37] You want to love your kids to the max? Show them Jesus working in your marriage. Amen? That's the call. And when we have more marriages in our church, pursuing that, I mean wholesale pursuing that, husbands sold out to Jesus, wives sold out to Jesus, their kids watching this wonder of wonders happen before their very eyes.

Boy, I see dad get upset. I see mom get upset. I see mom and dad get stressed. But you know what I always see? I always see them coming together to come back into the Lord and ask the Lord, what do we do with this?
What do we do with this? What better? You can't give them a better model of how to live life and navigate the world than that. So show them that. Show them the priority of Jesus working in your life.
Right. Alright. Alright. Where does that leave me? Let's apply this to Abraham. Abraham. What would it have been like for Abraham to have God tell him, I want you to travel for three days and this weigh on you for three days of traveling, morning, noon, and night, to get to the place where I want you to kill your son and then set him on fire and burn him up.
what would it have been like for Abraham if God had not been the highest priority relationship in his life? He wouldn't have done it.
[32:23] The only reason that Abraham could do what he did and raise that knife so that the Lord Jesus himself had to stay his hand from coming down into his son's heart was the fact that he loved the Lord.

That's the only way he could do it. He obeyed God because he had a high and holy reverence for the Lord. That's why he did it. When you look back on his life, he was unflinching in his obedience.

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You see a God-fearer in action. Look at this quote up here from John Murray. I thought it was interesting that he used Abraham in his illustration.
God was proving or testing Abraham. Abraham. He was proving him in respect of his fear of God. Abraham's obedience demonstrated his fear of God.
It was actually because Abraham feared the Lord that he obeyed God's voice. And now Solomon, in our passage, he wants you to truthfully assess what you are living for.
[33:28] What defines you? What motivates you to live the way you live? Here's what he's helping us do. Identify your own, not your spouses, not your kids, not your friends, yours.

Identify your own personal earthly vanities. We call those the earthly empties. Idols. Things that you're living for in place of the Lord.
And take prayerful measure of them in light of the fear of the Lord and your own mortality. God is the only true path to true purpose and genuine fulfillment in life.
Now, for us as Christians, that sounds and seems obvious, but it's not. It's not. It's something that we have to work on continually, beloved. And Jesus, Jesus has promised to be with us in it.
Now, Solomon helps us apply some of the many faces of godly wisdom in two primary realms or spheres of life in which we all live and move and have our being.
[34:34] Here's the first one that I want to share with you. It's godly wisdom applied to earthly authority. So this is all his talk about the king. And I think I can move through this fairly quickly. The first thing that we're going to see in this, who is like the wise man and who knows the interpretation of a matter?

It's kind of a rhetorical question. A man's wisdom illumines him and causes his stern face to beam. I say keep the command of the king. In other words, he's saying don't make more trouble for yourself than you already have.
If you go through life bucking authority constantly because you don't like what you see or hear, you're going to be miserable. It's no way to live. Solomon said, believe me, I'm the king. I know what I'm talking about.
You've made an oath before the Lord to walk in godliness. Look, verse 3, do not be in a hurry to leave him. Don't join in an evil matter for he will do whatever, the king will do whatever he pleases. You can kick and scream and do whatever, he's going to do what he pleases. Since the word of the king is authoritative, who will say to him, what are you doing? That would be wrong.
[35:41] He who keeps a royal command experiences no trouble for a wise heart knows the proper time and procedure. A wise heart knows how to deal with authority, especially when you disagree with it and it's having an impact on your life.

Verse 6, for there is a proper time and procedure for every delight, though a man's trouble is heavy upon him. Now he's doing a contradiction there and helping us try to be sober-minded about this. So here's what he's talking about up on the screen. This is the face of discretion. Discretion means wise judgment. You're judging the situations of life wisely, that is, with God's wisdom.
Things come at you, you make judgments, perceptions, interpretations about them that are going to lead to behaviors, you judge wisely. That's what discretion is.
I'll give you a reference, I won't turn there, Proverbs 8, 12. If you just write that down, now it's on the tape, for those of you who will listen to this, because you're not here. Discretion helps you patiently pause, and prayerfully ponder.
[36:44] Then you can prudently promote God's truth in the matters of life. So you ponder, you prudently promote, and you're able to do that because you step back and you pause to think about, alright, what does God's word say?

What is the wisdom of the Lord on this? I don't want to be rash, I don't want to be emotional, I want to ground myself in the truth of the Lord. And so you can use discretion to deal with earthly authority.
This is his point. The context concerns the authority of the king, and Solomon is speaking here as the wisest and most powerful king of his day. There wasn't another kingdom on the earth at this time more powerful than Solomon's kingdom.
Verses 5 and 6 give us the application of discretion concerning authority. How should I deal with authority in my life, Jeff? Well, this is one place you can go and ask.
Let me put it up on the screen. Godly wisdom helps us wisely judge the proper time and proper way of dealing with earthly authority. It follows like this, verse 2, keep the command of the king.

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[37:51] Verse 3, do not be in a hurry to leave him. Don't be rash. Don't use poor judgment because of emotionalism. And do not join in an evil matter.

Wisdom informs your heart and mind. Discretion then guides you in two practical realities. The king says and does what he pleases, and he's backed up in his authority.
authority. He's got something backing him up in that authority that makes that authority have some teeth. So don't get mixed up in that. You need to honor this for two reasons.
First one he gives you, your oath, and because it keeps you out of trouble with authority. The oath most likely concerns allegiance, allegiance that Israelites swore to the king with God as witness. that became part of the monarchy that Israel lived under. The theocracy that was ruled then by the king that they asked for. They had to swear allegiance to the king.
[38:54] And God is saying, you don't need to do that lightly. So some of this applies then and some of this we can bring over into now. Here is how one of the commentators I follow, Dr.

Barak, summed up this instruction. Right here at the bottom of the screen. No matter how many troubles the royal subject experiences due to the king's decrees, he or she must not rush the matter.
That's the issue. And commit an error in approaching the king improperly for much needed relief. Now obviously we need discretion. We need discretion and we need understanding in our approach to the matters of life.
So we have the face of understanding. We have discretion and we have understanding. You see that in 7 through 9. If no one knows what will happen, who can tell him when it will happen?
Well the answer is nobody. There's only one person who knows what's going to happen. That's God. No man then, no man has authority to restrain the wind with the wind.
[39:57] Or authority over the day of death. There's no discharge in the time of war and evil will not deliver those who practice it. All this I've seen.

All this I've applied my mind to. Every deed that's been done under the sun wherein a man has exercised authority over another man to his hurt. I've looked into the injustices of the world and life. I've looked into the ways that we lorded over each other and hurt each other and use our authority to manipulate other people and control them. I've looked into all of it and you know what? You will never figure out the answer to it all because you'll always live under the imperfection of ungodly men.
Always. Always. So look to God. Look to God. Don't ask for something that this world cannot give you and will not give you. We need discretion but that will only come.
We need understanding but that will only come as we follow the Lord. Let me give you a reference and take you there because it's real quick and it's right here. Proverbs 2. Hold your finger there in Ecclesiastes.
[40:59] I want to show you Proverbs 2.11 because this is a place where discretion and understanding are brought together in the application of truth. This is the protection that I mentioned to you in my introduction.

This helps keep us from deceptive and destructive forces of evil in our lives. Proverbs 2.11. Discretion will guard you.
Understanding will watch over you. Do you want to guard your heart? Do you want to know what it is to have a spiritual guard? A spiritual watch?
Maintain a spiritual watch over your heart? Well discretion will provide that for you. Understanding will provide that for you. They come together to do that. These words are not exactly the same. They're very similar. But conceptually they give you a little bit of a nuance on how this works. So discretion is wise judgment.
[42:02] Understanding would then be some of the spiritual skill that you develop as you understand what's going on. You're perceiving it in the Lord. God's wisdom is helping you see it for what it is and peel the layers away and all the camouflage and all that smoke and mirrors.

God's word helps you discern that through that. Understanding then is something that you gain as that happens so that you can then skillfully apply that wisdom in a way that blesses your life.
So discretion is wise judgment and understanding helps you make use of that wise judgment so that you walk in a manner that is worthy of the Lord. You with me? Okay. That's what's going on here.

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Folks that's really neat stuff. That's very practical. In terms of verse 7 back to the Ecclesiastes in terms of verse 7.
No one involved in these matters and situations can know the future. So this makes us all equally helpless to control every aspect of our lives. You know I was just talking with Suzanne.
[43:06] I think it was last night and I was saying to her as I try to lead her and I try to talk with her about our life and what we're facing and all so you know there are many things we cannot control hun.

What we need to do is we need to identify the things that we can and we need to be very perceptive and committed to working those things that we can control in the Lord together.
We need to keep a constant game plan of teamwork and what we can control. I can't control you. I can't control other people. I can't control the future.
There are many things I can't control but I can control the time that I give in ministering to my wife being in the word taking God's truth into my heart turning around and repenting and then using discretion and understanding to live all those kinds of things.
Proof of what I'm saying here is what he offers. Listen it's found in four examples that he gives in verse 8. Look at verse 8. Four examples from life which apply to every single person.
[44:12] You are not able to control the wind. That analogy is you are trying to control life with puffs. Emptiness. You can't do it.

Number two. Not being able to control the day of your death. You can't control that. Number three. Not being able to leave the army in time of war. We have some military guys here.
It's called AWOL. You can't just walk away because you decided I don't want to do this anymore. The fight is too hard. I'm scared. So I'm just going to hightail it. That's called cowardice. They shot people in times of war for stuff like that.
Not being able to use wicked living to save yourself. Wicked living isn't the answer. Sin is not the answer to more sin. To what you did. More sin is not the answer to sin.
It's not. Verse 9. Look at verse 9. All this I've seen and applied my mind to. Every deed. I've seen it all. Solomon applied great wisdom to deeds where someone uses his authority over someone else to their hurt.
[45:16] And his analysis is this. It's that man uses authority in corrupt and selfish ways to hurt other people. If you look back at chapter 7 verse 29. Behold I have found only this that God made men upright but they sought out many devices.

That's it. The heart of man defaults to selfishness. greed. Greed. Pride. Getting it over on the other person.
People can't help themselves. It's their bent. Now we're truly helpless to help ourselves apart from Jesus to deal with this. You know moral people that are not believers. I do too.
But at the end of the day all people who are not a believer all unbelievers have as their primary motive self. You understand that? They're not doing it for the glory and honor of God are they? There's always a hook with an unbeliever. Always. Always. No matter how nice they are. No matter how long you've known them.
[46:20] They're not in it for Jesus. And it would be naive of you to think otherwise. Godly wisdom applied to heavenly authority.

Verses 10 through 17. Godly wisdom applied to earthly authority. Godly wisdom applied to heavenly authority. And this is the face of knowledge.
Of knowledge. And you see some verses there from Proverbs. The fear of the Lord or that reverent offer God in His ways is the basis of a godly knowledge for navigating the matters of life.
Without God's wisdom to guide you, you live by the limits of your own intellect. Without God's wisdom to guide you, you are living by the seat of your pants.
As it were. God reveals Himself to us in Scripture for a reason. But listen folks, it's not an exhaustive knowledge.
[47:19] Everything there is to know about God is not in the Bible. That's impossible. A book cannot contain your God. What did John say? Many, many, many books couldn't contain all the things that Jesus said and did.

You can't. But what can we know? The Bible doesn't contain all there is to know about God and His wisdom, but it does, it does tell us what God wants us to know.

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He didn't leave out anything we need to know. He wrote down what He wants us to know. So the Bible informs and focuses your heart on fearing God.
That's the point. God, this Word is supposed to put before you a holy God that is worthy of your awe, the fear of your heart, the worship and reverence of your heart.
And that should change you and define you throughout your life, no matter what it is. The circumstances come and go and ebb and flow. Guess who doesn't change?
[48:20] God and His wisdom. He does not. He is your rock. He is steady through the whole thing. The earth can shake and quake and God remains steady.

He's the rock. You've heard this before. It's throughout the Psalms. So here's a definition we can work from. The fear of the Lord is a state of mind in which one's own attitudes, wills, feelings, deeds, goals are exchanged for God's.
Do you see that last part? Are exchanged for God's. This is you saying, not my will, Lord, but yours be done. Follow your Lord and Savior. Not my will, but yours.
I exchange it all for you. Verse 10, I've seen the wicked buried and those who go in and out from the holy place. They're soon forgotten in the city where they did all this. And it's futility.
What a waste, he says. What a wasted life. Unbelievers do not intuitively know or understand heavenly authority. They don't get God. They don't get it.
[49:18] They buck it. They don't understand it. In their wicked unbelief, they come and they go. Hear this now. In their wicked unbelief, they come and they go in the holy place of God.

That's interesting. In other words, they are religious. Some of them. They go through the motions of religious belief, but their hearts never change.
Their hearts never change. They flaunt their religious pretense. They disobey God in their hearts. And Solomon says, but they still die. It doesn't add one day to their life living for themselves.
They try. They think that living for themselves is going to make the difference to a better life, a longer life. I'm doing my thing. And Solomon says, that's wrong. That's exactly backwards.
You can shorten your life. You can't lengthen it. You can live in sin so much that sin kills you. But you can't lengthen your life.
[50:20] This is all up to the Lord. He says, you know, they flaunt all this, then they're buried, and no one remembers them. It's tragic, but true. They didn't make any difference for God and His kingdom here.

They just showed up, marked their ticket, left, that's it. Solomon said, you need to be careful. That's futility.
That's vapor. That's nothing. Verse 11, the sentence against an evil deed isn't executed quickly, and so hearts and sons of men are given fully to do evil. We're actually helping them along in this. People don't have any fear of God in their hearts, so what do they do? They drag their feet about executing justice. They corrupt it. They disregard it. Boy, if you look at some of the stuff coming out in the news today about what some of these judges are doing in passing sentences, in some cases, they won't even pass a sentence to people who are obviously guilty.
Slam dunk. Some of them, for terrible things they've done against other people, they get a slap on the wrist at most, and then they're sent off to do it again. And then we see them later, and they say, listen to their rap sheet.
[51:27] And they read all of these offenses, these people have done. You've seen this, right? Solomon says, this is a tragedy, a reality. The reason is this.

I'm going to put it up on the screen. Here's why people do this. There is no heaven in their hearts. They don't have a sense of the authority of heaven in their hearts, or they would do it very differently.
Finally. Verse 12 is the counter to verse 11. It's a response of faith that leads Solomon to confess the truth of what his heart knows.
Those who live in true reverence of God are secure in God's care forever, but not so the wicked because they don't fear the Lord. They don't fear, so they're not secure. And do you know, they live with that insecurity every day of their lives.
constantly trying to fill the insecurity with something from the world that only exacerbates and makes worse what they're facing. Verse 13.
[52:29] The truth of what awaits him is that he experiences the death-like existence of eternal separation from God in hell. But it will not be well for the evil man, and he will not lengthen his days

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like a shadow because he does not fear God.

I know, verse 12, it will be well for those who fear God, those who fear Him openly. You see, you can tell people who fear the Lord.
They live it openly. It's not something hidden. It's very obvious. Unbelievers may not be able to explain what they're seeing in your life because you're living openly before the Lord.
The fear of the Lord constrains you when it needs to constrain you, and it frees you when it needs to free you. That's what it does. Nevertheless, you're living for the Lord, and people see that.
But they may not be able to explain it. They may ask you, what is it with you? And you can tell them. I'll tell you what it is with me. Jesus. Okay?
[53:34] That's a good thing. Verse 14. That's kind of discouraging and confusing in verse 14. Futility done on the earth.

There are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked. Righteous men suffer sometimes like the wicked. But then on the other hand, there are evil men that seem to live a life that should be that of righteous.
And this is futility. He's saying, you know what? I see this kind of stuff and I can't always explain it because some of this just is in the mind of the Lord and I cannot understand it.
I can't go that far. The Lord hasn't made it known. Lord, why do you bless wicked people the way you do? And why do righteous people get cancer and die at an early age and leave their spouse behind?
And you go, well, the Lord doesn't tell us. That's stuff for the Lord. Solomon says, oh, what do we do?
[54:38] So, here's a way we can see this. When the unbelieving person thinks he can lengthen his earthly life by selfish living, he puts himself above others to further himself in a life of selfish ambition.

You've seen this. The ways of God and the matters of life are beyond our searching out. So how does he tell us to live given this reality? That there's much about life that is beyond us figuring out. Well, the key to this is verse 15. Verse 15. So I commend pleasure for there's nothing good for a man under the sun except to eat and drink and be merry and this will stand by him in his toils throughout the days of his life which God has given him under the sun.
That's the key. In other words, all that we can enjoy in this life is a gift from God so we should make it a point to enjoy Him. The God-given enjoyment is the Lord's counter.
That is the counter to what we can't control about the toils and perplexities and adversities of life. It is hard to live in this world for a Christian.
[55:51] But enjoying God, look at the screen now, enjoying God helps counterbalance the harsher realities of this sin-broken world beyond our control.

I watched a little vignette the other day where they asked John MacArthur what does he do, what he does when he gets depressed and he said, I don't know, I've never been depressed. I don't think he was bragging.
Then he explained what he meant. He said, you know, I just try to live in the light that the Lord gives me. I'm paraphrasing him. And so, I don't ask too much and I don't drift over to where I don't do what I'm supposed, I just try to follow the Lord.
And I have the joy of the Lord in that. There's peace in that. I don't get depressed. I don't let things like that overwhelm me. I don't let them do that. They can. Verses 16 and 17 cap it all off for us. They provide the backdrop for the rest of the book. Solomon says, you know, I gave my whole heart to searching, examining, investigating. I intensely labored to figure this all out because the wheels had come off my life.
[56:56] The wheels had come off my kingship. I was the richest man on the planet. I had more than any other human being on the planet blessed by the Lord and the wheels were coming off anyway.

What is that all about? I couldn't even sleep, he says, because I was trying to comprehend God's work in the lives of people and then manipulate it to His own good to make sense of what seemed insensible.
And here's his conclusion. Here it is. You ready? His conclusion. Man cannot discover the work which God has done in the past or the work He will do in the future as it concerns the matters of his life.

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No one can know this but God Himself. Here is the kicker. Leave the past in the past and leave the future to God. That sounds so simple to say. What a challenge.
Now, I want to close out, but I want to give you these principles before I do. I don't want to have to carry this over next week. If you'll bear with me just a few more moments, I want to give you some applications for what I've been saying to you.
[58:01] Alright? There are two primary operations of your heart working against you thinking and acting in the fear of the Lord from living in a way that is most defined by your deep reverence for Jesus.

That's what I'm talking about. Two primary operations of your heart. Now, here it is. Don't miss this. The first is expectations and closely linked is the second, your desires.
Now, we speak about this combination of wants and expectations as the motives of our heart. That's how we sum it up. The motives of our heart concern our expectations and desires, our wants. Motives drive what you do and why you do it. And now, you're starting to see, I hope, by connecting the dots, this is why the fear of the Lord is so critically important to your Christian walk with Christ. Because everything that you think and do is done out of the motive or desires or expectations of your heart. Well, if your heart is set to fear the Lord, if your heart is overcome with awe in the Lord, then you're bent at that time is going to be toward what pleases the Lord.
[59:17] Because you're in awe of Him. You're safeguarding that through discretion and understanding. You're making the application of these things so that the motives of your heart are driven by pleasing the Lord.

Your expectations and desires are wrapped up not in a person, not in a situation, not in a circumstance. They're wrapped up in pleasing the Lord. That's what you want more than anything. Jeff, I want a godly marriage. What Christian doesn't want that? Jeff, I want godly kids. What Christian doesn't want that? Jeff, I'd like to live in the Lord and feel the sense of security in my life and make wise choices about what God blesses me with.
Well, who doesn't? All of that gets convoluted when the loyalties of our heart drift off into worldly things. Even good things that are good in and of themselves, they're fine, but we elevate them to a place like, I want a godly marriage.
Well, if I want a godly marriage so much that I'm willing to sin to get it or sin if I don't get it, I've got to misplace loyalty, don't I? I'm taking a good thing and corrupting it and my heart is prone to do that.
[60:30] I'll do it with my kids, my wife, my work, whatever. Look at this quote. Since motives are such an important part of life, we would expect God's word to speak about them and it certainly does.

In fact, the entire Bible is a book about motivation. The entire Bible. God's wisdom wears many faces. So as a growing believer, you learn to apply those faces in the fear of the Lord to life's circumstances and what it does is it brings you a sense of calm.
It brings your heart a sense of peace and confidence and steadiness because you're standing on the rock. You know that there's nothing that can happen to me or will happen to me, future or whatever, as long as I walk with the Lord that God is not in control of in some manner or another and will lead me through it.
You don't have all the answers but you have the peace of knowing He'll do that. What does our text say? Wisdom softens one's face as a reflection of the softened heart.
That individual becomes more gracious and merciful and forgiving and that's the work of God worth contemplating and being grateful for. Dr. Barak is quoting basically the concept, the construct of verse 1.
[61:45] A man's wisdom illumines him and causes his stern face to beam, to shine. God puts a smile on your face because He put it in your heart and that's how we want to live.

Will you bow your heart in prayer with me? Well, Father, what a sobering text for our lives this morning. Much to think about, much to pray about, much to take in.
I pray for my brothers and sisters to have a sober-mindedness about these truths, Lord. They won't go away. They're going to last for eternity because it's Your Word.
And all of us are going to be evaluated at the end time by the life that we've lived and the works that we've done and how much of that has been done from a heart that fears You, that is in awe of You. So I pray that You would help us to run from sin, that You would help us to repent, and then in our turning away from sin, that You will help us to replace that sin with godliness, with a heart that says,

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Lord, I just, I want to live my life to please You, whatever's left of it, whether it's a day or 20 more years, I want to live my life pleasing You.
[63:00] I want to know what it means and what it looks like and what it feels like to be right in the center of Your will, making my life about You so that I don't waste my life, but I maximize who You are living in me.

Thank You for these blessed, blessed, wonderful truths that come because Jesus gave His life for us on the cross and was raised on the third day.
It is in His name that we pray and for His glory alone. Amen. Amen. Okay. Amen.

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