

## 01-12-16b Ecclesiastes

We're ready now to resume our study in Ecclesiastes chapter 7. This section at which we are currently looking has some, no matter how you translate it into English, it's a little bit awkward. It doesn't flow smoothly like it would if it had been written in English to begin with. So we've stepped back a little bit to see the flow of thought and we find that Solomon is directing our attention and talking about how he directed his attention to look at these different areas of life.

He's looked at areas of personal endeavor, at circumstances, the things of this life, the details of life, and he has looked at the other areas of subjectivity, eyes on people, what they say and what they're thinking. He's going to return to that theme here momentarily. And also eyes on self, obsessing on what is my righteousness, how am I perceived, should I just abandon myself to pursue righteousness at any price, should I abandon myself to wickedness or foolishness at any price.

And there is a principle of balance. It is healthy to examine ourselves. It is healthy to identify wickedness that is in our lives and get rid of it, but not to obsess on it, to belabor our sins, to try to do penance or to atone, to try to somehow make a payment to God or to assuage our guilt complex in some weird fashion is just as much an error as to obsess on our own righteousness.

Now, when it says in verse 17, do not transgress excessively and do not become a fool, why should you die in what is not your time? The penalty of becoming excessively righteous or making yourself overly wise is to make yourself desolate because wisdom is the means to an end. It is the path toward laying hold of that which is eternal. But if you take the path and make it an end in itself, then you're going to wind up desolate.

If you transgress excessively and if you become a fool, you die in what is not your time. And essentially, this is speaking not of physical death, but of operational death. At the point that you transgress excessively, at the point that you get off into some form of foolishness, your ability to bear spiritual fruit ceases.

You're a dead, withered branch. So going to either extreme, to abandon the path of righteousness into error or to obsess on the path of righteousness, either one can neutralize us. There is the Scylla and Charybdis in the spiritual realm, just as there was in the fable of Odysseus.

Well, here in verse 18, and we had a question about this over the break, it is good that you take hold in this and also from this not cause your hand to rest. In the English translations, it sounds like it's talking about the former and the latter, that you've got to kind of retain both of them. There's nothing wrong with that understanding.

What he's saying includes those concepts of not obsessing on righteousness and not lapsing into foolishness and evil. But what he's really talking about is the whole realm of human experience,

from righteousness to transgression. There's something we need to lay hold of.

And literally, it says, it is good, it is tov, that you take hold in this. As you look at the extremes of life, at the obsessions of life, at the passions of life, at the distractions of life, you need to take hold and from this not cause your hand to rest. Because the goal of all of these things, the thing to lay hold of, the eternal Yitron, prophet in all of this, is fearing God.

Remember our scripture reading this morning from Job 28? How does that chapter end up? Just in the same words that we've seen in the Proverbs and in the Psalms, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Fearing God comes forth from them all. That should be the outcome.

Looking at life as it is, realizing that it is cyclical, that nothing lasts, the wind returns, all of the things that Solomon has talked about in these first six and a half chapters ought to point man's attention. Paul sums this up in Romans chapter 1, what may be known of God is manifest in creation, in what can be seen. God has manifested His deity and His Godhead in the things that are around us.

And when we observe human life, when we observe creation, when we observe life as it is, God has given us this eternity in our hearts without which we will never understand the purpose of this life. People are grasping for the meaning of life. We talked about the philosophers and it was another good point that was made during the break because I mentioned Oprah Winfrey and about how the way she keeps her show popular is she does two things.

She herself, she has stated this and you watch any one of her shows and you can see it in action. She has two goals when she puts on a show and these are moments. She calls some of them light bulb moments where you get insight and you say, aha, I understand.

This is why I'm codependent. This is why I'm insecure. This is why I'm whatever it is, whatever your problem is.

Now I have insight into why I am the way I am. It's a light bulb moment. That's why she likes having Dr. Phil on there because he supposedly peels away the layers of people's misconceptions and preoccupations and shows them why they really have relationship problems or why they really are not facing the facts and so on.

The second kind of moment that she strives for are these feel good moments. This is where you have the disadvantaged person who comes through and here's my mentor. All of these where everybody in the audience goes, ah, isn't that sweet, isn't that special.

There's nothing wrong with these things. Not to say that you can't look at something and say that's appreciative, but if it becomes an end in itself, if you're living from one aha to the next, even in the spiritual realm. I have a good friend who's a pastor up in Tulsa and he was recently talking about the fact that there is a category of Christian who is living from one aha moment to the next

even in the study of the word of God.

Like well, I want to find the secret, I want to find the hidden. Now obviously we want to find the truth that is buried in Proverbs chapter 2, seek for it as silver, search for it as for hidden treasure, incline your ear, apply your heart. All of these things can be healthy until you push them to an extreme.

The hunger and thirst for righteousness and the hunger and thirst for understanding of the word of God is a healthy thing, but if it becomes an end in itself, if you sort of begin to live for that light bulb moment of, oh now, and that's all there is, now I understand the passage, now I have the answer, that always confused me, I mean all of us, there's nobody that gets more joy out of coming to an understanding of what a verse or a passage says than me. I am so excited to delve into the word of God and actually see what God says, it has life of its own, it has light, there's nothing like it, it's the best thing there is. But if I as a believer begin to live for the joy of discovery, this is like people who date and the thrill of the chase and the hunter and the prey and the cat and mouse game and the phone calls and the breathing to each other over the phone and the obsessing on somebody and dressing for them.

All of that is the means to an end, courtship and the dating mode is the means to an end. You're supposed to, through this rather horrendous process in our culture, you're supposed to find the person that God has designed for you, that's your soulmate, your opposite number, the person that completes you and without which you are incomplete. And when you find them, that's the goal.

But there are people who either never reach that goal or when they do are dissatisfied with it and they say, oh, I remember the former days when I got excited and I had that pity pet in my heart and I was deranged and couldn't think about anything else and I had that adrenaline rush and the thrill of the unknown and the mystery and all of these things that God put into dating so that you wouldn't give up and say, you know what, I'm just going to go out and plow my field and make my fortune and to heck with it. Well, the same kind of mistake, there are people who are just sad cases of those who have never seen that there's more to life than dating. All they want to do is date.

Now they call them players. Oh, I'm a player, I play the field, I'm playing the game, I'm haunting the singles bars and seeing if I can maneuver somebody back home with me and it's all about the game and not what that's supposed to lead to, what you're supposed to get out of the game and get into real life. And for a lot of people it just never happens.

Or it happens and they screw it all up and then they go back into it again. The same thing in the spiritual realm. It's a wonderful thing to discover what the Word of God says and what it means.

But if you make that an end in itself and if you're just living from one stimulating insight to the next rather than laying hold of the eternal truth and having it be a treasure and a resource that

sustains you and guides you in the calm moments and in the ongoing business of life, that's the goal. We're not here just to be thrilled. When you take that very far you wind up with the entertainment church like we have today where you've got orchestras and audiovisual media and big light kits.

I was looking on the World Wide Web to see the different opportunities that are available in Christian ministry and there are people advertising for lighting engineers and sound engineers and people who know how to work with gels and mixer boards and all this for churches. It's a full time position to be a lighting and mixer board guy for the entertainment production. I mean you might as well just be down making movies or making stage productions.

There are churches that are large enough to pay a staff to put on the show. Same thing with worship leaders who have to coordinate when you read the job description. They're working with the musicians and the skit players and all of these multimedia LCD projectors attached to computers and PowerPoint presentations.

Entertainment. I'm there to be stimulated. I want the show to flash before my eyes and give me a warm fuzzy feeling.

Well that might be okay if after you walk out you come away with an enhanced understanding of God and His Word. Maybe that can be done. I don't think it's necessary but the goal is what's important.

That's what Solomon is talking about here. It's the goal. Don't get wrapped up in righteousness for its own sake.

Don't get wrapped up in the study of the Word of God for its own sake. Don't fall off into transgression and error for its own sake. It is good that you take hold of this and from this do not cause your hand to rest.

Once you get a hold of it don't let go. We have here in Dallas, most of us here have seen a church have a good hold on the importance of the Word of God but they let their hand rest and it slipped away. That same church exists in name only now and is on a completely different track with a completely different view of Christianity and the function and role and purpose of a church.

They had a hold of it but it's not enough to get it once. You cannot let your hand rest. We constantly have to be reminded.

Some people throw things at me for reviewing and repeating some of these truths. Some things probably do get reviewed excessively but this is one thing you cannot review too much. You have to recognize the goal.

Look at the church today focusing on Jesus Christ. Is it good to focus on Jesus Christ? Of course.

But Jesus Christ himself said, I am the way to the Father.

I am not an end in myself. People who stop their Christian life at Jesus have missed the point. No man comes to the Father but by me.

If you get to Jesus and stop, you haven't gotten to the Father and you've thwarted the purpose of the Lord Jesus in coming and dying on the cross. Ultimately it is to bring us to the Father. But we often, it's a human tendency to confuse the means with the end.

There are people, this Dave guy is talking all the time about, well, it's the journey. Just enjoy the journey. As you travel the road, smell the flowers and Walden Pond and all of that.

It's just the road. As long as you're having a good time on the road, it doesn't really matter where you end up. Well, that is satanic, pit of sheol thinking.

It is all about where you end up. Who cares what's on, do you think the road that the Lord walked was a road of tranquility and roses and he was just picking flowers and setting children on his knee and out of nowhere somebody kidnapped him and nailed him to the cross? His road was hard all the way through. Look at the Apostle Paul.

Go over there to Corinthians and read his account of his life. How many times did he get the 40 stripes minus one and shipwreck. Not to say that everybody is going to have a life of disaster and calamity, but don't think that it's all about the journey and it's all about the means.

It's all about the goal. We've got an eternity to enjoy tranquility. We have an eternity to enjoy a lot of things that we just have glimpses of and tastes of now.

This is what Solomon is talking about. He says you've got to grab a hold of this and don't let go. Don't let your hand rest.

Fearing God is what comes forth from these things. All of these things. It's the fear of the Lord.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Remember Job 28? What was the last verse in that chapter? I'm going to turn back there and read it. Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.

We think well evil is being snidely whiplash going around tying women to railroad tracks and it's not. Evil is misappropriating our priorities. Evil is making the means the end.

You can make evangelism evil. You can make the study of the word of God evil. If you make it your goal and the be all and end all rather than the means that it's supposed to be.

So wisdom helps the wise. More than ten rulers are in a city. We talked about the translation of that verb in verse 19.

The translated strengthens but a better translation here is help. You don't need self-help books. You don't need all of these advisors.

You don't need to get the seven tape series from somebody who is going to make you a lifestyle. They have yoga lifestyle. Oprah had yoga people on the other day.

They were all doing yoga, pointing the bottom of their feet at their face on top of their knees and holding their, you know you make the okay sign and then point your palms up to the sky and cross your feet in an odd manner and hum to yourself. This is the road to peace and tranquility. People will find tranquility and will find peace doing that.

A lot of people have and don't think they haven't. They do. They just empty their mind and let the breathe in and breathe out and let the oxygen wash your problems away.

People can do that but what are they doing? They're just sublimating. They're just using a technique to stop thinking about their problems for a while. You can do the same thing with a good stiff shot of whiskey.

You can do the same thing with throwing yourself into activities and staying real busy so that you don't have to think. That is not a solution and it isn't a lifestyle. People make a lifestyle out of weight loss.

There's weight loss lifestyles. There's money management lifestyles. Why is everybody coming up with a lifestyle? There is an innate knowledge in the human soul that there are eternal things.

There are greater and higher things and it's not just getting through your day. It's about arriving somewhere. People just don't know where they're going.

We've got to take hold and not let our hand rest from it. Fearing God comes forth from them all. As long as you center your thinking and make your priority the fear of the Lord, that is the beginning of wisdom.

That is the beginning of understanding and that's how we start to take hold of eternal things and make our life count for something. Wisdom will help us. More than ten rulers, ten advisors, ten princes in a city.

For there is not a righteous man in the earth who does good and doesn't sin. So don't think that there is some advisor out there that's got all of the answers, he's got everything figured out. People do this even with pastors.

There are people who have made their pastor into a saint or an icon or a modern day prophet or something and defer. It's a scary thing. If you all ever do this to me, I'll excommunicate you.

I've gone up on the world wide web and seen people talking about their pastor that they listen to

and his vocabulary and the principles that he makes and it's a scary thing to me and this is why. Because in these conversations, I'm not trying to criticize somebody behind their back. People have posted these conversations on the public internet so I'm assuming they want people to read and react, so I am.

It's a sad thing to me to think that believers would have long conversations and if they ever do get around to talking about spiritual things, instead of saying, well, it says over in Timothy or Paul says in Ephesians, they say, well, you know, pastor so and so says thus and so and he said and he said and my pastor over here, he said this and my pastor said that and my pastor this and my pastor that. But this is like watching somebody, let's say they give a briefing from the White House and you've got Donald Rumsfeld and he's telling you the status of what's going on in Afghanistan but you watch the news and then your spouse comes in and you say, you know what, the TV said that Osama Bin Laden was heard on the radio the other day and the TV said, well, what authority does the TV have? It's just a conveyor of the real authority, the real knowledge is with Rumsfeld. He's the guy that has the facts and is communicating these things.

So it would be silly to say, well, you know, the TV told me that they heard Bin Laden on the radio the other day and they still think he's in Afghanistan. The radio said that the U.S. troops are doing this and that the Marines are doing that. It's not the conveyor, so it's the same bad thing to do to say, well, my pastor says or Sam says or Bob says or Don says or any other communicator of the Word of God as though they have the authority and that they are somehow, there's one mediator between God and man and that is the man, Christ Jesus.

And my goal when I communicate things that I learn from God's Word is that you'll come away with a knowledge of the Word of God, not a knowledge of my theology or my perspective but if it doesn't make sense to you from the Word of God, then toss it out. If it does make sense to you, then give it the attribution it deserves. I'm not, by the way, I'm bringing this up, I'm not reacting to anything I've heard recently.

I didn't overhear somebody say anything, but this is what Solomon is talking about here. To assign undue weight to your pastor or to some guru on TV is subjectivity, it's eyes on people. Cut out the middle man, go to the source.

If it's true, it's because God says it. If it's valid, it's because it's communicated in the Word of God. Go straight to the source.

I used to get, hear professors at seminary marking down papers because someone would cite a secondary source, they would put a point in their paper, they're writing about something and they say, well, this is, I'm footnoting this and it's from such and such a book. But that such and such book was quoting some earlier book. So here is Lewis Perry Schaeffer, but he's actually quoting Augustine.

Well cite Augustine, don't cite Schaeffer, if Schaeffer is just quoting Augustine. Don't cite your

secondary source. And so the same idea is here.

This keeps our focus on the Lord. If it's valid, it's because it comes from God. If it's true, it's because it comes from the Word of God.

And if you're going to cite it, and you're going to rest your faith on it, and you're going to operate on that basis, you need to know where it is in the Word of God. If somebody says, well, why do you think that's so? Or why are you thinking that way, or saying that, or making this decision? You ought to have chapter and verse from God's Word, not, well, you know, my pastor always says, or I heard so and so on the radio, or Billy Graham says, or Chuck Swindoll says, or John MacArthur says, or whoever else might be communicating the Word of God. If it's valid, then we should have it straight from the source.

Take hold of it. Do not let your hand rest. That wisdom will help you more than ten rulers will help a city.

A man, there's not a righteous man on the earth that will do good and not sin. If you start operating on secondary sources, if you start looking to people and placing a lot of value in what people think and what people say, there's all kinds of ways you can go astray. You're either going to make them your guide and be subject to the same flaws and sins that they may have, or you're going to hyper-react to things that they say and you're going to get subjective with eyes on self.

You're either going to have your eyes excessively on them or your eyes excessively on yourself. So it says in verse 21, he says, also all the words they will speak do not take to your heart. Well, who's they? There's a servant later on in the verse, but it hasn't mentioned the servant yet, has it? There is not a righteous man in the earth that will do good and not sin.

So the words that men speak, even though it's singular in verse 20, when he says, there is not a righteous man in the earth, he's talking about all the men in the earth. There's not one righteous, no, not one that is qualified except the man in Christ Jesus who wasn't on the earth when Solomon wrote. So the words that men speak, when you hear people talking, you hear these gurus and self-proclaimed philosophers and wise men, do not take these words to your heart so that you will not hear your servant cursing you.

Now we have a specific case. We've talked in general. Don't be subjective.

Don't have your eyes, in this case your ears, tuned to people excessively because if you get in this habit, if you start really taking to heart and paying a lot of attention to what people say, the smallest comment is going to throw you off stride. Who is the least authoritative person in Solomon's day? It's a slave. It's a servant.

Who is lower than whale dung in the ancient Near East? It's a slave. There's nobody with less credibility, less stature. Nobody goes to a slave and asks them for anything.

We were reading Hornblower last night and Lt. Bush was trying to take a 24-pound bronze cannon and mount it up on a cliff so that he could intimidate these Spaniards and get them to surrender because he could start launching these big cannonballs into their schooner and they would realize they had no way to get out of the bay and so he had to get this one ton chunk of bronze from sea level up to the top of this cliff and so they created a cat's cradle, which is a thick, matted thing made of line and then it has extension ropes, about 20 or 30 of them, for each man to pick up his 80 pounds or so of the load and they can carry this thing up this steep to the top of the cliff. Who did they use for this unskilled labor? They called in the Marines.

They had a detachment of 30 Marines and in the book, this is sort of Bush's perspective, he says, well, these Marines are just dumb animals and they just pick up and heave and then they stop and they pick up and heave and, being a Marine, it kind of hurt my feelings. But from the British sailor's point of view, the Marines are just brute beasts. They're not even thinking.

They're just hunks of muscle in a uniform that can point and shoot and carry things and that's about it. So Bush details the 30 Marines to grab the ropes and they can carry it about 20 or 30 feet and they have to stop and rest and it's blazing hot. It's down in the Caribbean and it's hotter than Gehenna down there.

So they carry it a little ways and stop and they're all pouring off sweat and they've got quite a ways to go, half a mile uphill. But he says, well, that's how the servants were viewed. They're just practically dumb animals.

But if you start being sensitive, oversensitive about what people say, your servant can speak. You say, hey servant, go bring in a calf and slaughter it for the meal tonight. The servant says, you're always making me have to go slaughter the animals.

Why am I always having to get all sticky with the blood? It's hot and smelly and I have to never do it. Why don't they just... And the servant starts cursing the master. Well, it was the ultimate absurdity for a master to be worried about what the slave thought.

Who cares? He's a dumb animal. He's there to do my bidding. He's not there... Princes are the ones that advise you and have the knowledge to steer you in the right path.

Servant is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the guy we just saw in verse 19. It's not an accident that you go from tsar, which is prince, just like the tsar of Russia comes from the very same word. Czar in Russian comes from T-S-A-R, going all the way back to ancient times and that's the word we have here.

These... A prince or a ruler, a wise person, the opposite end of the spectrum is a servant. But if you get used to assigning weight to everything you hear, you'll be walking down the store aisle and hear somebody say, oh, you know, green shoes just look so odd. And you think, wait a minute, I'm wearing green shoes.

And you can feel bad the whole rest of the day. And they may or may not have been talking about you, but some idle comment throws you off stride and you just start spiraling out of control. So keep in mind, keep the human race in perspective.

Everybody is sinful. Everybody is fouled up. There's not a righteous man on the earth that does good and doesn't sin.

So the words that they speak, why does he bring that up? You've got to take what people say with a grain of salt. Don't overthink it. You know, don't totally ignore it either, but don't overthink it.

The words that they speak do not take to your heart so that you don't hear your servant cursing you. You take the most minor, stupid comment. Of course servants are going to curse their masters.

Every servant curses his master. There's not an employee that hasn't looked with a furrowed brow at their boss. There isn't a slave on the earth that hasn't looked at his master and said, I think he is as fouled up as he can be.

There's not a junior officer. There's not a non-con. There's not an enlisted guy that hasn't looked at the leadership and said, those guys don't know what the heck they're doing.

Or words to that effect. Well, how silly. Is the general going to stop and say, you know, the privates are all upset at our battle plan? Well, you're going to be made a fool.

You're going to be made ridiculous if you start listening to your servants cursing you and taking it all to heart. You know in your heart that you've cursed others and what, you know, put it in perspective. Take it with a grain of salt.

He says, all of this I tried with wisdom. I checked it out. I've tried exercising wisdom.

I've tried to curb my subjectivity. I've tried to keep my eyes on important things. I said I will be wise.

I think they put quotes around this in some of the translations. But the real point here, he's not trying to quote himself. It kind of throws you off a little bit to see those quotation marks.

I like to translate it this way. I tried all of this with wisdom. I said I would be wise.

But it was far from me. I couldn't accomplish it. It's one thing to know what's wise.

You've got all kinds of people telling you what's wise. Even the Word of God will tell you what's wise. Remember what Paul says? With my mind I desire the law of God, but with my body I serve the law of sin.

I find that there is a law within me that when I want to do good, I can't. Well, this is Solomon's Old

Testament version of that same idea. I tried this with wisdom.

I said I would be wise, but it was far from me. Then verse 24 says, and this is a literal translation, far away is what that was. That's word for word out of the Hebrew.

Far away is what that was. It's the very same word, the last phrase of verse 23. You've got the same word in the first phrase of verse 24.

It was far from me. Far away is what that was, and deep, deep. Doubling a word in Hebrew emphasizes it.

Dying thou shalt die. Here, rather than a participle and an infinitive, here you have just a noun repeated. Far away is what that was, and deep, deep.

We were talking on the break about, it was a good question, about what is the difference when you look at Job and it talks about the sea and it talks about the deep. Well, there's a different connotation. There's a different implication when you talk about the troubled sea whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

You're looking more at the surface and at the action of the waves and what it can do to boats and how frightening it can be and how uncontrollable it is. When you talk about the deep, it makes you think of things that are lurking in there. Behemoth swims in the deep, and the gates of Sheol, and the seaweed is down in the deep, and you look at the prayer of Jonah and that kind of thing.

The deep has a different sort of connotation. Something that has fallen to the bottom of the sea is inaccessible. It's impossible to get to.

Something that is deep. Job talked about the guys that are looking for silver, and they swing from the ropes and they go down into these caverns and they dig these shafts to try to get at things, but there are some things that are so deep no one can get at them. That's what Solomon says here.

To try to accomplish these things, it's one thing to know that it ought to be this way. It's something else to accomplish it, but it's far away. It's deep, very deep.

Who will find it? So Solomon says in verse 25, I turned myself and my heart, and again, I think they smooth this over in a lot of your English Bibles, but it literally says, I turned myself and my heart, as though they were two separate things, I turned myself and my heart to know and to explore and to intensively seek wisdom. And, the next word is tricky to translate. There is a town in the region of Israel called Heshmon.

Remember Heshmon? Well, this word is from that same root, but it's in the plural. And so this is Heshbon. Let me find it here.

Heshbonon. Or Heshbon. I knew I had that spelled in my mind.

Heshbon. C-H-E-S-H-B-O-N. Heshbon.

This is a fascinating word because it normally means an invention or a device. And so, is Solomon saying, I wanted to intensively seek wisdom and inventions or devices? But it has the idea of skilled thinking. This is used of weapons of war, where somebody figures out how to make a catapult or a battering ram or something to break into a city.

It's used of the artisans in the tabernacle who devised, who figured out how to implement the guidance of God from Mount Sinai on how to make something come to pass. It has the idea of skilled and inventive thinking. So I translate this, ingenuity.

I turned myself and my heart to know and to explore and to intensively seek wisdom and Heshbon. Ingenuity. Well, what exactly is ingenuity? The verb from which this comes is also translated to account or to reckon.

To think. And so you can see this locus of meaning. It has to do with thinking that can implement something.

Thinking that can bring something to pass. So what is Solomon saying? I was trying to reach to implement this wisdom. I tried to do these things that I'm telling you are so good and so wise and I couldn't reach it.

It was too high, it was too deep. So I turned my mind and I turned my heart, turned myself and my heart, to try to seek out the wisdom and to seek out the kind of practical thinking, the ingenuity. Is there a step program? Is there a trick? Is there a secret? Is there an inventive means of making this happen? That's the idea here.

A lot of times when you see in the Old Testament where it says that someone was devising evil against someone. We saw it in Genesis chapter 50. Many, many times.

Or it talks about cunning workmanship in the Old King James. It says there was cunning workmanship in the tabernacle. This is the Heshbon idea.

Well, here, Solomon says, I intensively sought. This is the verb to seek, but it's in the Piel, which is the intensive stem. And I wanted to know evil folly and the follies of Halal in the Piel, which is rantings.

It's sometimes translated boasting, it's sometimes translated madness. Probably your English there has madness. But remember Halal, to praise, and in the intensive it's like excessive praise.

It's too much. It's over the top. It goes from declaring someone's praise to just ranting and carrying on in a strange manner.

I turned myself and my heart to know and to explore and to intensively seek wisdom and ingenuity, an ingenious way to make this happen, a skilled way that most people haven't figured out. And to know evil folly and the follies of rantings, to avoid these pitfalls. Now, which pitfalls is he talking about here? The ones he's just talked about.

Subjectivity in the area of eyes on people, of paying too much attention to what people say, too much attention to what people think, too much attention to how the wicked are getting over and how the righteous are suffering. And he says, I myself found more bitter than death, in verse 26, the woman who is, and in the English here it says, whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are chains. One who is pleasing to God will escape from her, but the sinner will be captured by her.

So he's going to talk about a type of woman and a type of man coming up. And this is going to be the summation of the subjectivity in the area of people. It seems like he's kind of changing subjects in midstream, doesn't it? He's suddenly talking about the woman whose heart is snares and nets.

You say, where did that come from? That's right out of left field. That sounds more like something out of Proverbs. It got dropped into the middle of here.

Beware the seductress and the temptress with her lips dripping honey and all. How does he, when he's trying all these things with wisdom and he says, the thing that's more bitter than death is this woman full of traps and snares. Well, this is going to be the culmination of talking about subjectivity.

What is the ultimate distraction in Eyes on People? It's relationship with a very special person, with a friend or with a lover. And he's going to talk about the woman here whose heart is a trap and a snare. Fascinating words there for trap and snare.

There's also a little bit of a text problem there that I'll talk about next time. But here's the point. We're in the holiday season.

There's a lot going on. There's always a lot going on in our life. As we navigate through the day, the pitfalls, the ditches on the side of the narrow road are subjectivity in the area of Eyes on Circumstances, Eyes on People, Eyes on Self.

It's good to evaluate people. It's good to evaluate ourselves. It's good to set priorities and accomplish tasks.

But if any of those becomes the goal instead of the means to the end of pleasing God and attaining to wisdom, and that which lasts beyond the setting of the sun, then we're neutralized. We're fruitless. We are operationally dead.

And we've ruined ourselves. That's the thrust and the gist of chapter 7. And Solomon is going to talk about the fact that wisdom alone is not enough. We need something more.

Once again, he's bumping his head on the limitations of the Old Testament age. We have that missing ingredient. We have God the Holy Spirit to enable us and to take the sharp sword of the Word and enable us and empower us.

And that's a good, healthy focus for us in this distracting time of the year. Well, let's close in a word of prayer. Father, we do thank You for the provisions You've made for our soul.

In the presence of Your Spirit and the gift of Your Word, we pray that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us and enable us to see the application of these truths in our daily walk. We pray it in Jesus' name, Amen.