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Ecclesiastes 7:1-14

"Some Wisdom For A Better Life"

March 17, 2013

Shall we open our Bibles this morning back to Ecclesiastes 7, as we continue with Solomon looking for life "under the sun," apart from God?

How many of you have ever misjudged anyone? (Laughing) Good. So you sized them up when you first met them only to find out later you couldn't have been more wrong. There was a woman who was waiting at an airport one night. She had several hours before her flight. She had gotten there way too early, and so she hunted for a book in the airport shop, and she bought a bag of cookies, and she found a place that she could sit. And she began to be engrossed in her book but happened, out of the corner of her eye, to see a man that was sitting beside her once in a while would reach into the bag of cookies and help himself to one. Well, she tried to ignore him. It was kind of embarrassing, and so she munched the cookies, and she watched the clock, and this guy was just quickly going through her little bag. And she was getting more irritated by the minute and said, "You know, if I wasn't such a nice person, I might pop you in the eye!" Eventually there was one cookie left in the bag, and he kind of smiled, reached over and nervously grabbed it, broke it in half and gave half to her. (Laughing) She had never been so angry. But her flight was called, and so she got onto the plane and sat down and got her bags out and wanted to get her reading book out. And realized there in her bag was her bag of cookies. (Laughing) Who's the thief now? (Laughing)

Well, it's a good story in the sense that this woman's mistake is often the one we make when we look at the way God deals with our lives. You see the trials and the difficulties and the adversities and the setbacks. We like to call them just "bad breaks," having a "bad week." Couldn't get any worse for me. And, if we were to vote this morning about what we'd like to eliminate from our lives, and we said, "How many of you would like to never have another trial as long as you live?" - we'd all vote unanimously. This is exactly the kind of life that we want, and we deem them bad when, in reality, they may be the best thing for us. And so, we misjudge. We misjudge what God allows in our life. We misjudge God, who should know better.

Back in chapter 1:8, Solomon, in his life "under the sun," had lamented how that having wisdom would bring you great grief. But he had tried all the good stuff.

What everyone would call good, he'd tried. He tried having a lot of money, tried having a lot of power, tried filling his life with pleasure or with things. He even turned to intellectualism and tried to find life in that. And every one of those things left him empty. They didn't satisfy him. They just frustrated him. Well, now here he is led by the Spirit of God to consider the bad experiences and what God might actually want to do through them - in your life. In chapter 7, Solomon is back on track spiritually. At least for a while. He speaks wisely and clearly and assertively, with great confidence. Much like the prodigal son, he comes to his senses for a moment. And he looks around, and he senses there is a better way to live.

And in our fourteen verses this morning, Solomon will give us seven ways we can live a better life - a better Christian life, a better life in terms of what God plans for us. In fact, he uses the term "better" eight times in fourteen verses. But these are teachings in comparative form - very Hebrew poetic in approach. These seven steps, these seven ways, embrace these seven biblical truths - you can live a better life. God says so. You might want to write them down.

Beginning in verse 1, "A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth." Be a person of character. Want to live a better life? Have a good reputation. In ancient days, people used ointment oftentimes just to cover up the smell of daily life. They didn't shower every day like we do. Sometimes they had no access at all to water, so they walked long, dusty, sweaty roads, or they rode on donkeys or camels or horses - none of which makes you smell any better. And so to gather some precious ointment that you could pour upon yourself and provide a sweet fragrance that you aren't so offensive, and your house smells pretty good, and people don't mind being around you, was a blessing. Sometimes it was precious because it was hard to find. It was rare. You remember there in John 12 that, six days before the Passover, Jesus went up to Bethany to Mary and Martha and Lazarus' house, and while they were sitting at dinner, Mary brought out some precious ointment. She poured it on Jesus' feet, and the accountant in the group - Judas - he said, "Look, you could have sold that for three hundred denarii." You made one a day, so for a year's wage. Jesus told him to leave her alone, that she'd always be remembered for this. He had her preparing Him for His death. She was anointing Him with a precious ointment. And Solomon comes along and said, "Look, if you have a good name, it's far better. You want to live a better life? Have a good name. It's far better than smelling good for a while." Or if you will, what you apply to the outside is of less

value than who you are on the inside. The character is, indeed, what makes a name for you. It's important. You want to live a better life? Have a good reputation. If you go outside this morning to the parking lot, and you see somebody's brand new Porsche, you don't think junk. You think fast and quality and price, probably - because it has a name for itself. Right? You relate your understanding to the name that it has created. Your name or character is important to you if you're going to live a better life. And Solomon's advice is right, it's biblical. Have a good reputation. Perfume may attract people initially. "Oh, who smells so good in here?" But that stuff wears off, and then you've gotta put it on again. It doesn't last. Yet your character is permanent, it's dependable, it's long-lasting, it endures. You ever walk by a restaurant when you're hungry? We were down - yesterday afternoon - at the beach, and we hadn't eaten lunch. Everything smells good when you're hungry, right? Doesn't matter what kind of restaurant it is, you just go, "Oh, we gotta eat!" But when you walk into the restaurant, things often change. It's dirty, the menu's awful, the food doesn't taste very good. One is the perfume, but the other is reputation. And the places you'll go back and eat again and again and again are places that have a name for themselves. They have good food, and they keep the place looking nice, and they serve well, and they're not too expensive, and, "Boy, I just always get more than I need." They have a name. It's not just the perfume, it's not just the outward that draws you. But it's how they serve, they have a consistent good menu and a good reputation. So, how you live determines how you're known. When your name comes up, what do people think? What's the first thing that comes out of their mouth when your name pops up? How do they respond? You know, we care about what other people think, and we should in regard to having a good name because it's far better than a temporary show.

The rest of verse 1 says, "the day of your death is better than the day of your birth." Now, I don't want you to pull that out of the context and forget the first part of the verse because they're tied in couplets. But his point is, "Look, if you live a good life, a good reputation, then the hope of every parent is fulfilled on the day of your death." You lived a good life. You lived a faithful life. Indians had a good saying. They used to say, "At your birth you cried while the world rejoiced. At your death the world will cry, but if you've done it right you'll rejoice." So, to the believer, live it well now - the reward is waiting. It'll get better - not worse - for you.

Second point - Attend a funeral and pay attention. Verse 2, "Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all

men; and the living will take it to heart." A house of mourning, in our terms, is a funeral or a cemetery. That's the end of all man. In ancient Hebrew cultures, you buried the person who died the same day, but then for seven days, everyone would gather at your home to comfort you - to sit with you, to help you through a very difficult time. Now, you read this, and you want to say, "Solomon's lost his mind! Who would rather not go to a birthday party than a funeral?" It's interesting. We do a lot of funerals and weddings here. People always come early for funerals because they want it over, and they always come late for weddings. "Hey, it's going on all day.....it's a happy day, we're gonna eat and dance, and it's gonna be great. We're gonna laugh." "Funeral's.....come on, let's go, get it started....."

But Solomon speaks with wisdom - for in attending a funeral, we are reminded of the temporary nature of our life, that death is inevitable. It's inevitable, and we should live accordingly. In fact, notice what he says at the end of verse 2 here, "the living will take it to heart." Better that you go to a funeral than to a house of feasting because the end of all men is to die. The living will take it to heart.

Today, 153,000 people are going to plan for a funeral, or at least they're going to have somebody plan their funeral. During the hour that you're here, 6,400 people will die, and it'll happen every hour of every day of every week of every month of every year. One day, you're going to be that statistic - 6,399 people are going to die that hour, plus you. So, we are benefited - we'll live a better life - if we take that into account. It is of greater benefit for us to realize that our life is short. A walk through a cemetery is of more value than a weekend in Vegas because you'll find that you will live life far differently and more wisely as you consider your life and the time that you are given. You won't hold on to your anger. You may not be able to get it worked out. There's no time to waste on worthless things. My life is short. I've got to "redeem the time. The days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

Solomon's right. The statistics of death are pretty impressive - one out of one dies. People are dying to join the club. I think it was Daniel Hawthorne who said, "A grave will preach a short sermon to the soul." So if we're going to die, we better take life seriously - at least understand that there's a better way to live than just laughing foolishly while judgment and death one day arrive unannounced and without adequate preparation being made. The Psalmist says in chapter 90:12, "Lord, teach me to number my days so that I can apply my heart to be wise." Better way of life.

Thirdly, embrace sadness, and let it have its affect on you. Verse 3 says, "Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better. The

heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth." Now, again, it is a comparative designed to speak to you about living a better life. The Bible is filled with calls for you to be joyful. God wants His people to be filled with joy. The old "laughter is good medicine" is true - it's good for the body, it's good for the spirit. You will read in Proverbs 15:15, Solomon writing, "He who has a merry heart has a continual feast," that "a merry heart will make a cheerful countenance" (Proverbs 15:13). God wants you to be joyful. But in comparison to how do you learn to live a better life, Solomon says you will learn more in times of sorrow - in terms of your heart and your condition of your heart before God - than in times of great laughter. In other words, those are places where you grow. Times of laughter are usually times of rest, right? We abandon ourselves and release our worries and tensions. But sorrow brings evaluations that you can only make when you're sorrowful; assessments that are important as can be that we will absolutely avoid until we have to consider them. They will push us - things that we determine will have a life impact, but we won't look at them until there is sorrow. And laughter, let's face it, oftentimes hides the - it's like a veneer over a bunch of paint. Look at the comedians, sometimes, and the way they live, but - oh, they laugh, but are they happy? No.

Jesus comes along in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:4, and He said, "Blessed are those who mourn," Really? "For they shall be comforted." Sounds ridiculous on the surface, but it isn't because to be mourning is to look for answers. And in the context there, Jesus is talking about man mourning over his sinfulness, over his inability to change his heart, to correct his behavior, to make things better.....promises he can't keep. And in mourning over his sin, the Lord comes with His solution, and I find life. I'm comforted, and I get saved. Sorrow is one of life's best teachers for it boils things down to the basics, and it pushes you to look at the reality of things. There's an old Arab saying that "sunshine every day makes a desert." It's a good thing to throw a little rain into those hot days. Here's what Robert Browning, the poet, wrote, "I walked a mile with pleasure. She chattered all the way but left me none the wiser, for all she had to say. I walked a mile with sorrow, and never a word said she. But oh, the things I learned from her as sorrow walked with me." I don't know if you knew that was biblical, but it is. Let sadness have its work. You'll live a better life.

Verse 5 says, be open to wise rebuke, or be teachable. You want to live a better life? Be teachable. "It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than for a man to hear the song of fools. For like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the

laughter of the fool." It's empty. "This also is vanity." How many of you like being criticized? Has anyone ever come up to you and said, "Hey, can you just tear into me. I haven't had anyone put me in my place in a week or two." (Laughing) You remember that when you were young. We don't like it, do we? I saw a mom with one of her daughters last week after service, and she was correcting her daughter who had done something wrong, and all I saw was the little girl rolling her eyes. And then I heard the words, "Whatever." (Laughing) And I thought, "That's perfect. That's exactly like us." You grow up, your attitude doesn't change. Right? We don't like being corrected. How come the police officer, who hands you that little paper, is always wrong, and you're always right? Look what Solomon says. "A rebuke from a wise person is better for you than to be praised and sang about by fools who really could care less about you." In fact, in his own poetic style he said, "You know, the praise of fools is kind of like throwing thorns in a campfire. Being so dry, they burn quickly. They snap, crackle and pop. They're quite a show, and then they're gone. And then you need to throw more into the fire to keep it going." Yet, what happens when someone who cares for you rebukes you? Points out something they see clearly in your life, and you listen. Man, that can change your life forever. It can improve you forever. You want to live a better life? Be open to rebuke. In Hebrew there's a great play on words - the Hebrew word for song is *shir*, and the word for pot is *sir*, and the word for thorns is *sirim*. So it sounds pretty, but the lesson is the same.

When Solomon's father, David, was rebuked by the prophet Nathan about his shenanigans with Bathsheba, he had been in hiding for over a year. This lovechild wasn't seen in public, and neither was father David. In fact, he will write in Psalms 32 and 51 about his depression and the difficulty and how he couldn't sleep while Absalom was working the crowd outside the palace. "Hey, dad would come out if he cared about you. Apparently he doesn't, but I do. So follow me!" And Nathan took the big step of rebuking a king who could take your life, and the rebuke that David heard and listened to changed his life. It brought David out of that depression. He would later write in Psalm 141 about it, about the deliverance that God had brought, about the help that God had been. "Rebuke a wise man," you'll read in Proverbs 9:8, "he'll love you. Correct a scoffer, he'll hate you. Rebuke a wise man, he'll love you." David wrote there in Psalm 141:5, "Let the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it. For still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked." David wanted to hear. That was the result of being rebuked. He became a better man for it. Paul, in Antioch, saw Peter playing both sides of the fence when those from

Jerusalem - who were not so sure Gentiles should be saved yet - came into town. He was eating with Gentiles, having some pretty good Gentile burgers or something. But the minute he saw them, he moved to the Jewish table, the Jewish believer table. A tough transition time. Barnabas got caught up in it, man. He didn't know what to do. And Paul went, "Hey, seriously, if Jesus is the Lord, will you walk with Him?" He called him out publicly. It changed Peter. Peter would write about it in his epistles - about how Paul had been given the wisdom of God. If you want to live a better life, be willing to hear constructive God-led rebuke from those who will be honest with you rather than just the praises of men who could care less about you. Sometimes we need a hug. But other times, a kick in the backside ain't so bad.

John Wesley told a story of preaching every week, and he said there was a woman in his congregation who was just constantly critical. He said one morning he had come out to preach, and she was in the front row with scowl completely engaged. And every time he looked at her through the service, she was just doing like this.....big frown on her face. Well, he had worn one of those - in those days, those little bow ties that have the strings that hang down, you know? And so after the service, he went to her and he said, "You don't look too happy today." And she said, "I'm not." He said, "Well, what seems to be the problem?" She goes, "Your tie is completely out of whack. It's way too long, it looks awful. It's totally distracting." He said, "Well, I'm real sorry about that." And he asked one of his assistants to go get a pair of scissors, some shears, and he came back with it. And he gave it to the woman and said, "Please. Cut it to your liking." And so she did. She straightened it out. And he said, "Are you happy now?" And she said, "Yes. That's fine." He says, "Well, could you give me the shears for a moment? And I'm sure you wouldn't mind a little correction. Your tongue offends me." (Laughing) "If you could just stick it out a little, I would trim it to my liking." It's not such a bad deal, sometimes, to be told you're off track. Right?

So, look, rebuke is better than praise. Praise will make you feel good, but it won't change you. Rebuke will. It'll confront you with you. It's a good thing if it comes from godly people who care about your life. Want to live a better life? Be willing to receive a rebuke.

Next, verse 7, learn to wait patiently upon the Lord. "Surely oppression destroys a wise man's reason, and a bribe debases the heart. The end of a thing is better than its beginning; the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools. Do not say,

'Why were the former days better than these?' For you do not inquire wisely concerning this." Now, he starts by - in verses 7 and 8 - saying that the long haul is superior to any shortcut. And he mentions some of them - oppression and bribery. He said, "That'll debase your heart. That won't bless you. That'll cause you to try to take a shortcut, even in a sinful manner, to get what you want. That's not wise." What is wise? Well verse 8 says - sticking with a thing until it's over; seeing it through to the end; waiting it out; playing by the rules; trusting in the Lord. That's better. That's better than shortcuts. That's better than some way around. The end is better. Why? Well, because in the end, you get everything you've been dreaming about. The work is over. You've made it.

I did a wedding, a few weeks ago, for a couple that - I've never seen people put more time and effort into a wedding. It was beautiful. But all I could think to myself is, "What must this have cost?" And, "How much time must this have taken?" And so, at the reception, I said to the groom, "Well, all this planning and look - 45 minutes, it's over!" That's what I was thinking during the wedding. "Well, we're done!" And he said to me, "It's worth it." I said, "Why?" He said, "I'm married!" All that planning. And by the way, most of the women do the work. I asked the guy, but I'm sure he had nothing to do with it. (Laughing) Pretty sure. He didn't care that all of that work went in because the end was better than the beginning. Yes, it only took a few minutes. But in the end, he was married to the woman that he fell in love with.

But if you're going to get to the end and find a better life, you're going to have to wait upon the Lord with much patience. And that's Solomon's point. The end is better. Don't take a bribe. Don't try to reason with your heart that you can make this go quicker. Wait upon the Lord, verse 8 at the end, "The patient in spirit is better than the proud" or the angry or the one who hastens, tries to push things along. How many projects do you suppose have come to nothing because somebody just ran out of patience? Or how many relationships end in disaster because someone has a short fuse, and they get impatient and they get angry, and they want to quit? The value is not starting well but finishing well. Most people start well. "Oh, I'm excited about my new diet." Till lunch, pretty much. (Laughing) Patience is one of the most important things you and I can ask the Lord for - can learn. Have you ever prayed for patience? It's weird, isn't it? Because you're impatient about getting it, aren't you? "Lord, I want patience - now!" It just doesn't seem to make sense.

I heard a young man asking the pastor for prayer for patience, and he said, "Well, could I pray for you right now?" And the young man said, "Of course." And he said, "Lord, give this young man plenty of trials and setbacks and difficulties." And the young man said, "Whoa, whoa, wait a minute! What are you doing?" He said, "Well, I'm just honoring your prayer request." And then he read him James 1:3-4, "the testing of your faith produces patience. If patience has its perfect work, you'll lack nothing." "I didn't ask for that. I didn't want that." Jesus said of the parable of the sower, where the seed of God's Word fell on a soft and willing heart, He said of them there in Luke 8:15, "They hear the Word of God with a good heart, and they keep it and bear fruit with patience." The Lord said in Luke 21:19, to the disciples, "By your patience possess your souls."

The long haul is superior. The end is better than the beginning. Patience isn't something, though, you can go to school and learn. It's not a textbook. "What are you studying right now?" "Patience." You don't learn patience in school. You learn it in life. It'll serve you better in this life if you keep at it and maintain relationships and finish the hard jobs and look to the end. It'll remove the "quit" from you, but you've gotta learn it. And you learn it by trusting in the Lord.

In impatience, people - verse 10 - sometimes say, "Well, what about the former days? What about how it used to be?" And Solomon says, "That's not smart because literally today is better than yesterday." You know, when life gets hard, many people reach back to past days - claiming it was better then. We've been doing the Exodus on Wednesday nights. There were folks in the wilderness going, "Man, Egypt was great!" Really? Are you absolutely out of your mind?! When the second Temple was built with Nehemiah, it said that the old folks who remembered the first Temple began to weep. "This is ugly. This is small. This is stupid. This is - I don't even like it. Oh, the first was glorious." Young men that hadn't seen the first one rejoiced because this is all that they knew. Nehemiah said, "The second Temple had more glory than the first because it was to the second Temple that Jesus came - not the first." I hear people say it all the time, "Remember the good old days?" Or the "back in the day...." I'm convinced that the "good old days" is nothing more than a combination of bad memory and a good imagination. (Laughing) If it was so good, why did you need to get saved? Why didn't you just stay there? Eatin' them Egyptian leeks. But our view shifts, doesn't it? We become cloudy if we look back like that. If you remember where you came from, you'll not seek to go back there. Paul said so to the Hebrews in chapter 11:13-16 when he was speaking about those who lived and died by faith that hadn't received the promise yet. They

saw them afar off, they embraced them, they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth, and they who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. If they had called to mind the country from which they had come, they might have had occasion to go back there, but they don't. They're looking for a better country, a heavenly country, which is why God is not ashamed to be called their God. He has prepared a city for them. The "good old days." Really? Time diminishes reality. It chimes over it. One day you'll look back at these days. These will be the "good old days." So what are you doing with them? The good old days were good because God was working in them. They can be good now if God is working in them.

I always worry when I say to people, "How are you doing?" and they start telling me what happened in 1970. They have to reach back that far to tell you what the Lord did - rather than saying, "Well, yesterday as I was praying, here's what God spoke to my heart, here's what God is doing." It's not wise to look back and wonder why it's not like now. These are the "good old days," Archie Bunker, these are the "good old days." It's an old people joke. (Laughing) Three of you laughed. It's the end that's better, not the beginning. Right? We need the best days of our life now.

Verse 11, let wisdom be your confidence and defense in the world. "Wisdom is good with an inheritance, and profitable to those who see the sun. For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, but the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it." Here's what the New Living Translation reads - same two verses, "Being wise is as good as being rich. In fact, it is better. Wisdom or money can get you just about anything, but it's important to know that only wisdom can save your life." Wisdom will help you to know how to handle an inheritance. God's wisdom, now, he's speaking about. But it exceeds the value of any inheritance because you can lose an inheritance. You can spend it poorly or invest it unwisely or just get it stolen. But the wisdom that God gives to you maintains its value, eternally, if you'll hang onto it. It's a knowledge of God that money can never buy. You can't buy wisdom. So Solomon said, "Wisdom is the main thing." Here's what he wrote in Proverbs 4:1-9 - to his son, "Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine: do not forsake my law. When I was my father's son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he also taught me, and said to me: 'Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live. Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not

forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honor, when you embrace her. She will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver to you.' " Get wisdom. We think of wisdom, and we think in terms of IQs or SAT scores or how many degrees you have, but that has nothing to do with biblical wisdom. I know plenty of guys with lots of degrees that ain't so wise. They're dying by degrees. The perfect argument is Solomon. Solomon was given by God, as a young man, wisdom greater than anyone who had ever lived had, and here he is writing this book - as dumb as he could be because he had walked away from the wisdom God gave him. Wisdom has everything to do with the place you give God and His Word in your life. And the greater wisdom is to make it all about Him. Wisdom can make you live skillfully in life. It can be a defense to you when the world says, "Here, this is life." You go, "No, it's not! This is life." It can keep you. It can keep you on track. It can defend you against error. It can draw you away from the things in the world that will harm you. But you are wise when God is your Lord, His Word is the light to your path. If you're here every Sunday, and your head is filled with information and you don't apply it, you're not very wise - at all. A better life is to let God's Word guide your life.

And finally, I think this is number seven. Always consider God in everything. Verse 13, "Consider the work of God; for who can make straight what He has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider; surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, so that man can find out nothing that will come after him." Now, the word consider means "to contemplate." It's more than just think about it. It means "think about it for a while." Right? Or "keep it in mind." And here's the good news about your life as a believer. There is a providence in your life because God promises to watch over every bit of it as your Heavenly Father, who is for you and not against you, who will finish the work that He began. He's all in with you. There's a providence about it. "Who can make straight what God has made crooked?" God will act definitively and clearly and without challenge. And wisdom tells me to fall in line with the will of God and His oversight and that I might rest in His care. I don't need to strive. I need to abide. I need to have a yielded life. His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And keep in mind, according to what we read here, that through adversity and prosperity, God is at work. When He blesses you, rejoice. Thank the Lord! He's been so good to me! When adversity comes, thank the Lord! He's being so good to me! Do you get what He's doing? No! It says so at the end of verse 14, "No man

can know what's coming next," but my rest comes in knowing God knows what's coming next. So I consider Him in everything, and my best move is to hand my future - which is unknown to me and know that it is not unknown to Him - and I can live for Him and rely upon Him who knows both me and my future and works all things together for my good. You know your eternal future, but you don't know what tomorrow holds. You can make plans, but God can overrule them. His eternal plan is far better than your five-year plan. And like a doctor, he'll write a prescription and go, "Here, you need this." From feasting to mourning, from laughter to sorrow, from praise to rebuke - enough blessings to keep you happy, enough trials to keep you humble - just where you need to be. He knows when it's time to bless you to keep you going and when it's time to make you sweat. Because His interest is in you. Consider God in all that you do.

You know, Job, when he sat there scraping himself with a potsherd and he was covered in boils and he sat amongst the ashes, it was his wife who said in Job 2:9, "How long, Job, are you going to maintain your integrity? You should just now curse God and die!" And Job said (verse 10), "You're speaking like a foolish woman. Can I accept good from God and not accept adversity?" And then you read the words, "In all of this, Job did not sin with his lips." He got it. God sometimes brings pressure so that He can bring us to Himself. He's in charge of our temporal state with a purpose of blessing us spiritually. That guy, Agur, that wrote Proverbs 30, said to the Lord there in verse 8, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." "I won't want to be so poor, Lord, that I'll think about stealing from someone else, and I don't want to be so rich that I'll forget about You." Keep the tension high on both sides. It's a good prayer.

So Solomon says God will deal with us in times of blessing and prosperity, difficulty and adversity. The whole intention is you can be dependent upon Him so you don't go off on your own. So, look, don't make the same mistake the woman at the airport with the cookies made. Don't misread your life - the down days, the up days, the good days, and what we would label as the "bad" days. God will work them all out. In them you will find a better life. It's where you're changed, it's where you're molded, it's where you're made. So quit misjudging God. Let Him have His work.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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