

POWER HOUR

10/4/2026

Lesson Text:
Ecclesiastes 9:11-18

Related Scriptures:
Ecclesiastes 2:12-16; 7:11-14:
Proverbs 15:14-17; 16:32-17:1
& Psalm 33:12-22

“WISDOM OVER STRENGTH”

NLT TRANSLATION

Golden Text: So even though wisdom is better than strength, those who are wise will be despised if they are poor. What they say will not be appreciated for long.. Ecclesiastes 9:16 NLT

Time: between 971 and 931 B.C.

Place: Jerusalem

Ecclesiastes 9:11-18 NLT

¹¹ I have observed something else under the sun. The fastest runner doesn't always win the race, and the strongest warrior doesn't always win the battle. The wise sometimes go hungry, and the skillful are not necessarily wealthy. And those who are educated don't always lead successful lives. It is all decided by chance, by being in the right place at the right time. ¹² People can never predict when hard times might come. Like fish in a net or birds in a trap, people are caught by sudden tragedy. ¹³ Here is another bit of wisdom that has impressed me as I have watched the way our world works. ¹⁴ There was a small town with only a few people, and a great king came with his army and besieged it. ¹⁵ A poor, wise man knew how to save the town, and so it was rescued. But afterward no one thought to thank him. ¹⁶ So even though wisdom is better than strength, those who are wise will be despised if they are poor. What they say will not be appreciated for long. ¹⁷ Better to hear the quiet words of a wise person than the shouts of a foolish king. ¹⁸ Better to have wisdom than weapons of war, but one sinner can destroy much that is good.

INTRODUCTION

Do you have cynical, unbelieving family or coworkers? Ecclesiastes helps us

step into their shoes for a moment and consider the world from a strictly “under the sun” perspective. When we do this, we see a world that is unpredictable and unfair. The people we would expect to succeed often do not. Ultimately, no amount of might, intelligence, or riches can safeguard one from seemingly arbitrary events. Catastrophes occur haphazardly, and even if we are somehow able to avoid natural disasters, disease, and accidents, in the end we will still all die. Yet despite all this, wisdom has value, especially when we consider the Creator.

Life is not pointless, as the author will later conclude (Ecclesiastes 12). Reading the sections of Ecclesiastes that accurately portray an “under the sun” perspective should not discourage us. Rather, it should motivate us to love our unbelieving friends and family for whom life seems meaningless.

1. Strength and power are overrated (Ecclesiastes 9:11-12). Think of today's symbols of success: celebrity status, wealth, educational and athletic achievements, political and religious positions, and Internet notoriety. Power is seductive! The author of Ecclesiastes pointed out that a projected winner in an athletic event does not always prevail, military prowess does not always translate to victory, and skill or education does not always bring wealth, success, or fame (vs. 11). From the under-the-sun perspective of someone who does not know God, it seems as if things happen according to chance. The human condition renders everyone vulnerable to disappointments (vs. 12). Even with the investments of time, money, and work, the risks of failure and loss loom. We are susceptible to personal failure and unforeseen happenings. Knowing this should prompt us to trust God, who rules over even the seemingly random events of life.

2. Wisdom is often underestimated (Ecclesiastes 9:13-15). The author observed what happened in people's lives, how they interacted and behaved, and how society functioned under the sun (vs. 13). The wise person learns from life experiences and studies the rise and fall of people and civilizations. Being watchful of how the world works helps us make sober evaluations and set realistic expectations. The author further explained how a mighty king tried to seize a city with military might while a wise man rescued his people (vss. 14-15).

Wisdom accomplished more than mere strength.

3. The wise are often overlooked (Ecclesiastes 9:16-18). Wisdom is better than wealth or power (vs. 16). Frequently, the way of wisdom is considered old-fashioned or overlooked as irrelevant. Fools often seek control through conflict by manipulating truth to gain power. They live by the premise that the ends justify the means. Often the loudest voices in culture peddle folly. Simply having a large following does not guarantee that anyone—whether an author, podcast host, or television star—is wise. On the other hand, the wisest voices quietly stand (vs. 17). Social media's allure is likewise attractive but full of empty foolishness. The most stable voices in culture stand upon God's eternal Word, which has withstood the test of time and has never been disproven. By it, God's people have been able to withstand fiery persecution. Wisdom is far better than military conquest and political power, but one rogue heart can cause great destruction (vs. 18). Yet we should not despair, for the author reminds us that a single wise man can also do great good when he told us the story of the poor wise man saving a city! Wisdom is necessary, but all human knowledge fades in the light of eternity (Ecclesiastes 2:12-16). We will all die and be forgotten some day unless Christ returns first. Therefore, the wise fear the Lord, live for His glory, and rest in His unfailing strength.

PRACTICAL POINTS

We should not assume that we can accurately predict what will happen (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

All people experience bad things and death. We do not know how much time we have left (vs. 12).

We should accept that people will forget us after we die (vss. 13-15).

Even from an under-the-sun perspective, wisdom has value (vs. 16).

Someone may be well known and popular without being wise (vs. 17).

We should be careful about how we behave toward others, for it is easier to destroy than to do good (vs. 18).

CONCLUSION

Since we should seek wisdom above everything else the world values, we need to find out how to obtain this wisdom. Solomon tells us in Proverbs 9:10: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." So fearing the Lord is the starting point in gaining wisdom. But what does it mean to fear the Lord? It means to have respect and reverence for Him along with a sincere desire not to offend Him. How does fearing the Lord lead to wisdom?

Fearing the Lord also means taking Him and His Word seriously. It means we do not regard His Word as mere suggestions but as commands. How might the idea of taking God seriously show up in our daily lives?

Let us determine to fear God and take Him seriously in all areas of our lives. If we do, we will be wise.

Next week, we will see that wisdom extends to every area of our lives – even our money. ***Proverbs 22:1-16 'Wisdom and Money'***.

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