

ECC. 7:15-29 - DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

THE SEARCH FOR WHAT IS RIGHT. - ([SERMON MP3](#))

Solomon wrestled with the question of why the righteous die early and the wicked die young.

- *What “good” people do you know personally who died young (7:15)? What “evil” people lived long?*
- *What other situations have you witnessed that left you feeling a similar way?*
- *What must we believe about God when questions like these trouble us? See Job 27:2-6, Isa 40:13-14, 55:8-9.*

Solomon tells us how to live in the face of life’s difficult questions. Do not be overly _____ or _____ and do not be overly _____ or a _____.

- *In these admonitions, Solomon shows us two temptations we often drift into. The temptation to try harder to earn God’s favor or to the temptation to ignore God’s law and live however we want. Ultimately this is presumptuous self-righteousness and foolish wickedness.*
- *Why do you think it is easier to have a higher opinion of yourself than you should (7:16-18)? What are some of the motivations that lie behind this? Why can self-righteousness destroy you?*
- *Why does God view self-righteousness in the same light as wickedness? See Luke 16:15, 18:13-14.*
- *How can you cultivate a heart of humility before God and others? Read Genesis 3:17-19, Luke 18:9-14.*

The problem with self-righteousness is that it seeks to earn God’s favor by doing good works. Ultimately, it is a form of karma, and Solomon attacks it in this chapter.

- *The concept of karma makes up much of the world’s religions. Karma says that whatever you put out in your choices will come back to you. If you follow the religious rules, then in the end good things happen to you. If you don’t follow the rules, bad things happen to you.*
- *Are there any patterns of thinking in the evangelical church that reflect more of karma than the truth? How have you allowed karma to creep into your view of God?*
- *How and where does karma fall apart? How is the gospel better than karma?*

Solomon says, “there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.” In Ecc. 7:20-29, Solomon takes time to point out several dimensions of the sinfulness of our hearts. Why do you think he spends so much time doing that?

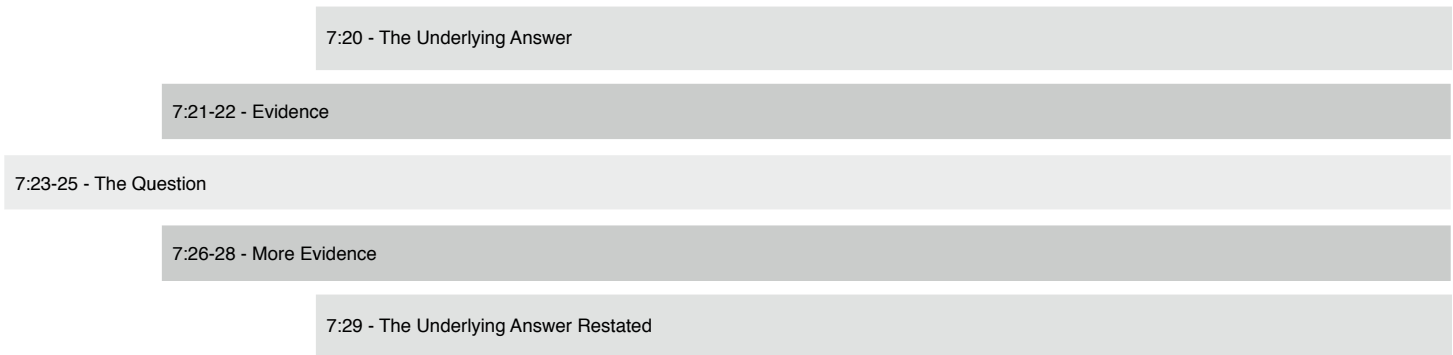
- *Think about the following quote: “The depravity of man is at once the most empirically verifiable reality but the most intellectually resisted fact.” (Malcolm Muggeridge) Do you agree? How is it true?*

- *How do you try to resist that fact? Think about your behavior, thinking or speech. How can you gain a more accurate view of your own sinfulness?*
- *This truth is not meant to discourage us. How is a healthy embrace of this truth the path to true hope?*

Solomon proves his point about our sinfulness by pointing to our hearts when we hear others speaking about us. (7:21-22)

- *When have you been overwhelmed by someone’s sin against you (7:21-22)? How does remembering your own sinfulness first help to give you freedom to hear sinful or critical words from others? Why, or why not?*
- *Are there other conflicts in your life where being more aware of your own sin would allow you to better love and serve someone? Be prepared to share a situation with the group.*
- *How can an accurate view of our sinfulness be a benefit? Of what does it ultimately remind us?*

Look at Ecc. 7:20-29. The question being addressed in this passage is placed right at the center, with the answer and evidence for it arranged around it. Use the chart below to discover the meaning of Solomon’s quest. Try to summarize each part:



- *Ultimately, why is the world the way it is? Why has God barred access to finding meaning?*
- *If man had remained in God’s intended state of uprightness, what would we have not needed to do?*
- *How is our search for meaning an expression of sin?*
- *Religion is often described as a search for ultimate answers. In light of our study and other passages of the Bible, someone has said, “All religion is rebellion.” Do you agree?*
- *How is Jesus the only answer to the questions Solomon raises? See Heb. 4:15, 2 Cor. 5:21, Eph. 2:8-10, Gal. 5:19-26, Rom. 8:15-25.*

PRAYER REQUESTS

Have you been living differently from the truth that Jesus is God’s answer to the problems of life? How have you been living independently of the exclusive hope found in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross? How can you focus on His gracious offering for you this week? Where do you need to believe the gospel in your life?