

Message #6**Ecclesiastes 2:12-17**

The big question is—who has the advantage? Which lifestyle should we pursue? Should we be one serious or loose? Should we be one who plans for the future or one who just lets fate take care of it all?

EVEN THOUGH A LIFE OF WISDOM IS BETTER THAN A LIFE OF FOLLY, WITHOUT GOD AT THE CENTER OF LIFE, IT WILL WIND UP EMPTY BECAUSE BOTH KINDS OF PEOPLE WILL BE FORGOTTEN AND BOTH KINDS OF PEOPLE WILL DIE !

Live life under the sun without God at the center and life will give you a raw deal. It doesn't matter what your education, what your pleasure, what your wealth, it will all be a big zilch.

HEADING #1 – Solomon's consideration of wisdom versus folly. **2:12**

It is clear from this verse that Solomon was older and was thinking of another king who would soon reign after him. In fact, the words “for what” indicate that Solomon actually undertook this consideration because he knew that if he didn't, other kings who would come after him would be tempted to take a walk on the “wild side.”

Now the word “consider” is one that refers to a calculated consideration. Solomon decided to take a serious, calculated look to see what he could see (Gesenius, p. 749). Solomon was looking at things carefully and critically.

The word “wisdom” speaks of wisdom at a crafty level in which one is able to analyze things and make wise discernments and judgments (Ibid. p. 277). The words “madness” and “folly” are words that describe what is proud and praised (“madness”) and what is foolish (“folly”) (Ibid., pp. 226 & 586).

Solomon purposely did a comparative study of wisdom versus folly.

HEADING #2 – Solomon's comparisons between what is wise and what is foolish.
2:13-14a

Comparative Study #1 - Solomon compared wisdom and folly . **2:13**

The word “excel,” which is repeated twice in this verse, is one that refers to something that is preeminent or superior to something else. The preeminence is at a beyond measurement level (Gesenius, p. 377).

Solomon's conclusion was it is far better to go after wisdom than folly. It is far better to gain a crafty knowledge that is able to discern things than to walk through life as an imbecile.

In fact, Solomon equates wisdom with light and folly with darkness. His conclusion is that one pursuing a wise understanding of things is one walking on the path of light. One not pursuing a wise understanding of things is one walking on a path of darkness.

Comparative Study #2 - Solomon compared one who is wise with one who is a fool.
2:14a

One commentator called this the comparison between “sagacity with stupidity.” There is a vast chasm between one who is wise and one who is a fool. One who is wise sees things. He has his eyes wide open. He sees clearly and factually. He uses his mind. He looks far ahead and thinks far ahead. One who is a fool doesn’t see things. His eyes and his mind are closed. The fool lives for now and doesn’t look or see anything down the road. He walks in darkness. He has no idea where he is going or what he is doing. A fool just stumbles through life—no real purpose and no real perspective.

Even without God at the center of life, it is better to be wise than to be a fool.

HEADING #3 – Solomon’s connections between the wise man and the fool. **2:14b-16**

The thing that kept haunting Solomon was the realization that there was a connection between the wise man and the fool. The word “fate” means the same lot is cast to everyone (p. 503). Even though Solomon realized it was far better to live life as a wise person rather than a fool, he also realized that there was an eerie connection between the two.

Connection of Fate #1 - Both are doomed to be forgotten. **2:16a**

Solomon concluded that when it comes to being a wise man or a fool, there is no lasting remembrance of either one. In the future both will be forgotten. One commentator called this the dance of “oblivion.”

Leave God out of the center of your life and it won’t matter whether you were a wise man or a fool—you’ll be forgotten.

Connection of Fate #2 - Both are doomed to die. **2:16b**

Death is the great equalizer of all humanity. The wise man will die and so will the fool. Of course the reason why all die is because all have sinned. Solomon connected the wise man and the fool two ways—the fate of being forgotten and the fate of dying.

In view of the fact we will die, it is far better to live your life with a focus “above” the sun on God, than “under” the sun on this world.

HEADING #4 – Solomon’s conclusion about life. **2:17**

Solomon thought about these things and hated life. The particular word used for “hate” indicates Solomon had a great hatred for life and actually considered it to be an enemy (Gesenius, p. 792).

Life didn’t make any sense to him. All his work, all his wisdom was totally empty.

The only way life makes sense is when God is at the center of it. Once God is at the center of life, a wise life versus a foolish life begins to make some sense. But without God, it is all empty and chasing the wind!