

# **A Meaningful Life is Submitted to Authority**

**Series: Finding the Meaning of Life**

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**Text: Ecclesiastes 8:1-8**

**Date: Wednesday, July 21, 2010, 7pm**

**Theme and Text:** Open your Bible to **Ecclesiastes 8**. We are looking at how “A Meaningful Life is Submitted to Authority”.

What we are going to find again is that the wise person is the one who lives His life in submission to God and focused around Christ. Focusing on the Lord and His character and His will for us is what the essence of wisdom is. Wisdom is found in Christ alone. And we ought to go after Him with all our might.

**Proverbs 4:7** says, “Wisdom is the principal thing: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.”

What is wisdom? Wisdom is essentially knowing how to live right, but it is not only that. It is right living for the right reason. It is right living for the Lord’s sake.

## **Who are the Wise? Believers!**

When the Bible talks about the “wise” it is talking about believers, plain and simple. Look at **Proverbs 9:10**, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.”

It doesn’t matter what seems right to us. **Proverbs 16:25**, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.”

Clearly the New Testament teaches us that ultimate wisdom cannot be had apart from knowing Jesus Christ.

Paul says in **1 Corinthians 1:24**, “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” Christ is called the Word (Jn. 1:1) and the Truth (Jn. 14:6). He is wisdom! To know Him and to fear Him and to live with Him as the center of your life is WISDOM.

So how can we lay a foundation for a full, meaningful life in Christ? You can always pick them out. The Bible says their face shines!

### I. The **Radiance** of the Wise (vs. 1).

Solomon asks an important question. Who really is wise? **Ecclesiastes 8:1**, “Who is like the wise? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man’s wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed.”

To be wise is to know Christ. Those who know Him are wise. Even the demeanor of the face of the Christian changes. We are “changed into the image of Christ” as we look to Him.

We ought to all be making spiritual progress in our lives. As you are saturated with the joy of Christ as you find Him in the Scriptures, you will be changed.

There is a joy about the countenance of every believer who is right with God. The peace and joy that comes from true wisdom is physically evident to those who observe the wise.

## II. The **Submission** of the Wise (vs. 2-5).

**Ecclesiastes 8:2**, “I say: Keep the king’s command, because of God’s oath to him”.

A. The wise have the right **attitude** toward authority. In **verse 2**, the first thing Solomon says is “Submit to the king”. Why? “because of God’s oath to him” (**verse 2**). God put him there. We can say the same thing today. Submit to the government. Pay your taxes. Obey the laws.

Paul tells us what our attitude should be in **Romans 13:1-2**, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.”

Look over at **1 Peter 2:17**. Peter tells us the same thing. “Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.” Peter tells us to honor, or literally prize, the emperor. This is written by a man that was eventually crucified upside down by the king (Nero) he is writing about. Nero was destroying Christians everywhere, yet Peter tells us to honor the authorities God has put in place, including the emperor.

Do you have a right attitude toward authority. Your attitude toward authority is truly your attitude toward God. This is applied in every area of life.

- In the **family**, Moses and Paul say we are to honor father and mother (Ex. 20; Eph 6:1-3).
- In **marriage**, we are told to submit to one another (Eph. 5:21) as well as the wife submitting to her husband (Eph. 5:22).
- In our **employment**, we are submit to our boss as we “would unto Christ” (Eph. 6:5).
- In **government**, as I mentioned above, Paul tells us to submit to governmental authorities. The powers “that exist have been instituted by God” (Rom. 13:2).

**Application:** Truly, your attitude toward authority reveals your heart’s attitude toward God. Are you submissive or stubborn?

B. The wise have the right **intentions** toward authority.

**Ecclesiastes 8:3-4a**, “Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause, for he does whatever he pleases. 4 For the word of the king is supreme...”

As mature and wise believers in Christ, it ought to be our intention to carry out the desires of those in authority over us. We should want to immediately do what those in authority desire, as long as it is not defying God in any way.

C. The wise have the right **words** toward authority.

**Ecclesiastes 8:4b**, “...and who may say to him, “What are you doing?” Who is going to talk back to authority?”

Submission leads to a discreet tongue. If you want to say something to anyone, whether it be a friend, your spouse, your employer, how you say it is just as important as what you say.

We see also that the wise person is not prone to talk back to authority. He doesn't question for no reason and say, (vs. 4): “What are you doing?”

When you approach anyone in authority, it is never right to make an accusation unless you have witnesses. We see this in regard to a pastor in **1 Timothy 5:19**, “Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses”. But I believe this ought to be our practice toward all authority. We need to be very careful how we talk about those who are in authority. This includes our parents, our employers, our church leaders, and our secular government.

III. The **Discernment** of the Wise (vs. 5-7).

A. The wise know that living in submission brings **peace** (vs. 5a). Look at **Ecclesiastes 8:5a**, “Whoever keeps a command will know no evil [troublesome] thing...”

1. The wise will not needlessly get themselves into trouble. So much of the problems in this life are brought on by sin. If you are in right relationship with God and others, you are going to bypass a lot of trouble in life!!
2. This doesn't mean that you'll always have a perfect life. It's wise to follow authority because generally speaking, God is going to protect you. It doesn't mean all wise people are going to always have peace and prosper. It is a general rule that those who obey authority live long. Remember Paul says this about those who honor their father and mother in Ephesians 6, and he's referring back to Moses in Exodus 20.

We keep the commands of those in authority over us. This is speaking of the king, but of course, our first and final authority is God and His Word. If you live a submitted life, you are going to be blessed by God. His face is going to shine on you. As I said, it doesn't mean you will always be at peace. Look at Paul—he suffered. He told Timothy to “endure hardness”. But these men were blessed by God. They saw God work. Any evil (or troublesome) thing that came their way was put their by God for their good.

So the wise have discernment. They know living in submission to authority brings peace!

B. The wise also know how balance **priorities** (vs. 5b).

Look at **Ecclesiastes 8:5b**, “and the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way”. Do you know the right time and the right way when it comes to balancing all the demands on your life? Life is CRAZY. You've got family responsibilities, church obligations, friends, work, etc. How do you know who to put first. You will know because you have a wise heart.

You are studying God's word. Wisdom does not come from you, it comes from God! When the Bible talks about the “wise” it is talking about believers, plain and simple. Look at **Proverbs 9:10**, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.”

It doesn't matter what seems right to us. **Proverbs 16:25**, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.”

If you are in God's Word, you will know how to balance priorities!

C. The wise understand the **providence** of God. Look at **verses 6-7**, “For there is a time and a way for everything, although man's trouble lies heavy on him. 7 For he does not know what is to be, for who can tell him how it will be?”

So many times, we are tempted to stew about things we cannot control. There is so much trouble that “lies heavy” on all of us. We don't know how it's going to turn out. I love the question: “Who can tell him how it will be?” I know the answer. God tells us in His Word in **Romans 8:28**, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” **Verse 29** says that God's purpose is that we would be “conformed to the image of His Son”.

Wise people understand life is difficult and unpredictable, yet the wise, those who center their lives on Christ, know how to navigate those rough waters. We are not controlled by what people or circumstances bring. We do what is right, and trust God.

**Application:** There is something very important in this verse. Even for the godly who are making the right decisions and walking with God are going to have “trouble”. And you don’t know how it’s going to turn out. Don’t be surprised by the trouble in your life. You’ll have it. Just make sure you are not the one who is causing it!

IV. The **Readiness** of the Wise (vs. 8). The wise live with a readiness to meet their Lord and Savior.

**Ecclesiastes 8:8**, “No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death. There is no discharge from war, nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it.”

A wise person lives in the full reality of his own mortality. A person can put off thinking about death through wickedness, but death is coming. Just as there is no discharge from war, we are all going to die, and a person who tries to ignore it by going after wickedness will not be delivered.

When you see the drug culture or the sensuality in all the media and all around us, remember, people are trying to put off death. But just as a general calls a soldier for service, God is going to call each one of us to Himself. A wise person is always ready for death.

Clarification: I’m not saying you should be morbidly thinking about death, but you should live with an urgency as if today were your last.

**Illustration:** Jonathan Edwards as a young man wrote about this in his famous resolutions. Two of them jumped out at me, and I think Edwards was hitting upon what Solomon was saying.

7. Resolved, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life.

17. Resolved, that I will live so as I shall wish I had done when I come to die.

**Illustration:** I think Jim Elliot, missionary martyr to the Auca Indians said this, “Wherever you are, be all there! Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God.”

He also said this, “God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life and may I burn for Thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine. I seek not a long life, but a full one, like you, LORD Jesus.”

**Application:** Are you living as if today could be the last day of your life? Are you living with an abandon to God. We cannot keep our soul in our bodies when God calls us home, so we ought to live in a way that we will not be ashamed when we see Him!

**Conclusion:** If you are wise you will build your life on the platform of God's authority, submitting to Him and His word and to those He puts in authority over us. And you will not try to figure out the hardships of this life. You will trust God and not lean to your own understanding. Us trying to figure out life is a tiny ant trying to figure out how a car engine functions.

Paul says, right now we see through a mirror darkly, but then face to face. Right now we are under the stars. We can see some light. But there is coming a day when the Sun will rise. We will be called together with the Lord. It will all make sense then. We will all understand everything better "by and by". When the morning comes.

Until then, we need to trust God. We need to love Him and walk with Him and not worry about what we cannot control!