

How to Walk Through the Valley (Ecclesiastes 6:12-7:14)

I. Introduction: Suffering is a universal reality

Can any good to be found in a vain, fleeting, life of suffering? (6:12)

II. Think about death instead of living in denial (7:1-4)

Reputation > precious ointment / day of death > day of birth

How is *death* better than *birth*? *mourning* better than *feasting*?

If you have not thought much about *death*, you really should - NOW

Death and *sorrow* have much to teach us, so why do we not take more time in our church meetings to consider them?

III. Rebuke is better than flattery (7:5-6)

Why do you hate being rebuked? What does the Bible says about it?

We shield ourselves from rebuke by:
justifying and defending ourselves
rebuking others and so becoming unapproachable
being overly sensitive (taking up offenses)
limiting our fellowship to those with kindred sins
hiding behind adversity (seeking sympathy instead)

IV. The end is better than the beginning (7:7-10)

Your Best Life ... Later

Pride: "I can make things better by taking matters into my own hand"

Anger: "I am upset because things have not gone my way"

Nostalgia: "I want to go back to the good old days"

V. Live wisely (7:11-12)

Pursue wisdom (ask for it) Proverbs 8:10-11

VI. Conclusion: An unchanging, loving God is in control (7:13-14)

You can't straighten a crooked valley, but God can, and does, through Christ; and that's what grace is all about (Luke 3:5)