

Notes and Quotes

Based on the chronological reading schedule followed in THE DAILY BIBLE compiled by F. LaGard Smith and published by Harvest House Publishers.

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Sobriety is Better than Levity

Ecclesiastes 7:2-6

"Better to go to the house of mourning Than to go to the house of feasting, For that is the end of all men; And the living will take it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, For by a sad countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, But the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise Than for a man to hear the song of fools. For like the crackling of thorns under a pot, So is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity."

In this passage, Solomon is telling us that one thing is better, more valuable than another. It would not seem so among men in the world today -- but it is better to go to a funeral than a party.

Solomon is not saying -- you should never go to the house of feasting; this is not a wholesale condemnation of all parties (though those involving sin should be shunned). But there is more personal value for us in occasions where sober reflection takes place. A funeral for example.

The reason might be explained this way. I'll express this through a question: Typically, when we attend a party, do we go home and think about our spiritual lives, God and eternity? No -- typically, when we go to a party and have a good time; we come home tired, laughing and our stomachs are bloated.

However -- when we attend a funeral, that event tends to generate sobriety, not levity. A funeral brings us face to face with the reality of death and it is good to think about death! And a funeral is

one of the few occasions where there is this sober focus on death. Can you imagine - having a few friends over to eat sandwiches and talk about death?

That's not what we do. It takes a funeral for us to take the time to contemplate where we are all headed, and hopefully - think about whether we are ready to die. Solomon says here, "death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart." A funeral may leave us with a sad face - but the thoughts we must entertain about death **MAY DO OUR HEARTS GOOD.**

"The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure." Now -- along this same line - Solomon wants us to know - there is something else that may be unpleasant, but can do us good: It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools!

At a funeral -- ideally -- you hear the rebuke of a wise man (take note, preachers!). At the party -- you hear the song of fools. Obviously -- the funeral is better for us than the party.

"Like the crackling of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of fools. This too is meaningless." I'm sure most of you will know what I mean, when I use the word "kindling." When you start a fire -- you gather up some dry twigs, and use them to get the fire going. What happens is, the kindling makes a loud popping noise or crackling sound... but it doesn't last very long. That's the way Solomon describes the laughter that is typical of parties -- **LOUD AND ENTERTAINING, but TEMPORARY.** Of course, there is more permanence and value in the funeral -- and the thoughts generated by the reality of death can do more for us than the laughter of fools. Let us take this to heart, and do what Solomon recommends at the end of this marvelous book: **FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.**
