Intro- We have made it through half of this great book... Have we gained any wisdom? Let's take a test and see if we have learned anything thus far! Don't worry. No grades will be sent out, and it's a short test. No trick questions. No multiple choices just simple true or false questions. Are you ready?

T or F   I Like laughter better than crying.
T or F   I Like weddings better than funerals.
T or F   I like thinking of my birthday better than the day of my death.
T or F   I like compliments better than criticisms.
T or F   I like short cuts better than the long way around.
T or F   I like the good old days better than the way things are now.

How did you do? Do you think you passed the test? IF you marked true on any or all of those statements, Solomon would have flunked you. If Solomon were giving the test, all these questions would be answered FALSE. In other words, Solomon preferred crying, funerals, thinking about death, criticism, the harder way, and the bad old days.

Text- 7:1-10 (prayer)

In all of Solomon's struggles, he comes to realize there is a BETTER WAY!

ILL- R. G. LeTourneau was a multi-millionaire. At the age of fourteen, LeTourneau dropped out of school. He found a job shoveling sand and dirt at a steel yard. While shoveling sand he began to think "There's Got To BE A Easier Way" to do this hard work. He later became the inventor of earthmoving machines.

In Ecclesiastes 7, Solomon may well have been describing countless people living today. They are wandering through life looking for the 'pie in the sky,' thinking that there has got to be more to life, and a better way to live. However, the sad tragedy is that, without God, all they will ever experience is a fleeting parade "under the sun;" rather than the grand finale God has in store for them "over the sun."
You may be one of the millions of people today who are disgruntled, disgusted, and dissatisfied with the current affairs of your life. It may be that you’ve thought, or maybe you are thinking, "There's got to be a better way!"

According to Solomon there is a better way! This Bible tells us HOW TO BE BETTER OFF! The key word in this chapter is “better.” He seems to use it over and over again. A General outline of the chapter is:

Let’s Look at some ways we can be better off:

I. YOU ARE BETTER OFF WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND:

STRONG CHARACTER IS BETTER THAN STRONG COLOGNE- (1a)

Ecclesiastes 7:1 'A good name is better than precious ointment;

A. THE LEGACY WE LEAVE!

“A good name”…a name being that which has influence & character.

ILL-An ancient proverb says, “Every man has three names;” “one his father and mother gave him, one others call him, and one he acquires himself.”

Proverbs 10:7 7 The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

Proverbs 22:1 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.

When Judas was born, he was given the good name “Judah,” which means “praise.” It belonged to the royal tribe in Israel. By the time Judas died, he had turned that honorable name into a shameful name.

'A good name is better than precious ointment. Perfume is temporary and you have to be near it. A good name is permanent and its effect on people lasts.

1 Samuel 16:7 7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

1 Peter 3:3-4 3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; 4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.
2- YOU CAN BE BETTER OFF WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND: THE DAY OF DEATH IS BETTER THAN THE DAY OF BIRTH

A. THE LESSONS WE LEARN

Ecclesiastes 7:1b “…and the day of death than the day of one’s birth. Solomon was not suggesting that it is better to die than to be born! But rather a man who dies with a good name is better than one who is born with an uncertain name.

3- YOU CAN BE BETTER OFF WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND: FUNERALS ARE BETTER THAN FESTIVALS

Ecclesiastes 7:2 It is 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 lay it to his heart. (Death is the inevitable end of every man!)

Death has a way of Slowing us up! Death has a way of Sobering us up! As a pastor, I’ve seldom had a wiser audience than in a funeral service. They really listen!

ILL- On a typical Sunday, I’ll get up and read my scripture and it probably sounds like this… John 14…”Jesus said, In my Fathers house…(Look at Danny over there- I think he’s asleep!) I go to prepare a place… (I wander if he’s going to preach another extra innings today, I’m hungry!)

Even at weddings,, I don’t think the bride and groom hear anything I say until those hot words, “I now pronounce you husband and wife… you may NOW kiss the bride!”

But at a funeral, people hang on every word!

A 30 minute stroll through a graveyard is better than an entire afternoon at a carnival, or spending a weekend at Six Flags.

Psalm 90:12, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

4- YOU CAN BE BETTER OFF WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND: GRIEVING IS BETTER THAN GIGGLING- (Vs 3-4)

There is nothing wrong with laughter.

Proverbs 17:22 A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

However you will find more wise men at a funeral and more fools at a party!
5- YOU CAN BE BETTER OFF WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND: CRITICISM IS BETTER THAN CHEERING- (Vs. 5-6)

King Solomon compared the praise of fools to the burning thorns in a campfire: you hear a lot of noise, but you don’t get much lasting good.

**Verse 5** It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.

Everyone likes to be complimented, while few like to be critiqued. However, Solomon is saying that often times a "wise rebuke" is much needed correction. There are times when we need a wise man who will tell the truth of what we need to hear.

When Criticism comes our way; **don't resist it, refuse it, or reject it; but, receive it,** because [It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.]

6- YOU CAN BE BETTER OF WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND: HONESTY IS BETTER THAN HUSH MONEY- (Vs. 7)

ILL- There were two brothers who lived wild, wicked lives. On the surface, no one would have ever guessed it because they were expert con artist who disguised their deceitful behavior by coming to church, and giving large sums of money. However, one day, one of the brothers died. The other brother approached the new pastor and asked him to preach his brother's funeral.

The pastor knew the reputation of the man's brother and didn't know any good thing that could be said of him; however, the man said, "Preacher, I'll give you $500, and all I ask is that you tell the people at the funeral that my brother was a saint." The people didn't want to lie, but finally gave into the appeal of the money.

At the funeral, the young pastor stood before the casket and said with firm conviction, "This man before you was an ungodly sinner and wicked to the very core. He was unfaithful to his wife, hot-tempered with his children, ruthless in his business, and a hypocrite at his church. **But, compared to his brother HE WAS A SAINT!**"

7- YOU CAN BE BETTER OFF WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND: YOUR ENDING IS BETTER THAN YOUR BEGINNING- (Vs. 8a)

**Pole Position** is great! **But Finishing is better!** It’s nice to start something but it is **better to finish** it, and finish it well.
The Prodigal Son started with *gladness and wealth*, but ended with *sadness and woe!* (Lk 15:11–24).

Joseph began as a slave but ended up a sovereign!

H. Patience Is Better Than Pride (7:8b)

I. Constraint Is Better Than Carelessness (7:9)

J. The Present Is Better Than The Past (7:10)

Solomon is telling us that we should not mourn for the “*good old days*”. I think it was Warren Wiersbe who said “*The good old days are a combination of a bad memory and a good imagination.*”