



## [Ecclesiastes 7:1-4](#)

(1) A good name is better than fine perfume,  
and the day of death better than the day of birth. (2) It is better to go to a house of  
mourning  
than to go to a house of feasting,  
for death is the destiny of every man;  
the living should take this to heart. (3) Sorrow is better than laughter,  
because a sad face is good for the heart. (4) The heart of the wise is in the house of  
mourning,  
but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.

*New International Version*

In terms of wisdom, Solomon unmistakably comes down on the side of sorrow and mourning as the more important. They are to be preferred because mourning motivates a person toward sober contemplation of his own mortality, which tends to affect the wellspring of our thoughts, words, and conduct effectively and positively. The wellspring of conduct is the heart, which is why “heart” is mentioned four times in these verses.

The heart is truly the center of a human being. Recall that [Jesus](#) reminds us that our words and conduct spring from our hearts ([Matthew 15:18-19](#)). Therefore, we need to search out and reinforce some important truths regarding death and its direct connection to our hearts and thus our conduct in life.

A number of years ago, *The Denial of Death* won the Pulitzer Prize for the best of nonfiction in a certain category. In it, the author, Dr. Ernest Becker, made this telling comment, confirming what the Bible clearly states: “The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is the mainspring of human activity—activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny for man” (p. ix). Here in Ecclesiastes, Solomon is subtly urging us to take steps to confront the truth of death's influence on our overall conduct in life.

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Ecclesiastes 7:1-4 (<http://www.theberean.org>)

Death was set in motion during the Creation Week. The way things now are in [this world](#), it is an almost daily factor in life. It has become the curse of curses, the last enemy to be destroyed. As we will see shortly, it dogs our existence.

The specter of death is so dominant in some people's minds that it virtually destroys their lives. Their actions are focused on avoiding death and overcoming it by somehow denying that it is the final destiny for man. These people are really downers in their effect upon others.

Conversely, many people, while living, do not prepare for the obvious reality of death. It and its accompanying sorrows are major events of life that everyone must deal with. Solomon exhorts us to face in a balanced way what this issue means in terms of God's truth so we are prepared for its inevitability.

He does this partly because he understands, perhaps as well as anyone ever did, that pursuing laughter, as he shows in chapter 2, and relishing enjoyable situations are easy compared to experiencing sorrow. However, mirth is almost useless in terms of leading a profitable life. A person must almost be forced to seek out involvement in sorrowful circumstances. Paradoxically, death and its sorrowful circumstances have far more to teach us about what is valuable to a meaningful life compared to mirth and laughter, passing pleasures that are here today and gone tomorrow.

Author Susan Sontag wrote, "Death is the obscene mystery, the ultimate affront, the thing that cannot be controlled. It can only be denied." Our language of death clearly shows society's attempts to soften, hide, or even deny it by using euphemisms, such as calling the dead person "the departed" or by saying that he "passed away" or "is not with us anymore." This is done to avoid saying the words "death" or "dead."

[God](#) deals with it in His Word by showing that it is best for us to deal with it directly. This allows us to understand more fully that death is indeed the way of all flesh and to lay it to heart, shifting the balance of our thoughts about its reality toward more serious thinking on it.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

**To learn more, see:**

**[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living \(Part Eight\): Death](#)**

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