

Ecclesiastes 7:27-29

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/eccl/eccl-7/ecclesiastes-727-29/>

Seeking ways apart from God's design leads to corruption. Solomon has discovered the pervasiveness of perversions and some rare exceptions along the way.

At verse 27, the *Preacher* (Solomon) proclaims, “Behold, I have discovered *this*.” Since Solomon does not then go on to explain what *this* refers to, *this* likely refers to his previous statement. His previous statement in verse 26 observes that:

“...more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are chains. One who is pleasing to God will escape from her, but the sinner will be captured by her.”

The *this* is an observable tendency in men and women. Men tend to seek sexual pleasure from women, and women tend to use sexual attraction to gain benefits from men. The natural bent is for each to seek something from the other, rather than to seek a mutual benefit. Since women tend to place a high priority on security, they might use sexual attraction to control a man who can provide security. Men tend to place a high priority on respect, so they might seek female responsiveness and sexual submission to demonstrate they are respected. Men fear and avoid female rejection. This is likely a major reason men are attracted to pornography—an imaginary woman will never reject them.

This is why biblical passages on marriage exhort men to love and serve their wives, providing security, while urging women to respect and respond to their husbands, providing affirmation. In this way each prioritizes the needs of the other. But humans are prone to be self-seeking rather than to serve. This is another example where true benefit begins with faith. We actually find true satisfaction in relationships through serving. But that is not apparent, so it requires trust to discover.

Solomon says he has *discovered this*, so now naturally he wants to *find an explanation*. How will he *find an explanation*? By *adding one thing to another*. Using reason and deduction. Which is interesting, since he has to this point discovered in every case that he could not find a comprehensive

understanding. But that did not stop him from trying. In each case his reason led him to faith. Faith is always the starting place for understanding. Solomon gives us a preview, saying he is *seeking* but has *not found* a satisfactory answer. But he tells us one thing he has discovered.

The *Preacher* has *found one man among a thousand*. However, the *Preacher* has *not found a woman among all these*. What does this phrase refer to?

It seems the *Preacher* is seeking an explanation for the observed phenomenon of dysfunctional, self-centric male/female relationships. Solomon observes “the woman whose heart is snares and nets,” along with the “sinner” who will “be captured by her.” It seems Solomon is observing that only *one man among a thousand* will take the way of escape. The way of escape is to be *pleasing to God*. Those who seek to please God first can escape the allure of the seductress. As previously stated, this is likely literal as well as metaphorical, as Solomon personifies both wisdom as well as folly in feminine terms.

Solomon has found that men who seek fulfillment through sexual pleasure end up trapped in *snares and nets*. They end up with their *hands* in *chains*. They could *escape from her*, by seeking to be *pleasing to God*. But they decline. This tells us that Solomon observes that the overwhelming majority of men succumb to the allure of sensual pleasure and end up with loss, perhaps in addiction. Solomon himself ended up falling prey to sensual pleasure, trapped in the idolatrous *snares and nets* of his wives ([1 Kings 11:4](#)).

This is not God’s fault. God *made men upright*. But we chose to sin. We chose to depart from God’s perfect design for us. And if that isn’t bad enough, men have *sought out many devices*. The word translated *devices* is also translated “schemes.” Not only does not *one man among a thousand* fall into *snares and nets* instead of seeking to be *pleasing to God*, the 999 men also devise “schemes” that get them in more trouble. These schemes likely are intended to help the men get what they desire and at the same time both rationalize and justify their actions. Thus, the men are not just helpless prey. They are willing accomplices.

So far this seems fairly straightforward. But Solomon adds a curious statement that amidst all his *seeking to find an explanation* for this observed phenomenon of mutual dysfunction between men and women, he has *not*

found a woman among all these. It falls to us to discern what Solomon is referring to with the phrase *among all these*.

It cannot mean that there are no women who behave wisely in this arena. The Bible holds forth female heroes that are amazing examples of faith and service. Ruth is an example. Boaz specifically praised her for putting her family before her passions in seeking marriage from him, rather than going after young and handsome men ([Ruth 3:10](#)). Ruth was Solomon's great, great grandmother. He would not dishonor her.

Since this is a personal statement, Solomon saying, "*I have not found a woman among all these*" could simply be a statement of the limit of Solomon's experience. "I know they are there, but I haven't run across one." This would not be particularly surprising given Solomon's position and approach. Many of Solomon's wives were acquired as part of his administration's diplomatic efforts. He married daughters of rulers from other countries as a means of establishing a treaty. The "job" of diplomatic daughters would be to advocate for their home country. And we know that Solomon sought the "pleasures of men" through acquiring "many concubines" ([Ecclesiastes 2:8](#)). It would not be expected that such women would be women who had mastered mutually beneficial male/female relationships.

One fly in the ointment for this explanation would be Solomon's experience as described in Song of Solomon. This biblical book documents a love story between Solomon and one of his wives. There is no recorded behavior apparent in Solomon's bride as having a *heart* that is full of *nets and snares*. What does seem apparent is that Solomon saw himself as *one in a thousand men*, and it turned out he was not.

So perhaps the best perspective might be to include Solomon's insight from verse 20 that "there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins." Every person is prone to be self-seeking, including in male/female relationships. We are all prone to *seek out devices/schemes*. Perhaps Solomon thought he knew *one man in a thousand* who could escape this self-centered behavior, but it turns out everyone is in the same boat.

Biblical Text:

²⁷ "Behold, I have discovered this," says the Preacher, "adding one thing to another to find an explanation,²⁸ which I am still seeking but have not found. I have found one man among a thousand, but I have not found a woman among all these. ²⁹Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices."

