

# Ecclesiastes 11 Commentary

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THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES					
The Search for Significance					
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Fickleness of Life Versus Fear of the Lord					
Place: "Under the Sun"					
Decades of Searching (in the days of King Solomon) circa 936BC					
King Solomon Author					

Ecclesiastes 11:1 Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days.

- KJV Ecclesiastes 11:1 Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.
- NKJ Ecclesiastes 11:1 Cast your bread upon the waters, For you will find it after many days.
- NET Ecclesiastes 11:1 Send your grain overseas, for after many days you will get a return.
- BGT Ecclesiastes 11:1 π στειλον τ ν ρτον σου π πρ σωπον το δατος τι ν πλ θει τ ν μερ ν ε ρ σεις α τ ν
- LXE Ecclesiastes 11:1 Send forth thy bread upon the face of the water: for thou shalt find it after many days.
- CSB Ecclesiastes 11:1 Send your bread on the surface of the waters, for after many days you may find it.

ESV Ecclesiastes 11:1 Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.

NIV Ecclesiastes 11:1 Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again.

NLT Ecclesiastes 11:1 Send your grain across the seas, and in time, profits will flow back to you.

YLT Ecclesiastes 11:1 Send forth thy bread on the face of the waters, For in the multitude of the days thou dost find it.

NJB Ecclesiastes 11:1 Cast your bread on the water, eventually you will recover it.

NRS Ecclesiastes 11:1 Send out your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will get it back.

RSV Ecclesiastes 11:1 Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.

NAB Ecclesiastes 11:1 Cast your bread upon the waters; after a long time you may find it again.

GWN Ecclesiastes 11:1 Throw your bread on the surface of the water, because you will find it again after many days.

BBE Ecclesiastes 11:1 Put out your bread on the face of the waters; for after a long time it will come back to you again.

■ **Cast:**

"Vain are the favours done to vicious men;  
Not vainer 'tis to sow the foaming deep.  
The deep no pleasant harvest shall afford,  
Nor will the wicked ever make return."

"To befriend the wicked is like sowing in the sea." These,  
indeed, invert this precept; nor is it extraordinary that they should;  
"The one, frail human power alone produced,  
The other, God."

■ **bread:** De 15:7-11 Pr 11:24,25 22:9 Isa 32:8

■ **waters:** Isa 32:20

■ **for:** Ec 11:6 De 15:10 Ps 41:1,2 126:5,6 Pr 11:18 19:17 Mt 10:13,42 25:40 Lu 14:14 2Co 9:6 Ga 6:8-10 Heb 6:10

**Related Passages:**

Proverbs 19:17 One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, And He will repay him for his good deed.

Luke 6:38 "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

Galatians 6:9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

2 Corinthians 9:6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Proverbs 11:24 There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, And there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want.

Isaiah 32:20 How blessed will you be, you who sow beside all waters, Who let out freely the ox and the donkey.

Cast your bread upon the waters

**LET GO  
AND RECEIVE**

[William Barrick](#) - Sowing in the Morning, Sowing in the Evening. In conclusion, the Preacher determines to fear God, obey God, and enjoy life (Eccl 9:1–12:14) Ecclesiastes begins with a declaration that all is futile, enigmatic, or ephemeral ("Vanity of vanities! All

is vanity," Eccl 1:2). Solomon focuses on the apparent lack of human advantage in life's labors "under the sun" (Ec 1:3). Indeed, he characterizes life on earth as endless cycle of sunrises and sunsets (Eccl 1:5). Now, at the end of the book, he looks "**beyond his gloomy vistas to see God.**" (McComiskey, borrow [Ecclesiastes](#)) Solomon realizes that life's certainties (like death) and life's uncertainties (like accidents and disasters) cannot be predicted (cf. Pr 27:1). However, a person can prepare for both sets of circumstances and enjoy God's marvelous gift of life "under the sun." How should someone live in the light of Solomon's extended discourse? **Kidner** offers a concise, but appropriate summary of this section of the book: **'Be bold! Be joyful! Be godly!'**" (The three referring respectively to Ec 11:1–6; Ec 11:7–10; and Ec 12:1–8. [Kidner, A Time to Mourn](#).) Thus, Solomon carries on from the advice of Eccl 10, **"Be wise!"** Such instructions or exhortations characterize the last major section of the book (Eccl 11:1–12:8), proclaiming **a call to decision and obedience.** (Borrow Eaton, [Ecclesiastes](#))

**Cast** ([shalach](#); Lxx - [apostello](#) in [aorist imperative](#)) **your bread** ([lechem](#); Lxx - [artos](#)) **on the surface of the waters, for** (term of explanation) **you will find it after many days.** The interpretation of this verse is not easy and there is a considerable divergence among the commentaries!

The classic interpretation, supported by Jewish and Christian commentators sees this as referring to almsgiving. Thus **Bread** refers to goods or resources, **Waters** refers people in need or uncertain circumstances. **Find it after many days** refers to the fact that God will bless your faithfulness.

A second interpretation is that this is a commercial venture metaphor which refers to ancient shipping/trade of sending grain or goods overseas. You **cast** your product into the unpredictable world of commerce (See [support for this interpretation below](#)). You trust that eventual profit will return after much time. This fits the economic themes of Ecclesiastes 10–11 and the context of risk in work.

A third interpretation is a call to bold faith in uncertainty. The idea is to take action despite uncertainty. Don't wait for the perfect conditions (Ec 11:4) Be faithful and open-handed, even when outcomes seem unsure

**Cast your bread** suggests releasing your resources, not hoarding them and as alluded to above could be a call to generosity or wise investment. The picture of casting something on water seems risky because there is no control, no guarantee of return. This evokes imagery of merchants sending ships to sea, farmers sowing seed in flood-prone fields, or generosity given without certainty of reciprocation

**ESV Study Bible** ([borrow](#)) - To **cast**... bread upon the waters is a metaphor without any contemporary parallels, so interpreters are uncertain about its meaning. Three suggestions are most common: (1) It refers to maritime commerce. (2) It refers to taking steps to spread out one's financial resources in multiple directions. (3) In older Jewish and Christian interpretation, it was taken to refer to giving to the poor, in which case finding it again represents others being kind in return.

**Wycliffe Bible Commentary** has a fourth interpretation - There is no certain explanation of this proverb. Traditionally, it has been seen as an exhortation to liberality or charity, which one is to cast (lit., send forth -- [shalach](#); Lxx - [apostello](#)) before others without any immediate realization of gain, but which will return someday to reward its giver (cf. Lk 16:9). But perhaps the verse is to be read, "Cast your bread upon the waters (strange though this may seem), yet you may find it after many days." Read thus, **it refers to the uncertainty of this life, in which even an apparently unwise action may yield reward.** (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

[Ray Pritchard](#) has a similar interpretation - In Ecclesiastes 11:1-2, Solomon, who has looked at all the problems of the world, now challenges his readers to grab hold of life and take a few chances. Disaster is still just around the corner, but since you can't know how or when or even if it will come, your best course is to "cast your bread upon the waters"; that is, be diligent in your labors so that you may profit from them later.

**John MacArthur** - Take a calculated and wise step forward in life, like a farmer who throws his seed on the wet or marshy ground and waits for it to grow (cf. Isa 32:20). (See [The MacArthur Bible](#)) (**ED:** This view is probably one of the least likely.)

**Henry Morris** has a more "spiritual application" for his interpretation of **bread upon the waters**. The Hebrew word for "**bread**" could also be used for the "grain" from which bread is made. The metaphor is that of spreading spiritual seed far and wide, trusting eventually to find its fruit in redeemed lives.

**Daniel Akin** - Some commentators see this casting of bread more literally (Keddie, 143–44). Others see it as metaphorical. In either case, the bottom line is that taking calculated risks can be a valuable thing. (See [Holman Old Testament Commentary - Ecclesiastes](#))

**William MacDonald** - In any case, the thought is that a widespread and wholesale distribution of what is good will result in a generous return in the time of harvest. This verse is true of the gospel. We may not see immediate results as we share the bread of life, but the eventual harvest is sure. (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Bob Utley** - There are scholars who think the mentioning of "waters" is a reference to marine commerce. Therefore, this verse refers to shrewd investments in sea trade (see NASB Study Bible)....it does illustrate the difficulty one faces in moderns trying to understand ANE idioms, imagery, and wisdom literature.

**NET NOTE** - Heb "your bread." The term **לֶחֶם** (lekhem) is traditionally rendered "bread" (KJV, NAB, RSV, NRSV, ASV, NASB, NIV, NJPS). However, Ec 11:1–2 seems to deal with exporting goods overseas (D. R. Glenn, [Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament - Page 1002](#)). It is better to take **לֶחֶם** ("bread") as a metonymy of product, standing for the grain and wheat from which bread is produced (e.g., Gen 41:54–55; 47:13, 15, 17, 19; 49:20; Num 15:19; 2 Kgs 18:32; Isa 28:28; 30:23; 36:17; 55:10; Jer 5:17; Ezek 48:18; Job 28:5; Ps 104:14; Prov 28:3); see HALOT 526 s.v. 1; BDB 537 s.v. 1.b. It is taken this way by several translations: "grain" (NEB) and "goods" (Moffatt). Qoheleth encouraged the export of grain products overseas in international trade.

**NET NOTE** - Heb "upon the surface of the waters." This is traditionally viewed as extolling generosity from which a reward will be reaped. On the other hand, some scholars suggest that the imagery deals with commercial business through maritime trade. M. Jastrow took this verse as advice to take risks in business by trusting one's goods or ships that will after many days return with a profit ([A. Cohen, The Five Megilloth](#) [SoBB], 181). Sea trade was risky in the ancient Near East, but it brought big returns to its investors (e.g., 1 Kgs 9:26–28; 10:22; Ps 107:23); see D. R. Glenn, "Ecclesiastes," [Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament - Page 1002](#). The verse is rendered thus: "Send your grain across the seas, and in time you will get a return" (NEB); or "Trust your goods far and wide at sea, till you get a good return after a while" (Moffatt). (**ED**: NOTICE HOW THESE TRANSLATIONS ARE IN EFFECT INTERPRETATIONS WHICH SHOWS HOW ESSENTIALLY EVERY TRANSLATION IS TO SOME DEGREE AN INTERPRETATION. PROBABLY THE MOST TRUE TO THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE IS YOUNG'S LITERAL TRANSLATION, BUT IT IS NOT ALWAYS THE BEST BECAUSE IT RELIES ON THE LESS ACCURATE TEXTUS RECEPTUS.)

**Charles Ryrie** feels this is "A metaphorical expression taken from the grain trade of a seaport town, illustrating the successful prospects of a bold business venture." (Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible](#))

**You will find it after many days** Though the return is not immediate, Solomon encourages trust, promising that willingness to obey and cast your bread will bear fruit in due time. Specifically what kind of fruit is not absolutely clear.

**William Barrick** - **What a Person Does Not Know** (Eccl 11:1–6) Repeatedly Solomon has urged his readers to pursue the opportunities God gives "under the sun." Now, in Eccl 11:1, he addresses the matter of exercising some faith in making an investment that entails risk. The opportunity involves either almsgiving (the traditional view) (Another view that has few adherents interprets the "bread" as a figure for seed that a farmer sows by casting it on soggy or wet ground; Jamieson, A Commentary) or commercial pursuits involving ocean-going ships. (Glenn, [Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament - Page 1002](#); borrow Garrett, [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, 338](#); Longman III, The Book of Ecclesiastes, 256; Bartholomew, Ecclesiastes, 337; Ryken, Ecclesiastes, 255.) Both of these involve the use of profits gained from one's labors. **If verse 1 deals with almsgiving, then Eccl 11:2 speaks of a distribution of gifts** (Ryken, Ecclesiastes, 254–55, associates the word "portion" here with its use in Neh 8:10. NASU's translation "Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight" is itself misleading, because the Hebrew reads literally, "Give a portion to seven and even to eight" In addition, Deut 18:8 uses "portion" with regard to food.) to seven or even eight needy people, multiplying the odds that some are going to do exceedingly well with that which they have been given. Adherents to this view appeal to an Arab proverb ("*Do good, throw your bread on the waters, and one day you will be rewarded*") (Longman, Ecclesiastes,) and Egyptian parallels ("*Do a good deed and throw it in the water; when it dries you will find it*") (Brown, Ecclesiastes) for support. Texts like Proverbs 19:17 ("*One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed*") lend further support to this approach involving a principle of ultimate compensation for generosity. **Kaiser**, taking the almsgiving viewpoint, rephrases Eccl 11:2, "*Be liberal and generous to as many as you can and then some, . . . So, make as many friends as you can, for you never know when you yourself may need assistance.*" (Borrow [Kaiser, Ecclesiastes](#)) In the New Testament a similar truth appears in Luke 16:9 ("make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings").

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**Cast** (send, send away) ([07971](#)) **shalach** means to send, to send forth, to send away, to let go, to put, to expel (cf Ge 3:23). The first use in Ge 3:22 describes Adam as he stretched out his hand to take of the forbidden fruit. The second use in Ge 3:23 describes God's punishment - "God sent him out (shalach) from the Garden." In Ge 8:7 Noah "sent out a raven" then "a dove" (Ge 8:8, 10, 12). In Ge 18:16 Abraham sent the visitors (one of which was the LORD!) on their way, thus sending off in a friendly sense. Of the angels who "reached out (shalach) their hands and brought Lot into the house." The LORD...sent (shalach) us (the angels) to destroy" Sodom and Gomorrah (Ge 19:13). In Ge 19:29 "when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow." Of Hagar and Ishmael "sent...away" into the wilderness of Beersheba (Ge 21:14). In Ge 22:10 "Abraham stretched out his hand" as he prepared to sacrifice Isaac. God told him "do not stretch out your hand against the lad." (Ge 22:12) We could continue working through the verses which gives us a good sense of what this verb shalach means. In Malachi 3:1 God says He will send "My messenger" (Elijah) (cf Mal 4:5). In Malachi 2:16 God says "I hate divorce" and the word in

Hebrew is shalach. Shalach is used to mean - Send fire (Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, Amos 2:2,5), a plague (Amos 4:10) or a famine (Amos 8:11).

**NET NOTE** - The verb שָׁלַח (shalakh, "to send; to cast") refers to the action of sending something to someone (e.g., Neh 8:12; HALOT 1995 s.v. שָׁלַח). The term is traditionally rendered here as "cast" (KJV, NAB, RES, ASV, NASB, NIV); however, some render it "send" (NJPS, NRSV, NEB). LXX uses ἀποστείλον (aposteilon, "send").

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**Ray Pritchard** - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - **BREAD UPON THE WATERS** Ecclesiastes 11:1—2

Several years ago I met Jack, a salesman who had changed careers when he was thirty-seven. I asked if it wasn't risky to leave his teaching position for the uncertain world of sales, especially since he had a wife and a young daughter to consider.

"Yes, it was risky," Jack said, "but I did it anyway."

Then he recalled the words his father once told him: "Son, I'm sixty-two now. I've been making decisions all my life. What percent of those decisions do you suppose were good decisions?" Jack figured maybe 40 to 45 percent of his father's decisions were good ones. "Son, that's high. I'm lucky if even 33 percent of my decisions turn out right.

"I'm old enough now that if I wanted to," his father added, "I could just stop making decisions. But if I stopped, that percentage would never change. It would stay at 33 percent until I die.

"Son, you can stop making decisions right now if you want to. If you do, you'll never get above where you are right now. But if you keep on making decisions— even when you're scared—you've got a chance to raise that average. And remember, you normally make better decisions as you get older because you have more experience in life."

That story illustrates a great principle. In Ecclesiastes 11:1-2, Solomon, who has looked at all the problems of the world, now challenges his readers to grab hold of life and take a few chances. Disaster is still just around the corner, but since you can't know how or when or even if it will come, your best course is to "cast your bread upon the waters"; that is, be diligent in your labors so that you may profit from them later.

Nothing has changed in Solomon's overall philosophy: He believes life itself is fleeting and frustrating. But as he begins to wrap up his journey toward reality, his tone seems to change. He's more upbeat, more positive, more encouraging of aggressive action.

Where there is no risk, there is no reward. As the apostle Paul wrote, "Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7 NASB). But if you never sow the seed, you never reap the harvest. In that case, you are like the man who hid his talent in the ground (Matthew 25:14-30).

All of us go through life making decisions every day. You can take no chances and stay right where you are. Or you can take a few chances and, like Jack's father, maybe raise your average. The choice is up to you.

Lord God, increase my courage so that I may take advantage of every legitimate opportunity that comes my way Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- In what areas of your life have you been afraid to move forward for fear of failure? What steps of faith could you take in the next week?
- How would your life be different if you began to confront your fears?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 56:11; Isaiah 43:1-2; and 2 Timothy 1:7.

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**Bob Utley** - There are several commands in this chapter:

1. "cast," Eccl. 11:1, BDB 1018; KB 1511, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
2. "divide," Eccl. 11:2, BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. "sow," Eccl. 11:6, BDB 281, KB 282, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. "be idle" (lit. "rest"), Eccl. 11:6, BDB 628, KB 679, *Hiphil* [JUSSIVE](#)
5. "let him rejoice," Eccl. 11:8, BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT but used in a [JUSSIVE](#) sense
6. "let him remember," Eccl. 11:8, BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERFECT but used in a [JUSSIVE](#) sense
7. "rejoice," v. 9, BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
8. "let your heart be pleasant" (lit. "do good"), Eccl. 11:9, BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a [JUSSIVE](#) sense

9. "follow" (lit. "walk"), Eccl. 11:9, BDB 229, KB 246, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
10. "know," Eccl. 11:9, BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
11. "remove," Eccl. 11:10, BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
12. "put away," Eccl. 11:10, BDB 716, KB 778, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
13. "remember," 12:1, BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

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**Talmage** - Sometimes the Nile overflows its banks, and the people throw the seed upon the water. As the water subsides, the seed strikes into the ground and comes up. Hence the allusion, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and it will come back after many days." What you sow you will reap.

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## Secrets to a Happy Life By Kevin Riggs

SCRIPTURE: Ecclesiastes 11:1–6

INTRODUCTION: King Solomon searched high and low for happiness in this world apart from God. He could not find it. He discovered that happiness is found in a relationship with God, living life God's way. In this passage, there are four keys to happiness:

1. Give of yourself to others (v. 1). Give of yourself to others and one day you will be repaid. A truly happy person is selfless.
2. Give of yourself generously and often (v. 2). The idea is to sacrificially give to others, and give often. Success is not measured by the size of your house, or the size of your pocketbook. It is measured by the size of your heart.
3. Be active and stay active (vv. 3–4). The picture here is of a person sitting around, doing nothing. Enjoy life, don't just watch the weather. Don't retire from living.
4. Trust God for the results (vv. 5–6). Some things in life we'll never understand. Happiness is found in trusting God, no matter what the results.

CONCLUSION: Give God control. He will take care of you.

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**Spurgeon in Faith's Checkbook** - WE must not expect to see an immediate reward for all the good we do; nor must we always confine our efforts to places and persons which seem likely to yield us a recompense for our labours. The Egyptian casts his seed upon the waters of the Nile, where it might seem a sheer waste of corn. But in due time the flood subsides, the rice or other grain sinks into the fertile mud, and rapidly a harvest is produced. Let us to-day do good to the unthankful and the evil. Let us teach the careless and the obstinate. Unlikely waters may cover hopeful soil. Nowhere shall our labour be in vain in the Lord.

It is ours to cast our bread upon the waters; it remains with God to fulfil the promise, "Thou shalt find it." He will not let his promise fail. His good word which we have spoken shall live, shall be found, shall be found by us. Perhaps not just yet, but some day we shall reap what we have sown. We must exercise our patience; for perhaps the Lord may exercise it. "After many days," says the Scripture, and in many instances those days run into months and years, and yet the word stands true. God's promise will keep; let us mind that we keep the precept, and keep it this day.

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Always Remember, We Get what We Reward

A weekend fisherman looked over the side of his boat and saw a snake with a frog in its mouth. Feeling sorry for the frog, he reached down, gently removed the frog from the snake's mouth and let the frog go free. But now he felt sorry for the hungry snake. Having no food, he took out a flask of bourbon and poured a few drops into the snake's mouth. The snake swam away happy, the frog was happy and the man was happy for having performed such good deeds. He thought all was well until a few minutes passed and he heard something knock against the side of his boat and looked down. With stunned disbelief, the fisherman saw the snake was back, with two frogs.

See: Ecclesiastes 11:1; Luke 6:38; Acts 20:35

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## What Goes Around...

Less known than his Aunt Corrie, Peter was part of the ten Boom family that provided a safe house in Haarlem, the Netherlands, to which Jewish people escaped during the Nazi occupation. Peter and others extricated hundreds of Jewish children from orphanages ahead of the S.S. troops, who were collecting them to ship to concentration camps.

Peter also played the organ in a country church. Though it was forbidden by German decree, one Sunday Peter pulled out the stops

and played the Dutch national anthem, while shocked but proud churchgoers stood and sang the words. For this act of defiance, Peter, then 16, went to prison.

After the war, Peter went around the world with the same message as his famous aunt: that forgiveness is the only answer to hatred. In Israel on one of his tours, he was felled by a heart attack. Prompt surgery was essential to save his life. The cardiologist spoke with his patient before the operation. "I see your name is ten Boom. Are you by any chance related to the ten Booms of Haarlem?"

"Yes," replied Peter. "That's my family."

The doctor replied, "And I'm one of the babies your family saved!"

—Harold J. Sala, quoted in *Men of Integrity*, Vol. 3, no. 5.

See: Ecclesiastes 11:1; Matthew 6:1-4; 1 Corinthians 3:6

"Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again" (Ecc. 11:1).

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## **Sow What You Need - Bob Gass - [A Fresh Word for Today: 365 Insights for Daily Living - Page 13](#)**

A man reaps what he sows. (Galatians 6:7, NIV)

You don't always reap where you sow; you don't reap when you sow; but you'll always reap what you sow; so start sowing what you need. You can give from your heart to any cause God tells you, and expect nothing back from them. Think of the problem that solves; others cannot disappoint you or control you, for they're not your source. If they were, you'd end up manipulating them or resenting them. But the Bible says that God will "multiply your seed sown" so that you will be "enriched in everything" (2 Corinthians 9:10,11). Did you notice the word "everything"? Your health, your marriage, your career, your family—everything! All you have to do is "sow," and God will be your multiplier.

Note again, you don't reap when you sow! This is hard if you're impatient or your need is urgent. God's Kingdom works in seasons, and if you respect them you'll be blessed. Imagine a farmer sowing a field of grain in the morning, and sitting up all night watching it. When you ask him "why," he says, "I am waiting for the harvest." You say, "Ludicrous!" Yes, but are you doing the same thing? The Word says, "Cast thy bread upon the water; for thou shalt find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1). Another version says, "Give generously, for your gifts will return to you later."

YOUR HARVEST IS CONNECTED TO A SEASON, THAT SEASON IS SCHEDULED BY GOD. IN A WORLD OF UNCERTAINTY, YOU CAN COUNT ON ONE THING; WHAT YOU SOW YOU WILL REAP!

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## **The Power of a Hymn**

"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."—Eccles. 11:1

Probably few modern hymns have wandered more widely over the world, been pasted into more scrap-books, or comforted more invalids than the one of Phoebe Cary's, beginning, "One sweetly solemn thought." She composed it in a little third-story bedroom after coming from church one Sabbath morning in 1852. The following incident, taken from Mrs. Mary Clemmer's life of the Cary sisters, shows how it influenced two tempted and erring men on the other side of the globe to lead better lives. The old man spoken of became an earnest working Christian, while "Harry" renounced gambling and its attendant vices:—

A gentleman in China, entrusted with packages for a young man from his friends in the United States, learned that he would probably be found in a certain gambling house. He went thither, but not seeing the young man, sat down and waited, in the hope that he might come in. The place was a bedlam of noises, men getting angry over their cards, and frequently coming to blows. Near him sat two men—one young, the other forty years of age. They were betting and drinking in a terrible way, the older one giving utterance continually to the foulest profanity. Two games had been finished, the young man losing each time. The third game, with fresh bottles of brandy, had just begun, and the young man sat lazily back in his chair while the oldest shuffled his cards. The man was a long time dealing the cards, and the young man, looking carelessly about the room, began to hum a tune. He went on, till at length he began to sing the hymn of Phoebe Cary, above quoted. "The words," says the writer of the story, "repeated in such a vile place, at first made me shudder. A Sabbath-school hymn in a gambling den! But while the young man sang, the elder stopped dealing the cards, stared at the singer a moment, and, throwing the cards on the floor, exclaimed, 'Harry, where did you learn that tune?'

" 'What tune?'

" 'Why, that one you've been singing.'



"The young man said he did not know what he had been singing, when the elder repeated the words, with tears in his eyes, and the young man said he had learned them in a Sunday-school in America.

" 'Come,' said the elder, getting up; 'come, Harry; here's what I won from you; go and use it for some good purpose. As for me, as God sees me, I have played my last game, and drank my last bottle. I have misled you, Harry, and I am sorry. Give me your hand, my boy, and say that for old America's sake, if for no other, you will quit this infernal business.' "

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## **DILIGENT GENEROSITY** [NIV, Once-A-Day: Worship and Praise Devotional: 365 Days to ...](#)

Ship your grain across the sea; after many days you may receive a return.ECCLESIASTES 11:1

Robert Gilmour LeTourneau, owner of more than 200 patents, made a fortune designing and selling massive earth-moving equipment. But he was perhaps most famous for his lavish charity. Later in life, he made it his goal to give away not 10 percent of his income — the standard Christian tithe — but 90 percent! His reasoning? "God has a bigger shovel than I have."

Such generosity is hard for us to fathom because we live in an uncertain world. But then we come to a verse like the above, which basically says, "Throw caution to the wind. Take financial risks. More specifically, be ready and willing to help others in trouble."

Why? Why would anyone live like that? First, because of the way relationships tend to work. Generous people typically find help when they are in trouble because the people they have helped are often the ones to return the favor. On other occasions the help comes from unexpected sources.

But even if we never "get it back" in this life, there is a second reason to be generous. Living by giving is a prime way we can worship God. Every time we write a check to help someone or an organization, or take a meal to someone in need, we have a prime opportunity to act out this prayer: "God, you have blessed me, so that I might bless others. You have been faithful to me in the past, and I know you will be in the future. I trust you to continue to provide. May this small gesture bring great honor to your name."

When you lend a helping hand to people, turn a trusting heart heavenward. Acknowledge God as the provider of every good thing in your life.

PRAYER Father, help me to give ...

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## **TODAY IN THE WORD**

Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again. - Ecclesiastes 11:1

In a wonderful little book entitled Money Smart, Christian financial counselor Larry Burkett says that while advice from unsaved experts to Christians may be good as far as it goes, ""their counsel is lacking the most essential element: God's Word. It has been my experience that most counsel from unsaved financial advisors is aimed at protecting the assets of their clients."" But, Burkett says, as Christians we have priorities other than financial gain.

There's a word for the element that is missing in so much of the advice we receive from non-Christians: stewardship. It makes a big difference whether you consider yourself owner and master of all you have, or as a manager of God's resources whose first responsibility is faithfulness (1 Cor. 4:2).

The writer of Ecclesiastes understood the importance of setting life's goals and making decisions with the knowledge that we are accountable to God. Being a wise counselor, he reminds us to keep our focus on the Lord, and not on His gifts and blessings.

Nowhere does God's Word tell us to hoard our time, our spiritual gifts, or our money out of fear that we might make a mistake or lose something.

Remember, the only servant the master judged in Jesus' parable of the talents was the one who hid his money because he was afraid of losing it and displeasing the master (Matt. 25:25-27). God intends His gifts to be used.

Once we have our spiritual vision adjusted, we are ready to take on the challenges He gives us. Life is full of uncertainties, Solomon says, but those aren't our concern. That which we can't see or understand is in God's hands. Our job is to invest our lives in the work of His kingdom.

Verse 9b may sound like dangerous advice. However, Solomon balances it with the reminder that our desires and decisions will come under God's review. It is also true that when we make the Lord our delight, He will ""give [us] the desires of [our] heart"" (Ps. 37:4).

If we had to give a title to today's study it would be, ""Go for it, but don't leave out God.""



In other words, let's not pack our lives so tightly, even with good things, that God is squeezed out. A good question to ask yourself today is this: are your heart, your mind, and your schedule so full that God would have to do something spectacular just to get your attention? Pray today that God will help you keep your spiritual eyes and ears open to Him.

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## Warren Wiersbe - A QUEST FOR ADVENTURE [Wiersbe Bible Commentary OT - Page 299](#)

When I was a boy, I practically lived in the public library during the summer months. I loved books, the building was cool, and the librarians gave me the run of the place since I was one of their best customers. One summer I read nothing but true adventure stories written by real heroes like Frank Buck and Martin Johnson. These men knew the African jungles better than I knew my hometown! I was fascinated by *I Married Adventure*, the autobiography of Martin Johnson's wife Osa. When Clyde Beatty brought his circus to town, I was in the front row watching him tame the lions.

Since those boyhood days, life has become a lot calmer for me, but I trust I haven't lost that sense of adventure. In fact, as I get older, I'm asking God to keep me from getting set in my ways in a life that is routine, boring, and predictable. "I don't want my life to end in a swamp," said British expositor F.B. Meyer. I agree with him. When I trusted Jesus Christ as my Savior, I married adventure; and that meant living by faith and expecting the unexpected.

Solomon used two activities to illustrate his point: the merchant sending out his ships (vv. 1-2) and the farmer sowing his seed (vv. 3-6). In both activities, a great deal of faith is required because neither the merchant nor the farmer can control the circumstances. If the merchant and the farmer waited until the circumstances were ideal, they would never get anything done! Life has a certain amount of risk to it, and that's where faith comes in.

Applying God's Truth:

1. What was the last adventurous thing you did?
  2. If you had a bit more faith in God, what new adventure might you like to try?
  3. What is your usual attitude toward risk? Are you satisfied with it, or would you like to become more (or less) a risk-taker? How might you make any desired changes?
- 

### Rewarded

A young machinist asked for three days' vacation to go deer hunting. His supervisor refused the request because the department was very pressed and was being forced to work overtime and on Saturdays. The machinist, who had a record of tardiness, came to work thirty minutes late and the harassed supervisor told him, "If you are tardy one more time this month, you'll be suspended for three days without pay." Guess who was late the next day? The machinist saw the monetary threat as opportunity and showed up late. He was suspended, went deer hunting and got what he wanted. And management applied the "proper" disciplinary procedure, but the work didn't get done.

By now you probably understand the greatest management principle in the world: The Things That Get Rewarded Get Done.

See: Proverbs 14:14; Ecclesiastes 11:1; Galatians 6:7

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**Adrian Rogers'** sermon [The Principles of Prosperity - GO TO PAGE 42](#) "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." ECCLESIASTES 11:1

### OUTLINE

- Introduction
- I. The Principle of Investment
  - A. Examine Your Motive for Investment
  - B. Seek Wise Counsel
  - C. Beware of Any Get-Rich-Quick Schemes
- II. The Principle of Diversification
- III. The Principle of Preparation
- IV. The Principle of Venture
- V. The Principle of Trust
- VI. The Principle of Work
- VII. The Principle of Perspective
- VIII. The Principle of Accountability
- Conclusion
- God wants you to prosper.*

Would you take God's Word and turn, please, to Ecclesiastes chapter 11? As you're turning, I want to tell you what we are going to be talking about today: **"The Principles of Prosperity."** And I have good news. Would you like some good news? Here's some good news: God wants you to prosper. Now you say, "I'm not certain about that, Pastor." Well, I want to give you some scriptures, in case there is the shadow of any doubt. I want to give you some scriptures. (CLICK FOR FULL SERMON [The Principles of Prosperity - GO TO PAGE 42](#) - RECOMMENDED)

**Ecclesiastes 11:2 Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth.**

KJV Ecclesiastes 11:2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 11:2 Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, For you do not know what evil will be on the earth.

NET Ecclesiastes 11:2 Divide your merchandise among seven or even eight investments, for you do not know what calamity may happen on earth.

BGT Ecclesiastes 11:2 δ ς μερ δα το ς πτ κα γε το ς κτ τι ο γιν σκεις τ σται πονηρ ν π τ ν γ ν

LXE Ecclesiastes 11:2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil there shall be upon the earth.

CSB Ecclesiastes 11:2 Give a portion to seven or even to eight, for you don't know what disaster may happen on earth.

ESV Ecclesiastes 11:2 Give a portion to seven, or even to eight, for you know not what disaster may happen on earth.

NIV Ecclesiastes 11:2 Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land.

NLT Ecclesiastes 11:2 But divide your investments among many places, for you do not know what risks might lie ahead.

YLT Ecclesiastes 11:2 Give a portion to seven, and even to eight, For thou knowest not what evil is on the earth.

NJB Ecclesiastes 11:2 Offer a share to seven or to eight people, you can never tell what disaster may occur.

NRS Ecclesiastes 11:2 Divide your means seven ways, or even eight, for you do not know what disaster may happen on earth.

RSV Ecclesiastes 11:2 Give a portion to seven, or even to eight, for you know not what evil may happen on earth.

NAB Ecclesiastes 11:2 Make seven or eight portions; you know not what misfortune may come upon the earth.

GWN Ecclesiastes 11:2 Divide what you have into seven parts, or even into eight, because you don't know what disaster may happen on earth.

BBE Ecclesiastes 11:2 Give a part to seven or even to eight, because you have no knowledge of the evil which will be on the earth.

- **portion:** Ne 8:10 Es 9:19,22 Ps 112:9 Lu 6:30-35 1Ti 6:18,19
- **seven:** Job 5:19 Pr 6:16 Mic 5:5 Mt 18:22 Lu 17:4
- **for:** Da 4:27 Ac 11:28-30 Ga 6:1 Eph 5:16 Heb 13:3

#### Related Passages:

Proverbs 19:17 One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, And He will repay him for his good deed.

Luke 6:38 "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

1 Timothy 6:18-19 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

## PREPARING FOR THE UNKNOWN

**Divide** (command) **your portion** ([cheleg](#)) **to seven, or even to eight** - **NET** is very interpretative = "Divide your merchandise among seven or even eight **investments** (See **NET NOTE** below)" Be generous and intentional in sharing or investing widely—don't put everything in one place. This could mean: Diversify your giving (help many people), or diversify your investments (spread your risk), or be active in doing good in many ways.

*Don't put all your eggs  
in one basket.*

**Donald Glenn** - "In view of the possibility of disaster, a person should make prudent investments in numerous ventures rather than put all his 'eggs in one basket' (e.g., Gen 32:7–8 for a practical example of this advice)." The **NEB** accurately reflects this interpretation of Ecclesiastes 11:1-2, "*Send your grain across the seas, and in time you will get a return. Divide your merchandise among seven ventures, eight maybe, since you do not know what disasters may occur on earth.*" (See [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Wisdom - Page 287](#))

**Philip Ryken** - Rather than simply taking our chances, we will plan for an uncertain and possibly unfortunate future. If we are wise, we will invest widely. Hopefully, if one investment does poorly it will be counterbalanced by another source of revenue that is doing somewhat better....(ED: APPLYING THIS SPIRITUALLY) It is about having the holy boldness to do seven (or even eight) things to spread the gospel and then waiting for God's ship to come in. Some of the things that we attempt may fail (or at least seem to fail at the time)—some of the ministries we start, for example, or the churches we plant, or the efforts we make to share the good news of the cross and the empty tomb. But we should never stop investing with the gospel in as many places as we can. (See [Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters](#))

I like **William MacDonald's** comment - Giving a **serving to seven**, even **to eight** suggests two things—unrestrained generosity or diversifying of business enterprises. If the first is meant, the idea is that we should show uncalculating kindness while we can, because a time of calamity and misfortune may come when this will not be possible. Most people save for a rainy day; this verse counsels to adopt a spirit of unrestricted liberality because of the uncertainties of life. Or the thought may be: [Don't put all your eggs in one basket](#). Invest in several interests so that if one fails, you will still be able to carry on with the others. This is known as *diversification*. (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**David Hubbard** - "**Seven or eight**" is a Hebrew numerical formula called X, X + 1. It occurs frequently in Proverbs (Pr 6:16, 30:21, 29) and in the first two chapters of Amos. Here it is not to be taken literally but means "plenty and more than plenty," "the widest possible diversification within the guidelines of prudence...." Seven means "plenty," and eight means, "Go a bit beyond that." (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

**NET NOTE** - The phrase "**seven or eight**" is a graded numerical saying depicting an indefinite plurality: "The collocation of a numeral with the next above it is a rhetorical device employed in numerical sayings to express a number, which need not, or cannot, be more exactly specified. It must be gathered from the context whether such formulae are intended to denote only an insignificant number (e.g., Is 17:6 "two" or at the most "three") or a considerable number (e.g., Mi 5:4). Sometimes, however, this juxtaposition serves to express merely an indefinite total, without the collateral idea of intensifying the lower by means of the higher number" (GKC 437 §134.s). Examples: "one" or "two" (Deut 32:30; Jer 3:14; Job 33:14; 40:5; Ps 62:12); "two" or "three" (2 Kgs 9:32; Isa 17:6; Hos 6:2; Amos 4:8; Sir 23:16; 26:28; 50:25); "three" or "four" (Jer 36:23; Amos 1:3–11; Prov 21:19; 30:15, 18; Sir 26:5); "four" or "five" (Isa 17:6); "six" or "seven" (Job 5:19; Prov 6:16); "seven" or "eight" (Mic 5:4; Eccl 11:2). **The word "investments" is not in the Hebrew text;** it is added here for clarity. This line is traditionally understood as an exhortation to be generous to a multitude of people (KJV, NAB, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, NIV, NJPS); however, it is better taken as shrewd advice to not commit all one's possessions to a single venture ([A. Cohen, The Five Megilloth](#) [SoBB], 181). D. R. Glenn ("Ecclesiastes," [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Wisdom - Page 287](#)) writes: "In view of the possibility of disaster, a person should make prudent investments in numerous ventures rather than put all his 'eggs in one basket' (e.g., Gen 32:7–8 for a practical example of this advice)." Several translations reflect this: "Divide your merchandise among seven ventures, eight maybe" (NEB); "Take shares in several ventures" (Moffatt).

**For** (term of explanation) **you do not know what misfortune** (raah - evil, misery, distress; Lxx - [poneros](#) - active evil) **may occur on the earth** - In simple terms Solomon speaks of uncertainty of future events or circumstances under the sun. Since calamity can strike unexpectedly, spread your efforts, resources, and kindness wisely and broadly. You can't predict the future—but you can prepare for it. Solomon isn't encouraging fear but wise foresight. You don't know what will happen—so act wisely now.

[William Barrick](#) NASU's translation "*Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight*" is itself misleading, because the Hebrew reads literally, "*Give a portion to seven and even to eight*" In addition, Deut 18:8 uses "portion" with regard to food.) to seven or even eight needy people, multiplying the odds that some are going to do exceedingly well with that which they have been given.

Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#) - Here is another emphasis on the uncertainty of life's outcomes even when wisdom is used. Translate, "Give a portion to seven, or even to eight (that is, be wise in your investments); yet you do not know what evil may happen on earth."

**Donald Glenn** points out that "To emphasize that man is ignorant of the future Solomon said, "You do not know" three times (Ecc 11:2, 5-6); he also said, "You cannot understand" (v. 5). However, he counseled that ignorance of the future should lead not to inactivity or despair, but to diligent labor. (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament - Page 1002](#))

**ESV Study Bible** ([Borrow](#)) - Rather than speculating about such uncertainties (see note on vv. 1-6), it is financially more prudent to explore multiple avenues for making one's living and investing one's resources (vv. 2, 6), which could involve giving a "portion" or "compensation" to several different areas (seven, or even to eight), because such diversification gives protection against unforeseen disaster in one or two of the areas.

[William Barrick](#) - If, however, Ec 11:1 refers to investment by means of commercial shipping, then Ec 11:2 refers to the diversification of shipments and/or investments into seven or eight consignments, so that at least some ships survive the journeys and return with their holds filled. "**Cast**" (Eccl 11:1) actually provides a misleading translation that promotes the traditional viewpoint. However, the imperative more closely approximates "**Send**" or "**Let loose**"—more befitting a commercial enterprise for which ships are sent out to sea for years at a time before returning to their home port. Additional argumentation for the maritime understanding of these two verses includes the Solomonic history which bears witness to the ships of Solomon's commercial fleet (1 Kgs 9:26–28; 10:22). Also, Pr 31:14 makes mention of both "ships" and "bread." As for the later Arabic proverb, it "may have been influenced by the early 'charitable' interpretation of verse 1."<sup>10</sup> None of the Egyptian references parallels closely the use of "bread," making them weak attestation to almsgiving in Ecclesiastes. The "**seven, or even to eight**" is the same " $x + (x + 1)$ " formula found elsewhere in the Old Testament (including Eccl 4:6, 12).<sup>11</sup> This form of reference indicates that there are more potential entities that match the description than just the seven or even the eight—in other words, an indefinite number. However, in some situations the formula expresses the fullness of a condition or, here, an enterprise.<sup>12</sup> Solomon does not mean by his words that commercial enterprise or almsgiving are "just a roll of the dice, gamble and nothing more. He is certain that the covenant people can count on eventual success, because God will guarantee it."<sup>13</sup> That which God grants, however, requires both faith<sup>14</sup> and patience. Jesus' parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14–30 appears to illustrate the same truth. The parable condemns the man who fails to invest the one talent that his master had given him. He did not want to take any risks, so he lost all potential gain. In the end, his master took away even the gift he had received. Paralyzed with uncertainty, fear, and doubt, he lost the gift due to its disuse. The variety of interpretations and translations do not destroy the foundational truths of the text. For example, whether an interpreter settles on the charitable, agricultural, or commercial interpretation of Eccl 11:1–2, the concepts of investment, risk, and faith remain and the exhortation to action rather than paralysis still rises inexorably from the text. Eccl 11:2 concludes with "for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth." Three more times, Solomon highlights human ignorance (twice in Eccl 11: 5 and once in Eccl 11:6). The statement serves as the key to the entire passage. Knowing our ignorance forms the basis for a realistic outlook that depends upon a sovereign, omniscient God.

**Ecclesiastes 11:3 If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth; and whether a tree falls toward the south or toward the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies.**

KJV Ecclesiastes 11:3 If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 11:3 If the clouds are full of rain, They empty themselves upon the earth; And if a tree falls to the south or the north, In the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie.

NET Ecclesiastes 11:3 If the clouds are full of rain, they will empty themselves on the earth, and whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, the tree will lie wherever it falls.

BGT Ecclesiastes 11:3 ἡ πληρωθῶσιν τὴν φη εἶς τοῦ τὴν γῆν κη οὐσιν καὶ ἡ πρὸς ἑλὼν ἡ τὴν τὴν καὶ ἡ τὴν βορρὰ τὴν οὐ πεσεταὶ τὸ ξύλον κε σταί

LXE Ecclesiastes 11:3 If the clouds be filled with rain, they pour it out upon the earth: and if a tree fall southward, or if it fall northward, in the place where the tree shall fall, there it shall be.

CSB Ecclesiastes 11:3 If the clouds are full, they will pour out rain on the earth; whether a tree falls to the south or the north, the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.

ESV Ecclesiastes 11:3 If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth, and if a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.

NIV Ecclesiastes 11:3 If clouds are full of water, they pour rain upon the earth. Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there will it lie.

NLT Ecclesiastes 11:3 When clouds are heavy, the rains come down. Whether a tree falls north or south, it stays where it falls.

YLT Ecclesiastes 11:3 If the thick clouds are full of rain, On the earth they empty themselves; And if a tree doth fall in the south or to the north, The place where the tree falleth, there it is.

NJB Ecclesiastes 11:3 When clouds are full of rain, they will shed it on the earth. If a tree falls, whether south or north, where it falls, there it will lie.

NRS Ecclesiastes 11:3 When clouds are full, they empty rain on the earth; whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.

RSV Ecclesiastes 11:3 If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth; and if a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.

NAB Ecclesiastes 11:3 When the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth. Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, wherever it falls, there shall it lie.

GWN Ecclesiastes 11:3 If the clouds are full of rain, they will let it pour down on the earth. If a tree falls north or south, the tree will remain where it fell.

BBE Ecclesiastes 11:3 If the clouds are full of rain, they send it down on the earth; and if a tree comes down to the south, or the north, in whatever place it comes down, there it will be.

- the clouds: 1Ki 18:45 Ps 65:9-13 Isa 55:10,11 1Jn 3:17
- if the tree: Mt 3:10 Lu 13:7 16:22-26

We cannot control the rain or a tree falling  
so live wisely while you have life!

## SOME THINGS ARE UNCHANGEABLE

**If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth**- Full clouds will rain. This suggests that certain conditions inevitably lead to certain outcomes. Even though we cannot control these things, we can expect results.

**and whether a tree falls toward the south or toward the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies**Whatever will happen, will happen is the idea. They are unchangeable. In Spanish one might say [Que sera, sera](#). Since you can't control everything, act wisely while you can—especially before it's too late (cf. v.4–6).

[William Barrick](#) - Continuing the discussion of risk, Eccl 11:3 reveals that no one has control over when the rain falls (even though it will inevitably come) or where a tree might fall (which is entirely random).

**Michael Eaton** - The sudden fall of the tree thus contrasts with the gathering storm-clouds, which can be watched with apprehension. The two points involved, therefore, seem to be: Mankind cannot control the difficulties of life, (i) even when he anticipates them, and (ii) because often there are totally unexpected events (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - Nobody can predict the weather, let alone control it, and the farmer is at the mercy of nature. Verse 3 contrasts the clouds with the tree. Clouds are always changing. They come and go, and the farmer hopes they will spill their precious water on his fields. Trees are somewhat permanent. They stand in the same place, unless a storm topples them; and then they lie there and

rot. The past [the tree] cannot be changed, but the present [the clouds] is available to us, and we must seize each opportunity. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**David Hubbard** - The processes of creation go on without your worry, and you could not change them if you tried. So keep your eye on those processes and get on with your work, Ecclesiastes urged. (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

**Walter Kaiser** - A third illustration is found in Ecc 11:3, which also urges us to continued activity even though we are ignorant of the circumstances connected with our exertions. Full clouds will empty themselves on the earth even though some of the water seems to be wasted, falling on lakes, oceans, and uninhabited deserts. But some of the rain will be directly beneficial. Likewise, trees blown over in storms will fall on one man's property or another's. But someone will get the use of the firewood, so rejoice. (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

**Philip Ryken** - the Preacher pictures a farmer standing out in his field. The clouds are heavy with rain—part of a familiar cycle in nature. Nearby a tree has fallen to the ground, possibly as the result of a storm. There is nothing the farmer can do about either the rain or the tree; these natural and seemingly random events are far outside his personal control. The one thing that the farmer can control is when he will sow his seed and harvest his crops. But this particular farmer is just standing there—watching the wind and the clouds (Ec 11:4), but not farming his field. The implication is that he is trying to guess when he can safely cast his seed or harvest his grain. Although there is “a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted” (Ecclesiastes 3:2), apparently this man is not sure what time it is! (See [Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters](#))

**William MacDonald** (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#)) - Verse 3 carries on the thought of the previous one, especially with regard to the unknown evil which may happen on earth. It suggests that there is a certain inevitability and finality about the calamities of life. Just as surely as rain-laden clouds empty themselves upon the earth, so surely do troubles and trials come to the sons of men. And once a tree is felled, it remains a fallen monarch. Its destiny is sealed. A wider application of the verse is given in the poem:

As a tree falls, so must it lie,  
As a man lives, so must he die,  
As a man dies, so must he be,  
All through the years of eternity.

—John Ray

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**Ray Pritchard** - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - **BOLDNESS: TAKING ADVANTAGE OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY** Ecclesiastes 11:3-4

Do you think Solomon was a pessimist? Certainly some of his earlier comments about the calamities of life might be taken that way. He knows full well that the "best laid plans of mice and men" often go astray. Things don't always work out right—they sometimes don't work out at all. Blades grow dull, snakes bite people, walls collapse, the wicked triumph over the righteous, and death comes to all of us sooner or later, sometimes when we least expect it.

This is life as we experience it. What are you going to do? Shrug your shoulders and give up? Stay in bed? Pout about the frowning face of providence?

Consider the dark clouds that mean a storm is advancing over the horizon. The same storm that washes away coastal homes also brings needed rain to the farmer's crops. If the uncertainty of life makes you stay curled up under the covers, you've missed Solomon's point. While it's true that you may be wiped out tomorrow, it's also true that you may strike oil. You'll never know unless you dig another well. But one thing is sure—if you don't dig, you'll never find oil. If you don't plant, you'll never reap the harvest.

Perhaps you've heard the old proverb, "A watched pot never boils." You've got to run some risks to get ahead in the world. Some plans will fail, some crops won't grow, some sales calls won't pan out—so what? Others will succeed, you'll have more watermelons than you know what to do with, and you'll bag the largest order in the history of your company.

The biblical view comes down to this: Since God alone knows the future, we ought to make our plans, use our brains, study the situation, take all factors into consideration, seek wise counsel, do the best we can, and then leave the results to God. Don't be reckless—that's the path of certain ruin; but don't sit on your hands either. Pay your money, take your chances, sleep like a baby, and let God take care of the future.

Lord Jesus, when I am tempted to look at my circumstances and despair, help me to remember that You calmed the storms before and You can do it again. Amen.

SHINING THE LIGHT

- How well do you handle failure? What lessons have you learned from your past mistakes?
- Are you gun-shy about the future? If so, what needs to change in your own heart before you can be bold again?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 48:14; Mark 4:35-41; and 2 Corinthians 9:8.

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### **Fruit From Old Seeds** (Ecclesiastes 11:1) - AMG Bible Illustrations

"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Eccl. 11:1). It is said that, in the hand of one of the mummies found in a pyramid, was discovered a bulbous root, which, being placed in the earth, grew and bloomed a beautiful, but unknown flower, after having been buried for many hundreds of years. So may the good seed of the word of God spring up after many years. We mention a case in point. Some years since, a venerable man, upwards of one hundred years old, was the subject of converting grace. The cause of his conversion was, hearing a text of Scripture, which his righteous mother had taught him in England, nearly one hundred years before!

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### **H A Ironside - Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.** Ecclesiastes 11:1

The reference is to the Egyptian method of rice sowing—scattering the seed over the land when flooded by the waters of the Nile, counting on a bountiful harvest later on. So it is with the sower of the gospel seed. He is to be diligent in giving out the Word of Life under all circumstances, knowing that God will not let His Word return unto Him void, but will use it in the salvation of the lost and needy. Often the results of faithful sowing will appear long years afterwards, but in many more cases it will not be until we stand at the judgment seat of Christ that the harvest will be revealed.

Sow thy seed, be never weary,  
Let no fears thy soul annoy,  
Be the prospect ne'er so dreary,  
Thou shalt reap the fruits of joy.

Lo, the scene of verdure brightening!  
See the rising grain appear.  
Look again! The fields are whitening,  
For the harvest-time is near.

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### DEEDS—good returned - Speaker's Sourcebook

Ecclesiastes 11:1; Matthew 26:40

#### Cast Your Bread...After Many Days

While walking outside his Vienna hotel in 1938, a Polish pilot was nearly upended when a man fleeing his pursuers rushed headlong into him. About to lecture the miscreant, the officer noticed he was ashen with terror. Panting heavily, he kept repeating "Gestapo! Gestapo!" The Pole quickly secreted him in his hotel room. Unaware of his guest's identity, but anxious to help him elude the Nazis, he flew the fugitive to Poland, landing in a meadow outside Cracow to protect him from arrest.

The Polish pilot went on to fly in the Polish, French, and British Air Force. In June 1940, after being wounded in a dogfight over the English Channel, he nearly died when he suffered a severe skull fracture while landing his plane. Initially, the hospital authorities considered surgery useless. Only when a respected brain surgeon arrived by plane and doggedly insisted did they allow him to operate.

When the pilot regained consciousness, the first face he focused on was the white-smocked Jew he had saved from the Gestapo two years before. When the officer weakly asked what he was doing there, the man told him his story. He had slipped into Cracow and, though pursued by the Nazis, had fled to Warsaw and then to Scotland. Appreciating the officer's kindness in flying him out of Austria in 1938, he noticed the officer's name on the plane's map and committed it to memory, vowing to repay the debt if an opportunity came.

When he heard that a Polish squadron had distinguished itself in the Battle of Britain, he found that his friend was involved. When he discovered that his friend had been critically wounded in combat and nearly killed in a crash landing, he asked to be flown to him. "But why?" the pilot whispered.

"I thought that at last I could show my gratitude. You see, I am a brain surgeon—I operated on you this morning."



How many will rise at judgment and call us blessed because in Christ's name we did what we could for that one in need?

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### **It Is More Blessed to Give** (Ecclesiastes 11:1) - AMG Bible Illustrations

One day, Mr. L., a businessman living in a southern city, knocked at the office door of the Salvation Army. The Army captain answered and was very surprised to receive a gift of \$100 from Mr. L. That was big money at that time and was much appreciated by this charity organization. As Mr. L. started to walk down the sidewalk, he heard steps behind him. It was the Army captain hastening to catch up with him. "Our baby is sick," he said, "would it be all right to use some of this money to buy milk for it?" "Go ahead and use all you need for your child," Mr. L. replied. A number of years later, Mr. L. was running for a high government office and was to make a speech in the city where the Army captain worked. The large auditorium was filled to capacity with interested listeners, and the Army captain was one of them. When Mr. L. finished his speech, the Army captain stood up and asked permission to speak. He told the incident how Mr. L. had given \$100 and about his sick child receiving the needed milk. There was a thundering applause from the audience—and a decided victory for Mr. L. in his campaigning! "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days" (Eccl. 11:1).

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"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." (Eccl. 11:1) - William MacDonald - Truths to Live By

Bread here is probably used, figuratively, for the grain from which it is made. In Egypt, seed was sown on flooded areas. As the waters receded, the crop came forth. But it did not happen immediately. The harvest came "after many days."

Today we live in an "instant" society, and we want instant results. We have instant mashed potatoes, instant tea, coffee and cocoa, instant soup and instant oatmeal. Also, we have instant credit at the bank and instant replays on TV.

But it is not like that in Christian life and service. Our kindnesses are not rewarded immediately. Our prayers are not always answered right away. And our service does not usually produce immediate results.

The Bible repeatedly uses the agricultural cycle to illustrate spiritual service. "A sower went forth to sow..." "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." It is a gradual process, over an extended period of time. The squash grows more quickly than an oak tree, but it still takes time.

Therefore, to expect instant results from our uncalculating deeds of kindness is unrealistic. To expect immediate answers to prayer is immature. To press for a decision the first time a person hears the Gospel is unwise. Certainly the normal experience is to give, pray and serve untiringly over a protracted period of time. You do so with the confidence that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. After a while, you see results, not enough to inflate you with pride, but enough to encourage you to press on. The full results will not be known till we reach heaven—which is—after all, the best and safest place to see the fruit of our labors.

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Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. Ecclesiastes 11:1

During the Civil War a man on horseback was confronted by a sentry who demanded at gunpoint that he give the password. "Lincoln," he confidently replied. A dead silence followed, for it wasn't the right word! Finally the soldier solemnly said, "If I hadn't recognized you, I would have shot you because of your mistake. At the risk of my own life I'm sparing yours. Go back and get the right word." Thanking the soldier warmly, the man rode away. When he returned, he said, "Massachusetts." "That's right, you may now pass," the guard replied. "I will not pass until I've given you a message. At the risk of your life you spared mine, so I must ask you if you have the right password for heaven." "Yes, I do!" said the sentry. "What is it?" "Jesus Christ." "Where did you learn that?" asked the man. "In your Sunday school class long ago in Pennsylvania. You planted the seed of God's Word in my life, and although you didn't know it at the time, it bore fruit. So even though you didn't have the right password, I knew you were an honest man. That's why I gave you a second chance."

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### **Bread On the Waters - Vance Havner**

IT WAS in a fish hatchery in the Northwest that they told me how the tiny salmon are released in a tributary, find their way to the river and then to the sea and after a year or two return to the same river and the same tributary whence they started.

Of course there came to mind the verse from the Word, "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Ecc. 11:1). No one can explain how the salmon find their way back to the identical stream where they started their journey years before. Nor can anyone explain how the smallest deed done in the name of Christ comes back one day to the doer of it laden with blessing. But it does. God has endowed his salmon with a strange wisdom that brings them home again. And He has ordered a blessed provision for His servants that lets no cup of cold water lose its reward; bread cast upon the waters comes back multiplied.

In Boston I saw a plaque marking the spot where an obscure Christian laid a hand on a broad-shouldered New Englander and so brought Dwight L. Moody to know Christ. That bit of bread cast upon the waters has traveled around the world and is still washing up in blessing on the shores of every continent.

Some time ago I had a letter from a preacher who had been called to the ministry through a sermon he heard me preach over twenty years ago. I did not know when I cast bread upon the waters that night that twenty years later it would return in a grateful letter.

And think of those whose lives we may touch and bless and never know it until eternity reveals it all. Our Lord advised us to make friends with money so that when we reach heaven we may be met by a reception committee of those we have blessed. There is absolutely only one financial investment that is perfectly safe and that is a deposit with heaven.

Now, strangely enough, casting bread upon the waters is just about the most uncertain thing you can imagine. What can be more haphazard than throwing bread on a moving stream? How could one possibly expect to get returns on a fling like that? "Laying up treasure in heaven" is a solid, substantial phrase but casting bread on water sounds like poor business. But that is just where a secret lies concealed. The Spirit of God used just this phrase because investing time and thought and talent and money in the things of the spirit has always seemed folly to this poor world. But after stocks and bonds have failed and money is worthless, earth's real millionaires are found to be investors in the eternal like Paul, who wound up his career with only an overcoat and a few books but is still drawing dividends because he invested with Him who is able to keep that which we commit unto Him against that day.

It has been said that the tiniest pebble dropped upon the water will start undulations that will reach the farthest shore. Certainly God has wrought into this spiritual world an eternal principle that brings back to the starting point again every holy deed done in the name of Jesus. Therefore, the wisest man is he who spends and is spent casting his bread on the waters for Christ's sake in loving service. Hit or miss it may appear to the poor deluded dollar-chasers of this present world, but the soundest business on earth it will turn out to be when God audits the books some day.

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### **Bread On The Waters - Vance Havner**

"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1). So say the Scriptures and so says experience. This scribe has been casting a little bread on the waters for many years. In sermons, printed articles and published books I have sought to say a good word for Jesus Christ. I have scattered words of warning, of rebuke, of counsel, of comfort, of encouragement. And now with the passing of many years I am reaping a good harvest.

Almost everywhere I go to preach, some dear soul tells me of a blessing received a long time ago. One man relates how he lay on a hospital bed and was lifted in spirit by one of the little books. Another found light on a baffling problem through a devotional page. Another, in a nervous breakdown, reached out his hand one night and picked up the first book he touched and found a needed word. A minister told how as a boy he had driven a car to bring his parents to a meeting where I spoke. He was sulking and sat far up in the gallery, quite out of sorts. But the Spirit of God convicted him and led him to the front to yield to Christ. Sometimes it was thirty years ago when the bread was cast on the waters and they waited all that time to tell me. What a circuitous route those crumbs followed to reach me after thirty years!

One does not have to be a minister to engage in such sowing of bread. Have we not heard of a mother's prayers being answered half a century later? And how many times have a few words spoken to some boy or girl seemed wasted effort, only to bear fruit when all seemed hopeless. Many a pastor has preached to wriggling youngsters who appeared to get not a single word of it, only to find long afterward that even in the most unpromising soil the seed bore fruit. His Word shall not return void. Casting that bread on some waters may seem sheerest folly but some streams make quite a turn down the years somewhere.

What a pity that we do not engage more in this holy enterprise that yields such blessed profit in after-years! Shame on us that we invest in ventures of every kind that bring us paltry dividends and neglect the very business that carries the guarantee of God! What happier way to spend old age than in finding bread cast on waters in our youth! No miser clipping coupons, no millionaire counting his gains ever knew the joy any Christian can reap from sowing the Living Bread.

The figure used here would seem to indicate a most unpromising prospect of reward. Seed sown even on poor ground may hold some hope of harvest, but bread on waters! There may be some allusion here to casting seed on irrigated land but just the same one can think of surer ways to reap a profit. But we fail to take into consideration that God's Word has miraculous power. It does something to everyone who is exposed to it. This is no hit-or-miss business. It is not our advice or counsel but the Divine Bread that shall not fail.

All around us are streams of life rushing on to some destination. We touch lives every day and yet in a day of good tidings we hold our peace. Some salesman can put us to shame. To a wide-awake Christian every person is a prospect, soil for seed, waters for

bread. And there is no better way to insure a happy old age than to provide for a harvest from crumbs scattered long before.

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## **SOWING AND REAPING**

"Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." -- Galatians 6:7

The principle of sowing and reaping is often used to warn about the inevitable consequences of evil deeds. But it can also be used as an encouragement to believers in their service for Christ. A. B. Simpson said, "I believe the toils and prayers of 20 years ago are not lost. We may not see the results of our labor and sacrifice immediately, but in due time they will issue into beauty and glory. "The love you give, the forgiveness you show, and the patience and forbearance that grace your life will surely produce much fruit. The friend you long to bring to Christ may refuse to be reconciled to Him. His heart may seem to be very hard, and your prayers and efforts may appear to be lost; but they are not! They will come back to you a hundredfold -- perhaps long after you have forgotten them. "Give God time! The results are working themselves out slowly but surely. There must be seedtime and summer before the autumn reaping." This agrees with Solomon's words: "Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days" (Eccl. 11:1). Keep on sowing! In His own time, and in His own way, the Lord will send the harvest!-- Richard W. De Haan

Keep on working through the seasons  
In the sunshine and the rain;  
Earnest prayer and faithful sowing  
Yield a wealth of golden grain.

God promises no loaves to loafers

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**Spurgeon in Faith's Checkbook** - "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth."—Eccl. 11:3.

WHY, then, do we dread the clouds which now darken our sky? True, for a while they hide the sun, but the sun is not quenched; he will shine out again before long. Meanwhile those black clouds are filled with rain; and the blacker they are, the more likely they are to yield plentiful showers. How can we have rain without clouds?

Our troubles have always brought us blessings, and they always will. They are the dark chariots of bright grace. These clouds will empty themselves before long, and every tender herb will be the gladder for the shower. Our God may drench us with grief, but he will not drown us with wrath; nay, he will refresh us with mercy. Our Lord's love-letters often come to us in black-edged envelopes. His wagons rumble, but they are loaded with benefits. His rod blossoms with sweet flowers and nourishing fruits. Let us not worry about the clouds, but sing because May flowers are brought to us through the April clouds and showers.

O Lord, the clouds are the dust of thy feet! How near thou art in the cloudy and dark day! Love beholds thee, and is glad. Faith sees the clouds emptying themselves and making the little hills rejoice on every side.

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**Donald Cantrell** - "It Is How It Is"

Ecc 11:3—If the clouds be full of rain, they empty [themselves] upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.

If the clouds come blowing in and they are full of rain, they will empty themselves upon the earth, if a tree falls toward the north or toward the south that is where the tree will lay. The point of this verse is this dear friend, it is how it is, ever what state you are in when you die, that's just how it will be. I am amazed at how we react when a sinner dies, they can be the vilest and wicked people while living, then the moment they die we expect the pastor to tell us that they were saved. If a man was lost in his sinful living, that same man is lost the moment of his death. If you go down to the local funeral home, his family will tell you about the time he went to church or about something he said one day while he was sobered up. I know that some will not like this devotion but can I tell you the truth, it is how it is!!! If a person lived it up and parties all of their living days, if in life they never acknowledged God, why would we expect things to have changed after their death? I have observed people grasping at imaginary straws trying to make a person saved after death, dear friend it is how it is. I am not saying this gleefully nor with any sort of gladness, in all actuality I find this devotion to be morbid and very startling. We need to go reach our lost loved ones, we must not wait until they die and try to persuade the pastor to preach them into heaven. I have had families get mad at me for not preaching that their lost loved one was saved and went to heaven. If a pastor fails in telling the truth when a lost person dies he is doing an injustice to his calling. The pastor must not find satisfaction in telling the truth but he must trust that telling the truth may compel others to seek salvation. I have stated in other devotions that I am still seeking the place where they bury the lost, for in most of my experiences I never see the lost in funeral homes that I visit. We must confront lostness before death occurs, because once that last breath has been taken it is how it is and nothing we say can ever change the results.

We must also challenge the saved person that is not living close to the Lord. I am talking about those that have honestly been saved

but are living as if they never knew God. The people that I'm thinking about are the ones that bring a great reproach upon the name of Christianity and the church. This person is the one that will die in a drunken state and the preacher has to tip toe around the truth when it is time to preach their funeral, can I say one more time, it is how it is. We ignore the truth when they are living but once the tree falls then we try to change how it really is. We as Christians would be better off if we confronted the wayward wanderers while they are still living, we must try to change things while we can, not after the tree has fallen. We must all realize once the tree has fallen it is over, there is not changing the truth. This also goes for all of us trying to serve God, if you are going to do anything for him, do it before the tree falls, for once it has fallen it is how it is!!! We must fully believe the word of God, because the word of God teaches us that once it is over, nothing from that point on will change.

1. The Reality of how it is
2. The Record of how It Is
3. The Revelation of how It Is
4. The Reason of how It Is

In the space below ask God to help you reach someone that may regret it when their tree falls:

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### It Is How It Is

Ecc 11:3 If the clouds be full of rain, they empty [themselves] upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.

We must also challenge the saved person that is not living close to the Lord. I am talking about those that have honestly been saved but are living as if they never knew God. The people that I'm thinking about are the ones that bring a great reproach upon the name of Christianity and the church. This person is the one that will die in a drunken state and the preacher has to tip toe around the truth when it is time to preach their funeral, can I say one more time, it is how it is. We ignore the truth when they are living but once the tree falls then we try to change how it really is.

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In the space below ask God to help you reach someone that may regret it when their tree falls:

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### Streams in the Desert - "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth." (Eccles. 11:3.)

WHY, then, do we dread the clouds which now darken our sky? True, for a while they hide the sun, but the sun is not quenched; he will be out again before long. Meanwhile those black clouds are filled with rain; and the blacker they are, the more likely they will yield plentiful showers.

How can we have rain without clouds? Our troubles have always brought us blessings, and they always will. They are the dark chariots of bright grace. These clouds will empty themselves before long, and every tender herb will be gladder for the shower. Our God may drench us with grief, but He will refresh us with mercy. Our Lord's love-letters often come to us in black-edged envelopes. His wagons rumble, but they are loaded with benefits. His rod blossoms with sweet flowers and nourishing fruits. Let us not worry about the clouds, but sing because May flowers are brought to us through the April clouds and showers.

O Lord, the clouds are the dust of Thy feet! How near Thou art in the cloudy and dark day! Love beholds Thee, and is glad. Faith sees the clouds emptying themselves and making the little hills rejoice on every side.—C. H. Spurgeon.

"What seems so dark to thy dim sight  
May be a shadow, seen aright  
Making some brightness doubly bright.

"The flash that struck thy tree—no more  
To shelter thee—lets heaven's blue floor  
Shine where it never shone before.

"The cry wrung from thy spirit's pain  
May echo on some far-off plain,  
And guide a wanderer home again."

"The blue of heaven is larger than the clouds."

KJV Ecclesiastes 11:4 He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 11:4 He who observes the wind will not sow, And he who regards the clouds will not reap.

NET Ecclesiastes 11:4 He who watches the wind will not sow, and he who observes the clouds will not reap.

BGT Ecclesiastes 11:4 τηρ ν νεμον ο σπερε κα βλ πων ν τα ς νεφ λαις ο θερ σει

LXE Ecclesiastes 11:4 He that observes the wind sows not; and he that looks at the clouds will not reap.

CSB Ecclesiastes 11:4 One who watches the wind will not sow, and the one who looks at the clouds will not reap.

ESV Ecclesiastes 11:4 He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.

NIV Ecclesiastes 11:4 Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.

NLT Ecclesiastes 11:4 Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest.

YLT Ecclesiastes 11:4 Whoso is observing the wind soweth not, And whoso is looking on the thick clouds reapeth not.

NJB Ecclesiastes 11:4 Keep watching the wind and you will never sow, keep staring at the clouds and you will never reap.

NRS Ecclesiastes 11:4 Whoever observes the wind will not sow; and whoever regards the clouds will not reap.

RSV Ecclesiastes 11:4 He who observes the wind will not sow; and he who regards the clouds will not reap.

NAB Ecclesiastes 11:4 One who pays heed to the wind will not sow, and one who watches the clouds will never reap.

GWN Ecclesiastes 11:4 Whoever watches the wind will never plant. Whoever looks at the clouds will never harvest.

BBE Ecclesiastes 11:4 He who is watching the wind will not get the seed planted, and he who is looking at the clouds will not get in the grain.

- Pr 3:27 20:4 22:13

Staring at the wind, not sowing

## THE PARALYSIS OF OVER ANALYSIS!

**He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap** NLT - "Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest." This proverbial statement seems straightforward and it speaks of literal sowing and reaping. It is a warning against being too cautious, waiting for perfect conditions to sow. Since there is always wind and clouds, to wait for no wind, you will never plant.

**David Guzik** The farmer who is overly analytical about the wind or the clouds will never plant his fields, and thus he will not reap. The Preacher gently pushes us away from an overly analytical approach to life.

**Michael Eaton** - The Preacher warns next against procrastination, still using an agricultural illustration: faced with erratic wind and weather, the farmer is not to wait interminably for a more propitious occasion to sow his seed. (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

**F B Meyer** - "If we are always waiting for favouring conditions, we shall resemble the farmer who is ever looking out for perfect weather, and lets the whole autumn pass without one handful of grain reaching the furrows."

**C H Spurgeon** - "If we keep on observing circumstances, instead of trusting God, we shall be guilty of disobedience. God bids me sow: I do not sow, because the wind would blow some of my seed away. God bids me reap: I do not reap, because there is a black

cloud there, and before I can house the harvest, some of it may be spoiled. I may say what I like; but I am guilty of disobedience.” (from sermon [Sowing in the Wind: Reaping under Clouds](#) - Guzik pointed out that in this sermon Spurgeon described "other ways that this attitude sins against God and man. To observe circumstances instead of trusting God shows unbelief, rebellion, foolish fear, and idleness.)

**Temper Longman III** says this verse "refers to farmers who would watch for the wind to cease and put off planting for fear that the wind would blow away the seed that they were sowing, just as the rains would ruin the harvests (Ec 11:4b). Thus, this verse looks at both ends of the agricultural cycle....Farmers who try to control their circumstances will never get anywhere. Perfect weather never comes; as a result, they do not get a harvest. The implicit message is not to let our inability to control circumstances paralyze our actions. The farmer who does this may very well starve to death. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 323](#))

*'Lack of complete knowledge  
is no excuse for inactivity'*

-- E. Jones

**NET NOTE** - This proverb criticizes those who are overly cautious. The farmer who waits for the most opportune moment to plant when there is no wind to blow away the seed, and to reap when there is no rain to ruin a ripe harvest, will never do anything but sit around waiting for the right moment.

**Charles Swindoll** - The natural occurrences described by Solomon in these verses (Ec 11:3-4) are both inevitable and unpredictable. We have no control over the rain—whether it will be a light mist or a violent storm. We have no way of determining when a tree may fall; we can only hope it doesn't fall on us! Because these events are unpredictable and in God's hands alone, we shouldn't base our plans on the "what ifs" of life....If we let fear of the unknown future dictate our everyday activities, we'd just stay inside and hide all day and get nothing done at all! Similarly, people spend a lot of time observing the obvious, talking about the inevitable, and worrying about both. What profit is there in living one's life this way? None. The implication of Ecclesiastes 11:3-4 is that we should be pursuing life with faith rather than watching it pass by in fear. We should be working on things God has given us the ability to affect rather than worrying about those things over which we have no control. Are there activities you've been avoiding due to fear of unknown results? Are there things you would like to try but you're intimidated by the "mights" and "what ifs"? If so, what is the worst that could happen if you stepped out in faith and did that activity with boldness? ([Living on the Ragged Edge](#))

**Philip Ryken** - The farmer in chapter 11 also refuses to work, but he is a different kind of fool. He keeps watching and waiting, but never sowing or reaping. Why not? Because rather than getting on with his work, he keeps hoping for better conditions....(RYKEN APPLIES THIS TO OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES) Rather than watching the wind and the clouds, imagining all the difficulties and waiting for better circumstances, we should try and do what we can with whatever God has given us in life. Pursue the dream you believe that God has given for your calling in life. Get involved in ministry. Show mercy to someone in need. Start a friendship with a neighbor, and pray that God will use that relationship to lead your neighbor to Christ. Do not hold back because of fear, but step out by faith—not faith that your own efforts will succeed, necessarily, but faith that God will take what you offer and use it in some way for his glory. But whatever you do, do not use the sovereignty of God or the uncertain difficulties of life as an excuse for not doing anything at all. (See [Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters](#))

**Derek Kidner** - The thought of verses 3 and 4 brings together again the things we can do nothing about and those that call for firm decision and action. The two examples given here—the clouds which follow their own laws and times, not ours, and the fallen tree which has consulted no-one's convenience—may start us thinking of may-be's and might-have-beens; but our business is to grapple with what actually is, and what lies within reach. Few great enterprises have waited for ideal conditions; no more should we. (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

*The man who waits for certainty  
will wait forever.*

-- William MacDonald

**William Barrick** - Whenever an individual waits for perfect conditions before either sowing or reaping (Eccl 11:4), failure and loss may very well follow. Over-hesitancy in making decisions involving risk can result in the best time passing by during inactivity. The paralysis of inaction results in lost opportunities. In the New Testament a similar agricultural metaphor makes its appearance in Paul's description of the respective tasks of mankind and God in the spread of the gospel: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth" (1 Cor 3:6; cp. Prov 10:22).

**Step Out Before It's Clear**” Are you waiting until: You're less tired. Finances improve. You're sure everything will work. Solomon says: stop waiting. The one who keeps watching the wind never plants. Faith doesn't wait for everything to make sense—it moves forward in trust. Obedience is rarely convenient. Fruitfulness is never guaranteed. But wisdom acts in hope, not fear. Sow the seed. Trust the Lord. Excessive caution leads to fruitlessness. Stop delaying a good work because the timing isn't perfect. You won't

always feel ready—but you must still sow.

*Paralysis from over-analysis  
may forfeit God's blessing*

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**George H Morrison** - Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.—Ecclesiastes 11:4

(Excerpts from his sermon "[The Fault of Over-Prudence](#).")

The language in which this proverb is couched is taken from the harvest field and is therefore peculiarly applicable at this season.<sup>3</sup> That does not mean, of course, that the way to succeed in farming is entirely to disregard the weather. But it means that if farmers will not work except when all the conditions for their work are perfect, if they are always doubting and fearing and forecasting rain, worrying and fretting instead of making the best of things, then probably they will neither sow nor reap and are little likely to make successful farmers. Just as a person may fail through too much zeal, so may a person fail through too much prudence.

In the first place, I like to apply our text to the important matter of our bodily health. If people are always thinking of their health, the chances are they will have a sorry harvest. That we must be reasonably careful of our bodies we all know; it is one of the plainest of our Christian duties. By the coming of the Son of God in our flesh and by making the body the temple of the Spirit, by the great doctrine of the resurrection, when what is sown in weakness will be raised in glory, the gospel of Christ has glorified the body in a way that even the Greeks had never dreamed of. But I am not speaking of reasonable care; I am speaking of morbid and worrying anxiety. Why, you can hardly drink a glass of milk today but some newspaper will warn you that you may be poisoned. And what I want you to feel is that that alarmist attitude, which will scarce allow you to breathe in this glad world, is the kind of thing that is denounced by Solomon in the memorable proverb of this verse. Lean on the Keeper of Israel and go forward.

I like to apply our text to the difficulties that beset our daily work, for we may so fix our eyes on these difficulties that all the strength is taken from the arm.<sup>4</sup> A person may ruin any work by rashness, as Simon Peter would have ruined the work of Jesus, but remember that if the rash have their perils, there are also perils for the overcautious. Do you remember the parable of the talents? Do you remember why the person with the one talent failed? He said, "I knew that you are a hard man.... So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground" (Matt. 25:24–25). The other servants took the common risks in giving out their money to the changers, but this man would risk absolutely nothing, and, willing to risk nothing, he lost all. Do you imagine it is just a chance that this individual had the one talent? We talk about the perils of genius, but our Savior talked of those of mediocrity. Great men and women have their glow and inspiration; things are worth doing when you can do them greatly. Genius is prodigal and scatters its pearls abroad; genius, like childhood, is equal to its problem. It is those of the one talent and mediocre minds who are tempted to the sin of being overcautious. I have known so many average people who failed because they were waiting for an impossible perfection. They said, "Tomorrow—by and by—I'll be ready; I'll have all the information in ten years"—and the ten years hurried by, and they did nothing, except to wish that they had started earlier. Do you think we ministers could ever preach to you if we watched the wind and looked at the clouds? If we waited for inspiration and a glowing brain, could we ever face the inevitable Sunday? The hours will come, and come to everyone, when taskwork quivers and palpitates with life, but perhaps they only come because we have been faithful, with a certain grimness, through the days of gloom. Let people hold to their lifework through mood and melancholy. Let them hold to it through headache and through heartache. For whoever watches the wind will never plant, and whoever looks at the clouds will never reap.

Just as a person may fail through too much zeal, so may a person fail through too much caution.

Our text has notable application in the great work of national reform. A certain disregard of obvious difficulties and of all that would discourage lesser spirits has ever been one mark of great reformers, whether in the church or in the state. When told that Duke George of Saxony was lying in wait for him, "I would go," said Luther, "if it rained Duke Georges." The winds were bitter and the clouds black as midnight, and Luther planted and reaped because he disregarded them. It is an easy thing to sneer at fanatics and to say that they are the ruin of their cause. It is an easy thing to make fun of the enthusiasts who are so terribly in earnest that they are not wise. But I will tell you those who are a thousand times more fatal to any cause than the enthusiasts are those who always eye the clouds and spend their days in shrinking from the wind. It is better to try and fail than to do nothing. We snatch our triumphs from the brink of failure. It is so easy to stand aside and criticize and magnify difficulties and raise objections. But we are here to plant and we are here to reap, as Luther knew and as every brave woman and man knows. Whoever watches the wind will never plant, and whoever looks at the clouds will never reap.

Then, I want you to apply our text to the great matter of decision for Christ Jesus. I want you to go away thinking of Peter when he walked on the sea to get to Christ. "Lord, if it's you, tell me come to you," and Jesus across the water cried to Peter, "Come"; whereupon Peter leaped out of the ship and walked on the water to his Lord. Then he regarded the clouds—how the wild rack was flying! He observed the wind—how boisterous it was—and, observing them, he began to sink and had to cry, "Lord, save me." Isn't Christ saying "Come" to someone here tonight? Isn't there someone like Peter who has heard his call? In such an hour the one thing



that is fatal is to give heed to the uproar of the storm. O you of little faith, why do you doubt? He is mighty to save and powerful to keep. Disregard everything except the beckoning Savior, and by and by you will reap a hundred times what you planted. (Borrow his book [The Wings of the Morning: Addresses from a Glasgow Pulpit](#) - full sermon is entitled "**The Fault of Over-Prudence.**")

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## **Weather Watchers - Vance Havner**

He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. Ecclesiastes 11:4.

If a farmer waited until he was sure of the weather he would never raise a crop. He has to reckon with the weather and contend with it, but he cannot be sure of it. So every year he makes a venture of faith.

We cannot let the wind and clouds of circumstance determine our course. We cannot grow a harvest for God with one eye on the weather. Just as with the farmer, circumstances are to be considered, and we shall not foolishly disregard them. But we must not let them be the main factor in making our decisions.

Too many saints live fearfully from one "weather report" to another, scanning the skies and watching the clouds, conscious of "conditions" rather than of Christ. Faith goes ahead in fair weather and foul. It breaks up the fallow ground, sows the seed, cultivates the crop, and gathers the harvest. There may be pests and floods and droughts, but the Lord of the Harvest will see to it that our labor is not in vain.

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## **ECCLESIASTES 11:4, 6 NCV**

Once the season for planting is upon us, the time to plant seeds is when we make time to plant seeds. And when it comes to planting God's seeds in the soil of eternity, the only certain time that we have is now. Yet, because we are fallible human beings with limited vision and misplaced priorities, we may be tempted to delay.

If we hope to reap a bountiful harvest for God, our families, and for ourselves, we must plant now by defeating a dreaded human frailty: the habit of procrastination. Procrastination often results from our shortsighted attempts to postpone temporary discomfort. A far better strategy is this: Whatever "it" is, do it now. When you do, you won't have to worry about "it" later. —CRISWELL FREEMAN Purpose for Everyday Living

What have you been putting off that needs to be taken care of today? How are you going to get the job done?

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## **Ecclesiastes 11:4 Watching The Wind**

He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap. —Ecclesiastes 11:4

When it comes to telling others about Jesus, I'm sometimes like a cautious farmer who keeps his eye on the weather, looking for the perfect day to plant his crops. The season passes and he sows nothing. The opportunity is gone; the harvest is lost (Ecclesiastes 11:4).

I hesitate and wonder, "Is this person ready to listen to the gospel? Is this the time to speak?" You can never tell what's going on in the depths of another person's heart. Some may be dwelling in darkness yet longing for someone to lead them into the light.

The Ethiopian eunuch in his royal chariot seemed to have it all together (Acts 8:27). He enjoyed prestige, wealth, and power, yet inwardly he was empty and searching. He was reading Isaiah's promise of the suffering Savior and trying to come to grips with his words. Right at that moment, Philip took the opportunity to tell the eunuch about Jesus (v.35).

I have a friend who often leads people to Jesus. I asked him once how he knew they were ready to receive the gospel. "It's easy," he replied. "I ask them."

So I must stop worrying about the wind and the clouds and get on with it—scattering the seed wherever I go, regardless of the weather. You just never know. —David H. Roper (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Toiling through the changing seasons  
In the sunshine and the rain,  
Zealous sowing with compassion  
Yields a wealth of golden grain.  
—Anon.

Sowing the seed of God's Word is never out of season

**Ecclesiastes 11:5 Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.**

KJV Ecclesiastes 11:5 As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 11:5 As you do not know what is the way of the wind, Or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, So you do not know the works of God who makes everything.

NET Ecclesiastes 11:5 Just as you do not know the path of the wind, or how the bones form in the womb of a pregnant woman, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

BGT Ecclesiastes 11:5 ν ο ς ο κ σ π ι ν γ ι ν σ κ ω ν τ ς ὁ ς τ ο π ν ε μ α τ ο ς ς σ τ ν γ α σ τ ρ τ ς κ υ ο φ ο ρ ο σ η ς ο τ ω ς ο γ ν σ τ π ο ι μ α τ α τ ο θ ε ο σ α π ο ι σ ε ι σ ν τ π ν τ α

LXE Ecclesiastes 11:5 Among whom none knows what is the way of the wind: as the bones are hid in the womb of a pregnant woman, so thou shalt not know the works of God, even all things whatsoever he shall do.

CSB Ecclesiastes 11:5 Just as you don't know the path of the wind, or how bones develop in the womb of a pregnant woman, so you don't know the work of God who makes everything.

ESV Ecclesiastes 11:5 As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

NIV Ecclesiastes 11:5 As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.

NLT Ecclesiastes 11:5 Just as you cannot understand the path of the wind or the mystery of a tiny baby growing in its mother's womb, so you cannot understand the activity of God, who does all things.

YLT Ecclesiastes 11:5 As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, How -- bones in the womb of the full one, So thou knowest not the work of God who maketh the whole.

NJB Ecclesiastes 11:5 You do not understand how the wind blows, or how the embryo grows in a woman's womb: no more can you understand the work of God, the Creator of all.

NRS Ecclesiastes 11:5 Just as you do not know how the breath comes to the bones in the mother's womb, so you do not know the work of God, who makes everything.

RSV Ecclesiastes 11:5 As you do not know how the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

NAB Ecclesiastes 11:5 Just as you know not how the breath of life fashions the human frame in the mother's womb, So you know not the work of God which he is accomplishing in the universe.

GWN Ecclesiastes 11:5 Just as you don't know how the breath of life enters the limbs of a child within its mother's womb, you also don't understand how God, who made everything, works.

BBE Ecclesiastes 11:5 As you have no knowledge of the way of the wind, or of the growth of the bones in the body of her who is with child, even so you have no knowledge of the works of God who has made all.

- **know:** John 3:8
- **nor:** Ps 139:14,15
- **so:** Ec 7:24 8:17 Job 5:9 26:5-14 36:24-33 37:23 38:4-41 39:1-41:34 Ps 40:5 92:5 104:24 Isa 40:28 Ro 11:33

#### Related Passages:

John 3:8+ "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but **do not know** where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Psalms 139:13-16 For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. 14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; 16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were

ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.

Job 10:8-12 'Your hands fashioned and made me altogether, And would You destroy me? 9 'Remember now, that You have made me as clay; And would You turn me into dust again? 10 'Did You not pour me out like milk And curdle me like cheese; 11 Clothe me with skin and flesh, And knit me together with bones and sinews? 12 'You have granted me life and lovingkindness; And Your care has preserved my spirit.

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

## WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW, TRUST THE CREATOR

Verses 1–4 encourage action and generosity despite uncertainty. Verse 5 continues that theme by reminding us: You don't need to understand everything to act in faith. Solomon presents two mysteries—the wind (or spirit) and the womb—as parallels to the mysterious work of God.

**Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant** (04392) **male** **woman** - **ESV** = "As you do not know the way the **spirit** comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child" **NRSV** = "Just as you do not know how the breath comes to the bones in the mother's womb." **You do not know** (5x/4v Eccl 11:2 Eccl 11:5 Eccl 11:6 Eccl 11:9) again is Solomon reminding us of the limitations of our human knowledge, even as Jesus explained to Nicodemus in John 3:8+. The word for **wind** is [ruah/ruach](#) which is also translated "spirit" so that some interpret Solomon as linking the "spirit" with the "bones" of the infant as reflected in the ESV translation. You don't understand how a baby is knit together in the womb (cf. Psalm 139:13)—yet it happens under God's creative power.

Solomon confronts our natural desire to understand everything before acting. He says: "You don't understand creation—and yet it's happening." "You don't understand God's providence—but He is still working." This leads to a principle: You don't need full understanding to walk in obedience.

**Michael Eaton** - Thus at this point in his closing appeal the Preacher simply insists on a fact: certain aspects of God's working on earth defy explanation. The mystery which shrouds our very origin underlies the whole of reality." (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

**Duane Garrett** feels that "Verse 5 should be translated, "*Just as you do not know how the breath of life enters the fetus in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the work of God, who does all.*" In context this means that since you cannot know that all will go well, do not demand assurance of success before you begin any enterprise. Just as in pregnancy a couple can only trust God that all will turn out well, even so in business enterprises one can only leave the outcome to God. Pregnancy is the supreme example of a human endeavor, the results of which are out of human control (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

**NET NOTE** on **wind** - Heb "**what is the way of the wind**" Some take these words with what follows: "how the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a pregnant woman." There is debate whether מַה־דֶּרֶךְ (mah-derekh haruakh) refers to the wind ("the path of the wind") or the human spirit of a child in the mother's womb ("how the spirit comes"). The LXX understood it as the wind: "the way of the wind" ( ὁ δὲ τοῦ πνεύματος, hē hodos tou pneumatōs); however, the Targum and Vulgate take it as the human spirit. The English versions are divided: (1) spirit: "the way of the spirit" (KJV, YLT, Douay); "the breath of life" (NAB); "how a pregnant woman comes to have ... a living spirit in her womb" (NEB); "how the lifebreath passes into the limbs within the womb of the pregnant woman" (NJPS); "how the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child" (RSV); "how the breath comes to the bones in the mother's womb" (NRSV); and (2) wind: "the way of the wind" (ASV, RSV margin); "the path of the wind" (NASB, NIV); and "how the wind blows" (MLB, Moffatt).

**NET NOTE** on **pregnant** is literally "the one who is full." - The feminine adjective מְלֵאָה (méle'ah, from מָלַא, male', "full") is used as a substantive referring to a pregnant woman whose womb is filled with her infant (HALOT 584 s.v. 2 מְלֵאָה; BDB 571 s.v. מְלֵאָה). This term is used in reference to a pregnant woman in later Hebrew (HALOT 584 s.v. מְלֵאָה). The LXX understood the term in this sense: κυοφορούσῃς (kuophorousēs, "pregnant woman").

**So you do not know the activity of God Who makes all things** - "The work of God" would include His creation as well as His sustaining of everything created. Little wonder that creation is such a mystery to the finite human mind who then attempts to distort

the truth about God with the lie of evolution! This is chasing after the wind! Is not this passage another way of describing God's transcendence which means He is above, beyond, and independent from His creation, emphasizing His infinite greatness, majesty, and "otherness." This truth reminds me of Moses' words in Dt 29:29a+ "The secret things belong to the LORD our God." The only things we can know about the work of God is what He has condescended to reveal to us.

[David Guzik](#) on **So you do not know** - In the same way we don't know the hidden things, we also do not know the works of God in any comprehensive way. The Preacher brings us to a place of humility and submission to God and His works that again pushes us out of the previously entrenched under the sun premise.

[Bob Utley](#) - **so you do not know the activity of God**" This has been a common theme (cf. Eccl. 1:13; 3:10,11; 8:17). God and His works and ways cannot be completely known by fallen mankind, but we can trust Him because of what we do know! **God Who makes all things** - This is an idiom for the entire creation (cf. Ps. 103:19; 119:91; Jer. 10:16). NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 730, lists several other phrases that are used to designate the entire creation: (1) heaven and earth (e.g., Gen. 1:1; Ps. 115:15; 121:2; Prov. 3:19-20, (2) "the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them" (e.g., Ps. 24:1-2; 50:12; 89:11; Jer. 51:48; 1 Cor. 10:26); (3) "in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth (e.g., Exod. 20:4; Ps. 135:6)

**William MacDonald** (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#)) Since we don't know everything, we have to muddle along with what knowledge we do have. We don't understand the movements of **the wind** or **how the bones** are formed **in the womb** of an expectant mother. Neither do we understand all that **God** does or why He does it.

[William Barrick](#) - Natural phenomena within God's control remain mysterious to mankind (Eccl 11:5). The wind's path cannot always be charted (cf. John 3:8) (**ED: HOW MANY TIMES HAS THE WEATHER FORECAST MISSED THE MARK!**) and the bones of a fetus can form in unexpected ways inside the womb (cf. Ps 139:13–16). ([See Seow below](#)) Both are basically invisible and outside the control of mankind (cp. Eccl 8:8). (Cp phrase "striving after wind" in Eccl 1:14, 17; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 6, 16; 6:9.) God, as the Maker of all things, produces the wind's patterns as well as the bones for the unborn infant. The very fact that He is in control demonstrates that He governs all things and people are not in control. Mankind's ignorance of the work of God (cp. Eccl 8:17) forms an ongoing theme in the final chapters of Ecclesiastes.

With a few changes in the Hebrew text, "wind" can be translated as "spirit" or "life-breath," resulting in the elimination of the figure involving wind and making the illustration just the entrance of the life-breath into the fetus; BORROW [C. L. Seow, Ecclesiastes, Anchor Bible 18C 336– 37](#). Cp. NRSV: "*Just as you do not know how the breath comes to the bones in the mother's womb.*"

**"Trust the God You Cannot Trace"** You don't understand: How the Spirit moves. How prayers work, How God redeems suffering. But you know He works, because He has proven faithful in creation and salvation. Solomon isn't telling you to figure it all out—he's urging you to act in faith anyway. The womb forms bones. The wind carries seed. And God is sovereign over both. Much of God's work is hidden, yet trustworthy. Understanding is not required for obedience. Obey now—don't wait until you have all the answers. Faith means sowing even when outcomes are uncertain. Trust God even when you don't understand His ways.

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## GOD'S MYSTERIOUS WAYS - Martin Luther

As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things. Ecclesiastes 11:5

God leads and directs his people in mysterious ways. In the Bible, we read, "Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen" (Psalm 77:19). Christ himself told Peter, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand" (John 13:7). Christ seems to be saying, "You want to see me and want me to do what seems good and right to you. But I will act in a way that will make you think I'm a fool rather than God. You will see my back, not my face. You won't understand what I'm doing or why I'm doing it. Then I'll be able to mold you and remold you the way I would like. My methods may appear as foolish to you as if they were from the devil himself."

We need to learn how God guides his people as they grow and develop. I too have often tried to dictate to our Lord God a certain way in which I expect him to run things. I have often said, "O Lord, would you please do it this way and make it come out that way?" But God did just the opposite, even though I said to myself, "This is a good suggestion that will bring honor to God and expand his kingdom." Undoubtedly, God must have laughed at my so-called wisdom and said, "All right, I know that you are an intelligent, educated person, but I never needed a Peter, a Luther, or anyone else to teach, inform, rule, or guide me. I am not a God who will allow himself to be taught or directed by others. Rather, I am the one who leads, rules, and teaches people."

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**Ray Pritchard** - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - GET BUSY...NOW! Ecclesiastes 11:5-6

Life is uncertain. So what? Solomon argues in favor of bold action precisely because you don't know what might happen tomorrow. Get up early, he says, and stay up late. Don't veg in front of the TV. Take every opportunity God gives you and make the best of it.

This practical advice reminds me of a friend who could do it all—sing, teach, lead music; he was a whiz at construction and knew how to fix cars, plus he had attended seminary. One day I asked him about his future. Did he want to be a pastor or teacher or enter some other vocation? Did he hope to get married? He answered that he had run into one of his old seminary professors recently and asked him for some advice. "You're suffering from the curse of too many options," the professor told him.

That's the problem of people who feel like they have too many choices and therefore don't know which way to go. The professor had been raised on a farm and when he graduated from high school, he could have either stayed on the farm or gone to college. So he went to college. When he graduated, he could have either gone back to the farm or to seminary. So he went to seminary. When he graduated, he had no choices, so he went to graduate school. His only job offer came from the seminary he attended, so he took it and remains on the faculty to this day.

"Most people dream of having more options, but I have been blessed by having almost none at all," the professor said. "At each stage of my life, I generally have had only one choice to make, so I made it and kept moving ahead." Solomon would heartily agree with that philosophy\*

Would you like to know the "secret" to knowing God's will? If there is a "secret" to be found, it is in doing today what you already know to be God's will. Just get up, get out of bed, take a shower, put on your clothes, eat breakfast, and do what has to be done. As you do God's will today, you will discover God's will for tomorrow.

The moral of the story: Don't worry about your options. Serve the Lord today and tomorrow will take care of itself.

Father, save me from the folly of idle speculation about tomorrow when I should be busy doing my job today.  
Amen.

#### SHINING THE LIGHT

- What project, dream, idea, or initiative have you been postponing? When do you plan to get started?
- What's the first step you need to take? So what are you waiting for?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Joshua 6:1-5; Psalm 139:13-16; and 1 Corinthians 15:58.

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**David Jeremiah** - The world is a mystery and life but a vapor, Solomon tells us; but hard work, wise living, and joyful countenance are not. They are the best chance for those who would make the most of earth on their way to heaven. Life is uncertain—embrace it with joy.

More than two hundred years ago, the Connecticut House of Representatives was in session on a bright, sunny springtime day. Suddenly, the sky grew dark and ominous shadows flooded across the chamber. The representatives grew alarmed as they looked out the windows in puzzlement. This was an age that lacked the science to foretell solar eclipses. No one could have expected or understood the sudden blanket of darkness. A clamor arose among the representatives. Adjourn! Let us hurry from this House to get our own houses in order! was the consensus. Some legislators believed the second coming of Christ was surely at hand. But the Speaker of the House, a devout believer himself, rose to speak. He gently acknowledged that the House was upset by the darkness and that some were afraid. "But the Day of the Lord is either approaching or it is not," he said. "If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. And if the Lord is returning, I, for one, choose to be found doing my duty. I therefore ask that candles be brought."<sup>3</sup> (Borrow David Jeremiah's [Searching for heaven on Earth : how to find what really matters in life](#))

#### GOD SPEAKS THROUGH CIRCUMSTANCES

As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.

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**Aspen Leaves** - Joni Eareckson Tada

As you do not know the path of the wind...so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things. —Ecclesiastes 11:5

It may be too early for fall where you live, but not if you're in Colorado. Right now the aspen groves along the front range of the Rockies are turning from green to golden. Nothing lifts the soul like the sight of a hillside of yellow aspen leaves quivering in a brisk mountain breeze. I've seen aspens in the wind. The leaves are so delicate, so small, their stems so fragile, that they flutter in the slightest of breezes. Aspen leaves seem to tremble even when the air is barely moving—this is how sensitive they are.

I want to be that sensitive to the Spirit's touch, don't you? A soul that is sensitive to sin, that resonates at the slightest movement of the Spirit. A soul that quivers when the breath of God all but touches it. How do we become this sensitive? Simple: be ready, stretch out your branches, unfurl your heart to God, for you never know when his wind will rise your way. After all, like the wind, the Spirit is uncontrollable and unpredictable. Who can harness the wind or the Spirit? "His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet" (Nah. 1:3).

John 3:8 reminds us, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." Just as the wind cannot be controlled or predicted yet its effects can be witnessed, so it is with the Holy Spirit. He cannot be controlled, but the proof of his work is always there.

To be an aspen leaf is to be sensitive to the movement of God in your life. Ask God for a soul sensitive to sin. Pray that God will make your soul tremble at the slightest stirring of the Spirit in your life. You may not be able to control the wind of God's workings, but you can control the degree to which you are sensitive to good and evil or right and wrong.

I stretch out my branches to you today, Lord. Let me catch the movement of your Spirit. May I be sensitive to your touch.

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### **ECCLESIASTES 11:5 - Os Hillman**

God will often use circumstances in our lives to direct us in making and confirming decisions. I have often discovered this to be the case—but only after a situation has occurred. I later look back and see how God worked in the situation.

Years ago, I launched a magazine designed for Christians in the workplace. I was having lunch with a Christian leader named Larry who headed a ministry that helps men and women apply biblical principles to managing money. During our lunch, I explained to Larry that I had noticed that there were many grassroots workplace ministries cropping up all over the country.

I asked Larry if he was familiar with some of the groups, because he had taught a course and wrote a book on operating a business on biblical principles. But he said he was not. He then asked, "It would be nice to know what all these groups are doing so we don't duplicate efforts. Do you think you could invite some of these groups for a roundtable discussion?" I told him I would, and I proceeded to invite four main workplace ministries that I had worked with in the past.

Then something unexpected began to happen. I began to get requests to attend the roundtable from ministries all around the country that had heard about the gathering. By the time the event actually took place, 54 people showed up representing 45 organizations from around the country! Unfortunately, Larry had a last minute conflict and was not able to attend. He informed me that I would have to host the meeting myself.

That was the birth of Marketplace Leaders, the ministry I now lead full time. I often joke that God tricked me into starting this ministry because He knew I never would have done that on my own at that time.

God often confirms His direction through circumstances. Be on alert that when God sets up situations that are out of your control, He may be giving you direction.

**Ecclesiastes 11:6 Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.**

KJV Ecclesiastes 11:6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 11:6 In the morning sow your seed, And in the evening do not withhold your hand; For you do not know which will prosper, Either this or that, Or whether both alike will be good.

NET Ecclesiastes 11:6 Sow your seed in the morning, and do not stop working until the evening; for you do not know which activity will succeed— whether this one or that one, or whether both will prosper equally.



BGT Ecclesiastes 11:6 ν πρω σπερον τ σπρμα σου κα ες σπραν μ φτω χερ σου τι ο γινσκες  
πον στοιχσει το το το το κα ντ δο π τ ατ γαθ

LXE Ecclesiastes 11:6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening let not thine hand be slack: for thou knowest not what sort shall prosper, whether this or that, or whether both shall be good alike.

CSB Ecclesiastes 11:6 In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not let your hand rest, because you don't know which will succeed, whether one or the other, or if both of them will be equally good.

ESV Ecclesiastes 11:6 In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

NIV Ecclesiastes 11:6 Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.

NLT Ecclesiastes 11:6 Plant your seed in the morning and keep busy all afternoon, for you don't know if profit will come from one activity or another-- or maybe both.

YLT Ecclesiastes 11:6 In the morning sow thy seed, And at even withdraw not thy hand, For thou knowest not which is right, this or that, Or whether both of them alike are good.

NJB Ecclesiastes 11:6 In the morning, sow your seed, until evening, do not cease from labour, for of any two things you do not know which will succeed, or which of the two is the better.

NRS Ecclesiastes 11:6 In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not let your hands be idle; for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

RSV Ecclesiastes 11:6 In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand; for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

NAB Ecclesiastes 11:6 In the morning sow your seed, and at evening let not your hand be idle: For you know not which of the two will be successful, or whether both alike will turn out well.

GWN Ecclesiastes 11:6 Plant your seed in the morning, and don't let your hands rest until evening. You don't know whether this field or that field will be profitable or whether both of them will turn out equally well.

BBE Ecclesiastes 11:6 In the morning put your seed into the earth, and till the evening let not your hand be at rest; because you are not certain which will do well, this or that -- or if the two will be equally good.

- **sow:** Ec 9:10 Isa 55:10 Ho 10:12 Mk 4:26-29 Joh 4:36-38 2Co 9:6 2Ti 4:2
- **know:** Ec 9:1 Hag 1:6-11 2:17-19 Zec 8:11,12 Ac 11:20,21 1Co 3:5-7 2Co 9:10,11

#### Related Passages:

2 Corinthians 9:6 (SPIRITUAL SOWING AND REAPING) Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Galatians 6:9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

Psalms 126:6 He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.

### OPPORTUNITY MAY ONLY KNOCK ONCE!

**Sow** ([speiro](#) - [aorist imperative](#) = "Just Do It!" "Don't Procrastinate!") **your seed in the morning and do not be idle** ([jussive](#) ~ command) **in the evening** - Solomon's commands remind me of the Latin phrase "Carpe Diem," Seize the Day (See related discussion - Redeem the Time). Don't stop sowing. Don't grow passive. Keep doing good—because God may bless any or all of it.

**David Guzik** Using agricultural images, the Preacher tells us to do work of all kinds—the work one would do in the morning, and the work one would do in the evening. (ED: OR ALL DAY LONG).

**For** (term of explanation) - Solomon explains why we must "Carpe Diem" and why we must seize the time we have to sow.



**NET NOTE** - **do not be idle** - Heb “do not let your hand rest.” The Hebrew phrase “do not let your hand rest” is an idiom that means “do not stop working” or “do not be idle” (e.g., Eccl 7:18); cf. BDB 628 s.v. נָחַת B.1. Several English versions capture the sense of the idiom well: “do not stop working” (NEB); “do not be idle” (MLB); “let not your hand be idle” (NAB); “let not your hands be idle” (NIV); “stay not your hand” (Moffatt). The term “hand” is a synecdoche of part (i.e., do not let your hand rest) for the whole person (i.e., do not allow yourself to stop working).

**You do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good** We cannot predict the future success of our sowing, but that uncertainty should not prevent one from sowing! **Do not know** is repeated 5x/4v in Ecclesiastes 11 (Eccl 11:2 Eccl 11:5 Eccl 11:6 Eccl 11:9) emphasizing the limits of what we can know, for there are things that wisdom can not tell. As much as wisdom drawn from observation can help learn important things, there were other things that wisdom cannot tell us.

*God may bless both your early and late efforts  
—you don't know, so keep at it.*

**David Guzik** We should give ourselves to all kinds of work, because we do not know the results. We know less of the future than we think we do; this shakes the previously assured under the sun premise.

**Bob Utley** on “**succeed**” - This Hebrew VERB (BDB 506, KB 503, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is found only here and in Eccl. 10:10 (*Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). The NOUN is found only in Ecclesiastes as well (cf. Eccl. 2:21; 4:4; 5:10), meaning “skill,” “success,” or “profit.” Success is uncertain. It may come (i.e., Eccl. 11:7-8) and it may not (i.e., Eccl. 11:8b). When it does, act (i.e., share).

**NET NOTE** - The terms “**morning**” (בֹּקֶר, boqer) and “**evening**” (עֶרֶב, 'erev) form a merism (a figure of speech using two polar extremes to include everything in between) that connotes “from morning until evening.” The point is not that the farmer should plant at two times in the day (morning and evening), but that he should plant all day long (from morning until evening). This merism is reflected in several translations: “in the morning ... until evening” (NEB, Moffatt).

**Warren Wiersbe** says that “God has a time and a purpose for everything (Ec 3:1–11), and we must live by faith in His Word. Therefore, use each day wisely (Ec 11:6). Get up early and sow your seed, and work hard until evening. Do the job at hand and “redeem the time” (Eph. 5:15–17), trusting God to bless at least some of the tasks you have accomplished. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

*The duty is ours.  
The results are God's.*  
-- Walter Kaiser

**Charles Swindoll** - Sow in the morning and don't be idle in the evening (Borrow [Ecclesiastes](#))

In his workbook on Ecclesiastes Swindoll adds that “Solomon’s final piece of counsel in Ecclesiastes 11:5–6 states this fact: there’s no way we can know the work of God, who alone controls all things. If we wait for perfect knowledge before we launch a new project or attempt a challenging task, we’ll stand frozen by ignorance as the world passes us by. Solomon rightly urged us to throw out the desire for certainty and be content with God’s wisdom and a good dose of faith in His sovereignty. We simply don’t know which earthly activities or investments will bring an abundant return, or which ones will be set aside by God’s better plan. So let’s just dig in and leave the results to God! ([Workbook](#))

**William Barrick** - Opportunity knocks only at certain times. If the conditions are good enough for sowing seed in the field, the farmer must remain active and pursue his occupation (Eccl 11:6). He cannot know whether the sowing should be in the morning or the evening, but the day gives the opportunity. The text expresses the continuous labor that a wise person must expend in order to see the harvest. God alone gives the field’s increase, the enterprise’s profits, or the labor’s success, but wise people must labor in order to see such results (cf. Eccl 9:10). Tidball summarizes Eccl 11:3–5 under three headings: “Don’t be paralyzed by inevitability” (Eccl 11:3), “Don’t be paralyzed by speculation” (Eccl 11:4), and “Don’t be paralyzed by ignorance” (Eccl 11:5).<sup>17</sup> Again, New Testament texts reflect the same instruction via a similar metaphor: “he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully” (2 Cor 9:6) and “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary” (Gal 6:9).

Tomorrow, Lord, is Thine  
Lodged in Thy sovereign hand;  
And if its sun arise and shine,

It shines by Thy command.

The present moment flies,  
And bears our life away;  
O make Thy servants truly wise,  
That they may live today.

--Philip Doddridge

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**"God May Bless Both"** You don't know which seed will grow—maybe: That conversation, That prayer, That late-night act of obedience. But God does. He may cause fruit from your early energy—or your evening perseverance. Your job is not to forecast fruit—it's to sow faithfully. God may bless efforts you didn't expect—sow broadly. Fruit often comes from where you didn't plan it (SEE ILLUSTRATION)! Don't "retire" from serving God—stay faithful in later seasons. View each day as another chance to sow something for eternity (Ps 90:12).

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**ILLUSTRATION** - One of my favorite examples of God's surprising harvest is the conversion of Luke Short at the tender age of 103. Short was sitting under a hedge in Virginia when he happened to remember a sermon he had once heard preached by the famous Puritan John Flavel. As he recalled the sermon, Short asked God to forgive his sins right then and there, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He lived for three more years, and when he died, the following words were inscribed on his tombstone: *"Here lies a babe in grace, aged three years, who died according to nature, aged 106."* But here is the remarkable part of the story: the sermon that old Mr. Short remembered had been preached eighty-five years earlier, back in England! Nearly a century had passed between Flavel's sermon and Short's conversion, between the sowing and the reaping. (John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence*) - (Philip Ryken - [Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters](#))

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**F B Meyer - Ecclesiastes 11:6** In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand.

We are all tempted to look too much to the winds and clouds. We study the faces of people, their moods and circumstances, and say, "It is not a favorable time to approach them about their souls. He does not look to be a likely case, or in a likely mood." But how do we know? If we are always waiting for favoring conditions, we shall resemble the farmer who is ever looking out for perfect weather, and lets the whole autumn pass without one handful of grain reaching the furrows; or who is always studying the clouds, seeking for a spell of hot summer weather; and presently the chance is gone, and the crop lost.

In fact, we can never tell what God is doing in the secrets of the heart. He may have been prosecuting his deep and wise designs with the souls that appear most untoward and unprepossessing. He may have led them to such a point that they are most eagerly yearning for the hand to lead them into the light. The eunuch in his chariot, might not, from a distance, have seemed specially ripe for the Christian evangelist; but, on coming near, he was discovered to be an enquirer. Saul of Tarsus was the least likely man in all Palestine to be a Christian; but God had been at work with him. Let us dare then to trust God, not looking for winds or sunshine, but scattering everywhere the precious seed of the Gospel.

"Say not, the struggle naught availeth,  
The labour and the wounds are vain;  
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,  
And as things have been things remain.

"For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,  
Comes silent, flooding in, the main."

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**Spurgeon - Morning and Evening** - "In the evening withhold not thy hand." —Ecclesiastes 11:6

In the evening of the day opportunities are plentiful: men return from their labour, and the zealous soul-winner finds time to tell abroad the love of Jesus. Have I no evening work for Jesus? If I have not, let me no longer withhold my hand from a service which requires abundant labour. Sinners are perishing for lack of knowledge; he who loiters may find his skirts crimson with the blood of souls. Jesus gave both his hands to the nails, how can I keep back one of mine from his blessed work? Night and day he toiled and prayed for me, how can I give a single hour to the pampering of my flesh with luxurious ease? Up, idle heart; stretch out thy hand to work, or uplift it to pray; heaven and hell are in earnest, let me be so, and this evening sow good seed for the Lord my God.

The evening of life has also its calls. Life is so short that a morning of manhood's vigour, and an evening of decay, make the whole of it. To some it seems long, but a four-pence is a great sum of money to a poor man. Life is so brief that no man can afford to lose a

day. It has been well said that if a great king should bring us a great heap of gold, and bid us take as much as we could count in a day, we should make a long day of it; we should begin early in the morning, and in the evening we should not withhold our hand; but to win souls is far nobler work, how is it that we so soon withdraw from it? Some are spared to a long evening of green old age; if such be my case, let me use such talents as I still retain, and to the last hour serve my blessed and faithful Lord. By his grace I will die in harness, and lay down my charge only when I lay down my body. Age may instruct the young, cheer the faint, and encourage the desponding; if eventide has less of vigorous heat, it should have more of calm wisdom, therefore in the evening I will not withhold my hand.

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### **Sideline for Substance ELIZABETH LUTER**

In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand. ECCLESIASTES 11:6 (KJV)

I've spent the last five years spinning my wheels. I've worked from sunup to sundown to strengthen the ministry assigned to my hands. Due to disaster, the ministry in which I serve was scattered throughout the nation. At the culmination of my duties, my life went into a physical tailspin. At the base of my diagnosis is fatigue. I have been forced to watch the ministry from the sidelines. The Lord has allowed greater maturity in my absence. Therefore, my physical limitations have provided me time to reflect and watch God's master plan.

I'm fascinated by the spiritual growth of many whom the Lord has allowed me to encourage. There is a time to reap what has been sown. When the farmer plants, he must wait the allotted time to see what has been produced. If he visits the crop too frequently, he is apt to be discouraged.

In the ideal world, one would prefer to have one major assignment at a time. Unfortunately, we are given God-sized tasks in duplicates. We try to decide which assignment is more worthy of our energy. When I persevere to give equal time and effort, the results are amazing. Outcomes in life are so unpredictable. It was never God's will that we figure it out, only that we be obedient.

If we were not physically limited, we would continue until our batteries completely burn out. God is so merciful and all knowing. When He sees us at our wit's end, He puts a halt to the process. He will pull us aside, restore our physical strength, and position us for our next assignment.

It is important as Christians that we remove ourselves from the activities of this world and give God our undivided attention. Only then will we be the cultivators we were called to be. Ecclesiastes 11:6 says, "For thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good" (KJV). It is not ours to determine when we will sow or what crop will be produced. We can only be grateful for having been obedient to the call.

Father, I thank You for holding the reins to my life. You control when I go out and when I come in. You give me strength for the journey and rest when I'm weary. You are so awesome! Amen.

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## TODAY IN THE WORD

Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle. - Ecclesiastes 11:6

Maybe you’ve seen the bumper sticker, “I’m not indecisive . . . am I?” We hesitate to mow the lawn or wash the car because it might rain. Or we keep putting off a decision until we’re positive that nothing will go wrong.

There’s nothing wrong with caution. But indecision can be paralyzing when it becomes a way of life, and some people go through life without ever being sure of anything or taking even the smallest risk. After a week of studying Ecclesiastes, we can understand why Solomon tells us to make the most of our God-given opportunities.

The context of these verses is one of the familiar themes of Ecclesiastes: we don’t know the future, and we can’t figure out what God does or how He does it. Three times Solomon said, “You do not know” (Ecclesiastes 11:2, 5, 6), and for good measure he added, “You cannot understand” (Ecclesiastes 11:5).

We already know that Solomon did not consider life’s shortness or its mysteries as reasons to crawl in a hole and hide. In fact, he used the examples of sea trading and farming to say, “Don’t wait for conditions to be perfect, because that will never happen. You don’t know what’s going to happen tomorrow. So go ahead, ship your grain out and plant your seed today while you can.”

That’s very practical advice for workers, whether you’re investing in the stock market or mowing lawns. We’re not only being urged to try, but to try different things in the hope that some will succeed. This doesn’t mean changing jobs every few months. The Bible is giving us permission to explore to the fullest the gifts and opportunities we receive from God.

Today, it seems like the only people giving Ecclesiastes-type advice are the secular self-help gurus who have a video and a course to sell.

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### William MacDonald - (Eccl. 11:6)

Our ignorance as to how and when God will use our service should prompt us to be tireless in buying up opportunities. The Lord often works when we least expect it, and He works in an infinite number of novel ways.

A Christian sailor, stationed at a naval air base, was standing near the corner of a hangar, witnessing to a buddy. A third sailor, out of sight around the corner, heard the Gospel, became convicted of his sins, and was soundly converted. The fellow to whom the message was directly addressed did not respond.

A preacher, checking the acoustics of a new auditorium, boomed out the words of John 1:29, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” To all appearance there was no one listening. Again he sounded out the timeless words of John the Baptist: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” The main floor was empty but a workman in the first balcony was smitten by the message and turned to the Lamb of God for forgiveness and new life.

An American Bible teacher spoke to a young American tourist in a railroad station in Paris. (Both came from the same city in the States and from the same neighborhood in that city). The young man was irritated to be confronted. He said, “Do you think you’re going to save me in a Paris railroad station?” The Bible teacher replied, “No, I can’t save you. But nothing happens by chance in life. It was no accident that we met here. I think that God is speaking to you and that you’d better listen.” In the days that followed, a Christian gave the traveler a ride to Vienna, witnessing to him on the way. Back in the States, that same believer invited him to a Christian ranch in Colorado. On the last day of his stay at the ranch, the fellow was standing alone in the swimming pool. Soon another guest joined him in the water, spoke to him quietly about the Lord, and had the great joy of leading him to the Savior. Years later the American Bible teacher was introduced to an earnest young disciple at the close of a meeting. The name sounded faintly familiar. Then he remembered. It was the tourist he had spoken to in a railroad station in Paris.

The moral, of course, is that we should be diligent for Christ in the morning and evening, in season and out of season. We never know which blow will break the granite or which word will be the life-giving one.

The success syndrome is an infection that has spread right through the whole Western world, so that its prevalence among Christian people, though distressing, is hardly surprising. The world's idea that everyone, from childhood up, should be able to succeed at all times in measurable ways, and that it is a great disgrace not to, hangs over the Christian community like a pall of acrid smoke; and if the spiritual counterpart of agonized coughing, lung pain, and shortness of breath should result, no one should be surprised. Those who want to become Christ's agents in building His Church now feel they have to have track records that show them as successes in everything to which they ever put their hand. So the impostors have a field day: anything that in the short term looks like triumph is equated with personal success, and anything that in the short term looks like disaster is seen as failure. Successful-looking performance at all costs becomes the goal, and unreality creeps into people's view of themselves as a result.

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## **ECCLESIASTES 11:6 - Charles Swindoll**

The only way we can come to terms with reality is by trusting God, regardless. No ifs, ands, or buts. If I am a farmer and God allows a flood to come and wash away my crops, or if God chooses to give me the beautiful season rains and a bumper crop, I trust Him and I give Him praise. If I am in industry or some profession and someone throws me a curve and God allows my whole world to be reversed, I trust Him and I give Him praise. I take life as it occurs. I don't waste time in the pit of doubt. Nor do I worry over crop failures and strikeouts.

We can't wait for conditions to be perfect. Nor can we wait for things to be free of all risks—absolutely free, absolutely safe. Instead of protecting ourselves, we have to release ourselves. Instead of hoarding, we are to give and invest. Instead of drifting, we are to pursue life. Instead of doubting, we are to courageously trust. - Living on the Ragged Edge

Are you prone to praise in seasons of prosperity and to doubt in days of trouble? Ask the Lord to give you a steadfast heart.

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## **Family Worship**

"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand."—Eccles. 11:6

The following is one of the most interesting circumstances in the life of the late John Ryland, Baptist minister at Northampton:—

Being on a journey, he was overtaken by a violent storm, and compelled to take shelter in the first inn he came to. The people of the house treated him with great kindness. When the hour of rest approached, the stranger appeared uneasy, and looked up every time the door opened, as if expecting something essential to his comfort. His host informed him that his chamber was prepared whenever he chose to retire.

"But," said he, "you have not had your family together."

"I don't know what you mean," said the landlord.

"To read and pray with them," replied the guest.

The landlord confessed that he never thought of doing such a thing.

"Then, sir," said Mr. Ryland, "I must beg you to order my horse immediately: I had rather brave the storm than venture to sleep in a house where there is no prayer. Who can tell what may befall us before morning?"

The landlord remonstrated with him, and said he had no objection to call his family together, but he should not know what to do when they came. Mr. Ryland then proposed to conduct family worship, to which all consented.

When he rose from his knees, almost every individual present was bathed in tears, and the inquiry was awakened in every heart, "What must I do to be saved?" This day was indeed the beginning of days to that family, and they became the means of diffusing a knowledge of the Gospel in a neighbourhood which had been before proverbially dark and destitute.

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## **Ecclesiastes 11:7 The light is pleasant, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun.**

KJV Ecclesiastes 11:7 Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun:

NKJ Ecclesiastes 11:7 Truly the light is sweet, And it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun;

NET Ecclesiastes 11:7 Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for a person to see the sun.

BGT Ecclesiastes 11:7 καὶ γλυκὺ τὸ φῶς καὶ γὰρ ὁ οὐρανὸς φθαλμοῦς τοῦ βλέπειν σὺ τὸν ἥλιον

LXE Ecclesiastes 11:7 Moreover the light is sweet, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun.

CSB Ecclesiastes 11:7 Light is sweet, and it is pleasing for the eyes to see the sun.

ESV Ecclesiastes 11:7 Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.

NIV Ecclesiastes 11:7 Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun.

NLT Ecclesiastes 11:7 Light is sweet; how pleasant to see a new day dawning.

YLT Ecclesiastes 11:7 Sweet also is the light, And good for the eyes to see the sun.

NJB Ecclesiastes 11:7 How sweet light is, how delightful it is to see the sun!

NRS Ecclesiastes 11:7 Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.

RSV Ecclesiastes 11:7 Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun.

NAB Ecclesiastes 11:7 Light is sweet! and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.

GWN Ecclesiastes 11:7 Light is sweet, and it is good for one's eyes to see the sun.

BBE Ecclesiastes 11:7 Truly the light is sweet, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun.

- the light: Job 33:28,30 Ps 56:13 Pr 15:30 29:13
- a pleasant: Ec 7:11 Ps 84:11 Mt 5:45

#### Related Passages:

Psalms 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.

Psalms 56:13 For You have delivered my soul from death, Indeed my feet from stumbling, So that **I may walk before God in the light of the living.**

Psalms 27:1 A Psalm of David. **The LORD is my light** and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?

John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

John 8:12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, **I am the Light of the world**; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

Ecclesiastes 6:5 "It never sees the sun and it never knows anything; it is better off than he.

Job 3:16 "Or like a miscarriage which is discarded, I would not be, As infants that never saw light.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;

Acts 26:18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

1 John 1:7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

### THE GOODNESS OF BEING ALIVE

**The light is pleasant** (sweet), **and it is good for the eyes to see the sun**- To experience **light** (life, consciousness, vitality) is a good and pleasant thing. To **see the sun** signifies to be alive. This passage seems simply reminding us that life is good, it is a gift to be alive and each morning to see the light of the sun. In short, this verse is like a sunrise before the shadow, reminding us to cherish the season we're in. I like the versions that say "**Life is sweet**" as it congers up the metaphor of tasting something and relishing the taste because it tastes good! Light (life) tastes good, regardless of our circumstances. Let me encourage you dear believer going through manifold ([poikilos](#)) trials (1Pe 1:6,7+) "**O taste** (a command) and **see** (a command) that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!" (Ps 34:8<sup>+</sup>). Dear reader, have you tasted the sweetness of Jesus and taken refuge in Him, so that you might live forever with Him and experience His "fullness of joy" and "pleasures forever" that are in His right hand? (Ps 16:11<sup>+</sup>) I will change the second clause of Solomon's words and proclaim **'It is good for the eyes to see the SON!'**



**THOUGHT** - I go to the beach often and my favorite sight occurs about 6AM as I look over to the eastern aspect of the ocean and I begin to see the first rays of the sun radiating over the waves (I took the picture above one morning), reminding me once again of the faithfulness of my God and of the truth He has given me another day to enjoy and to redeem for His glory and honor.

*Awake, harp and lyre;  
I will awaken the dawn!*  
-- Psalm 108:2+

As **Craig Bartholomew** says ""The proverb in Ec 11:7 starts the final stage in Qohelet's journey as presented in Ecclesiastes. The initial waw ("and," translated "truly") here indicates a shift in focus, but it is the content of the proverb that definitively signals a major change. Through large sections of Ecclesiastes "under the sun" has had decidedly negative consequences, but like the unexpected arrival of spring we find this proverb. Light is sweet: "sweet" is a metaphor of taste and evokes the tasting, the full experiencing, of life as truly good....**To see the sun** is to be alive as a creature, as one who lives "under the sun." This proverb declares being alive as good, delightful. (See [Ecclesiastes Baker Commentary on the Old Testament](#))

**William Barrick** - Rejoice in the Light (Eccl 11:7–8) Life presents wonderful opportunities that mankind must enjoy. Being "under the sun" has its limitations, but existence in the light (being able to "see the sun"; cf. Eccl 6:5; 7:11) is far more pleasant than the alternative (Eccl 11:7).

*The point is that life is "sweet"  
and should be savored like honey.*

**Keith Krell** In this first section, Solomon focuses on the importance of living our lives to the fullest before we grow too old.<sup>456</sup> In Ec 11:7 he writes, "**The light is pleasant, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun**" In Scripture, "**light**" is often a synonym for "life"<sup>457</sup> and the word translated "**pleasant**" is often used in reference to honey.<sup>458</sup> I have always liked peanut butter and honey sandwiches and Honey Bunches of Oats cereal. I even like honey in my coffee. The point is that life is "sweet" and should be savored like honey.<sup>459</sup> Thus, **the phrase "light is pleasant/sweet" means "it's good to be alive."**<sup>460</sup> So feel free right now to rock your head back and say, "Ahhh." In Ec 11:7, Solomon continues and makes use of a truism of life—that **seeing the sun typically brings delight**. We often say things like, "What a beautiful day it is!" "Don't you just love these sunny days?"....Solomon says, "Enjoy life because there are some amazing days." Feel free to let out a big, "YEOW?!" Or maybe a little James Brown, "I feel good."

The term "**light**" (haor) is used figuratively (metonymy of association) in reference to "life" (e.g., Job 3:20; 33:30; Ps 56:14). By contrast, death is described as "darkness" (e.g., Job 10:21-22; 17:13; 18:18; cf. Eccl 11:8; 12:6-7).

**Pleasant - honey** - See Judges 14:14, 18; Ps 19:10; Prov 16:24; 24:13; 27:7; Ezek 3:3. The only other usages of mathoq in the OT that don't explicitly describe honey are Eccl 5:11; 11:7; Song of Sol 2:3; and Isa 5:20 [2x].

**NET NOTE** - The term "light" (אור, ha'or) is used figuratively (metonymy of association) in reference to "life" (e.g., Job 3:20; 33:30; Ps 56:14). By contrast, death is described as "darkness" (e.g., Eccl 11:8; 12:6–7).

**NET NOTE** - The Hebrew term מתוק (matoq, "sweet") is often used elsewhere in reference to honey. The point is that life is sweet and should be savored like honey.

**NET NOTE**- Used with the idiom "**to see the sun**" (i.e., to be alive), Qoheleth is simply saying that the experience of a life is a pleasant thing that should be savored. The idiom "**to see the sun**" (both רא'ה השמש, ra'ah hashamesh, and שמש השמה, khazah hashamesh) is an idiom meaning "**to be alive**" (e.g., Ps 58:9; Eccl 6:5; 7:11; 11:7); cf. BDB 1039 s.v. 4 שמש.b. The opposite idiom, "**the sun is darkened**," refers to the onset of old age and death (Eccl 12:2).



**Derek Kidner** offers the following reminder on Ec 11:7-8 - "Candid as ever, these verses match the delight of existence with the seriousness of it. Each joy here is confronted by its opposite or its complement; there is no softening of the colours on either side. The bliss of being alive is captured in the lovely sentence which opens with the saying, **Light is sweet**... (Ec 11:7); and this youthful radiance may last, as Ec 11:8a points out, to the end. But not beyond. The author has not gone back on his insistence that, by themselves, time and all things temporal will disappoint us, who have eternity in our hearts (cf. Ecc 3:11). Their light must give way to the days of darkness and the undoing of everything under the sun; and we must face the fact or be shattered by it." (Borrow [The Message of Ecclesiastes: A Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance \(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976\), 98-99.](#))

**"Don't Waste the Light"** Solomon says: life is beautiful—not perfect, but precious. Each sunrise is a reminder of mercy (cf. Lamentations 3:23). To see the sun is to be given another day of: Repentance, Joy, Purpose, Worship, Love. What you do with the light shows whether you honor the Giver. Don't take your daily breath and vision for granted. God wants you to enjoy—not just endure—your days. Start each day with thankfulness for life itself. Don't waste time complaining—rejoice that you are alive.

### **When Morning Gilds the Skies**

--Edward Caswall

[Play this great hymn](#)

When morning gilds the skies my heart awaking cries:

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Alike at work and prayer, to Jesus I repair:

May Jesus Christ be praised!

When you begin the day, O never fail to say,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

And at your work rejoice, to sing with heart and voice,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Sing, suns and stars of space, sing, ye that see His face,

Sing, Jesus Christ be praised!

God's whole creation o'er, for aye and evermore

Shall Jesus Christ be praised!2

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**Ray Pritchard** - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - GOD IS IN THE DETAILS Ecclesiastes 11:7-8

Every day above ground is a bonus." A friend said that last night and I listened carefully because he has just survived difficult surgery to replace a heart valve. Life is good and light is sweet, especially when you've dodged the proverbial bullet and gained a few extra years.

*Enjoy life, because you're going to be dead  
a lot longer than you're going to be alive*

To paraphrase Solomon in Ecclesiastes 11:7-8, "Enjoy life, because you're going to be dead a lot longer than you're going to be alive." A morbid thought, perhaps, but one that no human experience can contradict.

Here's a crucial observation as we apply this truth: About 99 percent of life is ordinary. Many of us struggle with that truth, because we secretly dream of a life of perpetual excitement and unending happiness. A man takes a new job with high hopes and big dreams, only to find that most of his days are filled with the same things he's been doing for the last five years. Or a young woman dreams of a happy married life where she can prepare beautiful dinners and take leisurely strolls with her husband. In her eyes the future seems bright and free from difficulty. But soon enough she discovers that her husband can be grouchy and unappreciative of her most creative culinary efforts. Add to that dirty diapers, a living room that needs straightening four times a day, wet snowsuits, runny noses, dirty hands, and a sink that drips twenty-four hours a day.

Life is more than fun and games. It's also cleaning the oven, paying the bills, and doing the laundry.

Let's face it. Most of our days will be spent doing the "busywork" of life. We get up, get dressed, get the kids ready, eat breakfast, go to work (or to school), see people, attend meetings, answer questions, fill out forms, type letters, make phone calls, review files, make notes, keep appointments, clear our desk, go home, unwind, eat supper, walk the dog, talk to the children, watch TV, and go to bed. Then we get up the next morning and do it again.

Such is life. A great deal of what we do every day may seem mundane and even trivial, but that's where the will of God begins for

you and me. Blessed is that man who enjoys the routine, blessed is that woman who delights in the mundane, for they shall discover that God is in the details of life.

Sovereign Lord, open my eyes that I might see how blessed I really am. Amen.

## SHINING THE LIGHT

- Think of the three most joyful people you know. What qualities do they share in common?
- Take sixty seconds and count your blessings. Then thank God for them.

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 90; Ephesians 5:15-17; and Colossians 3:17.

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## Resistance to Melancholy

"Truly the light is sweet and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun"—Eccles. 11:7

Dante condemns to the Stygian marsh those who had been sad under the blessed sunlight. "Sad were we in the sweet air that is gladdened by the sun, bearing sluggish smoke in our hearts; now lie we sadly here in the black ooze."

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## Seeing the Son

Light is sweet, and it is good for one's eyes to see the sun. Ecclesiastes 11:7

It hasn't been clearly identified until recent years, but thousands of people know what it's like to experience the aptly named S.A.D., Seasonal Affective Disorder. This condition can cause lethargy, mental fatigue, and feelings of depression due to insufficient exposure to natural light. Scientists and physicians have affirmed the importance of sunlight to the human body—a physiological fact that Scripture has acknowledged all along.

While not everyone experiences S.A.D., it's true that most of us feel more cheerful when the sun is shining. Sunlight affects our mood in multiple ways. It not only provides illumination for our daily activities but also essential amounts of Vitamin D.

Exposure to God's Word is also vital to well-being. Think of it as "Vitamin D for the soul." When you begin your day with prayer and Scripture reading and take a few moments to meditate on biblical principles, you can be assured that the rest of your day will bear a marked difference. You might awake under a personal dark cloud, but looking into the light of God's Word provides a critical "perspective corrective."

Just as it is "good for one's eyes to see the sun," so also it is good for the soul to see the image of the Son of God in the pages of His Word.

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**Light** in the [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#) (highly recommended resource - page 1722 - the following is a short excerpt of a long article on "**LIGHT**") - The Bible is enveloped by the imagery of light, both literally and figuratively. At the beginning of the biblical narrative, physical light springs forth as the first created thing (Gen 1:3–4). At the end of the story the light of God obliterates all traces of darkness: "And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light" (Rev 22:5 RSV). Between these two beacons the imagery of light makes nearly two hundred appearances, with light emerging as one of the Bible's major and most complex symbols.....

Light as Symbol of Goodness and Blessing. At its most general level of symbolism, light represents goodness and holiness as opposed to evil. Evil-doers are people "who rebel against the light ... and do not stay in its paths" (Job 24:13 RSV). "Every one who does evil," Jesus explained, "hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed" (Jn 3:20 RSV). When applied politically light becomes a symbol for the goodness that flows from a ruler who rules justly over his people: "He dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth upon a cloudless morning" (2 Sam 23:4 RSV). In the NT the sanctified life is repeatedly associated with light. In the famous passage on holy living that concludes the epistle to the Romans, believers are commanded to "cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light" (Rom 13:12 RSV). Equally evocative is the picture in Ephesians 5:8–9: "Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and true)" (RSV). The calling of Christians is to "shine as lights in the world" (Phil 2:15 RSV). Light is also a symbol of God's favor and the joy this favor brings. When the Jews were rescued from Haman's planned genocide, they "had light and gladness and joy and honor" (Esther 8:16 RSV). The psalmist does not hesitate to limit the gift of this light to those who live in fellowship with God: "Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart" (Ps 97:11 RSV; 112:4). Similarly, the book of Proverbs asserts that "the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day" (Prov 4:18 RSV). When Job pictures his former prosperity, God's favor assumes the qualities of light: "His lamp shone upon my head, and by

his light I walked through darkness” (Job 29:3 RSV). In other contexts light is associated with life, and darkness with death. In the book of Job, to be redeemed from going down to the grave is parallel to one’s life seeing the light (Job 33:28), and to be brought back from the Pit is to “see the light of life” (Job 33:30 RSV). When the psalmist imagines the rich person’s going “to the generation of his fathers,” it calls to mind the picture that he “will never more see the light” (Ps 49:19 RSV).....

If God and His Son are light, **light becomes a natural symbol for salvation and the new life.** “The LORD is my light and my salvation,” the psalmist testifies (Ps 27:1 RSV). The person “who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God” (Jn 3:21 RSV). In Christ’s great discourse on himself as the light of the world, those who follow Christ are defined as people who “will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (Jn 8:12 RSV). According to 1 Peter 2:9, believers are those who have been called “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (RSV). An early liturgical formula, accompanied by its lead-in, is a fitting summary of this motif: “When anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it is said, ‘Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light’ ” (Eph 5:13–14 RSV). The implied message is clear: if God is light, to come to God is to come to the light and to receive life. We might note also the echo of Christ’s resurrection in the picture of the sleeper’s arising from the dead. Those who have been delivered “from the dominion of darkness” and transferred “to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col 1:13 RSV) are thus strongly associated with light as the thing that defines their very essence. Jesus called John the Baptist “a burning and shining lamp” in whose light people rejoiced (Jn 5:35). After painting a composite portrait of the ideal disciple in his beatitudes, Jesus added, “You are the light of the world.... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Mt 5:14, 16 RSV). It is not inaccurate, therefore, to view the church as portrayed in the NT Epistles as the possessor and giver of light. Paul writes to the Thessalonian church, “For you are all sons of light and sons of the day” (1 Thess 5:5 RSV). As prototypical convert, Paul was sent by God to the Gentiles “to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light” (Acts 26:18 RSV). This light is not only part of the church’s evangelistic proclamation but also characterizes life within the church: “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn 1:7 RSV).

**Ecclesiastes 11:8 Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all, and let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. Everything that is to come will be futility.**

KJV Ecclesiastes 11:8 But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 11:8 But if a man lives many years And rejoices in them all, Yet let him remember the days of darkness, For they will be many. All that is coming is vanity.

NET Ecclesiastes 11:8 So, if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all, but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many— all that is about to come is obscure.

BGT Ecclesiastes 11:8 τι κα ν τη πολλ ζ σεται νθρωπος ν π σιν α το ς ε φρανθ σεται κα μνησθ σεται τ ς μ ρας το σκ τους τι πολλα σονται π ν τ ρχ μενον μαται της

LXE Ecclesiastes 11:8 For even if a man should live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that comes is vanity.

CSB Ecclesiastes 11:8 Indeed, if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all, and let him remember the days of darkness, since they will be many. All that comes is futile.

ESV Ecclesiastes 11:8 So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.

NIV Ecclesiastes 11:8 However many years a man may live, let him enjoy them all. But let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. Everything to come is meaningless.

NLT Ecclesiastes 11:8 When people live to be very old, let them rejoice in every day of life. But let them also remember there will be many dark days. Everything still to come is meaningless.

YLT Ecclesiastes 11:8 But, if man liveth many years, In all of them let him rejoice, And remember the days of darkness, For they are many! all that is coming is vanity.

NJB Ecclesiastes 11:8 However many years you live, enjoy them all, but remember, the days of darkness will be many: futility awaits you at the end.

NRS Ecclesiastes 11:8 Even those who live many years should rejoice in them all; yet let them remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.

RSV Ecclesiastes 11:8 For if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.

NAB Ecclesiastes 11:8 However many years a man may live, let him, as he enjoys them all, remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that is to come is vanity.

GWN Ecclesiastes 11:8 Even though people may live for many years, they should enjoy every one of them. But they should also remember there will be many dark days. Everything that is coming is pointless.

BBE Ecclesiastes 11:8 But even if a man's life is long and he has joy in all his years, let him keep in mind the dark days, because they will be great in number. Whatever may come is to no purpose.

- **if a man**, Ec 6:6 8:12
- **rejoice**: Ec 3:12,13 5:18-20 8:15
- **yet**: Ec 7:14 12:1-5 De 32:29 Job 10:22 14:10 15:23 18:18 Jer 13:16 Joe 2:2 Mt 22:13 Joh 12:35 Jude 1:18
- **All that**: Ec 2:1-11,15,17,19,21-23,26 4:8,16 5:15,16 6:11

#### Related Passages:

Psalms 90:10-12 As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years, Yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; For **soon it is gone and we fly away**. 11 Who understands the power of Your anger And Your fury, according to the fear that is due You? 12 So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.

Psalm 49:19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers; **They will never see the light**.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them";

James 4:14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."

Philippians 4:4-5+ **Rejoice** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) in the Lord always; again I will say, **Rejoice** ([present imperative](#))! 5 **Let** your gentle spirit **be** ([aorist imperative](#)) known to all men. The Lord is near.

Ecclesiastes 2:13-14+ And I saw that wisdom excels folly as **light excels darkness**. 14 The wise man's eyes are in his head, but **the fool walks in darkness**. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both.

Ecclesiastes 9:7-10+ (**A CARPE DIEM PASSAGE!**) **Go** then, **eat** your bread in happiness and **drink** your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works. 8 **Let** your clothes **be** white all the time, and **let** not oil **be** lacking on your head. 9 **Enjoy** life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun. 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, **do** it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.

Rejoice in all your days under the sun!

### LIVE WHILE YOU ARE DYING

[Keith Krell](#) - In this passage, I believe Solomon says, "Live while you are dying." If you know country music, this may sound a lot like Tim McGraw's song, "Live Like You Were Dying."<sup>453</sup> The notable revisions are the words "**while**" and "**are**"—live while you are dying. By modifying this statement, I have chosen to focus on the biblical truth that all people are appointed to die.<sup>454</sup> Thus, you don't have to live like you were dying because your body is actually dying at this very moment. It is, therefore, more accurate to say you need to "live while you are dying."

**Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice** ([jussive](#) ~ command) **in them all** - Amen! Rejoice while you can! Solomon affirms joy should be our portion no matter our age! Solomon is commanding us to rejoice in all our years, even if we live to a ripe old age (I am 79 as I write this comment). If God gives you many years, rejoice in every one. But remember: you won't have them forever."Life is the gift God has given us which should cause us to be thankful and joyful. This reminds me of the words of Ps

118:24+ **"This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it"** While the context of that verse was the day of deliverance (cf Ps 118:21), it is a good word of application for us today. Live today in a way you won't regret in the **days of darkness**, for they will come. Encourage other aging believers to keep rejoicing, even as their strength fades. Let Solomon's command encourage you go back and meditate on the "carpe diem" (seize the day) exhortations he had given in Eccl 9:7-10+!

**Craig Bartholomew** points asks "After all that Qohelet has led us through, how is he able to move toward this conclusion? The key is found in the two verbs that dominate the poem, rejoice and remember. Verse 8 introduces them. "Rejoice" is the imperative that governs 11:9-10, and "remember" is the imperative that governs 12:1-7" This is not to suggest that Qohelet here loses touch with the paradoxes of life, but he contextualizes them in the framework of rejoicing and remembrance, and thus moves progressively in this section toward a resolution of his contradictory juxtaposition of joy and enigma. (See [Ecclesiastes -Baker Commentary on the Old Testament](#))

Moses gives us good advice to daily pray "So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom." (Ps 90:12)

*It is better to add life to your years than to add years to your life.  
We need to live life fully every day.*

**Keith Krell** adds that "A simple way we can do this is by enjoying the ordinary nature of life. A great deal of what we do every day may seem mundane and even trivial, but that is where the will of God begins for you and me. Blessed is that man who enjoys the routine, blessed is that woman who delights in the mundane, for they shall discover that God is in the details of life.<sup>462</sup> As we age, we need to learn to be thankful just to be alive. The older we get the more thankful and content we should become. As it turns out, the golden years may really be golden after all. Recent research suggests that older Americans are not only the happiest Americans, but they are also much more socially active than expected. Although many older individuals face health problems, they are generally more content with what they have than younger Americans. The research found that the odds of being happy increased by five percent for every ten years of age. Ilse, an 84-year-old retired nurse says, 'Contentment as far as I'm concerned comes with old age ... because you accept things the way they are. You know that nothing is perfect.' Although aging is often looked at negatively in our society, age brings many benefits, including a greater likelihood of contentment. Christians can also look at aging as bringing us one step closer to heaven and eternity with God.<sup>463</sup> With that said, it is critical for us to recognize that when it comes to years of life, it is still a matter of quality over quantity. It is better to add life to your years than to add years to your life. We need to live life fully every day. In the movie Braveheart, William Wallace (as portrayed by Mel Gibson) said, "Every man dies but not every man really lives."<sup>464</sup> This is a rather biblical assessment of life. The Bible declares that we will all die, yet many of us miss out on the abundant life that God offers us.<sup>465</sup> Don't let that happen to you. **Live while you are dying.**

*God's gift of life should be **enjoyed**,  
not just **endured**.*

**William Barrick** - Regardless of the number of years God might grant to any individual, "let him rejoice in them all" (Eccl 11:8a). God's gift of life should be enjoyed, not just endured. Until this point in the book, other enjoyment passages have "followed enigmatic sections. This shift to having the carpe diem section preface and structure the enigmatic section about death is significant, as is the introduction of 'remember,' which has not yet occurred in a carpe diem passage." (See [Ecclesiastes \(Baker Commentary on the Old Testament\)](#))

Early vibrant days give way to days of  
darkness reflecting the fleeting nature of life

**And let him remember** ([jussive](#) ~ command) **the days of darkness**, for (term of explanation) **they will be many** - One reason **days of darkness** will come is because we do not know what the future holds. As an aside, I must interject for believers, let us not become depressed and let us not forget that we know the One Who holds the future and He is good, even in our darkest times, which He promises to use for our good and His glory (Ro 8:28+). Solomon says that even while rejoicing, don't forget there are dark days ahead, whether due to the body aging, becoming ill and the ultimate darkness, death. Let this lead to grateful, not careless, joy. Wise joy is aware of life's fleeting nature. Don't waste today! While ultimate darkness refers to death, note the fact that Solomon says there will be many days of darkness, indicating that he is referring not just to death but to dark, difficult times that precede death. I understand what Solomon is saying. At age 79 I am rejoicing and thankful (1Th 5:18+) in the midst of experiencing **days of darkness** as my 45 yo daughter, with 2 years of sobriety, recently had a psychotic break precipitated by the dangerous practice of "[dabbing](#)" (so much for the statement that "Marijuana is safe for recreation!"), totaled her car, completely destroyed her apartment (from which she was evicted, the water damage alone coming to \$10,000 with more damages pending), attempted to kill herself and is now in a 90 day stay in a rehabilitation facility (the 4th or 5th one she has been in - I have lost count of the **days of darkness**). While this verse is not specifically referring to believers, it does remind me of Paul's words to believers in Acts 14:22b-



"Through **many tribulations (days of darkness...many)** we must enter the kingdom of God."

**NET NOTE**- The phrase "the days of darkness" refers to the onset of old age (Eccl 12:1–5) and the inevitable experience of death (Eccl 11:7–8; 12:6–7). Elsewhere, "darkness" is a figure of speech (metonymy of association) for death (Job 10:21–22; 17:13; 18:18).

**Dictionary of Biblical Imagery** (click for lengthy dissertation on "Darkness") **Darkness** has no existence by itself, being definable simply as an absence of light. It is a physical and spiritual reality as well as an apt symbol for some of the profoundest human experiences. With approximately two hundred references, darkness is a major actor in the biblical drama. The book of Job, a vision of calamity and despair, is a small anthology of descriptions of darkness, with three dozen instances. Darkness stands out from virtually all other literary images, which are finally ambivalent (having both good and bad manifestations), because it is uniformly negative in its import.

**William Barrick** - At the same time as one must rejoice, one must also **remember the days of darkness** (Eccl 11:8b). Since these dark days occupy a large amount of time (**"for they will be many"**), death does not seem an adequate reference—suffering, old age, and dying do fit the description, however. These days consist of times of trouble in which a person finds no delight (cp. Eccl 12:1). The trials and travails of a lifetime just serve to make the joys all the more pleasant and sweeter.

**Everything that is to come will be futility**(**hebel**; **Lxx - mataiotes**)- **Everything** cannot refer to literally everything for we know that for believers heaven will be bliss and eternal joy. The things Solomon refers to therefore are the things of this life under the sun which are all **futility** without God. Everything "under the sun" (on earth) that lies ahead is uncertain and fleeting so enjoy today. Everything under the sun is vanity, so don't cling to it too tightly.

**NET NOTE** - The term הֶבֶל (**hebel**) here means "obscure," that is, unknown. This sense is derived from the literal concept of breath, vapor or wind that cannot be seen; thus, the idea of "obscure; dark; difficult to understand; enigmatic" (see HALOT 236–37 s.v. I הֶבֶל; BDB 210–11 s.v. I הֶבֶל). It is used in this sense in reference to enigmas in life (Ec 6:2; 8:10, 14) and the future which is obscure (Ec 11:8).

**William Barrick** - Disregard for rejoicing and remembering leads to great disappointment, because everything yet to come will pass very swiftly (Eccl 11:8c). **"Futility"** (**hebel**) in this setting refers to that which is brief and ephemeral. **"Everything"** must refer to the latter days of life, including the time of dying, rather than to the afterlife.

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**Futility** (vanity, idols, breath, delusion, worthless, emptiness)(01892) **hebel** means breath, vapor, vanity, emptiness, meaninglessness; idols. **Hebel** commonly has the figurative use of that which is evanescent and unstable. The first OT use refers to idols (Dt 32:21, cf 1 Ki 16:13, 26, Jer 8:19; Jeremiah 10:8, 15; Jer 14:22 Jer 51:18; Jonah 2:9; Ps 31:6), a fitting word picture for the worthlessness of idols! **Hebel** refers to breath because of its transitory fleeting character, as in Job's figurative use "my days are but a **breath**." (Job 7:16, cf similar idea Ps 39:5, 6, 11; Ps 62:9; Ps 78:33 where **hebel** parallels behālâ from root bāhal "to hasten": Ps 94:11; Ps 144:4) **Hebel** "generally appears in contexts where it is used as a simile emphasizing the transitory state of an object, never as descriptive of the biological function. A prime example would be "Humanity is like a breath (Ps. 144:4). Not only is breath ethereal and of short duration, but all things which breathe will die." (Gilbrant)

**HEBEL IN ECCLESIASTES** - Eccl. 1:2; Eccl. 1:14; Eccl. 2:1; Eccl. 2:11; Eccl. 2:15; Eccl. 2:17; Eccl. 2:19; Eccl. 2:21; Eccl. 2:23; Eccl. 2:26; Eccl. 3:19; Eccl. 4:4; Eccl. 4:7; Eccl. 4:8; Eccl. 4:16; Eccl. 5:7; Eccl. 5:10; Eccl. 6:2; Eccl. 6:4; Eccl. 6:9; Eccl. 6:11; Eccl. 6:12; Eccl. 7:6; Eccl. 7:15; Eccl. 8:10; Eccl. 8:14; Eccl. 9:9; Eccl. 11:8; Eccl. 11:10; Eccl. 12:8

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### G Campbell Morgan - Ec 11.8

These are the final words in the revelation of what life is when it is lived "under the sun," that is, on the material plane, in a hemisphere with no vital relationships with the spiritual world beyond an intellectual assent to its existence. The mind travels on to that which lies beyond this life, and discovers only darkness. That outlook leads to the statement: "All that cometh is vanity." This carries his opening affirmation, "All is vanity," out beyond the present. The man who sees nothing but vanity in the things of to-day sees nothing but vanity in that which lies beyond his ken. There is only darkness, no light, no knowledge, vanity. Therefore let a man take hold of the present, and get out of it all that he can; let him rejoice in the years, because they are the only things of which he can be sure! This is exactly the attitude of thousands toward life. Indeed, it is the only attitude possible to those who have no direct dealing with the spiritual world. This is all they can do, and it is a pre-eminently sensible thing to do. Yet what a vicious circle is that which the mind, so circumscribed, makes in its thinking! Everything here is vanity—that is, void, not worth while; yet because there is nothing beyond, but once again vanity, let a man take hold of and enjoy the present vanity! Can anything be more fatuous? Thus the Debater proves what the book is intended to prove, the utter folly of life "under the sun," that is, life endeavouring to realize itself, while shutting out of its reckoning those larger facts, above the sun, beyond the material.

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## TODAY IN THE WORD

However many years a man may live, let him enjoy them all. - Ecclesiastes 11:8

Thomas Dewey is a name the older generation will know. He was a brilliant young attorney who won widespread recognition for his battles against organized crime. Dewey became a frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination in 1940, when he was just thirty-eight. An official in Franklin Roosevelt's administration made fun of Dewey's age by saying he had 'thrown his diaper into the ring.' Dewey didn't get the nod, but in 1944 and 1948 he was nominated, although he was defeated in both presidential races. He also suffered defeat in the 1938 race for governor of New York, but went on to be elected for three terms as governor.

Few things are more uncertain than the outcome of a political race, yet Thomas Dewey was willing to 'cast [his] bread upon the waters' (v. 1). He sounds like the kind of person Solomon described in Ecclesiastes 11. Since the future is uncertain, the king says, there's no need to be too cautious about pursuing various plans.

In fact, if we are too timid, always afraid of what might happen, we won't get anything done (v. 4). At first glance, Solomon's advice may seem contradictory. You might think he would say that since life is so uncertain, don't take too many chances. But Solomon advises exactly the opposite. In modern terms, he is saying, 'Go for it!'

Now before we make Solomon sound like some kind of tenth-century B.C. motivational speaker, we need to remember that his advice is tempered by several important theological truths. For example, in verse 5 we read that God holds the central place in the universe. Plans made without Him are doomed to ultimate failure. The reason any of our efforts succeed at all is because He is at work, guiding and deciding.

We're also reminded that the days of opportunity won't last forever (v. 8). Life is short, in other words. This is an especially good word for people in the prime of young adulthood. The Bible isn't being cynical or pessimistic, just realistic.

The other truth that guides these verses isn't so apparent here, but it's part of the context of the whole book. Solomon can encourage us to enjoy our years because God has given human beings the gift of happiness, which comes from a life well lived.

If you have a 'go for it' type of personality, you're probably saying amen to Solomon's counsel.

But whether you're the all-out or the cautious type, you're wise to submit all your plans, dreams, and hopes to God for His review, redirection, or approval. That's because He alone can judge a person's true motives (Pr. 16:2). In light of this, here's a good verse to memorize: 'Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed' (Pr. 16:3).

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## Remember the Creator - Peter Kennedy

"However many years a man may live, let him enjoy them all. But let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many."—Ecclesiastes 11:8

In 1783 Charles Simeon came to Cambridge, England, as the Vicar of Holy Trinity Church. At twenty-three years old he consistently preached an uncompromising message of the gospel of grace in Christ. His message was so dynamic that eventually his congregation did not attend his meetings. They locked their pews so no one else could attend either. Church officers locked Simeon out of the church on Sunday mornings. During these difficult days university students threw bricks through the church's windows; Simeon preached on the streets and people ignored him.

But Simeon persevered and ministered for forty years. His unswerving message was "Jesus Christ, crucified for sinners." One of the most famous of his followers was Henry Martyn who became a missionary to India. Some believe that Simeon was the most evangelical clergyman in the Church of England at that time.

While Simeon lay on his deathbed he smiled and asked those in his room, "What do you think especially gives me comfort as I face death?" All were silent. "It is the creation! I ask myself, 'Did the Lord create the world or did I?' He did! Now if He made the world and all the rolling spheres of the universe, He certainly can take care of me. Into Jesus' hands I can safely commit my spirit!"

If you remember the Creator your perspective on life is changed. Do you have a tough time enjoying life? Today in prayer give thanks that the Creator of the universe holds your life in His hand.

"May you live all the days of your life."—Jonathan Swift

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**Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things.**



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KJV Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, And in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.

NET Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes, but know that God will judge your motives and actions.

BGT Ecclesiastes 11:9 εφρα νου νεαν σκε ν νε τητ σου κα γαθυ ν τω σε καρδ α σου ν μ ραις νε τητ ς σου κα περιπ τει ν δο ς καρδ ας σου κα ν ρ σει φθαλμ ν σου κα γν θι τι π π σι το τοις ξει σε θε ς ν κρ σει

LXE Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart blameless, but not in the sight of thine eyes: yet know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement.

CSB Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth. And walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all of these things God will bring you to judgment.

ESV Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

NIV Ecclesiastes 11:9 Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment.

NLT Ecclesiastes 11:9 Young people, it's wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do.

YLT Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy childhood, And let thy heart gladden thee in days of thy youth, And walk in the ways of thy heart, And in the sight of thine eyes, And know thou that for all these, Doth God bring thee into judgment.

NJB Ecclesiastes 11:9 Young man, enjoy yourself while you are young, make the most of the days of your youth, follow the prompting and desire of heart and eye, but remember, God will call you to account for everything.

NRS Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the inclination of your heart and the desire of your eyes, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

RSV Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

NAB Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, while you are young and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart, the vision of your eyes; Yet understand that as regards all this God will bring you to judgment.

GWN Ecclesiastes 11:9 You young people should enjoy yourselves while you're young. You should let your hearts make you happy when you're young. Follow wherever your heart leads you and whatever your eyes see. But realize that God will make you give an account for all these things when he judges everyone.

BBE Ecclesiastes 11:9 Have joy, O young man, while you are young; and let your heart be glad in the days of your strength, and go in the ways of your heart, and in the desire of your eyes; but be certain that for all these things God will be your judge.

- **Rejoice:** 1Ki 18:27 22:15 Lu 15:12,13
- **during your childhood:** Ec 12:1 1Ki 18:12 La 3:27

- **follow:** Nu 15:30 22:32 De 29:19 Job 31:7 Ps 81:12 Jer 7:24 23:17 Jer 44:16,17 Ac 14:16 Eph 2:2,3 1Pe 4:3,4
- **eyes:** Ec 2:10 Ge 3:6 6:2 Jos 7:21 2Sa 11:2-4 Mt 5:28 1Jn 2:15,16
- **know:** Ec 3:17 12:14 Ps 50:4-6 Ac 17:30,31 24:25 Ro 2:5-11 14:10 1Co 4:5 2Co 5:10 2Pe 3:7 Heb 9:27 Rev 20:12-15

## ENJOY YOUR YOUNGER DAYS REMEMBERING YOU ARE ACCOUNTABLE

**Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood** Rejoice, live with delight, but never forget the accountability to God. It is not sinful to rejoice in the strength and sweetness of your young years. Let your inner life be joyful—emotional, spiritual, and personal delight in living.

**Keith Krell** Solomon commands young men and women to rejoice during their childhood and teenage years. Now this doesn't mean party-hearty and sow your wild oats. This advice refers to the natural human instincts of young people: be with friends, enjoy life at social events, see the world, find one's vocation, and desire a family and children. Enjoy your life. Don't put tremendous pressure upon yourself when making significant decisions. Remember the words of Ps 37:4: "**Delight** yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart." If you are delighting yourself in the Lord, His desires will naturally become your desires. This means you don't have to find God's will, you just need to find God. Or, as Augustine and Luther have said, "**Love God and do whatever you please.**" Christians ought to have more fun than anyone, but we should be pure and blameless before our on-looking world. The reason for this is that we are responsible for our acts (cf. 12:14).<sup>467</sup> God will judge us for what we do even in our youth. The Irish playwright, George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), once said, "**Youth is such a wonderful thing. It's a shame to waste it on young people.**" Shaw was right. Young people are typically either driven to a fault or lazy to a fault. It is rare to find a balance in children and teens. Consequently, it is easy for young people to squander their youth and fail to rejoice during their formative years....One of the most difficult issues in life is contentment. Young people, enjoy your life. I command you, the Bible commands you, "**REJOICE!**" Rejoice now while you can.

**And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes.** Solomon isn't mocking desire—he says, pursue your passions, your vision, your calling—**YET**...don't forget you will be accountable!

**ESV Study Bible** ([Borrow](#)) - Proper enjoyment of life is possible only within the moral boundaries established by God, Who will evaluate all human deeds according to his righteous judgment (cf. 12:13-14).

This is the final enjoyment (or, carpe diem) passage in Ecclesiastes. As Fredericks notes, "This is a more qualified refrain, however, buffered by the realities of God's judicial sovereignty and the utter brevity of each stage of life (Ecclesiastes," in Ecclesiastes & The Song of Songs)

**William Barrick - Again, Rejoice** (Eccl 11:9–10) Just as the Apostle Paul repeats the command to rejoice ("Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice," Phil 4:4), so King Solomon repeats the identical command (Eccl 11:8, 9). However, the second time he addresses the command specifically to the young man. Youth passes quickly, so its opportunities for enjoying life will be few. The reader of Ecclesiastes should note that Solomon does not instruct young people to rejoice that they are young, but while they are young. (Borrow [Leupold - Ecclesiastes](#)) He tells the young to put in place the theological foundation for living as early as possible. (See [Bartholomew Ecclesiastes](#)) When the youth becomes a man, he enters yet another brief season of life. During his manhood, he needs to allow his heart to enjoy life's pleasantness. "Like a bubble the days of our 'youth' soon burst, so we have to clutch them while we can." (Borrow [Hubbard, Ecclesiastes](#)) To many readers, Solomon's instruction ("follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes") sounds hedonistic and reckless. Those who interpret the text in this fashion contrast it with Numbers 15:39. Numbers speaks of the way that the tassels with a blue cord on the fringes of the Israelites' garments will remind them to obey the Lord's commandments rather than their own lusts. Ignoring the context of one or both passages provides the only means by which the two can be confused or made to be contradictory. Due to the very consistent and careful conclusions Solomon reaches throughout the book (and especially in its final chapter), Longman's characterization of the writer as "a confused, skeptical wise man who vacillates between the traditional doctrine in which he was trained and the harsh realities of life" (See [The Book of Ecclesiastes - Page 261](#)) seems unnecessary and overly skeptical itself.

**Yet** (term of contrast - the "asterisk" after the call to "rejoice"...rejoice but just don't rejoice in sin!) **know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things** - Solomon reminds us that we will be judged for our actions. You are free to enjoy life, but not free from God's oversight. What you do matters eternally—God will weigh your choices.

This is not a contradiction but is complete wisdom: Legalism says: "Don't enjoy life." Hedonism says: "Live without consequences." Biblical wisdom says: "Enjoy life deeply, but live it in light of eternity." Youth often feels untouchable, invincible, and independent.

*One must seek joy within the  
boundaries of God's moral standards.*

**NET NOTE** - Heb “and know that concerning all these God will bring you into judgment.” The point is not that following one’s impulses and desires is inherently bad and will bring condemnation from God. Rather the point seems to be: As you follow your impulses and desires, realize that all you think and do will eventually be evaluated by God. So one must seek joy within the boundaries of God’s moral standards.

**William Barrick** - Solomon does not leave this instruction without qualification. In a context where **“you do not know”** occurs four times (Eccl 11:2, 5, 6), he now says in a positive way, **“Yet know”** (Eccl 11: 9c). He reminds the young man that he must keep in mind that God will judge him for all that does not meet divine approval (cp. Eccl 9:7). The Hebrew employs a definite article on both **“God”** and **“judgment”** (“the God will bring you into the judgment”). (See the concept of judgment in Eccl 3:17; 8:12–13, 12:14.) Such grammar might indicate that Solomon has a single, specific judgment in mind. (Borrow [Eaton, Ecclesiastes, 145](#)) In other words, a reality exists beyond this life and that reality includes divine retribution. (Krüger, Qoheleth, 197, denies any such meaning, opting to identify the judgment with the transitoriness of mankind’s existence.) Hebrews 9:27 proclaims the same basic theological truth: “it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.” Priority, therefore must be given to God and to His will as revealed in His Word. No one should ever make their own desires the priority. Solomon encourages innocent, God-approved enjoyment of life’s gifts. Brown compares Ecclesiastes 11:9 with texts like Proverbs 2:11–14 and concludes that “the old sage, much like a typical grandparent, provides the necessary balance to the harsh admonitions of the parental voice in Proverbs. The combined effect is the formative education of youth.” (Borrow [Brown, Ecclesiastes, 106](#))

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**Spurgeon** - Solomon does, as it were, dare the young man to seek his own pleasure and throw the reins upon the neck of his passions, but he warns him of the price to be paid, that he may see that the game will not be worth the candle. It can never be worth while to sin, if it be in deed true that every sin will meet with punishment.)

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#### **TODAY IN THE WORD Ecclesiastes 11:9**

After the civil war in seventeenth-century England had ended and Oliver Cromwell was leading the nation, he ordered all troops in the British army to carry a Bible.

One young soldier bristled. He had joined the army for good times, not to be a “Bible-toter.” But he submitted to the order and stuffed the Bible in his pocket. Later, after a battle, he discovered that the Book had stopped a bullet aimed at him. The bullet had penetrated to Ecclesiastes 11:9, a warning of God’s judgment on youth. The message was too plain for the young soldier to miss, and he put his faith in Christ.

We can’t guarantee that if you practice biblical submission to authority you will be spared from all of life’s “bullets.” But we can promise you, on the authority of Scripture, that obedience to this “one another” command will bring blessing. God always honors obedience.

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#### **A Soldier’s Bible**

“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youths and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”—Eccles. 11:9

It was customary in Cromwell’s time for his soldiers to carry each a Bible in his pocket; among others, a profligate young man, who was ordered out to attack some fortress. During the engagement a bullet had perforated his Bible, and gone so far as to rest opposite the above text. These words, so appropriate to his case, powerfully affected his mind, and proved, by the blessing of God, the means of his conversion. He used to observe, that the Bible had been the happy means of saving both his soul and his body.

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#### **A Man in India (Ecclesiastes 11:9)**

The late Rev. W. Ward, of India, once preached from Ecclesiastes 11:9—“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth ... ” A notorious drunkard became, under this sermon, very seriously convinced of the importance of salvation; and, with his wife, a short time afterwards made a profession of faith. Previous to this, his employer had used every means he could devise to persuade him to become sober, but in vain. After this change, his employer wished to command him not to attend church, but he replied, “You know, sir, what a drunkard I have been, and how often you have urged me in vain to abandon alcohol; yet by going once to the chapel, I was constrained to do that which none of your reprimands were able to effect: therefore I wish to go again.”

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#### **TODAY IN THE WORD**

Let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. - Ecclesiastes 11:9

Charles Spurgeon, the great British preacher who was called to a pastorate in London in 1854 at the tender age of twenty, said of youth, 'Every age has its temptations. The young will learn that there are peculiar snares for little ones. Christ knew these. It was no small temptation at 12 years of age, to sit among the teachers, hearing them and answering their questions. It would have turned the head of most boys, yet Jesus went back to Nazareth and was subject to His parents.'

Youth, which in the Bible refers to anyone up to age forty, is a great season of faith. It's well known that more than eighty percent of all conversions occur by the age of eighteen. A person in his or her youthful years, when energy and commitment are usually abundant, can make a tremendous impact for Christ.

But as Spurgeon said, youth has its 'peculiar snares.' One of the most common is a tendency toward pride and self-sufficiency a feeling of invincibility that can lead young people to think they can do no wrong, or that the rules of life don't apply to them.

Today's verses offer a powerful, one-word antidote to that kind of thinking: God! Wonderful possibilities await the young with all of their energy and ideas, but they can't afford to live as if God didn't have anything to say about their lives. Actually, none of us can afford to live that way.

Yesterday we mentioned the fact that Solomon didn't have any problem telling young people to enjoy the blessings of life God had for them. This king who had started out so wisely in his own youth just didn't want young people to forget that every person is accountable to God.

This is interesting advice, coming from someone who had started his career on the throne of Israel as a young man wearing the title of 'the wisest person who ever lived.' Solomon fell on bitter times in his later years, mainly because he didn't follow the advice he offers here.

But those who are careful to remember God, keeping Him in the forefront of their thinking when they are young, will avoid the bitterness and disappointment of a life lived in His displeasure.

One reason the gospel is good news is that even if you're past your youth, it's not too late to begin your season of faith.

Maybe you have never come to Christ or you're not sure where you stand with Him. You can settle the issue today. Admit that you are a sinner (Rom. 3:23) deserving of God's eternal judgment (Rom. 6:23). Recognize that Christ died for your sins on the cross (Rom. 5:8), and believe in Him for your forgiveness and salvation (Rom. 10:9-10). And if you know the Lord, share this good news with someone else today, if possible.

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**Ray Pritchard** - [Something New Under the Sun](#) - GOD'S WORD TO PARTY ANIMALS Ecclesiastes 11:9-10

Sheila (not her real name) became a widow several years ago. She takes pride in her appearance and has a very pleasant personality. Even a casual observer would understand that she likes and appreciates the finer things of life. The little things give it away—her clothes, the way she carries herself, her conversation, the car she drives.

In the years since her husband's death she has never seriously dated anyone. No interest, not the right kind of men, plenty of things to keep her busy, lots of friends to spend time with. "What would I want with another man in my life?" she says, not meaning to ask a question, really, but simply stating a fact.

Not long ago she went to a wedding where some old family friends introduced her to a man from out of town. He was charming, witty, and great fun.

The next day they, along with two other couples, went for a boat ride on the river. They laughed, talked, ate fried chicken, and generally had a ball. Afterwards, it was off to a nice restaurant at the marina.

Finally, the evening was almost over. One of the couples loaned the new man their car so he could take Sheila home. When they arrived at her house, they went inside, talked a bit, and then the man asked a question.

"Can you get pregnant?" The lady was shocked but recovered in time to say no. His next question got right to the point, "Do you mind if I sleep here tonight?" This time her answer was quick, almost, she told me later, in the same tone as she speaks to her children, "Oh no, I couldn't do that." He left and has not called her since.

When telling me the story later, Sheila commented, "I could never do what he was asking. I would feel guilty the rest of my life."

There are two quick morals to this little tale. First, no one ever outgrows temptation; that Sheila was an older woman did not matter. Temptation may come in different forms, but come it will. If ever you let down your guard, in that moment Satan will find your

weakness and trap you. Second, the best way to defeat temptation is to refuse to take the tiniest step in a wrong direction. Let others stutter and stammer and flirt with danger. Remember the two-letter word that starts with n and ends with o. It can get you out of trouble and save you from enormous heartache. When temptation comes knocking at your door, just say no.

Father, help me to make wise choices today so that a guilty conscience will not keep me awake tonight. Amen.

## SHINING THE LIGHT

- To what extent does the pursuit of pleasure characterize life in our society? Examples, please!
- If being a party animal doesn't really satisfy, why do so many people keep looking there? What happens when we make personal pleasure the ultimate goal of life?

MORE LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD Read Psalm 33:1-3; 1 Corinthians 10:31; and Titus 2:11-14.

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**"Dance Before the Judge"** Solomon invites you to run, laugh, explore, build, dream. But he also whispers: "God is watching—not to ruin your joy, but to anchor it in meaning." When joy is grounded in God's design, it becomes: Satisfying, Lasting, Worthy of His smile (Col 1:10).

- Youth is a time for rejoicing—don't waste it.
  - Passion and pleasure are gifts—but must be guided by truth.
  - God cares deeply how you live—even when young.
  - Joy and judgment are not opposites—they go together.
  - The best youth is lived with purpose and eternal awareness.
  - Make decisions today that you won't regret when you stand before God.
  - Use your strength and creativity now to glorify your Creator.
  - Teach young people to see accountability as freedom, not fear.
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**Norman Geisler - ECCLESIASTES 11:9—Should a young man follow his own way or God's way? - [When Critics Ask](#)**

**PROBLEM:** In this text, Solomon encourages a young person to "walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes." But this flies in the face of other Scriptures that urge them to seek not after "your own heart and your own eyes" (Num. 15:39).

**SOLUTION:** There are several ways to understand this Ecclesiastes passage that do not conflict with other Scriptures.

First, some have suggested that it is an example of irony, meaning, therefore, they were not to go their own way but God's. Since irony is a perfectly legitimate human literary form that the Holy Spirit may use (see Introduction), this is entirely possible.

Second, even taken literally, the advice is not without qualification, since Solomon adds quickly, "But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Therefore ... put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity" (Ecc. 11:9–10). In this sense, Solomon's advice would be, enjoy yourself. Do what your heart desires, but at the same time bear in mind that you are accountable to God, "who gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17).

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## George Muller - Address to Young Men

Delivered in Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol, on Sunday, October 12th, 1873.

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity."—Eccles. 11:9, 10

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."—Eccles. 12:1

I HAVE been requested to preach, this evening more particularly to young men,—to the dear young men; and as I myself have been a young man, and know what it is to be a young man out of Christ, and a young man in Christ, a believer in the Lord Jesus, I cheerfully complied with the request. I myself lived to be twenty years of age and a few weeks before I was converted, and therefore I know experimentally what it is to be a young man out of Christ; especially when it is considered that, though I was only twenty years of age, I had the experience of one who was thirty or thirty-five years old; for I had been, from ten years and a half, so to speak, my own master, and had seen much, very much, of life by the time that I was twenty. Yet, as I was only a young man of

twenty when converted, I know experimentally what it is to be a young man as a believer in the Lord Jesus, and gladly, therefore, do I comply with the request to preach to my dear young friends,—the dear young men. But while the subject which we lay before you this evening is of importance to young men, it is also of importance to all of us,—to young men and young women, to middle-aged men and to middle-aged women, to elder men and to elder women; for the truth as it is in Jesus must always be of importance to every human being. The portion which I have read is one which more especially, by the Holy Ghost, is addressed to young men; and of all the portions in the Divine Testimony for the occasion, I know none more suitable than the one which I have been reading.

We will now read again, little by little, this portion, and meditate upon it, as God may help us: “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.” The first thing we have especially to keep before us regarding this statement is not as if the Holy Ghost were encouraging people, whether young men or young women or any human beings, to live according to their own likings. We have not for a moment to suppose this. The statement is precisely of the same character as we find at the very close of the blessed book of God, in the last chapter of the book of Revelation, in the eleventh verse, where we read: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. (12 v.) And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” These two verses are to be taken in connection, just as the first part of this ninth verse in the eleventh chapter of Ecclesiastes is to be taken in connection with the latter part of the selfsame verse. The Holy Ghost is stating here what will be seen with regard to young men—the natural liking of the natural heart of young men, that is, to please themselves; to go their own way; to gratify themselves; to walk according to the sight of their own eyes. It is not stated in the way of encouragement by the Holy Ghost that they should do so. Far less is it sanctioned by the Holy Ghost, as if there were no harm in all this. The fact is simply referred to, as it is among men,—What is the common course among men, and what is the natural tendency of youth. It was the same with all of us; the same, not only with young men and young women, but the same with middle-aged men and middle-aged women, with elder men and elder women. We like to go our own way, to please ourselves, and gratify ourselves, and act according to the biddings of nature. This is the statement of the Holy Ghost, just as we find it in the last chapter of the book of Revelation, but with this solemn, weighty, momentous addition: “Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me,” and here the Holy Ghost adds, “For all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”

“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.” Now, the very reverse of all this the Holy Ghost would tell them should be the case.

In the first place, “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth.” Are we to rejoice in our youth? The statement of the Holy Ghost again and again and again is, “Rejoice in the Lord.” Our strength is, to be happy in the Lord. This we are enjoined, this is the will of the Lord concerning us, to rejoice in the Lord, and not to rejoice in youth.

Further, “Let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth.” Our own hearts cheer us? The consolations of the blessed gospel are to cheer us, and not our own hearts. He that would trust in his own heart, and he that would look into his own heart, to find there a fountain of happiness, is a fool; and therefore that cannot possibly be the meaning. But it is simply the statement of the Holy Ghost how it is among men, what is the tendency among men, and how it is found to be among men. So, then, it does not at all mean that we should cheer ourselves, from the fact that we are young men.

“And walk in the ways of thine heart.” Verily, is it this that is enjoined? Can it be so? The walking in the ways of our own heart would be the ways of the transgressors. We are naturally far from God; we naturally do things which are hateful to God, which are anything but pleasing to Him. What is enjoined to the human being is, to walk in the ways of the Lord; and therefore it cannot possibly mean here that it is pleasing to God, and according to the mind of God; but it is simply stated what is the tendency of youth—to walk in their own ways, not liking to be directed by God’s orders, by God’s ways.

And then further, “In the sight of thine eyes.” This we like naturally, but that which is inculcated in the Holy Scripture is this,—to walk in the sight of God, to walk according to the mind of God, to walk in the light of God’s countenance, so to walk as that we do not go out of the sight of God. This is the will of the Lord respecting us. And, therefore, in the first place, this is to be settled in our own hearts, that here is the statement of the Holy Ghost, not by way of commendation, the very reverse, only the simple statement of the Holy Ghost as to what is common among men, what is the result of our fallen state, as long as we are not in Christ we rejoice in things which are according to nature, instead of rejoicing in things which are according to the mind of God. But it is the latter, and the latter only, which brings real, true joy, peace, and happiness to the human being; and the former never did, never will, never can. It is not contained in that which this world affords, not even in natural relationship, nor in the state of man as to his varied progress, it is not possible that, in any of these things, real joy, real happiness can be found; but only in communion with God, in oneness with God, in having done away, by the grace of God, the distance from God, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, can we find peace and happiness.

Now, that this is not a supposition of mine, but that it is evidently the mind of God, we at once find from the second part of the verse, where this is stated: “For all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” If it were commended by the Holy Ghost that a young man should rejoice in the fact that he is a youth, that he is young; if it were commended by the Holy Ghost that he should let his

heart cheer him in the days of his youth; if it were commended by the Holy Ghost that he should walk in the ways of his own heart, and in the sight of his own eyes, then why this addition? Why this contrast? A plain proof that it is the very reverse from what the Holy Ghost means us to do; for, as I said before, He would have us to rejoice in the Lord. He would have us to be cheered by the consolations of the gospel, He would have us to walk in the ways of God, He would have us to walk in the light of the countenance of God. This is according to the mind of God, and not the other. If, however, young men are determined to go their own way, then let them hear the word of the Lord: "But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

What then, if we are brought into judgment? If all our wrong doings are brought before God, and sentence passed according to our actions; if all our words, the tens upon tens of thousands, and the hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of words which we utter, from the moment that we are brought into the world to the moment that we are taken out of the world; and if all the thoughts and desires, the inclinations and purposes, which have been found in our hearts are tested by the scrutinizing eye of God, and weighed in His balance, what will be the end of this? What can be the end of this but to hear that awful sentence, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh! what would befall us if once we are to be dealt with according to our deeds, our words, our thoughts? We should be undone, and undone for eternity; and, therefore, the solemn and momentous point with regard to this latter part of the verse is not only that it says to us that the meaning, which is apparently the meaning of the first part of the verse, cannot possibly be the meaning; but that also, by this latter part of the verse we are stirred up to the utmost, and entreated, and besought by God to the utmost (if I may use the words), with all earnestness, with all diligence, with all haste, to close with Christ, to lay hold on the offers of the gospel, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls, in order that we may not have to stand at the judgment-bar of the Lord Jesus Christ, and hear that awful sentence to which I have referred. There is no possibility of escaping punishment and hell, but by believing the gospel. There is no possibility of having eternal joy and happiness, but through faith in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ; and if there had been a possibility of any human being being saved in any other way, God would not have delivered up the choicest, the most precious of all gifts He had to give,—even His only-begotten Son. But when He saw that we were lost and undone, His heart being full of yearning love, His heart full of compassion to the lost and ruined and guilty, He, in the riches of His grace, gave for them the choicest gift He had to give,—His only-begotten Son, and bruised Him and wounded Him and laid on Him the punishment of us all; and that blessed One endured, in our room, all the punishment which was due to those who put their trust in Him.

Now the great point before we pass on is this: First of all, I ask my dear young friends,—the dear young men to whom I am speaking more particularly this evening,—how is it with you? Have you closed with Christ or not? Have you accepted the offers of the gospel or not? Are you in Christ or out of Christ? I feel for you; I can well enter into your state. I was out of Christ for many a long year, and oh! the thousands of times that I have wished that I had known the Lord much younger than I did. There was, however, this difference between me and you; I never heard the gospel till I was twenty years and five or six weeks old; I never met with a Christian till I was twenty years and five or six weeks old. I never understood about the atoning death of the Lord Jesus till then. You, at least almost all of you, if not every one of you, have heard the gospel again and again; some of you, it may be, times without number. You have been entreated and besought, most of you, if not all of you, many times to believe the gospel; therefore see the difference. Now, be besought and entreated at last; oh! let me beseech and entreat you to give, without delay, your heart to the Lord. And if you want another testimony, though I dare say you have had testimony upon testimony before, I tell you that it is altogether a mistake when persons suppose that they will never have a happy hour if, while young, they believe the gospel,—that is a most grievous mistake; it is the reverse. It is just this very reception of the Lord Jesus Christ which gives real joy, real happiness, real gladness of heart. The other is a, more fancy, a dream-like joy; there is no reality in it; it brings nothing but an aching heart afterwards, whatever the apparent joy for the time may be.

I know from my own experience what it is with, all one's might to seek to enjoy the world, for I did it to the utmost, and I had opportunity above many to do it; and it was nothing but vanity and misery and wretchedness that it brought.

Then, again, on the other hand, I know what it is, as a young man, to be a Christian; for, as I told you, I was about twenty years and five or six weeks old when I was brought to the knowledge of the Lord; and then, having found the Lord, I was happy, and before the very first evening had closed, in which I was brought to the knowledge of the Lord, I said to my former companions in travelling, "What are all our joys and all our pleasures on the journey to Switzerland in comparison with this evening. That was the very beginning of my divine life; and now forty-eight years have passed, and I bear testimony, to the praise and honour and glory of God, that I have never been tired of Christ; but the longer I walk on in the ways of God, the more I find how true the Word of the Lord is, that the paths of wisdom are paths of pleasantness and peace; that real joy, real happiness, real blessing, real peace, real comfort, reality, are to be had by faith in the Lord Jesus. Only I make this addition, You must be an out and out Christian; you cannot hold with one hand the world, and with the other Christ. You would otherwise be a wretched being; and if there are any here present who want the world and Christ, let them keep the world, for they cannot have both. You can have nothing but perdition if you cleave to the world, because it is under condemnation, and you will be condemned with the world if you will not let the world go; but if you are minded to let the world go, and lay hold on Christ, and be an out and out disciple of the Lord Jesus, I tell you this, as an honest man, you will be a happy man. Oh! how happy, how unspeakably happy, how blessed your portion as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Oh! it is a blessed thing to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, dear young men, be no longer believing the lie of the devil; and to you young women I say the same; and to you elder men and women I say the same; to every one here present, and even to the little boys and girls here present, I say the same; if ever there comes a whisper to your mind from the devil, that all joy and happiness would be gone if you were to become a Christian,—it is the very reverse. Real joy, real happiness, real blessedness, only begin with the day that we obtain spiritual life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; for then comes the time when our sins are forgiven; then comes the time when we become the children of God through this faith in the Lord Jesus; then comes the time when we become the heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; then comes the time, and only then, that you can lie down, in peace at night, knowing that, if it were the last time, and you should not awaken any more in this world, you would not lift up your eyes in torment, but in heaven. I challenge any dear young man here present, who will show to me any way that makes so happy as this,—to know that if this were the last night, to be awaking in heaven, and not in torment. Oh, what is not this worth! Oh, how blessed is this one single thing! What can all the world give in comparison with this one single thing,—to know that, if this were our last night, heaven would be our portion, and not the place of torment? Is it not worth something? You speak about the happiness at the billiard table: I know it; and misery it is, and nothing else. You speak about the enjoyment of the theatre: I know it, above many of you, if not all of you; I was there times without number, and was passionately fond of the theatre; and what then? Wretchedness and misery were the result. You speak about the ball-room: there was I;—there was I, and at two or three o'clock in the morning left the ball-room with a disordered stomach.

I know all this,—the wretchedness and misery which it gives, instead of real enjoyment and real happiness. You speak about the pleasures of reading: I know them too; for when I was only thirteen years old I had my books by the month out of the library, and I devoured them with all eagerness—volume after volume. And you speak about learning, and the enjoyment in this: I was at school from the time that I was five years old, to the time that I was nineteen and a half, when I went to the university with honourable testimonials, and was there for four years; and then studying was not over, for when I came to England I went on with Hebrew, Chaldee, etc. And what did I find? That learning in itself gives no happiness,—no real, true happiness. Christ, and Christ alone, gives real, true happiness. I know seven languages; and with all this I should have gone to hell, if it had not been that I know Christ, Christ, Christ. Oh, the blessedness of being a disciple of the Lord Jesus! Oh! my dear young friends, be you male or female, or little children, let me tell you of the blessedness, the blessedness, THE BLESSEDNESS, of being a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Only be an out and out Christian, It is this half-hearted mind which makes men to be no really happy beings. You cannot be happy if you want to hold the world with one hand and Christ with the other; but the moment you come to the determination that you will not halt between two opinions, and that you will be an out and out Christian, you will be happy. I know the difficulty of this; for, when I was converted, I was almost the only believer out of 1260 young men who were students at the university; and they knew me, that I had been in the fencing saloon to learn fencing, in order that I might be able to fight a duel if any one insulted me. They knew me: "There is the Mystic," as I was called; and they pointed at me with fingers. But those sneers lasted a few days or a few weeks at the most; and, by the grace of God, I stood at the side of Christ with two or three students out of the 1260, and the result was, a happy man I was. And the result has been, a happy man I have been. But it must be an out and out thing. And therefore this I would say affectionately to those who are yet out of Christ,—Only be upright and honest. You who are believers in the Lord Jesus, let me affectionately say this,—Let it be an out and out standing at the side of Christ with you. Be not half-hearted. The devil will seek, if he cannot altogether bring you back to him, at least in some degree to bring you back into the world. Now let me affectionately beseech and entreat you to let it be an out and out Christianity, and then the result will be this,—you will be an out and out happy man. Thus it should be with all the disciples of the Lord Jesus. It would pain me to the almost if people could live with me a month in the house and not bear this testimony,—that Mr. Müller is "a happy man" And a happy man I desire to be; and a happy man I am. It is Christ who makes me happy; for there is something unspeakably blessed in this,—that the older one gets, the nearer the end of the journey, the brighter the blessedness of the prospect; with heaven as one's home, that one is getting nearer and nearer to the gates. Oh! how blessed to be in Christ. And this blessedness I desire for all my beloved dear young friends to whom I am more specially speaking this evening. It is a blessed thing to be a believer in the Lord Jesus.

"But know, thou, that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity." If we act according to the statement of the first part of the ninth verse, the result will be this,—sorrow to the heart and evil to the flesh. I would mention here, by the way, that "flesh" is to be here understood as "the body." It does not mean the old and corrupt nature, it means the body. Now if we walk according to the ways of our own heart, according to the sight of our own eyes, it is certain, that there will come, sooner or later, more or less sorrow to the heart, and that there will come evil, even to the body, as the certain result.

The will of God is, that young men should remove sorrow from their heart, and put away evil from their body; but, if young men walk according to their natural inclinations, it will bring, it must bring sorrow,—oh! how much sorrow. Let any dear young men just follow out their own desires: sorrow upon sorrow it will bring; sorrow upon sorrow it will bring, not only as to the heart, but also as to the body, in most instances; yet not only to the body, evil, but oftentimes premature death. Oh! how often is it seen that not only disease

of the body, but even a premature death comes from walking according to the natural inclination and the carnal mind.

So, then, if you wish to put sorrow from your heart, if you wish to put evil from the body, the way is to walk according to the mind of the Lord, which begins, in the first place, by the reception of the gospel, by receiving Christ, and then, afterwards, by continuing in Christ. Abide in Christ, seek to please the Lord, and to act according to the mind of the Lord, It is by this, and by this only, that sorrow can be kept from the heart, and that evil can be kept from the body. Oh how deeply important it is to attend to these things! And we see it is just the graciousness of the heart of God which brings before us this boon; because the Lord wills not the death of the sinner, but that he should turn from his evil ways and live. This is not all. If young men are believers, God desires them to be happy believers,—truly happy. This, however, cannot be, except they abide in Christ. This is the only way whereby sorrow can be removed from the heart, and whereby evil can be kept from the body. Awful diseases many dear young men bring on themselves, and even premature death, because they do not attend to these things.

And then it is added, in the way of caution, “For childhood and youth are vanity.” The word “youth” in Hebrew means “the beginning of the day,” “the breaking of the day”, and therefore the figure is carried out here. “Childhood and the morning of life are vanity.” Vanity here means, “of a transient character,—it passes—it does not last long—it goes away.”

Now this is also a point to be kept before us. It is deeply important, in the first place, with regard to this life, that youth is of a transient character, it passes away. Therefore, in childhood and in youth, the best use is to be made of time, talents, strength. The cultivation of the mind is deeply important. From what I have been saying, you must not for a moment suppose that I mean that it is not worth anything at all that one knows this or the other thing, or that the mind be well cultivated; I mean no such thing to be understood by what I am saying. I simply mean that these things are nothing in comparison with the choicest and the chiefest of all the good that we can have,—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is important for young men to make good use of their time, even with regard to this life; because childhood and youth are of a transient character, they pass away; and therefore the mind should be cultivated.

Things that are profitable for this life are to be learned,—and to be learned, among other reasons, that hereafter they may be useful even in the cause of Christ. I have just been referring to languages. When I learned French, for instance, and other languages, I had no thought that they would ever be useful, in the service of Christ; but afterwards it pleased God so to order it in His providence that I had sometimes six missionaries for five and six months at a time in my house, and there were three different languages spoken at my dinner-table,—German, French, and English. Now the very fact of knowing these languages helped me in the cause of Christ. I am now continuing my correspondence in three different languages,—French, German, and English. These, in the cause of Christ, have been very useful. Not that I mean to lay stress on these things, as if they were of such moment that there would be no happiness without them. Not this; for the great point, after all, remains,—to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, and to walk in the ways of God. But, if we have the opportunity, let us make good use of the opportunity. We must not despise the opportunities, nor put them aside, but make good use of them; because youth passes away, is of a transient character, does not last, and therefore the time is to be usefully employed in the cultivation of the mind and in becoming acquainted with the affairs of this life, all of which may afterwards be used, not only with regard to this life, but in the service of the Lord, and for the glory of God.

But though it is important with regard to the affairs of life and the things connected with this life, to do so, it is of infinitely more importance with regard to eternal matters, because childhood and youth are not lasting, are of a transient character; therefore the momentous point is, that, while yet young, we should give our hearts to the Lord. Not to put it off to this time or that time. Suppose that time never came? And even if the time came, the heart naturally gets harder and harder, and therefore, a loss is sustained by putting it off. But the cares of this life come after awhile, and then the less inclination to give the heart to the Lord. Therefore, the great object, both as to this life, and especially with regard to the world to come, should be to make the best use of childhood and youth, which are passing away.

Before passing on to the last verse of our subject, I pause, and I ask the question, “How many have given the heart to the Lord?” I see a number of dear young persons before me, both male and female. How many have given the heart to the Lord? I see also a few very young persons—children; have they given the heart to the Lord? I do not want you to answer the question to me; but I do beseech and entreat you, in sincerity, in uprightness, with godly earnestness, to answer the question, to God Himself, who, by His Spirit, puts the question to your heart: “Art thou Mine, or art thou for the devil? Art thou for Christ, or art thou for the world?” How can there be a halting between two opinions?

Youth and childhood are of a transient character; you put it off, and you think there is time enough. How do you know there is time? What if, when you get home this evening, you are laid low? What if, in the night, the cholera comes upon you, or if some other disease should befall you and hurry you away? What then?—what then?—what then? All is too late.

Oh! be besought and entreated, dear young friends. Be assured of this, that the more you hear of the gospel, and the more you reject the invitations of the gospel, the harder your heart becomes; the further you get away from Christ; the more you are getting into the ways of the devil; the more you love the world. Oh! be besought and entreated.

The last verse: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

What is the import of this? In the first place, I judge what the Holy Ghost would bring before the human beings is this: That the human beings—especially the young part of the human beings—should keep it before them solemnly, deeply, gravely, earnestly, that they have a Creator. Now all in this country know that they are created. But the mere superficial knowledge is not enough; it is of little significance in comparison with the reality. What the Holy Ghost would have us to keep before us is that we are creatures, and that we have a Creator.

The verse we have before us implies various points. In the first place, it implies this: "That the creature is subject to the Creator." This we cannot sufficiently keep before our hearts. It implies further: "The creature is made for the honour and glory of the Creator." We can never have this sufficiently before our eyes. It implies further: That because the creature is made for, the honour and glory of the Creator, therefore the creature should live so that the honour of the Creator would be upheld. In what way can the human creature, above all things, honour the Creator? In the first place, by accepting the choicest of all His gifts, the Lord Jesus Christ; and whosoever has not accepted Christ never honoured the Creator.

You think this is a hard saying;—it may be. I repeat it solemnly,—Every one here present, who has not accepted Christ, whether fifteen years old, or twenty years, or twenty-five years old, never once, in his whole life, honoured the Creator. There is no such thing as that we honour the Creator, whilst the choicest gift, the most precious gift, this unspeakable gift, which cost Him so much,—His only begotten Son,—is not accepted. Go home in this belief, that you are fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years old, and never once, for one single minute in your whole life, honoured God, because you have not accepted Christ.

This is no hasty statement. It is my deliberate conviction. As a man of God I give it as my deliberate conviction. All you have done—all you have said, never can, never has, tended to the honour of God as long as you have not received the gospel. Therefore the first thing, if you would honour God the Creator, if you would realize what is meant by "remembering" Him, you must close with Christ; you must accept the gospel; you must pass sentence upon yourself as a ruined, guilty, lost sinner, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of your soul. You must put your whole trust, and only trust, in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This, and this only, God would consider as remembering Him.

Then, if you have received the gospel, further abide in Christ. Seek to please Jehovah Jesus, who spake the word; everything that is in existence was brought into existence by Him, and He is the builder of the universe. Abide in Him; seek to please Him; seek to act according to His mind. That He considers as the choicest, most precious way of remembering your Creator.

Lastly: "While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." This is the very reverse from what a young man naturally says: "I am very young; there is time enough; when I am old I will attend to these things." The very reverse from what God says: "Before the evil days come," that is the will of the Lord. When men get advanced in life, then comes the danger of not attending to these things: because of the heart having been so much hardened, because the cares of this life shut out Christ, because of numberless troubles, a long family, a number of children to be settled in life; therefore this, the most momentous of all matters, is not to be put off. Oh! how wise,—how infinitely wise, is God. But the devil, you see, is always against God; he is always placing things in the very opposite light. God says, "Before these days come." Nature says, "I will put it off till I am an old man, or till I am an old woman." The devil whispers, "There is time enough when you get to your death-bed." How do you know that you will ever get to your death-bed? The next time you travel—rush! and in an instant you are carried away in a railway accident; the next time you ride in a carriage, off the horse goes, and in an instant you are thrown out, and in eternity; the next time you go out, a tile falls on your head from the roof, and in an instant you are in eternity. Oh! how do you know that you will live one single day more? How utterly fallacious it is to put it off to old age, to this or that time! The present moment, and the present moment only, is the time, and therefore the present moment alone is ours; we cannot boast of time.

Once more, beloved young friends, male or female, beloved older men and women, let me beseech and entreat you, with all earnestness, to seek the Lord while He is to be found, and to call upon Him while He is near. And be you sure of this: if you go—to speak after the manner of men—one single step, it is Jesus who comes a dozen or a hundred steps towards you. He stands, as it were, with open arms to receive you. It is the very joy and delight of His heart to welcome you; and, therefore, delay not. Oh! be besought and entreated.

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### Selwyn Hughes - Have a Great Childhood

Disaster pursues sinners, but good rewards the righteous.—PROVERBS 13:21

Solomon's comments in **Ecclesiastes 11:9** are aimed at the young: "**Let your heart be glad in the days of your youth.**" Enjoy your days one by one, he is saying, because before you know it, you will be an adult.

The words that come next have sent some Christians into apoplexy: "And walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes." I remember a youth leader in a church I pastored who set out to teach the Book of Ecclesiastes to the young people. But he deliberately left out these words. When I asked him why, he said: "That's bad advice for young people. They are inclined that way already so I thought it best not to draw attention to it." I drew his attention to the words that follow: "but know that for all of these things God will bring you to judgment." This is what Solomon is really saying: "Relax and have a super time when you are young. There will be many impulses and many things that appeal to your eyes. Follow them, but keep in mind there will be a day of accountability. So don't let your impulses go wild."

Some believe that warning takes the joy out of living, but it shouldn't. If we ignore the God to whom we must all answer, then we leave ourselves open to experiencing not life but unrestricted liberty. And that kind of freedom is bad for us. So banish all worries, Solomon tells the young, and avoid those things that bring pain to your body. Young person, you are only young once. Stay close to God and you'll get the most out of it.

#### Prayer

O God my Father, while I am thankful for all the books that help me learn of You and know about You, help me never to put these ahead of Your Word, the Bible, but always behind it. Make me a person of the Book. In Jesus' name. Amen.

#### Further Study

Jos 1:1–8; 2 Kg 22:1–20

What was God's command to Joshua?

Why did the king tear his robes?

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### Reverencing Conscience

"But know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."—Eccles. 11:9

An ancient Persian fabulist tells the story of a king, who, having hanged his general because he had lost a battle, resolved in his rage to kill the widow and children of the unfortunate officer also. The whole country was in distress because of this cruel and unjust resolution, and numerous petitions were sent in. But all was in vain. The despot grew the more implacable the more his sense of humanity was appealed to. One day the king's chief counsellor threw himself at the feet of his master, and asked for justice. He was accompanied by his daughter, a woman of unparalleled beauty. "Ruler of the world," he said, "your physician, seeing that my daughter surpasses his daughter in beauty, as the sun surpasses the moon in glory, has in a fit of jealousy deformed my child by throwing a caustic fluid over her face." Having said these words, he unveiled his daughter's head. An ugly black spot was exposed, which monstrously disfigured the otherwise beautiful countenance of the poor girl.

The king, roused to anger by the sight, immediately sent for his physician.

"Why have you done this to the woman?" he asked.

The physician gave no reply.

"By the sun and all his hosts," cried the king, "with thy head shalt thou pay for this offence!"

He beckoned to the captain of the guard, who at once stepped forward to execute the verdict. But the physician produced a sponge from his bosom, and, dipping it into a basin of water, with one stroke thoroughly washed away the black spot.

"What is this?" asked the king, in a voice of glad surprise.

"Ruler of the world," the counsellor answered, "you have sentenced my friend the physician to death because he only disfigured a girl's face by a stain which could be washed off easily, but what sentence will the eternal Judge have to pass upon you, if you cast such a stain upon your conscience as you purpose—a stain which all the water of the ocean cannot wash away?"

The king, deeply struck by this question, abandoned his cruel intention, and sent the widow and children of the deceased general home, enriched with tokens of his princely munificence.

This fable, in spirit like many other passages in the writings of the heathen authors, confirms the truth of the observation, that reverence for a pure conscience is so deeply implanted in our nature, that even sin, with all its destructive effect upon man's moral sense, has not been able altogether to destroy it.

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### Conspicuous for Exceeding Sin

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways

of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”—Eccles. 11:9

About a century ago, there flourished in the city of Glasgow a club of young men, which, from the extreme profligacy of its members, and the licentiousness of their orgies, was commonly called the Hell Club. Besides their other meetings, it was their custom to hold one great annual gathering, at which each tried to surpass the other in extravagance of riot; and on these occasions one young man—who, gifted with brilliant talents and a handsome person, had at one time raised hopes which he had subsequently destroyed—was ever conspicuous for his exceeding sin.

On retiring to rest after one of these annual festivals, he had the following dream:—He fancied that he was mounted upon a favourite black horse, and was riding homeward in the dusk, when a stranger, whom the gloom prevented him from seeing distinctly, seized his horse’s rein, saying, “You must go with me.”

“And who are you?” exclaimed the young man with an oath, as he struggled to free himself.

“That you will see presently,” returned the other, in a tone which thrilled such an unaccountable terror through even his reckless breast that, plunging his spurs into his horse, he attempted to fly, but in vain; however fast the animal flew, the stranger was still at his side, till at length, in his desperate efforts to escape, the rider was thrown, but instead of being dashed to the ground, he found himself falling—falling—falling still, as if sinking into the bowels of the earth.

“Where am I? Where are you taking me to?” he gasped out.

“To hell,” replied the stranger, while interminable echoes repeated the fearful sound, “To hell! to hell! to hell!”

On coming to a standstill, he found himself at the entrance of a splendid building. Instead, however, of the expected cries and groans and lamentations, nothing was heard but sounds of music and rejoicing. On entering, he soon perceived that he was amongst old acquaintances, whom he knew to be dead, and all of them he observed were following the pursuits which had most engrossed them on earth. Approaching one of these—a lady whom he had known as an inveterate gambler—he asked her to cease awhile from play, and to introduce him to the pleasures of a place which seemed so very unlike what he expected. But, with a cry of agony, she answered that there was no rest in hell; that they must for ever toil on in those very pleasures and pursuits to which they had abandoned themselves while on earth. In the midst of the terror which this inspired, his conductor returned, and on his earnest entreaty restored him again to earth, leaving him, however, with the words, “Remember! in a year and a day we meet again!”

At this crisis of his dream the sleeper awoke, feverish and ill; and, either from the effects of the dream, or from his previous excess, he was for several days seriously unwell. During this period he had time for grave reflection, which ended in a resolution to abandon the club and his licentious companions altogether.

After getting well, however, his companions, to whom he told the reason of his leaving them, soon contrived to make him ashamed of his good resolutions. He resumed his former course of life, and when the next annual meeting came round, he was, as usual, the most reckless of all the guests.

On rising to make the customary speech, the president observed, “This being leap-year, it is a year and a day since our last anniversary.” The words struck on the young man’s ear like a knell; but ashamed to expose himself to the jeers of his companions, he sat out the night, drowning fearful thoughts in wine and revelry. Then, in the gloom of a winter’s morning, he mounted his horse to ride home.

Some hours afterwards the horse was found quietly grazing by the roadside, whilst a few yards off lay the corpse of his master.

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## **H A Ironside —Ecclesiastes 11:9.**

It is a solemn thought that, although the grace of God avails to save the vilest sinner, yet nothing can ever make up the losses of a wasted life. The effects of sin remain even though the sinner is justified by faith in Christ. In the government of God there are temporal consequences of evil living which no repentance and reformation will ever undo. Therefore, the importance of turning to God in youth ere one’s influence for evil has affected others in a way that will leave eternal consequences. The only path of true blessing is that of subjection to the will of God.

“I took the best of my youth  
For pleasures all my own—  
Forgetting I must some day reap  
The chaff that I had sown.

I took the best of every day,

When mind was fresh and keen—  
To do the special things I loved,  
The things that would be seen.

My youth soon fled, and I, alone,  
Reaped sorrow for my pleasure;  
The things I loved to do for show  
Proved but an empty treasure.

But when I gave my best to God,  
My life—the morning hour—  
I found His pleasure was my own,  
His grace, my shining tower!”

—Mildred Allen Jeffery.

**Ecclesiastes 11:10 So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.**

KJV Ecclesiastes 11:10 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.

NKJ Ecclesiastes 11:10 Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, And put away evil from your flesh, For childhood and youth are vanity.

NET Ecclesiastes 11:10 Banish emotional stress from your mind. and put away pain from your body; for youth and the prime of life are fleeting.

BGT Ecclesiastes 11:10 καὶ ἀποστῆσον θυμὸν πικρῶς σου καὶ παρὰ γὰρ πονηρὰν πικρὰν σαρκὸς σου τί νεότης καὶ νοῦς ματαιότης

LXE Ecclesiastes 11:10 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for youth and folly are vanity.

CSB Ecclesiastes 11:10 Remove sorrow from your heart, and put away pain from your flesh, because youth and the prime of life are fleeting.

ESV Ecclesiastes 11:10 Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.

NIV Ecclesiastes 11:10 So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigor are meaningless.

NLT Ecclesiastes 11:10 So refuse to worry, and keep your body healthy. But remember that youth, with a whole life before you, is meaningless.

YLT Ecclesiastes 11:10 And turn aside anger from thy heart, And cause evil to pass from thy flesh, For the childhood and the age are vanity!

NJB Ecclesiastes 11:10 Rid your heart of indignation, keep your body clear of suffering, though youth and the age of black hair are both futile.

NRS Ecclesiastes 11:10 Banish anxiety from your mind, and put away pain from your body; for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.

RSV Ecclesiastes 11:10 Remove vexation from your mind, and put away pain from your body; for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.

NAB Ecclesiastes 11:10 Ward off grief from your heart and put away trouble from your presence, though the dawn of youth is fleeting.

GWN Ecclesiastes 11:10 Get rid of what troubles you or wears down your body, because childhood and youth are pointless.

BBE Ecclesiastes 11:10 So put away trouble from your heart, and sorrow from your flesh; because the early

years and the best years are to no purpose.

- **remove**: Ec 12:1 Job 13:26 Ps 25:7 2Pe 3:11-14
- **anger**, Ps 90:7-11
- **and put**: Job 20:11 2Co 7:1 2Ti 2:22
- **because**: Ec 1:2,14 Ps 39:5 Pr 22:15

Remove the "grave" clothes of anger  
And put on the "grace" clothes from God

## GUARD YOUR YOUTH DON'T WASTE IT!

So, **remove** grief ([kaas](#)) and anger ([kaas](#)) from your heart and **put away** pain from your body - The Septuagint has "put away evil from thy flesh." That makes sense because **grief** ([kaas](#)) and **anger** ([kaas](#)) from your heart are often related to sin. "Don't waste youth on sin, bitterness, or foolishness—because it will soon be gone." **Remove**, turn aside, put away is a command that calls for a deliberate, decisive response. **From your heart** would parallel nicely with Solomon's command in Pr 4:23+ "**Watch** over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life." **Put away** is a command to avoid the sins of the flesh and choices that harm your physical health or defile your body—whether moral, sexual, or addictive behavior. Solomon's words remind me of Paul's to his young disciple Timothy to "**flee** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) from youthful lusts and **pursue** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." (2Ti 2:22+)

**Keith Krell** Young people, you are commanded to actively and intentionally "remove" three entities from your life: **grief, anger, and pain**. Practically speaking this means: As far as possible the problems that beset **heart** and mind are to be resisted. Quit being a worrywart. Guard yourself from being stressed out by school, sports, and relationships. There will be plenty of time to really worry when you get older. Just kidding! Worry is a sin, so avoid it at all times. Don't develop a root of bitterness. If your parents have divorced, forgive them. If your best friend gossiped about you, let it go. Don't bring pain upon your body through alcohol, drugs, and sex. It's just not worth it.

**NET NOTE** - The verb סור (sur, "to remove") normally depicts a concrete action of removing a physical object from someone's presence (HALOT 748 s.v. 1 סור). Here, it is used figuratively (hypocatastasis) of the emotional/psychological action of banishing unnecessary emotional stress from one's mind. The Hiphil usage means "to remove; to abolish; to keep away; to turn away; to push aside" (HALOT 748 s.v. 1). The English versions render this term in a variety of ways, none of which is very poetic: "remove" (KJV, RSV, ASV, NASB); "turn aside" (YLT); "ward off" (NAB); and "banish" (NEB, MLB, NIV, NRSV, NJPS, Moffatt).

**NET NOTE** on **grief** - The root "vexation" (כַּעַס, [kaas](#)) has a broad range of meanings: "anger" (Deut 4:25; 9:18), "irritation" (Deut 32:21), "offend" (2 Kgs 23:26; Neh 3:37), "vexation" or "frustration" (Ezek 20:28), "grief" (1 Sam 1:6), and "worry" (Ps 112:10; Eccl 7:9); cf. HALOT 491 s.v. כַּעַס. Here, it refers in general to unnecessary emotional stress and anxiety that can deprive a person of the legitimate enjoyment of life and its temporal benefits.

**NET NOTE** - put away pain - In light of the parallelism, רָעָה (ra'ah) does not refer to ethical evil, but to physical injury, pain, deprivation or suffering (e.g., Deut 31:17, 21; 32:23; 1 Sam 10:19; Neh 1:3; 2:17; Pss 34:20; 40:13; 88:4; 107:26; Eccl 12:1; Jer 2:27; Lam 3:38); see HALOT 1263 s.v. 4 רָעָה.ב; BDB 949 s.v. 2 רָעָה. This sense is best captured as "pain" (NASB, RSV, NRSV, MLB, Moffatt) or "the troubles [of your body]" (NEB, NIV), rather than "evil" (KJV, ASV, YLT, Douay) or "sorrow" (NJPS).

Youth is beautiful but brief—  
a vapor, not to be wasted.

**Because** (term of explanation) **childhood and the prime of life are fleeting** ([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#), "vanity") - The time of childhood is very brief. Enjoy it while you can. I wish someone had told me that when I was that age! Once you graduate from college then the grief and pain of life under the sun becomes all too real!

*Do great things while there is time for greatness.  
Don't put happiness on hold.  
Enjoy what you have. Live while you are dying.*

**Keith Krell** Solomon says we are to remove **grief, anger, and pain** because childhood and the prime of life are **fleeting**



([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#), “vanity”). The phrase “**the prime of life**” literally refers to “blackness” of hair as opposed to grey hair.<sup>470</sup> ...Youth is “**fleeting**” ([hebel](#)) just like our “breath.”<sup>471</sup> We need to enjoy life now. We need to live for Christ now. In the movie *Dead Poets Society*, Robin Williams plays a poetry teacher for an old, established all-boys school. On the first day of class, he takes his students downstairs to a hall filled with old photos of past classes. Some of the photographs are fifty to seventy-five years old. Most of the men in the photos have lived and died. They are nothing but worm food and daisy fertilizer. The pictures portray them in their youth and vitality, but that was in the past and now they are dead. As the boys gaze on these long-forgotten portraits of youth, they hear the words **Carpe Diem**—“**Seize the Day!**” Life is short. All too soon they will be nothing more than a faded photograph on a wall. So seize the day—make each day count. Live purposefully and meaningfully. Do great things while there is time for greatness. Don’t put happiness on hold. Enjoy what you have. Live while you are dying.

**NET NOTE** - **prime of life** - Or “youth”; Heb “black hair” or “the dawn [of life].” The feminine noun הַשְׁחָרֹת (hashakharut) is a hapax legomenon, occurring only here. There is debate whether it is from שָׁחַר (shakhor) which means “black” (i.e. black hair, e.g., Lev 13:31, 37; Song 5:11; HALOT 1465 s.v. שָׁחַר; BDB 1007 s.v. שָׁחַר and שָׁחַר) or שַׁחַר (shakhar) which means “dawn” (e.g., Gen 19:15; Job 3:9; Song 6:10; HALOT 1466–67 s.v. שַׁחַר). If this term is from שָׁחַר it is used in contrast to gray hair that characterizes old age (e.g., Prov 16:31; 20:29). This would be a figure (metonymy of association) for youthfulness. On the other hand, if the term is from שַׁחַר it connotes the “dawn of life” or “prime of life.” This would be a figure (hypocatastasis) for youthfulness. In either case, the term is a figure for “youth” or “prime of life,” as the parallel term הַיָּלְדוּת (hayyaldut, “youth” or “childhood”) indicates. The term is rendered variously in the English versions: “black hair” (NJPS); “the dawn of youth” (NAB); “the dawn of life” (ASV, MLB, RSV, NRSV); “the prime of life” (NEB, NASB); “vigor” (NIV); “youth” (KJV); and “manhood” (Moffatt). The plural forms of הַשְׁחָרֹת and הַיָּלְדוּת are examples of the plural of state or condition that a person experiences for a temporary period of time, e.g., זָקְנִים (zéqunim, “old age”); נְעוּרִים (né’urim, “youth”); and מְלֻמִּים (’alumim, “youthfulness”); see IBHS 121 §7.4.2b.

**NET NOTE** on **fleeting** - The term הֶבֶל ([hebel](#); [Lxx](#) - [mataiotes](#), “vanity”) often connotes the temporal idea “fleeting” (e.g., Prov 31:30; Eccl 3:19; 6:12; 7:15; 9:9). This nuance is suggested here by the collocation of “youth” (הַיָּלְדוּת, hayyaldut) and “the prime of life” (הַשְׁחָרֹת, hashakharut).

**ESV Study Bible** ([Borrow](#)) - Whatever woes or ailments one has, one should not dwell on them excessively.

**NET NOTE** - Or “youth”; Heb “black hair” or “the dawn [of life].” The feminine noun הַשְׁחָרֹת (hashakharut) is a hapax legomenon, occurring only here. There is debate whether it is from שָׁחַר (shakhor) which means “black” (i.e. black hair, e.g., Lev 13:31, 37; Song 5:11; HALOT 1465 s.v. שָׁחַר; BDB 1007 s.v. שָׁחַר and שָׁחַר) or שַׁחַר (shakhar) which means “dawn” (e.g., Gen 19:15; Job 3:9; Song 6:10; HALOT 1466–67 s.v. שַׁחַר). If this term is from שָׁחַר it is used in contrast to gray hair that characterizes old age (e.g., Prov 16:31; 20:29). This would be a figure (metonymy of association) for youthfulness. On the other hand, if the term is from שַׁחַר it connotes the “dawn of life” or “prime of life.” This would be a figure (hypocatastasis) for youthfulness. In either case, the term is a figure for “youth” or “prime of life,” as the parallel term הַיָּלְדוּת (hayyaldut, “youth” or “childhood”) indicates. The term is rendered variously in the English versions: “black hair” (NJPS); “the dawn of youth” (NAB); “the dawn of life” (ASV, MLB, RSV, NRSV); “the prime of life” (NEB, NASB); “vigor” (NIV); “youth” (KJV); and “manhood” (Moffatt). The plural forms of הַשְׁחָרֹת and הַיָּלְדוּת are examples of the plural of state or condition that a person experiences for a temporary period of time, e.g., זָקְנִים (zéqunim, “old age”); נְעוּרִים (né’urim, “youth”); and מְלֻמִּים (’alumim, “youthfulness”); see IBHS 121 §7.4.2b.

*Mankind must never focus on the negatives to the extent that they miss the pleasant opportunities that God gives for their enjoyment.*

**William Barrick** - Therefore, people must “**remove grief and anger**” from their hearts and “**put away pain**” from their bodies, because the times of their lives “**are fleeting**” (Eccl 11:10). Mankind must never focus on the negatives to the extent that they miss the pleasant opportunities that God gives for their enjoyment. Enjoying the good things requires the proper perspective on the bad things in life. After all, the bad is equally ephemeral. “**Grief and anger**” represents a single Hebrew word (כַּעַס, [kaas](#)) occurring seven times in Ecclesiastes (Ec. 1:18; Ec. 2:23; Ec 5:17; Ec. 7:3; Ec. 7:9; Ec. 11:10). In Eccl 1:18 and Eccl 2:23 it is parallel to “pain.” In Eccl 5:17 the NASU translates the word as “**vexation**,” in the description of eating in darkness “with great vexation, sickness and anger.” But, in Ec 7:3 Solomon contrasts it with laughter and happiness, making it an equivalent of sadness. Occurring twice in Ec 7:9, “anger” seems most appropriate in that context. As Ryken points out, “This is not a call to deny the very real suffering that everyone experiences. Nor is it a call to escape pain by living for pleasure. Rather, it is a call to take care of our mental and physical health.” (See Ryken [Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters - Page 267](#))

Questions for study:

- What plans do you have to take some risks in order to serve God faithfully and trust Him fully?
- Over what kinds of things in your life do you feel that you have no control?
- What are the perfect conditions for which you wait before making decisions or before doing something for Christ?
- What are the pleasant things you enjoy in life “under the sun”?
- What are some of your memories regarding your “days of darkness”?
- How can young and old alike enjoy life with a balanced perspective and a sense of accountability?
- How can you “remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body”?

**“Clear the Path for Joy”** Solomon is saying: You were made for joy, not for regret. So clear your life of what will leave scars. Bitterness in the heart.

Indulgence in the flesh. They may feel powerful now—but they leave you empty. Remove what harms, so you can run free and full. Youth is meant for joy—but also for responsibility. Youth is fleeting—what you do with it shapes your future. Develop godly habits before temptations get stronger. Cut off toxic influences, friendships, or media that feed sin. Commit your body to Jesus Christ while you are a youth—don't wait for regret.

**Grief** (03708)(**kaas**) A masculine singular noun meaning anger, provocation, vexation. The alternate spelling of the word occurs only in Job. The majority of occurrences are in poetic literature. Human sinfulness and idolatry (1 Kgs. 15:30; Ezek. 20:28) cause God's anger, while fools, sons, wives, and rival wives can also cause vexation (1 Sa 1:6; Prov. 27:3; 17:25; 21:19, respectively).

**Swanson** - 1. **sorrow, grief**, i.e., a feeling of anxiety and sadness in a distressing situation (1Sa 1:16; Ps 6:8; 10:14; 31:10; Pr 17:25; Ecc 1:18; 2:23; 5:16; 7:3; 11:10); 2. **anger, fury**, i.e., have a strong feeling of displeasure and annoyance based on a wrong, real or perceived (Dt 32:19; Ps 85:5; Pr 12:16; 21:19; Ecc 7:9) 3. **taunt**, i.e., a speaking of words of scorn, implying anger toward object of scorn, with a focus on eliciting a response by the mocking (Dt 32:27; 1Sa 1:6); 4. **provocation**, i.e., cause another to be angry by an action (1Ki 15:30; 21:22; 2Ki 23:26; Pr 27:3; Eze 20:28)

**Kaas** - 25x - anger(3), bitterly\*(1), grief(4), grief and anger(1), grievous(1), indignation(1), provocation(7), provocations(1), sorrow(1), vexation(1), vexing(1). Deut. 32:19; Deut. 32:27; 1 Sam. 1:6; 1 Sam. 1:16; 1 Ki. 15:30; 1 Ki. 21:22; 2 Ki. 23:26; Job 5:2; Job 6:2; Job 10:17; Job 17:7; Ps. 6:7; Ps. 10:14; Ps. 31:9; Ps. 85:4; Prov. 12:16; Prov. 17:25; Prov. 21:19; Prov. 27:3; Eccl. 1:18; Eccl. 2:23; Eccl. 7:3; Eccl. 7:9; Eccl. 11:10; Ezek. 20:28

**Spurgeon** - There is a way of making youth truly joyous, let the wise young man try it. Our young days will soon be over, let us make them as happy as we can, and live while we live. Everyone agrees with this advice, but few know that the best way of carrying it out is to obtain salvation by believing in Jesus.

**The Wallenda Factor** Ecclesiastes 11:10; 1 Peter 5:7 - Peter Kennedy

Karl Wallenda lived on top of the world. The aerialist thrilled crowds with his daring stunts on the high wire—before that fateful day in 1978, when his show ended. Wallenda plunged 75 feet to his death before an audience of thousands in San Juan, Puerto Rico. What happened? His widow explained that Karl has never been one to know fear. Self-confidence marked his style—until he started worrying. Little details of safety preoccupied his mind. He checked and double-checked the tightrope. Here was a different Karl. Instead of putting his energies into walking the wire, he concentrated on not falling. From then on, Wallenda became an accident just waiting to happen. It was inevitable that he fall, or so his widow felt. Motivational speakers and managers call this the “Wallenda factor”. Beware of being so afraid of failure that you dwell on the negatives. Be careful in a prudent way, but don't be paralyzed by a fear of failure.