

**Ecclesiastes 11**  
**Be Young, Have Fun, and Be Godly**

INTRO – sundials

**Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away**

*Altera pars otio, pars ista labori.* (**Devote this hour to work, another to leisure.**)

*Omnes vulnerant, ultima necat.* (**All hours wound; the last one kills.**)

*Ultima latet ut observentur omnes.* (**Our last hour is hidden from us, so that we watch them all.**)

*Vidi nihil permanere sub sole.* (**I have seen that nothing under the sun endures**)

**“Tedious and brief”**

**CELUI QUI DORT LA GRASSE MATINÉE**

**DOIT TRAVAILLER L'APRÈS-DINÉE.**

***He who sleeps the morning through***

***His work in afternoon must do.***

REVIEW

The lead voice of this Book of Ecclesiastes, called himself the Preacher and he has a thesis which is:

Life is empty; life is vain; life is meaningless; life is futile; life is frustrating; life is trivial; life is without satisfaction, and it goes off script.

When that happens people try to solve the problem or fill the void with all sorts of things – work, pleasure, philosophy, pragmatism, entertainment...

Those attempts to import meaning don't work.

**The wisest thing you can do is to realize that not even being wise will tell you everything you want to know. - David Gibson**

Life “under the sun” has no way of accounting for the realities of life – the moral framework of good and evil, or of meaning / emptiness. **To answer the BIG questions that haunt us we need the resources of something outside ourselves and something beyond life under the sun.**

Scripture gives us that framework and we see it in the pages of wisdom literature. But those who reject God and what he has to say must still borrow from the life system of the believer to cope in the world.

If you talk with people and they are honest, here's what you'll find. (Actual conversation with a young French guy)

**“If there is a God, then He can prescribe how we are to live, and I don't WANT TO live that way.”**

**“If there is no God, then life is meaningless, and I can't live that way.”**

So you must borrow the ideas of meaning, purpose, and significance, and hope that it all works out in the end.

**Ecclesiastes gives us the framework for meaning and enjoyment in life. The preacher takes the whole book to point to the truth of the providence of God over all things.** And his beliefs that God is in control of everything and is working it out for the good of His people are at the very core of his philosophy of life and answer to the cynicism of the world.

David Gibson

In chapter 11 the Preacher asks us: Where do you stand to look at the things you don't know about life? What is your perspective on the things in your life that you cannot control?

EX: Linda S. waiting for visa from Brazil – it didn't come through on Monday – “God's got this”

God wasn't surprised. \*We prefer a God we can pity to a God who is sovereign who we must trust and obey. We prefer a God who "means well but can't pull it off- bless his heart" to a God who is in control even over the "hevel" that afflicts us. Scripture calls us to trust the God who could stop the injustice and the affliction but doesn't, and He doesn't always tell us why.

We all have plans for the future – this afternoon, evening, this week, next month, vacation plans etc – but in reality we don't KNOW if those will actually happen – James 4:13-15

If wisdom has any power to protect us, it is in admitting our own limitations and vulnerabilities.

Eaton...

Be bold (11:1-6) or better, be generous!

Be joyful (11:7-10).

Be godly (12:1-8).

BE BOLD (11:1-6) or better, be generous! (LIVING BIBLE)

11 Give generously, for your gifts will return to you later. 2 Divide your gifts among many,<sup>[a]</sup> for in the days ahead you yourself may need much help.

3 When the clouds are heavy, the rains come down; when a tree falls, whether south or north, the die is cast, for there it lies. 4 If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.<sup>[b]</sup> 5 God's ways are as mysterious as the pathway of the wind and as the manner in which a human spirit is infused into the little body of a baby while it is yet in its mother's womb. 6 Keep on sowing your seed, for you never know which will grow—perhaps it all will.

These verses give us wisdom on how to contemplate our general approach to life in light of the uncertainties of life – Derek Thomas

This is a call to trust God in the midst of the hevel and live large. Go big or go home. Some see v. 1 as a word about doing business through shipping and expecting to get a result, in time.

Others see it and v. 2 as a word about being bold and generous even in unknown times.

Either way, it is a word about how risky life can be.

v. 1 It's a call to a life of faith in the face circumstances that would lead us to throw in the towel.

Don't give in to the cynicism, fear or apathy that can so easily set in.

THIS IS HARDER FOR SOME THAN FOR OTHERS.

EX: women talking to Keller about getting Master's degree for security, etc. "we live on a rock that is moving through space at a speed of 67 thousand miles per hour and one day a trap door will open into eternity and you think a Master's degree will provide security?"

That's not an argument against a Master's Degree, but against thinking it is an ironclad security protection.

Meyers - Despite life's vaporous uncontrollability and even wisdom's vulnerability, the Creator promises ultimate fulfillment when his people trust him and venture to serve others. Thus, Solomon exhorts us to be generous (1-2a). Some have argued for other interpretations, but the last clause exhorting us to give a portion to seven or eight seems rather clear, and interprets the parable of casting bread. An interpretation involving a call for commercial investment may be a factor. In that case "bread upon the waters" is more or less equivalent to money sent overseas.

Gibson- Life is full of risks, but that risk is not meant to paralyze. Rather it is meant to free us to do what we do generously. You don't know what disaster will strike or when it will strike, so be as prepared for it as you can by giving and giving again and sitting loose to what you have.

EX: Generous Giving- Miracle in Franklin

<https://generousgiving.org/media/all-videos>

<https://generousgiving.org/media/videos/miracle-in-franklin>

<https://generousgiving.org/media/videos/miracle-in-franklin-the-rest-of-the-story>

Some might say, "the future is uncertain so eat your dessert first", but Ecclesiastes says, "the future is uncertain so give your dessert away." Meyers??

Ecclesiastes is about wise generosity that takes action for the sake of others.

V 5 Eaton – the life of faith does not remove the problem of our ignorance; rather, it enables us to live with it. Faith flourishes in the mystery of providence; it does not abolish it.

Life is uncertain, but God is certain, and our actions in response to who God is do count. We don't know everything, but we're not to be paralyzed by our ignorance. Don't make lame excuses for laziness. V. 4

We can't see the wind and even with our advanced technology we can't fully understand all that goes into the growth of a baby in the womb, but God does.

Boldness in life is not based on the certainty of what we face, but in the certainty of God's ultimate control.

Ecclesiastes teaches us to let go of the desire and the idea that we can know and control all we need to know. Pretending we know is foolishness, not wisdom. - Meyers

v.4-6 Wisdom comes as we acknowledge our human inability to anticipate or prevent or change the exigencies of life under the sun.

EX: Movie "Parenthood" with Steve Martin- they have a crazy life with their kids and the grandmother gives a story about riding a roller coaster. She doesn't come out and say it, but it is a metaphor for life – up and down, turns, twists – scary and thrilling.

THIS IS HARDER FOR SOME THAN FOR OTHERS because some hate roller coasters.

Some of us probably need to be a bit more interested in what we can control. Life has enough ups and downs without adding to them through foolishness.

Do you know the Serenity Prayer from Francis of Assisi? (not to be confused with the relaxation technique on Seinfeld – "Serenity Now")

*Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

That is not far from what Ecclesiastes 11:3 is saying. "Trust God. Realize the things that you can't change. Be serene in your acceptance of those things that you can't change, but bold and courageous in dealing with the things that you can."

BE JOYFUL (11:7-10).

<sup>7</sup> It is a wonderful thing to be alive! <sup>8</sup> If a person lives to be very old, let him rejoice in every day of life, but let him also remember that eternity is far longer and that everything down here is futile in comparison.

<sup>9</sup> Young man, it's wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it! Do all you want to; take in everything, but realize that you must account to God for everything you do. <sup>10</sup> So banish grief and pain, but remember that youth, with a whole life before it, can make serious mistakes.

This passage looks at our happiness in light of our coming death and judgment.

The goodness of life is portrayed by "light"- an image of the OT that is contrasted to adversity and death. Gen 1:3; Job 10:18

It is joyful to be alive. The two words used indicate that life is to be enjoyed, but even more, it is to be savored with enthusiasm, as one might enjoy honey. – Eaton

v. 8 enjoy life NOW because we never know when death may come. The earlier verses show the hevel/vanity in terms of delay, uncertainty, perplexity, difficulty, ignorance and disappointment. Because those are hard-wired into our lives, don't put off the effort to enjoy life.

He's not saying "be young, be foolish, but be happy" (The Tams). But he is saying, "This life was meant to enjoy, especially when you're young. Make the most out of life, but avoid the pitfalls of youth. – DON'T DO FOOLISH. It's going to slip by quickly so make the most of it in a positive way."

v. 9

Enjoy life, but 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 – ESV study Bible

Youth itself can become vanity if not lived with an eye on God and eternity.  
Youth itself can become an idol.

EX: Anti-aging business brings in BIG \$\$\$\$. People wanting to look young, and feel young thinking they can hold off death.

The ratio is still 1:1

At the conclusion of the film Braveheart, William Wallace is preparing to face his executioners and Princess Isabella of France offers him an anesthetic by to numb the pain of his imminent torture and death. He refuses to drink it.

"You will die; it will be awful," she says.

"Every man dies," replies Wallace. "Not every man really lives."

### Wise Living Is Its Own Reward

Life is a gift and the simple gifts of work, friends, food, etc are gifts to be enjoyed, not used to bolster our own self-image or sense of success. Do your bucket list, not just your to do list - Gibson

Live like you were dying (Tim McGraw)- because you are.

Jesus lived like he was dying. He was born to die, yet he lived with gusto. He cast "his bread upon the waters" – he gave his life and he is THE BREAD OF LIFE. That is what this table represents. Jesus didn't live paralyzed by fear; He was all in when it came to living in obedience to the Father. He was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross – FOR US.

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