

REJOICE, REMOVE & REMEMBER

Life is fleeting and puzzling, i.e., vanity, "The Teacher" says. So, he lays his case out. It's deep. It's not a "boxed" description, and that's kind of the point. Life is for sure pointless without God, but even with God in the picture, life is puzzling and momentary. There are true principles, but even then, there are no guarantee formulas in life. Life happens. Chance happens. It's interesting. Having said all of that, he begins to sum up his thoughts. He addresses life in its early stages before it gets dark and dreary. Before the inevitable *death* which comes to all.

(ESV) Ecclesiastes 11:7-8 Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun. 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.

- Rejoice, remove and remember. Three guidelines for the young, says the inspired "teacher" of Ecclesiastes as we will see. He's already mentioned two of them briefly.
- You're expected to understand this, yet not fully. And that's okay. You understand to take in life, don't you? Every time the Sun shines bright, there's life and hope. You understand that life is short and days can be difficult, yet not fully. And that's alright as well.
- This lesson is for those of young man/womanhood. For childhood. For the youth. However, there's something for us all to learn.

(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.

- (NASB) 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.
- Young: You finally found the passage that says, "Follow your heart!" No, even better . . . it says "follow the impulses of your heart." You ever hear the expression "if it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is?" Yeah. And what would that say about us if we thought God was saying, "Hey, when you're young, just wallow in the flesh" and we respond, "Yay!". Listen, we don't want that kind of lifestyle and that's not what He's talking about. It's like when Paul wrote, " 'All things' are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful." He's not saying that literally it's okay to do whatever you want, but you choose not to do some things because they're not helpful.
 - Warning: we are addicted to entertainment. I watch my share of shows and movies. I'll tear up some *Zelda: Breath of the Wild* with the kiddos, etc. But, put this in context of every person who could hear this. Filter it through their lens. More importantly - the lens of the audience receiving this instruction. That was for "Old Israel." My point, there's some seriousness here - it's not all fun and games. Okay, I wanted to get that out of the way.
- But hear what he says! And what your hand finds to do - do it with all your might! What do you enjoy? What are you good at? What brings you joy? You know what Solomon said? Get after it! Now is the time . . . because you have the time. Now is the time to be cheerful! Sometimes we forget that when we look at someone in an older state and compare them to their younger years

and say, "They're different" as though something is wrong. Yes, there could be something wrong. Or it could just be that life has changed someone in the way it should. Listen, now is the time. You bring optimism and energy to others life. Your "go to 'em" attitude is contagious. Keep it coming! I've said it more than once, but one of the things I know I'm going to miss is that look in our children's eyes. Its a look of innocence, no doubt, but even more. Its that wonder and excitement. I hope the person doesn't mind (I love you so much), but one of you are going through some changes. It hit you recently - made you sad. You're saying goodbye to childhood and entering manhood. Its sad to say goodbye. Listen, that's right. Everything is as it should. You're totally right in saying goodbye. I believe one reason the elderly have an easier time welcoming heaven is because they've had more opportunities to say goodbye to people and stages in this life. One one hand and context, as Solomon pointed out, it is foolish to say, "Why were the former days better than these?", but in another context and way it's not foolish. The days were better in their own way. Was it not better before sin entered into your own life? Was it not better before there were difficulties and dark days? Of course. That's not what Solomon was talking about.

- So, what do you rejoice in today?
- We are to remember that it will come to and end and we will stand before God to answer for the freedom given to us. This isn't meant to create fear (terror), but rather to promote fear (reverence) towards God, so that we don't experience dread when we stand before Him. Listen, you're young, but not that young. You have the ability to know right from wrong. You comprehend consequences.
 - So, live with fear. And also, don't be consumed with fear. Confused? That will paralyze the life God wants you have and enjoy. Confused? Good. Let's move on to the parents.
- Parents and/or older family/friends: We know a little more, don't we? We know the cruelties of life and how quickly the years go by. We know the sweetness of youth. The Sun is a little brighter in a way, isn't it?
 - We are to protect that innocence. I'm not talking to those who are facing or have faced difficult times. Times that are out of your control. Times that, against your deepest desire, darkened the Sun for your young ones. I'm not talking about that. I was one of those children who witnessed the Sun darken too soon (one of many in this world). Let me say something to you - the Son of God overcomes any darkness and brings a different kind of light. He overcomes. But even so, when and where we can . . . we need to protect them
 - Don't make them feel guilty for wanting to spread their wings. Don't hinder them when you shouldn't because of your own fear or baggage.
 - Don't put on their shoulders what they shouldn't bear. Be the adult. Let them know security. Do that for them physically and emotionally. I've worried (along with those much older than myself) about the know-it-all attitude of the younger generations (some of it beginning close to my decade). It's a problem. But, as I consider it, I'm not so sure the older generation isn't to blame. It's hard for me not to think, as I look at parenting, music, entertainment, culture, that we didn't lead them to behave and belief in such a manner. We've asked to "be an adult" in ways they shouldn't, while failing to teach them the areas in which they can grow, while being realistic and learning humility. Children are not supposed to have the wisdom of the wise. So, let's quit treating them like they have it or should have it. They should lean on us. When did they become the rock? Let's lock

arms on this one: not in our homes. Let's honor those who are ahead of us - whether it be 5 or 50 years. Let's be reasonable.

- Do help them see what they're good at. Be their biggest supporters! Give 'em some guidance and wisdom.
 - Don't tell them they're good at everything (do we need to say this?) Be honest supporters - don't set them up. Give me any kid and I'll tell you something true: there are things they're good at and things they are not. Paul didn't say, "You can do anything because God has given everyone the ability to do anything!" **No you can't.** I promise you that we wouldn't want some of our own kiddos working for NASA. Someone's gonna get hurt! Plus, and I'm just gonna say it bluntly: you're gonna raise an annoying adult who thinks everything they do is gold. Others will see and know that's not the case - they'll find them to be annoying and off-putting. You ever meet those kind of people and think "I really wish someone would have told them this long ago." It almost seems to late, doesn't it?
 - On the other hand, you can raise a child who does not see and enjoy the abilities that God has given them. It kills their spirit. They won't find their place . . . and that's a dark place to be. Let them know there may be a good or bad way to go about what they're doing. Help them see what that could look like several years down the road. Is that the only passion/ability they have? How much time will that require? What will it cost? Will it effect their availability later on in marriage, parenting, the church. We need to talk about this more.

(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.

(NASB) 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**.

(NKJV) Ecclesiastes 11:10 10 Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away **evil** from your **flesh**, for childhood and youth are vanity.

- Parents and/or brethren: we want to protect their innocence. I'll admit. I had to hold back some tears more than once at Starbucks while putting this together (though, I must admit the soft and soothing study music I was listening to didn't help either - haha.)
 - Let your remarriage be strong. So many broken marriages (broken whether they're divorced or still together) result in sorrow, grief and anger for your children.
 - Let your financial burden be just that - your burden and not the children's. Love God, not money. Trust in Him - he'll take care of the rest. Your kids, if possible, don't need that. As Paul pointed out, there will be a time for children to make a return to their parents, but that time is not now.
 - Raise your children . . . don't make the kids raise the kids.
 - Fathers and mothers - don't let your parenting style provoke your children to anger.
 - We all need to reach out and help the young. I'm not against therapy (I've benefited from it myself), but many times it's because guidance and counseling is missing in a local church. Remember this passage: **Proverbs 20:5** The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a

man of understanding will draw it out. **Proverbs 18:4** The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.

- Youth: however, sometimes you can bring about this pain, so he says to put away the evil from your flesh. I don't agree with this one man's interpretation of these passages, but he put it well when he wrote: *"they see the roses, but do not discover the thorns, until pierced by them."* You don't have a complete appreciation when you're playing with fire. You hear it can consume you, but you don't fully understand. But, you understand enough.
 - Listen, what God has preserved and given to you is much better than what you're giving your flesh. Don't be foolish and learn it the hard way.
 - This is also a time that we create habits. They can be good or bad, but just remember - the longer the habit, the harder it is to break. Again, this can be a blessing or a curse.
 - So, what is it that you may have to give up? Have you let anyone know? Don't let pride or fear get in the way.

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

- The New King James will translate it "difficult days." You read on and get the idea. The body ages and begins to break down. Indeed . . . things become difficult.
- Youth: Remember. The idea is to *be mindful* or *recall*. Don't just think about it, but to do so with the intention to act on what you know or recall to be true.
 - Listen, time flies by, and before you know it this sweet spot of life is over. Originally, I was thinking about specific things you may be going through - trying to figure out which one to hit. Dating. Marring. Work. Entertainment, etc. but then I realized it would be better to approach it this way.
 - If you will remember what you know - rejoice while being serious about God's way - then He will lead you in every direction. But that means that you'll be going to Him now.
 - Do you remember God right now? How so? Do you think about Him before you make plans and enjoy life?
- Parent and everyone else. I'll let Solomon do the closing: Ecclesiastes 9:7-10; 12:11-14. I always take the opportunity to remind us the difference of "fear" in the Bible. This fear, like so many times, speaks to reverence. So, fear, but don't fear. You can't always know what's going on. You'll stress yourself out doing so. So, stop that. Enjoy what God has given to you. Remember we'll face Him one day. Now get on with it.