

**Chapter summary** –*God warned us to not be a fool in chapter ten and thus miss out on all He has said thus far about how to get the most out of life! He stresses that if we take heed to His counsel we will reap huge blessings even in this broken world.*

*It is as though at this point, in chapter eleven, that God is saying to us, “Ok, I have laid the theological foundation for you on how life works, or if you prefer, doesn’t work. You have the necessary knowledge, wisdom and understanding that pertains to living in the broken world that man has created. You know now what My, your Creator’s relationship is concerning it. You have the tools you need to live your life to the fullest. Now here is a little wise counsel about some specific issues I have not covered thus far.”*

*God begins this chapter by addressing everyone in general about a number of practical everyday issues. Then He will predominately focus His attention on the youth as He moves through the chapter.*

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IV. In Solomon’s search for an answer to his question, he now tells us how to live for that which exists above the sun, (Ch. 7:1-12:7)

### **1. SOLOMON DESCRIBES FOR US THE BEST WAY TO BENEFIT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE FROM OUR LIFE UNDER THE SUN, (7:1-12:7)**

**1) Solomon details the real value of wisdom that is from God, (7:1-9:18)**

**2) Solomon warns us against playing the fool, (10:1-20)**

**3) Solomon gives us some practical advice, (11:1-12:7)**

**(1) Solomon advises all generations, (11:1-8)**

**1a Don’t be careless, diversify, (11:1, 2)**

### **INTERPRETATION:**

<sup>1</sup> **Cast** (spread out or send out), **your bread** (alms, grain or assets), **upon the waters** (the needy, the flooded fields or merchant shipping lanes), **for** (after releasing your resources), **you will find it** (the return on your investment), **after many days.**<sup>1</sup>

### **NOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> There are 4 main interpretations concerning this verse.

1. ...a recommendation of alms-giving, which eventually will be rewarded.
2. ...refer[s] to commerce on the sea...despite the risk and daring of such a course, one is counseled to take a commercial risk that has some possibility, but not certainty, of success.
3. ...The bread merely dissolves. But this action, which is counseled, can nevertheless paradoxically lead to an unexpected successful result. Murphy, Vol. 23A, *Word Biblical Commentary : Ecclesiastes*. electronic ed. Logos Library System
4. ...casting grain on a flooded area that eventually dries up and the result is a crop to harvest.

It really doesn’t matter which view you take as the principle is the same.

<sup>2</sup> **Give a serving** (share of your alms, grain or assets), **to seven** (individuals, fields or ships), **and also to eight** (“Don’t put all of your eggs in one basket.”), **for you do not know** (cannot predict—cp., vv. 2, 4, 6), **what evil** (misfortune), **will be on the earth**, (so be careful and diversify your investments).

Knowing that there are no guarantees as to what will happen in the future can be an asset rather than a detriment if it causes us to be wise and careful. In fact, it is really essential if we are going to gain the most that we can from this sin cursed world. The fool will not see the wisdom of this proverb and just continue to bring harm to himself.

Let me give some examples of what I believe God wants us, young and old alike, to understand here.

### 1. Not being careless in giving to those in need:

Our primary reason for giving to those in need ought to be because our Lord asks us to and that it is as if we are giving our gifts directly to the Lord Himself, (Mat. 25:35-40, “...*when you did it unto one of the least of these you did it unto Me.*”) Another aspect of this though, is that because we live in a broken, sin cursed world, most of us will find ourselves in difficult times from time to time. The wise counsel that God is sharing with us in Ecclesiastes 11:1, 2, is that the more generous we are in helping others in need, the more likely we are in receiving help in our day of need. Again, this must not be our primary motivation for giving, but God tells us that it is a natural by-product of our giving that is a tremendous blessing when it is needed.

***Pr 19:17—He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given.***

***Pr 22:9—He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor.***

***Lk 6:38—Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”***

The fool is not generous to those who cross his path, the wise are. Both suffer the adversities that this sinful, unpredictable world can produce. Both are duly rewarded for their wisdom or foolishness. ***Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard.*** (Pr 21:13)

### 2. Not being careless in your investments:

Our primary reason for investing is to further our ministry potential as God’s stewards. This principle of stewardship is clearly described for us in the Scriptures. ***“For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey ...As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God,*** (Mt 25:14-15, 1 Pe 4:10).

Another aspect of this though, is that because we live in a broken, sin cursed world, most of us again will find that some of our investments turn out to be flops. The wise counsel that God is sharing with us in Ecclesiastes 11:1, 2, is that by spreading our investments out into several areas, it is more likely that we will receive a gain on some of our investments. Again, financial prosperity must not be our primary motivation for investing, but God tells us that it is a natural by-product of our carefully exercising financial diversity.

**1 Ki 10:15, 14—The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold, besides [what came] from the traveling merchants, from the income of traders, from all the kings of Arabia, and from the governors of the country.**

**Pr 24:3-4—Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.**

**2 Co 9:6-11—But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: “He has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.**

The fool is not careful in his investments and what he does gain, he keeps to himself. The wise are careful and generous stewards of God’s blessings. The wise and the fool both suffer the misfortunes that this sinful, unpredictable world can produce. Both as well, are duly rewarded for their wisdom or foolishness. ***There is desirable treasure, and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man squanders it.*** (Pr 21:20)

### **3. Not being careless in your labor:**

Our primary reason for working is first to provide for ourselves and family, ***“if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*** (1 Ti 5:8). Secondly we are to work to help those in genuine need, ***“...let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need,”*** (Eph 4:28). Another aspect of this though, is that because we live in a broken, sin cursed world, there are going to be good years and bad years. Sometimes there will be a big harvest and at other times there will be a small one, or even none at all at the severest of times. The wise counsel that God is sharing with us in Ecclesiastes 11:1, 2, is that the more diversified we are in our labor, or in planting

different crops in various places, the more likely we are in finding a job or reaping something for our labor—to use for ourselves and to share with others. Once again, the primary motivation for our careful and diversified labor is not to only fill our barns (i.e., to provide for our own), but God tells us that it, is a natural by-product of having something in our barn to use for ourselves and to share with others, or that they have shared with us out of their bounty.

**Pr 6:6-8—Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.**

**Lk 12:16-21—Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” ’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”**

The fool is not generous with his bounty, the wise are. Both suffer the droughts that this sinful, unpredictable world can produce. Both are duly rewarded for their wisdom or foolishness. ***The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.*** (Pr 13:4)

## 2a Don't be paralyzed, act, (11:3-6)

<sup>3</sup> **If the clouds are full of rain** (like one always hopes after planting and hopes not in harvest—but you never know if it will rain or not—whether you want it or not), **they empty themselves upon the earth,** (and your crop grows if you planted it, but it makes it tough if it's harvest time); **and if a tree falls** (because of a strong wind, which one always hopes it will not, but never knows if it will or not , v.4), **to the south or the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie,** (you can't predict it or stop it—what is going to be—rain or no rain, strong wind or no wind—is going to be. It is beyond your control).

<sup>4</sup> **He who observes the wind** (waiting for the perfect conditions), **will not sow** (plant a crop), **and he who regards the clouds** (again, waiting for the perfect conditions), **will not reap,** (reap a harvest. We live in an imperfect world and thus we are surrounded by imperfect conditions).

<sup>5</sup> (Another way of looking at this issue is), **As you do not know** (understand), **what is the way of the wind** (you cannot predict what it will or won't do [or “*wind*” may mean “*spirit*”, meaning just as you cannot understand how life animates a body]), **or**

(even), **how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child** (after life begins), **so you do not know the works** (the activity), **of God who makes everything**, (it is impossible to understand why God does or allows what He does, when He does it or allows it).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>6</sup> (So, in light of the unpredictability that this sin cursed broken world presents), **In the morning sow your seed** (Get up and get busy! Make decisions and take action, in less than ideal situations or even in terrible conditions.), **and in the evening do not withhold your hand** (continue to be industrious); **for you do not know which will prosper** (you do not know which will fall prey to the consequences of our sin cursed world or which will grow in spite of it), **either this** (the mornings work), **or that** (the evenings labor), **or whether both alike will be good**, (as will be the case at times).<sup>3</sup>

#### F APPLICATION:

Carolyn Koons who when white-water rafting one day writes: "I was told, after the fact, that the Kings River was flooded 13 feet above its normal water level. It didn't occur to me to ask why we were the only people attempting white-water rafting that day.

"Some of our group decided not to join the rest of us in the raft. They preferred to hike along the canyon cliffs and experience the river through the lens of a camera.

"Our guide prepared us for the trip by explaining that when we hit the rapids, water would rush down, then shoot up into a 'haystack.' The trick to riding haystacks was to pull up on the front of the raft so the water would lift us up instead of crashing over us.

"Soon came the test. The flooding river roared into a canyon. We hit a mega-haystack, and the guide shouted, 'Pull! Pull!' We pulled with all our strength and all our adrenaline and all our desperate will to survive the monstrous rapids. We pulled and pulled and pulled...

"No one told us it was possible to flip a raft upside down. We found ourselves fighting for air, battered by rocks, an holding on for dear life. Finally, we wrestled the raft over to a small ledge on the side of the river. The cliff behind us went straight up 150 feet. What would we do now? We were terrified. There was no way out.

"Our friends hiking along the cliff saw our plight and shouted the only solution: 'GET BACK IN THE RIVER!'

"Back in the river? None of us wanted to fight that battle again. One woman panicked and refused to move. The rest of us put on our bravest faces to try to convince her it was our only hope. She refused to move--paralyzed by fear. Two hours later, she faced reality. And although it was one of the scariest things we had ever done, we all got back into the river. Our raft

<sup>2</sup> I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end. Ecc 3:10-11

<sup>3</sup> The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it. Pr 10:22

shot out of the canyon to safety, and we were thankful for having survived a life-threatening adventure."

Koons continues, "You and I are on a river, and the river is called life. Do you know what the problem is? We think we are sitting on a sailboat, and we expect life to be smooth and calm. The reality is that we are white-water rafting. Rapids are built into life, and we can handle them better if we learn to expect them as a natural feature of this river [of life]."

"Have you ever found yourself washed up on the side of the river? Many of us are sitting on the [ledges] of life, exhausted from our last battle with the rapids, watching other people go down the river. We are hurt, we're angry and frustrated. Or maybe we have been sitting here awhile now. We are rested and safe, but bored and hopeless."

The solution is to get back into the river! [Don't be paralyzed, act!]

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God in no uncertain terms is making it very clear to us that our life upon this earth is full of hazards and uncertainties. All of which are the consequences of our unleashing sin into our personal lives and upon the global world.

- One day you have a job and the next day you do not.
- One day a loved one is living for the Lord, the next day he or she is not.
- One day your project at work flies, the next day it crashes and burns.
- One day your marriage is on the mountain top, the next day it seems to be going through the valley of the shadow of death.
- One day you are healthy, the next day you are not.
- One day your loved one is beside you and the next day he or she is not.
- One day you are up, the next day you are down.
- One day your retirement is secure, the next it's all but gone.

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, sought to bring some sense and order to these kinds of perils and uncertainties in this river of life, but he found he could not. God alone can make any sense out of them and can orchestrate them for good. God also knows us very well and He knows that the hazards and uncertainties we have to face day in and day out could very easily paralyze us. God is telling us to be decisive and to take action on a daily basis. God is telling us to get back into the river of life. Yes, we will get thrown out again, but we have to get right back in again, and again, and again. We won't be thrown out all of the time and we will eventually get through the canyon.

A quote I came across last year that meant a lot to me is, "***The brave are simply those with the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, who go out to meet it.***"

Is there some hurt, fear, anger, confusion, etc. in your life that has put you on the ledge along the river of life? You need to take some action and get back into the river.

Maybe you are in the river and you see those on the ledges as you proceed down. Don't pass them by without offering a word of encouragement.

### **3a Don't be gloomy and pessimistic, be cheerful and optimistic, (11:7, 8)**

Do you believe this statement?

“It is really a natural trend to lapse into taking oneself [unfavorably] because it is the easiest thing to do...for [gloom] flows out of men naturally, but laughter is a leap. It is easy to be heavy; hard to be light.” ---G. K. Chesterton

If you don't, and if I have interpreted Ecc. 11:7, 8 correctly, God does believe it's true.

#### **1b) Cheerfulness: its description, (7)**

<sup>7</sup> **Truly the light** (i.e., the spark, the zest, the energy of life—when one possess it),<sup>4</sup> **is sweet** (pleasant, lovely [*the opposite of sweet is bitter—repulsive, depressing*]),<sup>5</sup> **and it is pleasant** (good, beneficial), **for the eyes to behold the sun** (it has wonderful therapeutic abilities—when one is exposed to it);

#### **2b) Cheerfulness: its stimulation, (8)**

One gal said, “I know it's going to be a good day when all the wheels on my shopping cart turn the same way.” Well what does God say should stimulate us?

<sup>8</sup> **But** (even), **if a man lives many years and rejoices in them all** (the best possible scenario—scoring 100 out of 100), **yet let him remember** (be mindful of), **the days of darkness** (that death is only around the corner—that we all have an appointment with death—that our days upon this earth will not last forever—that after death is the judgment [Heb. 9:27]),<sup>6</sup> **for they** (ones days in Sheol), **will be many** (compared to your days here upon this earth, [One might say, “Really enjoy the summer, because winter is just around the corner and it going to be a lot longer in duration.”]).<sup>7</sup> **All**

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<sup>4</sup> You are happy to be alive.  
You are excited about your day.  
There is a bounce in your step and a sparkle in your eye.

<sup>5</sup> (Spoken by Elihu), He will redeem his soul from going down to the Pit, and his life shall see the light. “Behold, God works all these things, twice, in fact, three times with a man, To bring back his soul from the Pit, that he may be enlightened with the light (the spark, the zest, the energy of life), of life. Job 33:28-30

<sup>6</sup> Before I go to the place from which I shall not return, to the land of darkness and the shadow of death, Job 10:21

<sup>7</sup> The stimulus is that death is coming so don't wait to be cheerful and don't do it halfheartedly either! You don't have a lot of time to enjoy what God wants you to enjoy during your stay on earth. It's the same kind of intensity that you exercise when that vacation at a wonderful resort finally arrives. You do all that you can to squeeze every drop of enjoyment out of it before it ends.

that is coming is vanity (This could possibly mean several things).<sup>8</sup>

NOTES:

#### F APPLICATION:

The point that God is making is very clear. The hazards and uncertainties that a life on this earth presents should not blind us to the fact that life with God, is still a blessing and a tremendous opportunity for us to be blessed, and to be a blessing to others. God is telling us that life is an arena in which we have a responsibility (because we have been divinely enabled by the Holy Spirit), to rise above the futility of life under the sun, despite all of the odds of doing so.

You know the odds. It's the struggle you face between knowing what you should do and what you want to do. What you want to do is usually not what you should do and it is usually the stronger of the two forces as well. The odds are against you.

God wants us to enjoy life, not simply endure it. While most of the circumstances of your life are out of your control, your attitude towards life is not. The never ending tension between imminent death and finding whatever joy you can in this life is always present. But, the fact is, God tells us simply and plainly that there isn't anything in life that we cannot find some measure of joy in. He says in James 1:2, "**My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.**"

One old sage said, "The one who smiles when things go wrong is just going off his shift." Well God in His Word, tells us something very different.

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<sup>8</sup> **[1]** This is an Old Testament book remember. In the New Testament, for the believer, God tells us that to be "**absent from the body is to be present with the Lord,**" [2 Cor. 5:8]. That was not the case for the Old Testament believer. Christ had not come and paid the penalty for sin yet, so the OT believers went to Sheol, the holding place of the dead, while they waited. Yes, it was in the compartment called Paradise, but it was still not heaven, and they were still not free. They were still separated from God. They were in perpetual limbo. **[2]** For the unbeliever, whether from the OT or NT period, all is emptiness for him who has sealed his fate at death to an eternity in hell and damnation. **[3]** This could be a repeat of the statement that God started this book with in Ecclesiastes 1:2, and has repeated many times, "**Vanity of vanities**" says the Preacher; "**Vanity of vanities, all (everything without exception), is vanity, 'I have seen all the works that are done (by man), under the sun (not above the sun!—in other words by man and for man [not by God and for God]); and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind,**" (meaning everything done under the sun is filled with emptiness and futility). God may be saying to us that if we chose to not enjoy life and live above the sun, everything in our life will be filled with emptiness; a sad and futile existence.

All of these interpretations could fit the context and can be backed up Scripturally.

God says in Matthew 5:10-12, **“Blessed (happy), are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for (the reason being: Is that it is fun? NO!—Is that it is exciting? NO!—Is that it is desirable? NOT HARDLY!—It is because), great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”** (Mt 5:10-12—that is your measure of joy) God said to the Apostle Paul, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”** Paul then said in response, **“Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”** (2 Co 12:9)

Did it work for Paul, though? Could he truly be happy in all of his experiences? Let’s ask him. Turn to Philippians 4:10-13. **“I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”** Did it work for Paul? Yes, and it will work for you too.

Let’s look at this from another perspective.

If you were to walk down the streets of the city or the town where you live and ask the people you meet, "What are you waiting for to enjoy life?" I think you would get one of three different answers, and each one finds its origin in the world's system in which we live.

Here's the first that comes to my mind: *"I'm waiting until I have the things I've always wanted. When that happens, then I'll be happy.* [Are having material possessions wrong? No.—Is basing your happiness on material possessions wrong? Yes.] That directly connects happiness with material possessions. How very many people really think, "When I have those *things*, then I'll laugh at life and I'll smile back at God." This cuts cross-grain with Jesus' words:

"Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life [does his light] consist of his possessions" (Luke 12:15).

In other words, even if we could have all the things we've ever wanted, we still wouldn't have what life is all about. The implication is even stronger: It's a waste to connect happiness with the things that don't comprise life. John Gardner, author of *Self-Renewal*, writes these biting, but true words:

If happiness could be found in having material things, and in being able to indulge yourself in things that you consider pleasurable, then we, in America, would be deliriously happy. We would be telling one another frequently of our unparalleled bliss, rather than trading tranquilizer prescriptions.'

...Another answer people would give when asked "What are you waiting for to be happy?" is "*I'm waiting for a person who will fulfill my life.*" . [Is it wrong to have close friendships? No.—Is basing your happiness on having close friendships wrong? Yes.] Frequently, this answer comes from someone who is unhappily single. "I'm waiting until I meet my future marriage partner." Or from the couple who is anxious to start a family, "We are waiting until we have our first baby." And how about the unhappily employed? "I'm waiting for the boss to change. I'm waiting for there to be a change at the top." Or the unhappily married: "I'm waiting for things to change at home; then I'll be happy." Many would say they're waiting for a friend to pull up close and relieve their loneliness.

None of that holds water. Scripture frequently reminds us how foolish it is to trust in "the arm of flesh" to bring us hope and happiness. Psalm 41 gives us an account of David's confession regarding his rather miserable situation. And it had to do with people—maybe people with whom he had cultivated a friendship over the years who had now turned against him.

All who hate me whisper together against me; against me they devise my hurt, saying, "A wicked thing is poured out upon him, that when he lies down, he will not rise up again." Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me (vv. 7-9).

We can't depend on people for our happiness. Like David, we may invest much time and emotion in cultivating a close friendship, only to be let down with disappointments and heartaches. No, if you're counting on a human being to bring you happiness in life, you're in for a lifetime of waiting.

There is a third possible answer. "*I'm waiting until I have achieved my goals and realized my dreams.*" . [Is it wrong to have goals and dreams? No.—Is basing your happiness on meeting these goal and dreams wrong? Yes.] How many have dreams and high hopes that are on the horizon and then think, "I'll be so happy when I accomplish my plans." Regardless of what it may be—owning a business, making a million dollars, fulfilling that educational dream, completing a desire to go around the world, or sailing a vessel from this continent to another—whatever or however great the dream may be, and as much as it may keep us plugging, chances are extremely good that it will never bring satisfaction. The realization of our dreams will never make us smile contentedly down deep inside. [Another thing is that a dream can disappear as quickly or even quicker than it appeared. Then what are you going to do?]

At the risk of sounding simplistic, I find the following statement one of the most sensible, reasonable, and achievable answers I've ever heard:

Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be happy. For when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow. So let it grow, and don't try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete (James 1:2-4, TLB).

Isn't that a great way to live? I'm not waiting until "someday" when I can find the pinnacle or the plateau of happiness, but I'm finding it in the climb. I'm discovering it in the struggle. I'm learning that it's in the difficult times that I really can have a lot of happiness. I don't need things or people or vast accomplishments if I have the living God as the nucleus of my life. Struggles, in fact, can become some of life's best experiences.

[A little girl asked her grandmother, who she knew was going through some struggles, how she felt. Her grandma told her that she felt fine. The little girl responded by saying, "Well, if you feel good, why don't you tell your face."]

If you are truly going to be happy, cheerful, it just can't be words. It has to come from deep inside your inner man. It has to come from your soul and spirit.]

This is going to sound terribly familiar, but maybe repetition will help reinforce the truth. Happiness is for today. Joy is available now. We are not to put it on hold. Happiness isn't something that will secretly open up to us when we turn fifty-five, or when we reach some goal or find the right marriage partner. Happiness is for now. It is inseparably linked to the living Lord.

## **(2) Solomon advises the younger generation, (11:9-12:7)**

### **1a Enjoy your youth, (11:9-10)**

<sup>9</sup> **Rejoice** (imperative, a command to be glad, live it up!), **O young man,**

A father became upset about the time his sixth grade son took to get home from school. He determined to make the trip himself to see how long it should take to cover that distance. He concluded that twenty minutes maximum was enough, but this son was taking well over an hour.

Finally the father decided to follow his son as he walked home. After that trip the man said, "The twenty minutes I thought reasonable was right, but I failed to consider such important things as a side trip to skip some rocks on a pond...or time to sit on a bench and watch the different people pass by...or a few minutes to talk to some grandmas working in her flower beds...or time to shoot a few hoops with a pine cone.

In short, I had forgotten what it was like to intentionally take time to have some fun in life.

God stresses to you young people especially... to have a ball in life; have fun. The reason being is that when you get older.. you will start looking forward to a dull evening.

**1b) When to especially enjoy your life, (9)**

**in your youth** (in those prime days when your body is strong, your mind is still quick, at the time of your prime potential—these are some of the best days of your life),

**2b) How to enjoy your life, (9)**

**(1c) Listen to your heart, (9)**

**Rejoice, O young man, in your youth; and let** (allow), **your heart** (the control center of your actions, speech, motivations, and attitudes), **cheer you** (give you joy), **in the days of your youth** (may your personhood and your heart be in harmony with each other, both being equally satisfied with no regrets, no guilt, no conflicts]);

**(2c) Satisfy your heart, (9)**

**walk in the ways** (satisfy the will), **of your heart,**

**(3c) Satisfy your eyes, (9)**

**and** (walk), **in the sight of your eyes** (satisfy the desire of your eyes);

So far it sounds pretty hedonistic, doesn't it. It sounds like total surrender to the flesh. Well, God is going to show us in no uncertain terms, that it's not.

**(4c) Use your head, (9-10)**

**but** (here's the qualifier), **know** (recognize, realize), **that for all these** (for satisfying the will of your heart and the desire of your eyes), **God will bring you into judgment**, (God will examine whether it was something that would truly bring you the joy He wants you to experience, [joy that is absent of guilt, shame, dishonor and joy that would extend into the eternal]—God is saying that he wants you to live life to the hilt, but He is not giving you license to go wild—there are boundaries, rights and wrongs, checks and balances).

<sup>10</sup> **Therefore** (since God wants and even commands you to live life to the full), **remove sorrow from your heart** (sorrow that is brought on by a sinful thought life, attitude, and/or motives), **and put away evil from your flesh** (evil brought on by sinful words and actions), **for** (the reason being, apart from these boundaries), **childhood and youth are vanity** (futile, hollow, empty, fruitless, joyless).

OK, so how are you to live life to the full, and not bring sorrow into your heart or evil into your life—and thus not have to fear judgment day? I’m going to give you several ways, via several biblical examples.

1. Did Daniel live life to the hilt?! He sure did. We can follow Daniel’s example then—**Daniel purposed** (determined, made up his mind, resolved from his inner most being), **in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.** Daniel 1:8
  - Purpose in your heart not to defile yourself with the sinful things that your flesh craves, the world offers, or the devil promotes. Decide your stand on moral and ethical issues before you are challenged by them, like cheating, lying, gossiping, speeding, drugs, and sex before marriage. If they are sinful now, they are not going to change later. I do not believe that Daniel ever regretted his decision and therefore it had to bring him a good measure of joy, here on earth as well as at judgment.
  
2. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego can teach us something about living life—*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. “If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. “But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”* Daniel 3:16-18
  - Face persecution for doing the right thing bravely, confidently in the strength and to the glory of the Lord your God. Sometimes it is the only way to get through to some people, like Nebuchadnezzar. Sometimes it is the only way to get through to you as well, like Samson. I do not think that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego ever regretted their decision and therefore it had to bring them a good measure of joy.
  
3. Let’s consider Joseph, the son of Abraham for a moment—*And it came to pass after these things that his master’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.” But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. “There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her. But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside, that she caught him by his*

*garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside. And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside,* Genesis 39:7-13

- You can't always avoid temptation. Sometimes you come face to face with it and your only way out is to run away from it. Get away from it as fast as you can. That may mean leaving a particular place. It may mean terminating a friendship. It may mean being willing to be teased, ridiculed or even disliked.

If you don't run from temptation, you will probably be bitten by it like this salesman:

An eager but somewhat unscrupulous salesman was delivering a bid to an engineering firm. While the man waiting on him stepped away from the desk for a few moments, the salesman noticed a competitor's bid on the man's desk, but he couldn't read the amount of the bid, as there was a juice can on top of the part of the bid that showed the total amount. The temptation was just too big to resist and so he reached over to move the can to see what the competition was bidding. As he lifted the can, his heart sank as he watched thousands of BBs pour from the bottomless can and scatter across the floor. He was baited and he fell for it. (Sin always bites back in some hidden way—Adam and Eve)

- Moses can teach us something about life—(*the man Moses was very meek/humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.*) Numbers 12:3
  - Work through the frustrations that others bring into your life and exercise gentleness towards them. Intercede personally and to God for their welfare. You may still have to make hard choices concerning others as Moses did, but you can still maintain control in doing so.
- Nehemiah—*And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. Therefore the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart." So I became dreadfully afraid, and said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?" Then the king said to me, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."* Nehemiah 2:1-5
  - Always have a burden and a vision for God's work. Look for ways that you can use your abilities and spiritual gifts for God on behalf of others, at home, church, school, your neighborhood, wherever you are. Allow God to burden your heart about His work and people.

6. Job—...***Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?***” ***In all this Job did not sin with his lips.*** (Job 2:10b)
- Accept the fact that you will experience both good and adversity in your life. See them both as equal and necessary parts of God’s plan for your life. Some of it will pertain to what God wants to do in you, and some of it will pertain to what God wants to do through you on behalf of others. So endure hardship with your spiritual eyes open as Joseph did as he said to his brothers—***“you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good,”*** (Gen. 50:20). Ask yourself one simple question here, “God, how can I put you on display through this hardship or blessing?”
7. Paul—***I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,*** (Romans 9:1-3).
- Always have a burden for the lost around you. Try to never forget their plight and reach out to them with compassion. Attempt to offer them God’s gift of forgiveness and close fellowship. Ask Jesus everyday, “Jesus, please allow me to see those who I will come into contact with today, through Your eyes of compassion.” Always keep a good tract or two on you. (What evangelism is and is not...)
8. Solomon—***You have ravished my heart, My sister, my spouse; You have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes, with one link of your necklace. How fair is your love, my sister, my spouse! How much better than wine is your love, and the scent of your perfumes than all spices! Your lips, O my spouse, drip as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under your tongue; and the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.***  
Song of Solomon 4:9-1
- If God has marriage in store for you. Always be overjoyed with the love of your spouse and no other. Guard and keep your affections focused on him or her. Always work hard to continually make your marriage all that God wants it to be for the both of you. Make sure that you always make time to enjoy each other, apart from talking about bills, trials and business.
9. Barnabas—***Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.” Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.*** Acts 15:36-38

- Never stop believing in others. Attempt to keep them focusing on their God given potential. Help them to succeed in life. God has made everyone, without exception, valuable and with purpose. We are all going to make mistakes. We are all going to have strengths and weaknesses. We are all going to have things that draw people towards us, as well as things that drive them away. Be a Barnabas, a builder-upper. Believe in them with the hope that they will believe in God and themselves.

Psalm 29:2

***Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.***

God says, and I say, “Live it up!”

## 2a Remember you Creator, (12:1-7)

<sup>1</sup> Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them":

<sup>2</sup> While the sun and the light, the moon and the stars, are not darkened, and the clouds do not return after the rain;

<sup>3</sup> In the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow down; when the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look through the windows grow dim;

<sup>4</sup> When the doors are shut in the streets, and the sound of grinding is low; when one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of music are brought low.

<sup>5</sup> Also they are afraid of height, and of terrors in the way; when the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper is a burden, and desire fails. For man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets.

<sup>6</sup> Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the well.

<sup>7</sup> Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

1. Let him enjoy them in such a way that it brings him an eternal reward.

 **INTERPRETATION:**

**F** **APPLICATION:**

 **COMMENTARY:**