



How to Maximize Your Life

Pursuing Wisdom Under the Sun, Part 11

Ecclesiastes 11:9-10

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A secular journalist put it well when he wrote, “Inside every old person is a young person wondering what happened.”

David Gibson, [Living Life Backward](#) (Crossway, 2017), p. 131

Inside every old person is a young person who’s wondering to themselves — and perhaps even out loud — how did life go by so fast?

And everyone can chime in and tell their story of how the unpredictable events occurred in their lives, or when things took place without any explanation.

Life is fast and filled with things that are unexpected and things that are unexplainable.

If you were with us in our last study as we began chapter 11 in Ecclesiastes, Solomon essentially told us not to let the unexpected events in life paralyze us with fear. He went on to challenge us to not let the unexplainable events in life rob us of joy.

How do we do that? Well, at this point in his private journal, Solomon is bringing God back into the scene of life down here under the sun.

That sense of security and joy can occur as we recognize that what is unexpected to us was fully expected by the plan of God for our lives.

And what is unexplainable to us was fully known by the wisdom of God.

I appreciate the lyrics to that gospel song that has a walk of faith in mind for the believer, with an incredible perspective as it sings:

*We see the present clearly
But He sees the first and
the last
And like a tapestry He's
weaving you and me,
To someday be like Him*

*God is too wise to be
mistaken*

*God is too good to be
unkind
So when you don't
understand
When don't see His plan
When you can't trace His
hand
Trust His Heart*

Babbie Y. Mason / Eddie Carswell Trust His Heart lyrics; Warner
Chappell Music, Concord Music Publishing LLC

When you can't trace His hand, trust His heart.

Solomon is now an old man — and like any older person who cares about God and the people of God, he's about to pull up a chair, as it were, and talk directly to young people.



What was the best “fatherly advice” that you have been given by someone older than you? How did that advice impact the course of your life?

And there's a sense of urgency in Solomon's inspired advice. No doubt he's thinking about his own son who will soon be crowned the king of Israel. We're about to listen in on an amazing father-son chat here.

But God the Father's intention is to pull up a chair, as it were, and look every young person in the eye and give life-directing, life-protecting, life-fulfilling advice through this text.

God wants us to get it right at the earliest stage possible.

Follow along as I read these two verses of scripture:

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

Ecclesiastes 11:9-10

This is an incredibly loaded conversation.

Let me break down God's advice to young people through Solomon's words here, into three statements.

The first one might surprise you — here it is:

Enjoy your early years thoroughly!

Verse 9 again — just the first part:

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth.

Ecclesiastes 11:9a

You might notice that this same command appears in **verse 8** — to believers of all ages — rejoice in all your days.

But now God pins this advice on the lapel of every young person's heart.

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth.

Solomon's doesn't say, "Listen, you're young, but don't forget that one day you'll be old."

Gibson, p. 135

That'll throw cold water on somebody's enthusiasm in life.

Solomon doesn't write here: "You're young, but one day you'll be old like me."

What he does write is for you to enjoy to the hilt the days of your youth.



The young years in life are full of change, from being a child to an adult, with education, jobs, and family all changing along the way. How can you find time to enjoy those moments along the way?

This text has been convicting to me personally, because I realized that I'm making comments to younger people and even younger parents, "Look, enjoy these days because one day they'll be gone; before you know it, they'll drive away."

I can still remember the moment — my wife had gotten our twins bundled up and we went out; Marsha was holding the door of a store open and I was pushing the twin stroller through the doorway. And a woman walked by, a little older than we were, and she stopped and smiled and asked me, "Are those twins?" I said, "Yes, you want 'em? Can we pay you to potty train them?" She laughed and said to us what was music to my wife's ear's especially; she said, "I've have twins . . . it'll get easier."

That was actually encouraging! You'll survive — enjoy where you are right now.

And this is especially true of young people, because what do they want? They want to get older! Somewhere in life that reverses.

One of my grandsons turned 6 and I could tell he was already over it! He told me, "I'm gonna be 7 next!" Forget 6, he wants to be 7. He went on to say, "And then I'll be 8."

We can't wait to get older. We can't wait to go to school. We can't wait to drive. We can't wait to graduate. There's a positive side to that but there's a negative side that is cultivated as well.

Solomon wants us to challenge the cultivation of discontent even at a young age. You don't necessarily outgrow this attitude of discontent wherever you are in life.

So, learn to enjoy the moment where God has placed you.

By the way, don't overlook the fact that rejoicing is a command. He's delivered the command to every age in **verse 8** and now he specifically gives it to the young person in *verse 9*.

Which is another way of saying that a discontented spirit starts young.



Describe a time you have faced difficulty but remained content. Have you ever been discontented with something in your life? How have you learned greater contentment along the way?

Throughout scripture, this command confronts our discontented spirit, which started in the Garden! "Eve, you've got everything you could possibly want in this Garden Paradise, but wouldn't you want something more?"

So, here is a command to have a joyful spirit in life.

Rejoicing in where you are is doing battle with the enemy of discontent.

Paul was imprisoned but wrote to the believer to rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice. (Philippians 4:4)

And there's a reason for it that we often overlook.

When you give your child, or family member or friend, a gift, you expect them to thank you for it; to open it and enjoy it.

Adapted from Gibson, p. 136

What if they opened it and then complained about it and didn't want to use it and kept it in the box or kicked it under the couch? You'd be grieved if not offended.

God has given us the gift of our individual lives. Solomon has reinforced in chapter 11 that when we say things like, "But I don't like it; I want something different; it's not my favorite thing; it's not what I want," God is grieved, if not offended.

C. S. Lewis got it right when he wrote to a friend — even after living through World War II and losing his wife to cancer — he writes, "It is the Christian's duty to be as happy as he can be."

John Piper, *The Dangerous Duty of Delight* (Multnomah, 2001), p. 14

When's the best time to start practicing the obedience of a joyful spirit?

Solomon pulls up a chair and delivers this most unusual advice to young people — "Listen, you're young; everything is in front of you; don't wish these days away; enjoy where you are right now, and begin now, to develop a thankful, joyful spirit."

How?

- Start with small things — work your way up!
- Make thanksgiving a daily practice.
- Ask God for eyes to see His gifts, both small and great. And then don't wait — don't get any older before you start.

Frankly, no matter how old you are, it's never too late to begin.

Solomon writes, enjoy your early years thoroughly.

Secondly,

Spend your early years wisely!

Notice the next phrase in verse 9:

Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes.

Ecclesiastes 11:9b

You could translate this, follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes.

William D. Barrick, *Ecclesiastes: The Philippians of the Old Testament* (Christian Focus, 2011), p. 190

And you're thinking, what kind of advice is that? Are you kidding?

You don't tell young people to follow their impulses — that's like giving a 16-year-old a sports car, hoping he'll drive under the speed limit.

You don't tell young people to follow their dreams and creative thoughts, are you out of your mind?

That's exactly what Solomon wrote. Solomon looks at a young person and says, "What is it that really gets you excited about life? What are you interested in doing with your life? What is it that you'd really like to go after?"

And here's the qualifier – notice the last part of the verse:

But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

Ecclesiastes 11:9c

In other words, just make sure that whatever it is that you're going after is something God would be pleased with if you found it.

The idea of judgment here is not to be interpreted as some kind of damper — you know, "Enjoy your life, because one day you will get dragged into court and stand before the judge."

No, that's not the spirit of this phrase. Solomon is simply reminding young people that freedom has a fence.

Privileges include responsibilities; liberty comes with accountability.

Quotation from Warren W. Wiersbe, *Ecclesiastes: Be Satisfied* (Victor Books, 1990), p.

And he reminds the youth that their ultimate accountability is that coming day when we all will stand before our creator God.



What has your youth taught you about accountability? You may not still live under your parents' roof, or your teachers classroom, but do you still feel accountability to someone else for your actions? Do you feel that accountability to God?

Invest your early years wisely, which is another way of saying, don't waste your life!

One author writes that as a boy he used to hear illustrations that his fiery father would use as he preached. One of his father's most gripping illustrations was a man the church had prayed for over many decades. He was resistant to the gospel and had a hard demeanor and a hard heart. Piper writes, "But one day, for some reason, he showed up when my father was preaching. At the end of the service, to everyone's amazement he came and took my father's hand. They sat down together on the front pew of the church as the people were dismissed. God opened his heart to the Gospel of Christ, and he was saved from his sins and given eternal life. But that did not stop him from sobbing and saying, as the tears ran down his wrinkled face—and what an impact it made on me to hear my father repeat what this man said, through his own tears, "I've wasted it! I've wasted it!" This author writes, "This gripped me more than the stories of young people who died in car wrecks before they were born again; this story of an old man weeping that he had wasted his life awakened in me a fear and a passion not to waste mine."

John Piper, *Don't Waste Your Life* (Crossway Books, 2003), p. 12

Sounds like Solomon here in the closing portion of his private journal.

There's one more point to make here to the youth of every generation — and I

believe in the providence of God, this is what He wants you to hear today:

Enjoy your early years thoroughly;

Invest your early years wisely:

Now thirdly:

Guard your early years carefully!

Verse 10 – notice the first command:

Remove vexation from your heart

Ecclesiastes 11:10a

The word **vexation** combines two ideas: anger and resentment. And when those coexist in a young person's heart, you end up with rebellion. Put away anger and resentment — in other words, put away a rebellious, resentful spirit.

Charles R. Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge* (Insight for Living, 1983), p. 117

And young people struggle with this early on because life seems to get in the way, older people get in the way, parents and teachers and coaches get in their way.

Solomon effectively says, "You better learn to deal with this early in life, because you will find out throughout your life that something or somebody will always be in your way — that illness, that financial loss, that co-worker who beat you to that promotion — something always gets in the way of your happiness. Learn early to resist anger and resentment from growing in your heart."

Again, it's a matter of going back to that earlier principle that when those

unexpected and unexplainable events occur in life — especially the disappointing ones — God isn't surprised! He's allowing it for His purposes which, at the moment, are not being explained.

When you can't trace His hand, trust His heart.

Now notice the next part of this command in verse 10:

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

Ecclesiastes 11:10

Youth and the dawn of life are fleeting.

This expression translated the dawn of life, or the prime of life, comes a word that literally means black.

Daniel L. Akin and Jonathan Akin, [Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Christ in Ecclesiastes](#) (Holman, 2016), p. 114

It was typically used to refer to a full head of black hair on a young person. Solomon is writing here that youth and that black head of hair of yours are fleeting.

That black hair will turn gray, or maybe it'll just turn loose!

So, during these days of youth and vitality, Solomon writes here, ***put away pain from your body.***

The word ***pain*** refers to evil — and evil, or sin, in the context of the body refers to immorality. Solomon is referring to sexual

sin that brings danger and pain as a consequence to the body.

The tragic failure of the older generation today is that it is approving and applauding and promoting and selling and endorsing and glorifying the sexual promiscuity of young people.

In fact, one of the blights on our generation as a culture is that we have attached the word “safe” to the word “sex” — and of course, it has everything to do with sex outside of marriage — which would be sinful.

There is no such thing as safe sin.

That's like going to the beach where sharks have been spotted and putting up signs that read, “Safe swimming.”

I think it's interesting that Solomon will write more about sexual sin than just about any other topic. He ought to know because it wasted decades of his life.

He writes to young men in Proverbs 5 about the danger of sexual promiscuity and he writes in ***verse 11 that at the end of your life you will groan, when your flesh and your body are consumed.***

This is the warning that will never make it into the movies; this isn't going to get into school textbooks; sexual activity among young people is causing a tidal wave of consequences.

Listen to the Center for Disease Control's statistic that you'll never see on the news; and I quote, “A new sexually transmitted infection is diagnosed every 45 seconds and in its wake are pain, blindness,

arthritis, infertility, brain damage, heart disease, and death. In spite of 50 years of penicillin and wonder drugs, millions of people are contracting new generations of incurable, sexually transmitted disease.

Bruce K. Waltke, [Proverbs: Volume 1](#) (Eerdmans, 2004), p. 129

Every 45 seconds.

Another author wrote that 300,000 people contract Hepatitis B every year, globally. It's a virus primarily transmitted through sexual contact that causes permanent liver damage and death.

Robert Jeffress, [The Solomon Secrets](#) (Waterbrook Press, 2002), p. 118

The Center for Disease Control issued a statement 24 months ago that told — and I quote — “Combined cases of syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia reached an all-time high in the United States. There were more than 115,000 syphilis cases reported this year. Gonorrhea increased to more than 580,000 cases and chlamydia increased to more than 1.7 million cases.

So, in one year, 2.4 million cases of sexually transmitted diseases were reported, causing sickness, pain, contagion, and even death.

And ladies and gentlemen, you didn't see one press conference. You didn't read one newspaper article. You didn't watch one alarming news report; you didn't receive one mandate or restriction or warning.

Why?

Because our world doesn't want to own up to God's design; it doesn't want to hear any advice from Solomon or the church or God that would in any way restrict what they desire to do with their bodies.



How difficult is it for you to honor God, even when it means controlling your bodily impulses? How can we share the truths of God's Word concerning sexual sin to a world that does not want to be told what they can or cannot do with their body?

But Solomon pulls his chair up close and says, “Listen young people; this is God's word; this is God's design; this is God's protection — put this as far away from you as you can. I want you to enjoy your youth; I want you to make the most of it, but you've got to do it God's way. God knows what's best; God created you, and God wants you to enjoy the gift of life He's given you.

So:

- Enjoy these early years thoroughly;
- Invest these early years wisely;
- Guard these early years carefully.

And let me say this — no matter how old you are today, it's never too late to begin.

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