Bread Upon the Waters

Remember Your Creator While Young

Ecclesiastes 11:1-10
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Ecclesiastes 11:1-10,

1. Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again.
2. Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land.
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.
4. Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.
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.
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.
7. Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun.
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.
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.
10. So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigor are meaningless. (NIV)
**Introduction:**

I. Coffman observed that chapters 11 and 12 conclude Ecclesiastes and deny the hopelessness of what has been said previously.

II. Bland called attention to the repeated use of the “you do not know/understand” phrase (four times) in this chapter relating to:

   A. disasters to come.
   
   B. weather.
   
   C. mysteries of life.
   
   D. mysteries of God and his work.

III. Matthew Henry identified two principal topics which are addressed in this chapter; viz.,

   A. Engage in works of charity, liberality and bounty to the poor. Verses 1-6.
   
   B. Prepare for death and the judgment. Verses 7-10.

IV. “Koheleth, having been concerned with perplexities in God’s moral government, and the difficulties that meet man in his social relations, proceeds to give his remedies for this state of things,” the Pulpit Commentary states.

   A. The remedies are:

      1. beneficence and an active life.
      
      2. joyful light-heartedness.
3. piety.

B. The Pulpit Commentary further concludes that “man’s duty and happiness are found in activity, especially in doing all the good in his power, for he knows not how soon he himself may stand in need of help. This is the first remedy for the perplexities of life.”

C. The Pulpit Commentary states that God expects the spirit to enjoy the present, with a chastened regard to the future. Cheerfulness is the second remedy for the perplexities of the present life.

Commentary:

**Bread Upon the Waters**

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

**Note:** Headings based on NIV text.

I. Cast your bread (corn) upon the waters, . . .

A. Traditionally this verse and the one following advise benevolence. (Coffman)

1. **Matthew 5:42, 46, Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? (NIV)**

2. **Luke 6:38, Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running
over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (NIV)

3. Proverbs 19:7, A poor man is shunned by all his relatives— how much more do his friends avoid him! Though he pursues them with pleading, they are nowhere to be found. (NIV)

4. Psalm 112:5, Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice. (NIV)

5. Psalm 126:5, 6, Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him. (NIV)

B. Others believe the application is to God’s blessing business ventures.

C. Smith wrote, “Who in their right mind would hurl cakes of bread into a stream of water? This seems to be a metaphor for engaging in thankless toil. The proverb then urges the wise person to do good without hope of return.”

D. Remember, Davidson reminded us, generosity changed Scrooge, the “covetous old sinner into a man whose ‘heart laughed.’”

E. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown wrote, “This image is taken from the custom of sowing seed by casting it from boats into the overflowing waters of the Nile, or in any marshy ground. When the water receded the grain in the alluvial soil sprang up.” The Pulpit Commentary rejects this application.
1. Isaiah 32:20, how blessed you will be, sowing your seed by every stream, and letting your cattle and donkeys range free. (NIV)

2. Isaiah 49:4, But I said, "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God." (NIV)

F. Adam Clarke saw this expression as “an allusion to the sowing of rice; which was sown upon muddy ground, or ground covered with water, and trodden in by the feet of cattle: it thus took root, and grew, and was found after many days in a plentiful harvest.”

G. Koheleth taught that we are to use even our seed-corn to help the needy. (Matthew Henry)

H. The meaning may be that we are to do good without hope of return. (Pulpit Commentary)

1. Matthew 5:44-46, But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? (NIV)

2. Luke 6:32-35, "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do
good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. (NIV)

I. The meaning may be that we are to engage in productive commercial ventures with expectation of profit. The Pulpit Commentary rejects this application.

1. Proverbs 31:14, She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. (NIV)

2. Psalm 107:23, Others went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters. (NIV)

A. After many days rewards will come to the benevolent person.

B. Davidson wrote, “... this is not an invitation to be generous so that you may reap a reward. That would be against the spirit of true generosity.”

C. Adam Clarke commented, “Give alms to the poor, and it will be as seed sown in good ground. God will cause thee afterwards to receive it with abundant increase.”

D. “The Targum understands it of giving bread to poor sailors,” Adam Clarke also wrote.

E. Send your benevolent gifts on a voyage. In due time they will return to you. This follows the merchant ship figure. (Matthew Henry)

F. Do not give to get, but God does take care of his own.
Ecclesiastes 11:2, Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land. (NIV)

Note: Bland gives two possible applications of verses 1 and 2, the first relating to benevolence and the second to business enterprises.

I. Give portions to seven, yes to eight, . . .

A. The GNB reads, “Put your investments in several places, even many places.” (Coffman)

B. “The KJV, ASV and the RSV unanimously render the word give. (Coffman)

1. Give liberally, not grudgingly.

2. Charity is advocated.

C. Smith explained this passage to mean, “. . . give a portion of your bread to any number of those who might need it. Koheleth is recommending unlimited benevolence.”

D. The New English Bible, Davidson observed, renders this verse differently as follows: “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.”

1. Business people take risks, but they lesson their liabilities as is practical.

2. Proverbs 31:14, She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. (NIV)
3. Isaiah 18:2, which sends envoys by sea in papyrus boats over the water. Go, swift messengers, to a people tall and smooth-skinned, to a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation of strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers. (NIV)

4. Wise entrepreneurs don’t put all their eggs in one basket. (See Davidson)

E. Scriptures:

1. Job 5:19, From six calamities he will rescue you; in seven no harm will befall you. (NIV)

F. Adam Clarke wrote that we should never cease giving as long as we see distressed people around us and we have means to help.

G. The use of seven and eight or other numbers in sequence in the Old Testament (Bland) refers to many; for example,

1. Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13, This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth, This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Gaza, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom, This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood, This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Edom, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because he pursued his brother with a sword, stifling all compassion, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked, This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Ammon,
even for four, I will not turn back {my wrath}. Because he ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend his borders, (NIV)

2. Amos 2:1, 4, 6, This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Moab, even for four, I will not turn back {my wrath}. Because he burned, as if to lime, the bones of Edom's king, This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Judah, even for four, I will not turn back {my wrath}. Because they have rejected the law of the LORD and have not kept his decrees, because they have been led astray by false gods, the gods their ancestors followed, This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back {my wrath}. They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. (NIV)

3. Proverbs 30:7, 9, 15, 18, 21, 24, 29, "Two things I ask of you, O LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God. The leech has two daughters. 'Give! Give!' they cry. "There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, 'Enough!': "There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand: "Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up: "Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise: "There are three things that are stately in their stride, four that move with stately bearing: (NIV)

4. Our blessings are to be shared in as many ways as possible, Bland concluded.
5. Micah 5:5, And he will be their peace. When the Assyrian invades our land and marches through our fortresses, we will raise against him seven shepherds, even eight leaders of men. (NIV)

6. Proverbs 6:16, There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: (NIV)

H. God gives to us. We are to give liberally to others. (Matthew Henry)

II. for you do not know what (evil) disaster may come upon the land (earth).

A. The time may come when you may need help and will need the assistance of others yourself. (See Smith)

B. Smith further wrote, “The idea is to make friends now as insurance against the day the help of others will be needed.”

1. Luke 16:1-12, Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg— I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' " 'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' " 'A thousand
bushels of wheat,' he replied. 'He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? (NIV)

2. The help of those you have assisted may be needed one day.

3. Those who say, “I cannot give because I may need the money later” are answered by “I will give so that when I am later in need those I have assisted will come to my rescue.”

4. To be in a position to receive help when circumstances change is not the world’s greatest reason for helping the needy.

5. Proverbs 8:9, To the discerning all of them are right; they are faultless to those who have knowledge. (NIV)

6. Galatians 6:1, Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. (NIV)
C. Adam Clarke wrote that circumstances change and one day we may be in need of help from others. “Do as thou wouldest be done by.”

D. “Do not hold back from generosity because you anticipate misfortune or economic or political collapse. Take risks in practicing liberality.” (Bland)

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. (NIV)

I. If clouds are full of water, . . .

   A. There are some things which are totally outside our control. (Davidson)

   B. “We are wise if we come to terms with the fact that there are things in life over which we have and can have no control, . . .” (Davidson)

   C. Adam Clarke observed that clouds provide rain on fields and deserts. In our giving we may give to both the worthy and unworthy and that our task is to relieve distress. He concluded that it is better to help a hundred unworthy people than to overlook one worthy needy person.

   D. Farmers can well attest to the uncertainty of the weather. (See Bland)

   E. “In Wisdom Literature, weather is symbolic of that which is unpredictable,” Bland wrote.

II. they pour rain upon the earth, . . .
A. Wealth comes as a gift from God. (Coffman)

B Smith understood this verse to say that misfortunes are to be expected and that we need to be prepared for them through our present benevolence to those who may later help us.

III. Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, . . .

A. Man is helpless “in the face of the forces of nature, and man must accept things as they are. The future can be neither calculated nor controlled,” Smith further wrote.

B. Adam Clarke noted that, like a falling tree, the day of our death, at best, will soon come. We should do all the good we can while we are living.

C. “When the wind blows over a tree,” the point is, “humans have absolutely no control over where that tree will fall. Humans know that trees fall. What we do not know is when or where. Humans cannot predict future events,” Bland wrote.

D. When the winds of adversity blow we can either bend or break. (See Pulpit Commentary)

IV. in the place where it falls, there will it lie.

A. Death ends our abilities to give, do good, and perform acts of benevolence. (Coffman)

B. The condition in which we die will forever remain unchanged!

1. Revelation 22:11, 14, 15, Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy." "Blessed are those
who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the
tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.
Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the
sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and
everyone who loves and practices falsehood. (NIV)

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

I. Whoever watches the wind will not plant; . . .

A. If we wait until we are certain our gifts and benevolent deeds
will be used in the most worthy ways by their recipients, we will
always have an excuse not to give. (See Coffman)

1. Ecclesiastes 9:10, Whatever your hand finds to do, do it
with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going,
there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor
wisdom. (NIV)

B. These statements are obviously applicable to the agricultural
world from which they were taken. (See Coffman)

1. The uncertainties of life are not to discourage us from
doing our duty.

C. Smith explained this verse to mean “that the one who tries to
foresee the future and prepare for every contingency will miss
golden opportunities.”

D. While we have no say in many certain things, there are other
decisions we must make and actions we must take if we are to
succeed. (See Davidson)

II. whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.
A. Rain during harvest could be a very damaging thing, but anxiously watching the clouds may well be counter productive.

B. “Nothing in life is certain,” Smith concluded. “Probability girded with prayer must be the rule for every venture.”

C. We must act, not look for excuses to remain disengaged, inactive, to postpone and evade our responsibilities. (See Davidson)

D. The too cautious farmer will never plant and will not prosper. (See Bland)

E. In Palestine the west and northwest winds usually brought rain and some were destructive to crops. (Pulpit Commentary)

1. Proverbs 25:23, As a north wind brings rain, so a sly tongue brings angry looks. (NIV)

2. 1 Samuel 12:17, Is it not wheat harvest now? I will call upon the LORD to send thunder and rain. And you will realize what an evil thing you did in the eyes of the LORD when you asked for a king." (NIV)

3. Proverbs 26:1, Like snow in summer or rain in harvest, honor is not fitting for a fool. (NIV)

F. Risks are a part of life. Those who want to play it always safe from risks won’t do anything.

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. (NIV)
I. As you do not know the (way) path of the wind, . . . (spirit) . . .

A. Many of life’s great mysteries are beyond human comprehension although humans now understand more than did ancient Koheleth and his contemporaries. (See Coffman)

B. Man does not know many basic things about the physical world. He knows less about the spiritual world. (See Smith) (The Pulpit Commentary concurs.)

1. Two physical areas Koheleth used to illustrate this are meteorology and embryology.

C. Matthew Henry wrote that this addressed the fact that we do not know how the wind/soul/spirit enters the human body.

II. or how the body (bones) is formed in a mother’s womb, . . .

A. Job 10:8, 9, "Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again? (NIV)

B. Psalm 139:14-16, I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (NIV)

C. “The formation and quickening of the fetus were always regarded as mysterious and inscrutable” by the ancients. (Pulpit Commentary)
D. Job 10:8, 9, "Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again? (NIV)

E. Proverbs 15:30, A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones. (NIV)

F. Proverbs 16:24, Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. (NIV)

III. so you cannot understand the work of God, . . .

A. Who is so presumptuous as to claim to understand the ways of God.

1. Ecclesiastes 3:11, He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. (NIV)

2. Ecclesiastes 8:17, then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it. (NIV)

3. Ecclesiastes 9:12, Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them. (NIV)

B. The previous illustrations point to the fact that most of all people cannot understand the work of God. (See Bland)

IV. the Maker of all things.
A. Consider the constellations, galaxies, universes beyond ours and DNA only to get a glimpse of God Almighty, the maker of all things!

**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. (NIV)

I. Sow your seed in the morning, . . .

A. Take advantage of all our opportunities to do good because, while some of our efforts may prove unsuccessful, others will prove successful. (See Coffman)

1. **2 Corinthians 9:6-15**, Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the
gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (NIV)

2. Galatians 6:10, Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (NIV)

3. 2 Corinthians 9:6, Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. (NIV)

4. Hosea 10:12, Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you. (NIV)

5. Galatians 6:7, 8, Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (NIV)

B. Coffman observed that Paul, by inspiration, certainly knew what these verses mean.

C. Smith understood this verse to warn “against indolence and aptly based on ignorance of the future and the inscrutability of God’s dealings.”

D. Davidson suggested that we are to take every opportunity to do God’s will, not wait for some ideal imagined situation to do God’s bidding.
1. Don’t neglect opportunities which would then lead you to regretfully say, “If only I had done this or that, how much better life would have been.” (See Davidson)

2. Now is the acceptable time; today is the day of salvation!

3. Are you president of the procrastinators club?

E. Adam Clarke understood this verse to teach that we should always be ready to show mercy, morning, noon and night.

1. The reasons, motives of our giving, Clarke observed, are also crucial. We must give for the right reasons.

F. Don’t let the fact that you don’t understand God’s ways keep us from working morning and evening.

II. and at evening let not your hands be idle, . . .

A. Take advantage of all opportunities because we do not know which ventures will succeed and which ones will fail. (See Smith)

B. Bland wrote, “Do not allow uncertainty to lead to idleness. Be diligent and responsible.”

C. 2 Corinthians 9:6, Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. (NIV)

III. for you do not know which will succeed, (prosper) . . .

A. Isaiah 55:10, 11, As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and
making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (NIV)

B. “We must develop a balance between spontaneity and responsibility,” Bland affirmed.

1. “Do not be afraid to take risks in life when it comes to fulfilling responsibilities and especially when it comes to performing deeds of kindness,” Bland wrote.

IV. whether this or that, . . .

V. or whether both will do equally well.

Note: “Having taught us how to live well, the preacher comes now to teach us how to die well.” (Matthew Henry)

Remember Your Creator While Young

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

I. Light (life) is sweet, . . . (dear) . . .

A. Enjoy the present moment.

1. A cheerful disposition adds so much to life’s happiness both for its possessor and those associated with the cheerful person. (See Coffman)

2. John 16:22, So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. (NIV)
3. Paul repeatedly directed the Philippians to rejoice.

4. Ecclesiastes 7:11, Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing and benefits those who see the sun. (NIV)

5. Psalm 49:19, he will join the generation of his fathers, who will never see the light of life. (NIV)

B. “Koheleth (now) comes to his final conclusion regarding the meaning of life,” Smith wrote.

1. Light (life) is a wonderful blessing.

2. Light makes visible all the wonders of this life.

3. Either way life is sweet, unspeakably beautiful.

4. For the benevolent diligent worker life is really something! (See Smith)

5. We do well to enjoy and be grateful for everyday the good Lord gives us to live on his earth.

Note: Bland identified two dominant themes in these verses, enjoy and remember.

C. Why would anyone seek death except to escape intense pain on earth or/and to gain wondrous blessings in the world to come. (See Matthew Henry)

II. and it pleases the eyes to see the sun; (that is, to be alive, to enjoy life).

A. Light and sun are metaphors for life. (Bland)
1. Job 3:16, Or why was I not hidden in the ground like a stillborn child, like an infant who never saw the light of day? (NIV)

2. Job 33:28, 30, He redeemed my soul from going down to the pit, and I will live to enjoy the light. 'to turn back his soul from the pit, that the light of life may shine on him. (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. (NIV)

I. However many years a man may live, . . .

A. Have a disciplined appreciative regard for the future.

1. Matthew 5:11, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. (NIV)

II. let him enjoy them all.

A. It is man’s pleasure and duty to enjoy life whether he lives a long life or dies prematurely.

B. Remember! Earthly life will not last forever. Enjoy life as long as it lasts.

III. But let him remember the days of darkness, . . . (death) . . .

A. Coffman wrote that the application here is to the days of death, sickness, infirmity and dying.
1. Psalm 23:3, 4, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (NIV)

B. Smith speaks of Sheol as a definite contrast to “life under the sun.”

1. John 9:4, As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. (NIV)

2. Smith urged that we live the best we know however hour of every day!

3. Job 10:21, 22, before I go to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and deep shadow, to the land of deepest night, of deep shadow and disorder, where even the light is like darkness." (NIV)

4. Psalm 88:12, Are your wonders known in the place of darkness, or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion? (NIV)

5. 1 Corinthians 15:32, If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." (NIV)

C. Remembering the certainty of death, we are enjoined to enjoy the present.

1. Ecclesiastes 7:1, The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem: (NIV)
2. “We are not to live life recklessly, but we are to make every moment count. (See Bland)

3. John 9:4, As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. (NIV)

D. The Pulpit Commentary states that the abode of the departed spirits was usually conceived of as a realm from which the light of day was excluded, or only dimly admitted.

   1. Job 10:21, 22, before I go to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and deep shadow, to the land of deepest night, of deep shadow and disorder, where even the light is like darkness." (NIV)

IV. for they will be many.

   A. The days in Sheol, where we remain dead, are many for sure!

   B. The days of darkness are many, not endless. Even after the longest night comes the dawn of a new day! (Matthew Henry)

V. Everything to come is vanity, fleeting, meaningless.

   A. “The present is the substance of life,” Smith stated. “Make the best of it.”

   B. Smith also said this may refer to old age and its attendant weaknesses treated in chapter 12.

   C. Smith wrote that Koheleth urged the enjoyment of youth and the remembrance of the grave.
D. Nothing in life is permanent. Generations come and go and the world keeps turning.

E. The unknown condition of the dead, to Koheleth, like so many things in this life, is vanity, meaningless. (See Pulpit Commentary)

1. Ecclesiastes 9:5, For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. (NIV)

2. Job 10:21, 22, Nothing is left for him to devour; his prosperity will not endure. In the midst of his plenty, distress will overtake him; the full force of misery will come upon him. (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. (NIV)

I. Be happy, (rejoice), young man, while you are young, . . .

A. Learn early in life to enjoy life! (Smith)

B. Enjoy your youth, be happy, but don’t do anything you will later regret.

1. 1 Kings 22:15, When he arrived, the king asked him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" "Attack and be victorious," he answered, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand." (NIV)

2. Ecclesiastes 2:2, "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?" (NIV)
3. **Ecclesiastes 7:2**, It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart. (NIV)

C. Adam Clarke observed, ”youth is devoid of cares; and, consequently, of many perplexities and distresses” that attend later years.

1. Therefore, young people, rejoice in your carefree days.

D. Some seniors are young in attitude and continue to enjoy each present moment.

1. We are well advised to enjoy life at every age! (Bland)

II. and let your heart (mind) give you joy in the days of your youth.

A. Live a young wild life of sin and license, but know you will pay for it! (Coffman)

B. “Follow your heart which is to be rooted in the fear of God and it will assuredly desire what is right.” (Smith)

C. Matthew Henry agrees with Coffman when he said, “the voluptuous vicious course of life” will exact a heavy price!

D. **Proverbs 15:13**, A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit. (NIV)

III. Follow the ways of your heart . . .

A. Follow the ways of your righteous heart.
B. If you yield to youthful lusts which drown men in perdition, you will certainly pay the price.

C. Isaiah 57:17, I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, yet he kept on in his willful ways. (NIV)

IV. and whatever your eyes see, . . . (go for it!)

A. Ecclesiastes 2:10, I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. (NIV)

B. Job 31:7, if my steps have turned from the path, if my heart has been led by my eyes, or if my hands have been defiled, (NIV)

C. Ecclesiastes 2:24, A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, (NIV)

D. Ecclesiastes 3:12, 13, 22, I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God. So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him? (NIV)

E. Ecclesiastes 5:18, Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him—for this is his lot. (NIV)
F. Ecclesiastes 8:15, So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun. (NIV)

G. Numbers 15:39, You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. (NIV)

H. Ecclesiastes in the above verses speaks of wholesome pleasures while Numbers speaks of unlawful, sinful pleasures.

V. but know that for all these things . . .

A. However, there is one thing which you must realize; that is, . . .

B. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown observed that young people see the roses, but are unaware of the thorns!

C. Discipleship costs in self-denial, but it spares its adherents penalties for sins that are far more costly.

1. Luke 14:26-33, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another
king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. (NIV)

VI. God will bring you to judgment.

A. You will pay for your sins!

B. Ecclesiastes 2:26, To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. (NIV)

C. Ecclesiastes 3:17, I thought in my heart, "God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed."

D. Ecclesiastes 7:17, 18, Do not be overwicked, and do not be a fool— why die before your time? It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all extremes. (NIV)

E. Hebrews 9:27, Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

F. “If young people do not make the most of their youth, God will want to know why,” Davidson wrote.

G. Ecclesiastes 12:14, For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. (NIV)
H. Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10, For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom. (NIV)

I. Christians know we reap what we sow in this world and in the world to come!

J. Ecclesiastes 12:14, For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. (NIV)

K. God had not revealed as much to Koheleth as he has to us through Christ regarding life after death.

1. Hebrews 1:1, 2, In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. (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. (NIV)

I. So then, banish anxiety (sorrow, fretfulness) from your heart . . .

A. Banish evil from your life.
B. Live righteously.

C. Avoid a lifestyle that produces “remorse and suffering.” (Cook via Coffman)

D. Matthew 6:27-34, Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (NIV)

E. Rid yourself of all, every evil passion, all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. (Adam Clarke)

F. “Let young people look to themselves and manage well both their souls and their bodies.” (Matthew Henry)

G. “Take heed lest you provoke God by the thoughts of your heart,” wrote Wordsworth as quoted in the Pulpit Commentary.

H. We are to banish “low spirits, moroseness, discontent.” (Pulpit Commentary)

II. and cast off the troubles (evils) of your body, . . .

A. The sins of youth often are seen in the diseases of the mature.
B. The lusts of the flesh lead to destruction! Cast off evil morals.

C. “Let them (youth) take care that their minds be not lifted up with pride, nor disturbed with anger, or any sinful passion. Remove sorrow, or anger, from your heart.” (Matthew Henry)

D. Disciples from early life are to follow after piety. (Pulpit Commentary)

1. 2 Corinthians 7:1, Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. (NIV)

2. 1 Corinthians 6:18, Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. (NIV)

III. for youth and vigor are (fleeting) meaningless.

A. Eternity is the only thing that matters, that is permanent.

Conclusion:

I. We are not to live recklessly with self-abandon. (Bland)

A. Ecclesiastes 2:24-27, A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. (NIV)
B. Ecclesiastes 9:7-9, Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favors what you do. Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. (NIV)

C. We are to enjoy life, Bland wrote, because:

1. life is transient and will soon be gone.

2. God wants us to enjoy his blessings including life while at the same time being prepared for the judgment.

II. Both youth and and maturity are fleeting.

A. “Don’t fret, but produce good fruit which will continue and abound to a good account.” (Matthew Henry)

III. God’s people are to be liberal in benevolence.

A. Matthew 5:42, Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. (NIV)

B. Matthew 25:31-46, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me
something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (NIV)

C. Matthew 7:12, So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (NIV)

D. Galatians 6:10, Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (NIV)

E. Galatians 6:9, Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. (NIV)
IV. Live each day in joyful appreciation of life because the shadow of the tomb is lengthening in our direction.
References


Coffman, James Burton, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, ACU Press, Abilene Christina University, Abilene, TX 1993.


Questions

Ecclesiastes 11:1-10

(Questions based on NIV text.)

1. What excuses do people give to justify their not giving liberally to the needy? (You might need more lines.)

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2. Why are we to cast our bread upon the waters?

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3. What is the connection between giving to many and not knowing what disaster may befall us?

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4. What lessons did Koheleth teach with the clouds and tree illustrations? (See verse 3.)

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________________________________________________________________________
5. To what extent is caution advised? When is being too cautious counter-productive?

6. What is meant by “the path of the wind?”

7. To what extent can we know how the body is formed in the womb?

8. To what extent can we understand the work of God?

9. If we do not know the path of the wind or how the body is formed in the womb, how could we possibly understand the work of God?
10. Describe the *all things* God has made. Give the question your best efforts, please.

11. What does verse six say about industriousness as opposed to idleness?

12. Why should we be active, industrious?

13. Define *light* and *sun* as used in verse 7.
14. Are you enjoying fully, whether they be few or many, the years God has given you? If not, why not? ________________________________
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15. What are the “days of darkness”? How long will they last? _______
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16. How can it be said that youth, vigor and, for that matter, “Everything to come is meaningless”? _____________________________________
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17. “Be ________________, _______________ ________________, while you are ________________, and let your ______________ give you _______________ in the ______________ of your ______________.”
18. Explain what Koheleth meant by his direction for young men to follow the ways of their hearts and whatever their eyes found of interest?
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19. If young men’s hearts and eyes lead us astray, what will happen? What will God do? ______________________________________
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20. How can we banish anxiety from our hearts and cast off the troubles of our bodies? ______________________________________
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