



Abundant Life in a Meaningless world – Part 7

Chapters 11-12 – WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT

Is life worth living?

That was the question Solomon raised when he began the discourse that we call Ecclesiastes. After experimenting and investigating “life under the sun,” he concluded, “No, life is not worth living!” He gave four arguments to support his conclusion:

1. the monotony of life,
2. the vanity of wisdom,
3. the futility of wealth,
4. and the certainty of death.

Being a wise man, Solomon reviewed his arguments and this time brought God into the picture. What a difference it made. He realized that life was not monotonous but filled with challenging situations from God, each in its own time and each for its own purpose. He also learned that wealth could be enjoyed and employed to the glory of God. Though man’s wisdom couldn’t explain everything, Solomon concluded that it was better to follow God’s wisdom than to practice man’s folly. As for the certainty of death, there is no way to escape it; and it ought to motivate us to enjoy life now and make the most of the opportunities God gives us. Now Solomon was ready for his conclusion and personal application. What he did was present four pictures of life and attach to each picture a practical admonition for his listeners (and readers) to heed. The development looks like this:

- ☺ Life is an ADVENTURE—live by faith (11:1-6)
- ☺ Life is a GIFT—enjoy it (11:7-12:8)
- ☺ Life is a SCHOOL—learn your lessons (12:9-12)
- ☺ Life is a STEWARDSHIP—fear God (12:13-14)

Life is an ADVENTURE (11:1-6)

1. What two illustrations does Solomon give as examples of “adventure”? (v. 1-6)
 - a. V1-2 (see also 1 Kings 10:22) _____
 - i. the merchant sending out his ships
 - ii. “Send out your grain in ships.” Solomon himself was involved in various kinds of trade, so it was natural for him to use this illustration (1 Kings 10:15, 22).
 - b. V3-6 _____
 - i. farmer sowing his seed
2. What is common between these two illustrations? _____
 - a. Neither the merchant nor the farmer can control the circumstances.
 - b. The ships might hit a reef, meet a storm, or be attacked by pirates, and the cargo lost. Bad weather, blight, or insects might destroy the crop, and the farmer’s labor would be in vain.
 - c. If the merchant and the farmer waited until the circumstances were ideal, they would never get anything done! Life has a certain amount of risk to it, and that’s where faith comes in.
 - d. “For you do not know” is a key phrase in this section (vv. 2, 5, 6). Man is ignorant of the future, but he must not allow his ignorance to make him so fearful that he becomes either careless or paralyzed.
 - e. In other words, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.”
 - f. Don’t wait around for ideal situation
 - g. God has a time and a purpose for everything (3:1-11), and we must live by faith in His Word.

Life is a GIFT (aka Remember Your Creator While Young) (11:7–12:8)

3. In order to enjoy life what are the 3 instructions that Solomon states we should obey? (vv. 11:7-12:2), work out the 'R' word for each. Also write how we can apply these instructions in our lives.

a. Vv. 11:7-9 R_____

1. **Rejoice!**
2. What a joy it is to anticipate each new day and accept it as a fresh gift from God!
3. Solomon especially instructed the young people to take advantage of the days of youth before the "days of darkness" would arrive. He was not suggesting that young people have no problems or that older people have no joys. He was simply making a generalization that youth is the time for enjoyment, before the problems of old age start to reveal themselves.
4. Young people have to watch their hearts and their eyes, because either or both can lead them into sin (Num. 15:39; Prov. 4:23; Matt. 5:27–30). "Walk in the ways of your heart" (nkjv) is not an encouragement to go on a youthful fling and satisfy the sinful desires within (Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:20–23). It is rather a reminder for young people to enjoy the special pleasures that belong to youth and can never be experienced again in quite the same way.
5. Those of us who are older need to remember that God expects young people to act like young people. The tragedy is that too many older people are trying to act like young people!

b. Vv. 11:10 R_____

1. **Remove**
2. Privileges must be balanced by personal responsibilities. Young people must put anxiety out of their hearts (Matt. 6:24–34) and evil away from their flesh (2 Cor. 7:1). The word translated "sorrow" means "vexation, inner pain, anxiety." If we are living in the will of God, we will have the peace of God in our hearts (Phil. 4:6–9). The sins of the flesh only destroy the body and can bring eternal judgment to the soul.
3. The phrase "childhood and youth are vanity" does not mean that these stages in life are unimportant and a waste of time. Quite the opposite is true! The best way to have a happy adult life and a contented old age is to get a good start early in life and avoid the things that will bring trouble later on. Young people who take care of their minds and bodies, avoid the destructive sins of the flesh, and build good habits of health and holiness have a better chance for happy adult years than those who "sow their wild oats" and pray for a crop failure.
4. The phrase means "childhood and youth are transient." These precious years go by so quickly, and we must not waste our opportunities for preparing for the future. The Hebrew word translated "youth" can mean "the dawning" or "blackness of hair" (as opposed to gray hair). Youth is indeed the time of "dawning," and before we know it, the sun will start to set. Therefore, make the most of those "dawning years," because you will never see them again.

c. Vv. 12:1-2 R_____

1. **Remember**
2. This third instruction means more than "think about God." It means "pay attention to, consider with the intention of obeying." It is Solomon's version of Matthew 6:33: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (nkjv).
3. How easy it is to neglect the Lord when you are caught up in the enjoyments and opportunities of youth. We know that dark days (11:8) and difficult [evil] days (12:1) are coming, so we had better lay a good spiritual foundation as early in life as possible.

4. For what do the metaphors in Verses 12:3–7 give us a description of? _____
- a. one of the most imaginative descriptions of old age and death found anywhere in literature.
5. Match the metaphors and the meanings. Draw a line between the two that match. (Vv. 12:3-4)

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| keepers of the house | • | • | You start to lose your teeth. |
| strong men | • | • | Your arms and hands tremble. |
| grinders | • | • | Your legs, knees, and shoulders weaken and you walk bent over. |
| windows | • | • | You wake up with the birds early each morning, and wish you could sleep longer. |
| doors | • | • | You can't chew your food, or your ears can't pick up the sounds outdoors. |
| grinding | • | • | Either your hearing starts to fail, or you close your mouth because you've lost your teeth |
| rise up | • | • | Your vision begins to deteriorate. |
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|---|-----------------------------|---|--|
| • | <i>keepers of the house</i> | • | Your arms and hands tremble. |
| • | <i>strong men</i> | • | Your legs, knees, and shoulders weaken and you walk bent over. |
| • | <i>grinders</i> | • | You start to lose your teeth. |
| • | <i>windows</i> | • | Your vision begins to deteriorate. |
| • | <i>doors</i> | • | Either your hearing starts to fail, or you close your mouth because you've lost your teeth |
| • | <i>grinding</i> | • | You can't chew your food, or your ears can't pick up the sounds outdoors. |
| • | <i>rise up</i> | • | You wake up with the birds early each morning, and wish you could sleep longer. |

Life is a SCHOOL (12:9–12)

6. What were Solomon's 3 characteristics of his work? (Vv. 9-10) _____
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- a. **Wise** - for Solomon was the wisest of men (1 Kings 3:3–28). The king studied and explored many subjects, and some of his conclusions he wrote down in proverbs.
- b. **Orderly** - After studying a matter, he weighed his conclusions carefully, and then arranged them in an orderly fashion
- c. **Words were upright and true** – He always used upright words of truth.
7. What 3 things are stated in verses 11-12 about Solomon's words? And what is the Warning? (Vv. 11-12) _____
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- a. Words of wise are like goads (to stimulate to stir to action or feeling)
- b. Like nails (they are firm and keep things together)
- c. Given by one Shepherd (Inspired by the Lord God) Ezek 34:15-16
- d. Warning not to add anything to Gods word

Life is a STEWARDSHIP (12:13-14)

8. As Stewards what are our 3 responsibilities? (Vv. 13-14)

- a. V13 _____
- i. **Fear God** (v. 13). The “fear of the Lord” is that attitude of reverence and awe that His people show to Him because they love Him and respect His power and His greatness. (Prov. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:18-20)
- b. V13 _____
- i. **Keep His commandments** (v. 13). God created life and He alone knows how it should be managed. He wrote the “manual of instructions,” and wise is the person who reads and obeys. “When all else fails, read the instructions!” The fear of the Lord must result in obedient living, otherwise that “fear” is only a sham.
- c. V14 _____
- i. **Prepare for final judgment** (v. 14). “God shall judge the righteous and the wicked” (3:17). “But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment” (11:9 nkjv). Man may seem to get away with sin (8:11), but their sins will eventually be exposed and judged righteously. Those who have not trusted the Lord Jesus Christ will be doomed forever.
- ii. Six times in his discourse, Solomon told us to enjoy life while we can; but at no time did he advise us to enjoy sin.
- iii. The joys of the present depend on the security of the future. If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, then your sins have already been judged on the cross; and “there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1; and see John 5:24). But if you die having never trusted Christ, you will face judgment at His throne and be lost forever (Rev. 20:11–15).
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Is life worth living? Yes, if you are truly alive through faith in Jesus Christ. Then you can be satisfied, no matter what God may permit to come to your life. “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12).

You can receive life in Christ and—be satisfied!