

Enjoying Life Under the Sun

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[0 : 00] Let me invite you to turn in your Bibles to Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes chapter 11. Good to see you guys. Everybody back.

All these folks, yay! Continue to pray for Pedro and Mona as they continue to recover. Greg and I received a text from Pedro, I guess, this morning?

Last night, was it? They miss us. They're ready to be here. Michael, good to see you, brother. Here, ready to go. Amen. Amen. Sitting under the Word.

Well, the title of my message for this morning is Enjoying Life Under the Sun. It's kind of a three-parter, part three of a three-parter that I've been doing in chapter 11 as we finish up this chapter today, Lord willing.

Enjoying Life Under the Sun. And that's the theme. What we want to talk about primarily this morning is what does it mean for Christians to rejoice? We just read it in Psalm 97. We sang about it.

[1 : 04] Now we're ready to hear from the Word about what does it mean for Christians to live a life of joy? What does it mean for you to enjoy life?

In spite of the reality that we're all facing and living in, a harsh, hard, difficult, in some cases even a horror-filled world.

The world is so full of harm and hurt and harshness. Some of us have seen bigger portions of that than others. Then when you add to that the reality that we're all falling apart.

We're all headed for the grave. And we're all deteriorating. The joints hurt. The hair falls out and turns gray. One of the things that we'll see in our passage is there's this metaphor about the youthfulness of dark hair.

Dark, thick hair. And you realize the culture that we're talking about here? The dark, full hair. I mean, in Song of Solomon, one of the most romantic things that he said about his girlfriend was, her hair was thick and dark like that of a goat.

[2 : 17] I did it for her. But what happens is that dark hair starts to turn gray. Right?

In worst case scenario, it starts to fall out. And all of those are signs that we live in a deteriorating world.

A world that isn't supposed to last forever. Just like us. And so what's on the other side of this world deteriorating?

What's on the other side of you deteriorating? And how do you live now with joy knowing all of that's true? Not denying it.

Not hiding from it. Not glossing it over. Well, according to David Wells, who is a professor of historical and systematic theology at Gordon-Conwell Seminary, one of the most alarming aspects of our current culture is how it inclines people to collapse all of reality into the self.

[3 : 28] All right? Let me say that again for you. Nope, don't put that up there yet. Wait till I cue. I give you the cues or you get the whip. I know, I know.

It's terrible. All right, listen. Let me say it again. One of the most alarming aspects of our current culture is how it inclines people to collapse all of reality into self.

Now, just stay with me. Listen to this. Meaning then, meaning in life goes only as far as the limit of self. I make meaning.

I make meaning. I make meaning. And so there's only meaning as far as I'm able to make it for myself. Another way of saying this.

There is no objective significance in life. There is no sense of absolute significance in life. If I don't think it's significant, guess what?

[4 : 28] It's not significant. If I don't interpret it as meaningful, then it's not meaningful. Maybe it's meaningful to you, but not to me. And we can all agree that there's no absolute standard of meaning or value of meaning in life apart from what we each determine to be meaningful.

How do you like to live in a world like that? Guess what you do? You do live in a world like that. But that's not the Christian world. That's not the Christian worldview.

Significance for this worldview isn't a fixed reality. It's a fluid construct of your own making. Now, listen, folks, no doubt we are all meaning makers.

We are all meaning makers. You've heard me say that before. We are all constantly perceiving and interpreting the matters of daily life and trying to make meaning out of what is going on in our lives. Each of us seeks to interpret that reality moment by moment. But hear this carefully. Self at the center of everything and self as the final authority of what is most meaningful in life, quote, eats away at every vestige of meaning for which people grasp, end quote.

[5 : 51] In other words, self at the center of everything, making my own meaning, meaning, interpreting things the way that I want to interpret them, seeing and perceiving them the way that I want to do, apart.

Now, this is all apart from the Lord, doing all of this in my own way, according to what I've chosen to interpret that meaning by. Self at the center of all that is the way that most people view the world and think that's the way to go.

And yet we understand that the Bible teaches that by doing that, self actually truncates or disposes of or even dissolves any opportunity that you really have to make true meaning out of life.

Self is the reason that you can't do that. Self plays God. And we are terrible, terrible gods. So if we're left to make meaning out of everything on this planet, we're in big trouble.

A lot of times when we do that, we end up destroying each other. Well, David Wells goes on to explain. That the biblical understanding of the world explains this.

[7 : 04] All right, now we're ready. Cue, cue the quote. Yay. There we go. There we go. I understand what you did before. I'm talking about David Wells, aren't I? So Wells goes on to explain that the biblical understanding of the world explains, quote, the emptiness of human experience, which is the outcome to alienation from God, and which is the present consequence of his wrath.

So we have an outcome and we have a consequence. The emptiness that we feel is an outcome from being alienated from the Lord.

He goes on to say it is the consequence of being relationally severed from God. And that is registered in the twilight knowledge of God, which still persists in human consciousness.

Leaving people without excuse. That's Romans one. But the relational disjuncture is so substantial and so complete as to leave them always disoriented, always caught in the coils of painful futility.

Human beings have in their own conscience the realization that there is this disjuncture, this disjoining, this severing from God.

[8 : 24] They feel it. They know it. Whenever you talk to an unbeliever who's rebelling against God, living their own way, and wants to have nothing to do with Christianity, you can put this in the bank.

There is some part of them that realizes and understands and knows that there is a God in the heaven that they're accountable to, and that God will hold them in judgment, and they don't want to deal with that.

That is built into their very psyche, their DNA, if you will. And they know it. And in knowing all of that, these people, according to Wells, are always caught in the coils of painful futility.

And that's what I want to emphasize for you. Does that sound familiar in terms of the book of Ecclesiastes, futility? See, the Bible explains why that innate sense of futility, meaninglessness, resides in human beings.

And why it's our greatest enemy as we fight against sin. Trying to make one's own meaning out of life, trying to live life without God, is painful futility.

[9 : 38] So that people jump from one thing to the next to try and salve that futility, that sense of inner emptiness that they carry with them.

Now, if you were saved in adulthood like I was, you probably have something of a fix on what I'm saying. You can probably relate to that sense of emptiness in your life.

I know I chased all kinds of stuff dealing with that. And it wasn't until I started growing in the Lord that I began to understand what that emptiness was all about.

It was an emptiness that I was experiencing because I wasn't right with God. I wasn't serving the God that made me for the purposes that he made me. And it left me feeling completely alienated, really, from myself and from others. Trying to make your own meaning without God is painful futility.

[10:42] The dilemma of our own modern culture that we face today is akin to the cultural dilemma of Solomon's day and time.

Because people are people and sin is sin. And time doesn't change that. We're going to remain people made by God, made in the image of God, dealing with sin and brokenness in our lives. And if the world goes on for another 5,000 years, that won't change. That's not going to change till Jesus comes back. So the dilemma that Solomon is facing in his time as he writes this is the same dilemma we're facing in our time.

Solomon sought then, hear this, Solomon sought a wisdom that would unlock the meaning of life. He felt the same thing we feel.

He went on a life quest to search out what a person might do to experience a deep sense of purpose and personal fulfillment in life.

[11:47] Why? Because it wasn't happening for him. Why? Because he turned away from the Lord. It just struck me. If you go to 1 Kings 11.

1 Kings 11. We'll just survey this. Because this is a really fascinating account. 1 Kings 11.

Now, King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh. A Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women.

Okay. From the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the sons of Israel, you shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you.

Why not? Why is that such a big deal? For they will surely turn your heart away from their gods. After their gods, Solomon held fast to these in love.

[12:49] So is Solomon doing what God said or is he doing what God said not to do? Not to do. Right? Now, what happened in verse 3? He had 700 wives.

I just, I don't even get that. Just exactly what God said is the point.

Whether he, listen. One would have been enough. One of these women would have been enough to turn his heart away. But no, he had to have a thousand. Let's give the guy credit.

If he's going to do it, he's going to do it all in. And he did it all in. Right? Now, look at verse 4. When Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods. And his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God.

As the heart of David his father had been. He went after, in verse 5, all of these people and their idols. Verse 6. Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

[13:51] He did not follow the Lord fully as David his father had done. He actually went on to build places of worship to these gods.

Based on the influence of his foreign wives. In verse 8. And then in verse 9. The Lord was angry with Solomon. Because his heart was turned away from the Lord.

The God of Israel. Who had appeared to him twice. And commanded him concerning this very thing. That he should not go after other gods. But he did not observe what the Lord had commanded.

And so as a result of all of that. Back now to Ecclesiastes 11. As a result of all of that. The Lord said, I'm going to tear the throne of Israel from you. And he did. After Solomon.

Israel went into war after war. Finally into a civil war. That divided the nation into two parts. The northern kingdom was then ultimately conquered. A little while later.

[14:53] The southern kingdom was conquered. And they all went into exile. And imprisonment. In a foreign land. God used the Assyrians. And the Babylonians to do that. To Israel.

So all that God said. What happened as a result of Solomon. Turning his heart away from the Lord. Did happen. Solomon was on a life quest. Did he find what he was looking for?

What he found in his lifetime of laboriously looking. Was emptiness. Emptiness. He tried work. He tried women.

He experimented with mood altering effects. With wine. With alcohol. He partied. He chased pleasure and power. He constructed these huge private playgrounds and palaces.

He achieved great cultural status. Political status. Military status. Nobody wanted to mess with Israel in the time of King Solomon.

[15 : 55] He gained worldwide fame. He filled his life with the finest things his world offered. He soared to heights of personal achievement and worldly pleasure that you and I can only dream of.

And what happened? Well if you go back to Ecclesiastes chapter 2. He tells us in his own words. So let's look at that together. Beginning in verse 1.

Solomon says. I said to myself. Come now. I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself. Alright. Now here's the theme of our message today. The theme of the message today.

Is the enjoyment of life. And all that that means. In terms of what Solomon's telling us. And this is very interesting. That he in chapter 2. Is going to say.

Here's how I pursued enjoyment. And behold. It too. Look at the end of verse 1. It too was. Futility. I said of laughter.

[16 : 57] It is madness. I said of pleasure. What does it accomplish? I explored with my mind. How to stimulate my body with wine. While my mind was guiding me wisely.

And how to take hold of folly. Until I could see what good there is. For the sons of men. To do under heaven. The few years of their lives. So I enlarged my works.

I built houses for myself. I planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks for myself. And I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made ponds of water for myself.

From which to irrigate a forest of growing trees. You talk about a garden. I bought male and female slaves. And I had home born slaves.

Also I possessed flocks and herds. Larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. Also I collected for myself silver and gold. And the treasure of kings and provinces.

[17 : 56] I provided for myself male and female singers. And the pleasures of men. Many concubines. Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem.

My wisdom also stood by me. All that my eyes desired. I didn't refuse them. I didn't withhold from my heart any pleasure. For my heart was pleased because all of my labor.

And this was my reward for all my labor. Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done. And the labor which I had exerted. And behold all was vanity.

And striving after wind. And there was no profit under the sun. Wow. What was his conclusion then in verse 17?

Look at that. So I hated life. For the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me. Because everything is futility and striving after wind.

[18 : 57] He wasn't enjoying any of that. None of that brought any sense of fulfillment, meaning or joy to him. Why? Because he turned his heart away from the Lord. Could any of that and all of that been enjoyable to him?

Absolutely. Absolutely. Those were tremendous blessings upon blessings that God had given to this man. Far and above what anybody else in the world was experiencing at this time in the way of blessing.

And worldly pleasure. And not one single bit of it brought him as much as a spark of lasting meaning and enjoyment and fulfillment in life.

Look at verse 20 with me in chapter 2. Therefore I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun. I completely despaired.

And then in verses 24 and 25. There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good.

[19 : 58] This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God. If you're going to enjoy your life. If you're going to take the very menial everyday details and tasks of life.

Like eating and drinking and working. And find a sense of fulfillment meaning and joy in them. It's going to be because you recognize that all of that comes from the hand of almighty God for you.

And that God is specifically detailing that for you. In that moment of your life. And that's where the meaning comes from.

It's meaningful because God's behind it. That's why it's meaningful. Verse 25. For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without him?

Isn't that good? That's a great evangelistic verse. Who can eat and who can have enjoyment without him? So Solomon looked and Solomon labored.

[21 : 08] He spent an adult lifetime trying to make meaning of his life. But he did all of that apart from living his life as God's gift.

And he found that nothing, nothing has significance in and of itself. Nothing in this life brings any true and lasting sense of meaning in and of itself.

Why? Because it's fleeting. Because it isn't grounded in an understanding that God made all of this. And he made it for a purpose.

We want to use the stuff that God made for our own purposes. And not for the purposes that he designed. And that's how we get in trouble. That's when we start drifting away from what really is important and valuable in life.

I'm just giving you this according to the Bible. These are not my opinions. This is what the truth says. All is futility. All is emptiness, vapor, vanity, and striving after wind.

[22 : 17] So as he draws his book of Ecclesiastes to a close, Solomon lays out then the antidote to a meaningless, futile, vapid life under the sun.

The first ten chapters of Ecclesiastes take us from this wonderful, careful consideration and examination of godly wisdom in the matters of life to now acting on and applying that wisdom in life. That's a lot of what chapters 11 and 12 are all about as he sums everything up. It doesn't mean that in the first ten chapters he's not telling us some things to do and not do as a result of godly wisdom. But in 11 and 12 now, he's kind of bringing all this together and sewing it up and saying, here is the main focus. Here's the thing you need to believe most, and here's the thing you need to do most if you're going to know a sense of godly joy and meaning in life.

So chapter 11 has done this. The last couple sermons, it's provided us with two primary actions of obedience for applying godly wisdom to the matters of life.

[23 : 29] The first is, and we'll put this up on the screen for you, the first is be bold in faith. You remember this. And this is verses 1 through 6. So let's read that together. Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days.

Divide your portion to seven or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth. If clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth.

And whether a tree falls toward the south or toward the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies. He who watches the wind will not sow, and he who looks at the clouds will not reap.

Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of a pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.

Sow your seed in the morning. Don't be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed or whether both of them alike will be good.

[24 : 35] What we've done in the first couple of sermons with this is outline what he's talking about here when he says be bold in your faith. Step out in your life in a bold faithfulness to God.

And here's how we talked about that. A wholehearted devotion towards God. And that becomes evident in a decisive, holy boldness towards life.

Christians should be some of the most cheerful, bold, intrepid people on the planet. Now hear me carefully as I caveat this, my friends.

This is not about your personality. You say, well, I'm just, I'm an introvert. We have introverts in here, don't we? Right? We have people that have all kinds of personalities in here.

All different expressions of person. This is not about whether you're type A, C, B, or X, Y, Z. This is all about God's command for you to live a life of boldness in your faith.

[25 : 35] Because you have a wonderful, sovereign God. You have a sense of boldness about life. You want God to use you to grab life and bring it in.

And make everything you can of it. Because you get one shot. And Solomon is giving us leave for this. It's okay for Christians to say, grab life.

Enjoy it. Take every bit of life you can. Grab it and wring every drop of joy out of it that you can. That's wonderful. Do that. Absolutely do that.

Is there a but? Hang on and see. Hang on and see. A wholehearted devotion. We talked about it this way.

It is a fearless faith in God. Not in yourself. Not in your abilities. It's not self-reliance. It's a fearless faith in God.

[26 : 33] Leading to an eager obedience to please Him in every aspect of your life. Every matter of life. No matter how troubling. Heartbreaking. Hard or challenging.

Is to be viewed as an opportunity. An opportunity for you to take the initiative. In living out your faith in a good and sovereign God.

Now I don't know in an analogy. I don't know a lot about. Fighting and combat and things like that. But I love war history. And I've read a lot about it. And I've researched a lot about it. Because I love it. I just like reading about it. One thing I do know. There's a smart way to be on the defensive. But an even better way of being on the defensive. With a mindset that as soon as that opportunity arises. And you can create that moment. You want to be on the offensive. You want to turn that defensive position into a mode of attack.

[27 : 32] You want to aggress toward the enemy. You want to seize. And hold on to. I can't think of a better analogy for the Christian life.

Than fighting against evil and sin in an aggressive mindset. With a heart of bold faith. That is eager and ready for God to use you to aggressively assault enemy territory. In your own heart. And in life. God let me take opportunity to be used by you. To move out into what is the darkness.

And bring the hope of the light that lives within me. Now do you see why that takes. That takes some courage. And selflessness. And discipline.

What kind of people want to actually allow themselves. To have this wonderful thing in them. Called Jesus. This wonderful person living in them. This truth in their life.

[28 : 32] And then they want to step out. And bring all of that into the nastiness of the world around them. Why don't we just build a little palace around our house. And stay comfortable with Jesus.

And sing praises in our house. And go do our little job. And then run back into our hidey hole. Why don't we do that? Because that's not the great commission. To go. That's why.

It's as simple as that. It just ain't about us. It's just not. So what you do is you weigh the situation. From what you know of God's truth. And God's wisdom. That's the battle plan. The battle plan is here for us. So we weigh. We weigh what's in front of us.

In the way of the war. The battle. From the battle plan. We do weigh it. We are careful. That's 1 through 10. Chapters 1 through 10. Now we begin to move out.

[29 : 29] In faith. And act in holy boldness. To make. To do what? To make the character. And heart of God. Known. That's what you want.

That's why you. Why would I move out into that? Why would I live a life like that? Why would I be concerned about others like that? Because you're concerned to bring the character and heart and wisdom of God.

Into a dark world. That needs the light of the love of Jesus. And he lives within you. And so this is a call to holy boldness.

Well the second primary action then that we'll deal with today. Be bold in joy. Here it comes. Be bold in joy. And that's 7 through 10.

The light is pleasant. And it is good for the eyes to see the sun. Indeed if a man should live many years. Let him rejoice in them all. And let him remember the days of darkness.

[30 : 31] For they will be many. Everything that is to come will be futility. Rejoice young man. During your childhood. And let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood.

Follow the impulses of your heart. And the desires of your eyes. Yet. Here's your but. Yet. Know. That God will bring you to judgment for all these things.

So. Remove grief and anger from your heart. And put away pain from your body. Because. Childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.

And we have some people in here that will say. Amen. Amen. I'm one of them. That's right. Remove grief and anger and. From your heart.

And put away pain from your body. Childhood and the prime of life. Are fleeting. So right away in verse 7. The light is pleasant. And it is good for the eyes. To see the sun.

[31 : 29] Here's the command. You ready? Rejoice. Rejoice. Why? Why should you do that?

In such a broken world. Your bodies are breaking down. The world around you is broken. Other people are broken.

Relationships are broken. Why rejoice? Well here's what he says. Because light is pleasant. And it is good for you to see the sun. Now what is.

What is going on here with this Hebraism? What's going on with. With what he's saying here? You're alive. You're alive. If you contrast this with chapter 6 verse 5.

It might help a little bit. Look at chapter 6 verse 5 with me. It never sees the sun. And it never knows anything. It is better off than he.

[32 : 32] What's he talking about here? If you might remember. He's talking about a miscarriage. And he said you know it's better for a miscarriage. Even though the miscarriage doesn't see the sun and never knows anything.

Than to have been born and live a life apart from God in such misery. Better to never have been born. That's his point. So the contrast here is.

You have something that doesn't get to see the light. It doesn't get to have life. It doesn't get to breathe. Make choices. And experience any of the things that we experience.

Because we're alive. And then if you also look at chapter 7 verse 11. Wisdom along with an inheritance is good. And an advantage to those who.

See the sun. What good is wisdom? What good is an inheritance? If you're dead. If you're not breathing. You got to be alive to enjoy those things.

[33 : 37] That's the contrast that we're seeing in verse 7 of Ecclesiastes 11. You're alive. You're alive. This is the first of three R's.

That I'm going to give you from the text. Three R's. The first one is rejoice. Rejoice. Throughout the Bible. Light. Is contrasted.

With darkness. So that light depicts life. Joy. Blessing. Righteousness. You remember Psalm 97 11. Michelle. Do we have a slide for that? Psalm 97 11.

Just a reminder. There you go. We read that in our text this morning for our call to worship. Light is sown. You see. Isn't that interesting? Because we're talking about sowing and reaping here.

Light is sown like seed for whom? The righteous. Only the righteous get the benefit of what's being sown as light.

[34 : 34] Light. And gladness for the upright in heart. We reap gladness from living in the light. That's what we reap. So you sow light.

You reap gladness. You sow darkness. You reap sorrow. It's pretty basic, isn't it? And yet it's there. It's there. Darkness, on the other hand, is seen as vexation. Sickness. Anger. Death.

And sin. If you look at chapter 5, verse 17. I'm just showing you a few places where Solomon has dealt with this. And I'm trying to show you how he's wrapping it up.

He's bringing these concepts together. Chapter 5, verse 17. Throughout his life, he also eats in darkness with great vexation, sickness, and anger.

[35 : 32] And the question at that time when I preached through this was why? And the answer was because he's living without God. He's living without God. This is a person who wants to make his own meaning in life.

And all he gets as a result of sowing his own meaning in life is vexation, sickness, and anger. That's the contrast between living in the light and living in the dark.

Living with the Lord and for the Lord and living apart from him. So the light is pleasant. As it means that there is a new day for you filled with new opportunities for you to apply wisdom.

To do good and to receive good from the heart and hand of the Lord. What difference would it make in your life, friends, if you got up every morning and said, The fact that I got up this morning and I'm breathing and I see daylight.

And I see that there's a sun in the sky, which means there's still a God holding it there. That's something. That's worth a smile. No matter what's going on.

[36 : 47] No matter what's going on. This is so real, so raw and practical. It ministered to your pastor this week, I can tell you. So what does he say?

Rejoice. It's good for your eyes to see the sun standing brilliantly in the sky because it tells you that God is holding his world together and he's giving you another day of life.

Now, what will you do with it? How will you answer God in that opportunity today? Some of you will say, I'm just going to try to be a godly mama.

All right. I'm just going to try to go to work and be a godly man and make a living for my family. All right. Good. Make sure you give thanks to the person that's making all that possible.

Make sure you're living out of a heart of gratitude that says, I got to get up and breathe God's air today. So I owe him a lot. I owe him a whole lot.

[37 : 54] The joyfulness of life, friends, is emphasized with the words pleasant. Pleasant and good. Look again with me. The light is pleasant and it is good for the eyes to see the sun.

Pleasant and good. Now, your translation likely has some combination of sweet, pleasant, pleasing for these two words. One commentator pointed out that the first word in the New American

Standard translation, pleasant, is the opposite of bitter.

It's used in Judges 14, 14 as the sweetness of honey. The sweetness of honey. The second word in the New American Standard is good.

It's a general term similar to how we use good in our language. It's not bad. It's good. Very basic. Right. So hear this now. Life is not only not bad, it's good.

Now, you see perspective here? Some people go through life with an attitude like this. Christians. Well, I guess life isn't all bad.

[39 : 04] And some Christians go through life like this. Not only is life not all bad, it's good. There's a difference. Now, listen to this.

Listen to this as we go through it. And it's not only good, but it's sweet. It's sweet.

As Michael Eaton pointed out, life is to be savored with enthusiasm as one might enjoy honey. Because that's the literal translation.

Life is like honey. Now, I'm going to be real candid with you. I just didn't feel like my life was like honey this past week.

I promise you, I didn't sit in my house Monday through Friday going, life is just like honey. It's so sweet. I didn't do that.

[40 : 05] But boy, I got to this part in the scriptures and fell on my face before the Lord in confession. And said, Lord, this is how I want to live. I want to live my life with this heart and this mind and this attitude.

No matter what. I don't want to be defined by my circumstances any more than you do. But your pastors fight this as well.

Verse 8 then. Indeed, the light is pleasant. It is good for the eyes to see the sun.

Right? Life is sweet. It's good. Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all. And let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. Everything that is to come will be futility. Now, it sounds like he's contradicting himself. So what's going on here?

[41 : 02] Well, indeed is the way the New American Standard translates the beginning of verse 8. Indeed, following on what he just said in 7. That means definitely, truly, absolutely.

Take full advantage of the years God gives you to live them with enthusiastic joy. That's on you. It's all a matter of where you set your heart. It's all a matter of where your focus in worship is. Now, to give you a sense of urgency about how critical this is, we need to remember.

There's your second R. We need to remember. There's a balance to this. Have you ever been around somebody so cheerful that they made you want to throw up?

We're not talking about that person. This is a person that's firmly grounded in reality. So here's the grounding you need to keep this rejoicing from being one of three things at least.

[42 : 10] Number one, an escape from reality. We're not talking about a rejoicing that is an escape from reality. Or a worldly effort to cope with reality so that you're surviving but not thriving.

So we're not escaping. We're not coping. And we're not using rejoicing to deny reality by telling yourself that I just try to see the bright side of everything.

That's not what we're talking about either. This is deeper. This is more grounded, more fixed. It's not fixed simply in your attitude. It's fixed in the truth that you're willing to embrace as your attitude.

It goes beyond you. It transcends human wisdom and it's fixed in heaven. But God brings it down to heaven because Jesus lives in you.

God brings all of this joy and this reality and this enthusiasm into your life by bringing Jesus into your life.

[43 : 19] He is the joy. He is the wisdom. He is the enthusiasm. He's the reason it's worth getting up in the morning and breathing air.

This is a paradigm shift that will just transform your life. It's supposed to. It doesn't turn everything upside down. It puts it right side up. You were living upside down.

Jesus is helping you live right side up. Everybody's walking around upside down. We all think we're right side up. Then he turns you right side up and you look weird and everybody wants you to get back the other way.

You're throwing everything off. John MacArthur preached a sermon one time. It was very good. Very straightforward as it always is.

And he had a very famous actor and director in Hollywood call him up. Say I want to meet with you. So we went and met with him. Went out to his mansion or whatever and met with him. And he came

in and sat down.

[44 : 22] And the guy lit into him and said don't you understand that what I just I just heard you say this stuff. You're throwing the whole balance of the world off man. The whole equilibrium of the place is just going to pot because of what you're saying.

You need to stop this mess man. You're messing it totally up. And John sat there and said he sat there for a long time listening to this nonsense. And when he finished he said now I've listened to you.

Will you listen to me? And he shared the gospel with him. And told him that Jesus Christ is the reason I'm sharing this. And I intend to keep right on.

He named the guy. He named who it was. And I went. Oh my. Okay. God opened that door and John walked right in and there it went.

The world does. The world sees us as upside down. They're all walking around right side up. So what do we need to remember?

[45 : 24] Well we don't need to remember that rejoicing is about escaping or coping or denying. Coping with or denying reality. That's not what we're talking about. There's nothing fake or superficial or artificial about what we're talking about.

There's nothing hypocritical about it. Or shallow. So what are you to remember? What are you to remember? What are you to put some mental effort into as you reflect on reality?

That there's there's death in the world and murder in the world and war in the world and rape in the world and heartache in the world and miscarriage in the world and injustice in the world. And some of that comes into your life and touches your life.

What are you to remember? You're to reflect on the fact that your years in this life will be full of what does the text say? Look with me.

Days of darkness. For they will be many. How are we supposed to have joy in that reality?

[46 : 34] What he's calling you to hear is rejoicing in a sober assessment of life. Rejoicing by preparing yourself.

Facing the reality not retreating from it. That's real. That's real. There are days of darkness and they will be many.

Have you had some of those already? But that doesn't have to define you. It doesn't have to define your life.

Now, folks, let me ask you, have you have you seen and experienced hard. Hurtful, hateful and even possibly horrible things in your life so far.

Just so far. All right. Well, there's more to come. If God grants you more years to live, there's more to come. Why? Because that's the world you live in.

[47 : 44] That's the world you live in. All right. Have you suffered injustice? Wrong? Being sinned against? Being misunderstood? Being taken for granted?

Have you experienced the suffering and failure and disappointment and discouragements that come from living as a sinner among sinners? Have you experienced that? There's more to come. If God grants you life on the earth, there's more to come. Varying degrees. That's life here and now. And remember this, too. What's ahead is full of more of the same because Solomon says life is futile. In this context, what he's talking about is fleeting.

Your youth and your opportunities to live in the prime of your life are fleeting. They go fast. And no matter how much you look back, you can't get them back.

[48 : 48] You can't get them back. Life doesn't give up its joys easily. Life doesn't give up its joys easily. Life doesn't give up its joys easily.

Life doesn't give up its joys easily. Have you found that to be true? So for all of those reasons, Solomon is building a case.

You need to boldly pursue life and boldly labor to squeeze out its joys despite how fickle, faulty and futile it is.

Folks, don't you appreciate the rawness of the Bible? Don't you appreciate the fact that God is laying this out so so wonderfully and truthfully and he's not pulling any punches?

He's telling us, oh, yeah. In many ways, it's a terrible place to live. This side of heaven is just it's terrible. And you're going to encounter all kinds of terribleness in this world.

[49 : 49] That doesn't have to define you. And that doesn't mean that I'm not a good God wanting to do a good thing in your life. And you say, well, Jeff, then are you saying that the Bible says it

comes down to my perspective?

I can't go there. I can say that your perspective is important, but I can't say it's the most important thing. What's the most important thing? Are you listening? God's perspective.

That's what's most important. What has God said? What does God tell you to do? What has God laid out for you to be the reality?

And then what has he called you to in living in that reality? Has he called you to gloominess?

Darkness? Sorrow? Grief? Depression? Is that what we're supposed to walk around doing?

Oh, we love Jesus. Oh, it's just all good. God's in the heavens. And Jesus, because we don't want to look people in the eye. Why? Because we feel like hypocrites.

[50 : 52] Come to Jesus and have joy in your life. I don't have any, but maybe he'll give you some. But, you know, we smirk. But I'll tell you, we've met him. We've met this.

We've encountered this. People who call themselves Christians and they want to live every day like they're a martyr. Oh, look what I'm giving up for Jesus. Look what I'm enduring for Jesus.

It's almost as if they forgot to look at the cross and say, no, brother, what's more important is what he endured for you. That'll change your life. What he endured for you will change your life.

And you'll never be the same. You'll never look at yourself or this world the same again. Verse 9.

Rejoice. Here it is again. Rejoice, young man, during your childhood.

Let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood and follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. That's interesting. Now, this, again, is the main theme coming through.

[51 : 57] Rejoice. And the reason is common to each of us. We each have the vigor and choices of youthfulness only for a brief season of life.

So realize I told you at the beginning of the Ecclesiastes. These Solomon's main thrust here is that of living a life of wisdom.

Knowing that this gift of life is from the hand of God. So don't waste it. And his main audience are young people. People in the prime of life.

Because he's saying, don't do what I did. Don't waste that. And find yourself where I am now looking back full of regret. And knowing I'm going to have to stand before God and give an account of all of that.

And he's grabbing them and saying, so I'm looking into the youth right now. And I'm saying, don't waste it. Grab it. Listen to mom and dad. Listen to your mother and your father.

[53 : 00] And hold on to what they tell you because they love you. Because they love you. And rejoice. Rejoice. Look, if God gives you many years, everything about them will go by very, very quickly.

And you're steadily moving towards your death. If you disregard living boldly for the Lord, you will miss life. That's all it takes.

If you want to waste your life and miss life, just live your life apart from God. That'll guarantee that you'll miss it and waste it. So what does he say in verse nine?

Let your heart be pleasant. Pleasant. Do you see that? Rejoice, young man, during your childhood and let your heart be pleasant. Greg, what's the ESV say? Let your heart cheer you.

Let your heart cheer you. That grabs it. That grabs it. Let your heart. Now, this is a different word.

The word pleasant here is a different word that was used up in verse seven that meant sweet.

[54 : 04] Here it means to go well with. Or as Greg said, to make cheerful, successful, to make beautiful. All right. Is it all of those, Jeff?

It has an element of all of that wrapped up in it. So what are we talking about? Let your heart, let your heart be full of merry, cheer and the beautiful things of life.

So focus on what is good and then rejoice in God's bountiful love and goodness to you, despite the fleeting nature of youth.

Dr. Barak quoted from commentator Michael Kelly. Michelle, can we put this next quote up there for him? This is from Michael Kelly. Give yourself. Here's what verse nine is talking about.

Give yourself to life in all its richness and fullness. If things seem to be perverse and distorted, do not let that bother you. Life may not turn out as you expect, but you must not permit its uncertainties and disturbances to impair your energies.

[55 : 12] That's a careful, careful quotation. Choice of words. Don't let it impair your energies, your direction in life, your service to Christ.

Because it will. It will. If you focus on the bad and the negative in life, it will rob you of your energies. And it will put you in a direction that will cause you to spend your life on things that are not valuable. We can get into a lot of trouble here, folks. I hope you'll hang on to that quote. It's well said. It's why I brought it to you. So what do we say? Be bold in faith.

Rejoice. And now what does he say? Follow the impulses of your heart. This may be the only time in this pulpit you will hear this come. So pay attention.

All right. The ESV, the English Standard Version, which Greg is using, and the New King James Version, which one or two of you might have, both have it this way.

[56 : 21] Walk in the ways of your heart. I cringe when I say that. But it's in the Bible. So I need to get over it. Walk in the ways of your heart.

But I tell you, I just spent three years studying why you don't want to follow your heart. And why you want to get to the root of what's going on in your heart and repent of it.

Three years. The last three years of my life in this program of study that I'm in. And now I'm standing up here and I'm saying, follow the impulses of your heart. And even worse, follow the desires of your eyes.

It's painful to say this. Normally, this is really, really bad counsel. So why is it something Solomon wants us to do?

Now, you've heard Marivi teach this in women's Bible studies. You've heard my brother Greg teach you this. They were teaching this before they ever met me. Because it's right. And it's true.

[57 : 19] Girls. Miss Hogue is going to teach you this. Because you can't get away from it in hermeneutics. The science and interpretation of scripture.

Context. Context is king. In interpretation. Context tells us that Solomon's counsel is grounded in a heart.

That fears the Lord. And in eyes that are watchful for God's works of grace. I just preached two sermons on that.

So the qualification then comes next. Watch. Yet. No. Follow the impulses of your heart. And the desires of your eyes.

In other words. Everything I've been telling you. About filling your heart with the wisdom of God. And living in a high and holy reverence for God. Out of your heart.

[58 : 17] Follow that. Live in the fear of the Lord. Open your spiritual eyes. See the works of grace that God is doing in your life.

And be thankful. Follow after. Be guided by what you see God doing. What you know God has said. What God is putting in your heart. The work of grace that he's doing in your life. Live out of that. Don't live out of what the world says and defines in all of this.

You put your eyes on the world. It's going to drive you right into the ground. And you're going to crash and burn. Yet. Yet.

No. If you're going to follow the desires of your heart. And the desires of your eyes. The impulses of your heart. Yet. No. This is very interesting.

[59 : 13] In contrast to all that you can't. And don't know. Which Solomon has stressed four times. In chapter 11. He did it in verse 2.

Twice in verse 5. And in verse 6. In contrast to that. You do know now. That God will bring you to judgment for all these things.

Sayeth the word of God. God will bring you to judgment for all these things. This is personal. This is personal between you and God. We need to tell people.

There is a personal God in the heavens. He knows you and the hairs on your head. And you will answer to this God. The Lord will hold you accountable for every decision.

Every word. Every attitude and action of your life. So listen. You're not simply drawing closer to death. You're getting closer and closer to giving God an account of your life.

[60 : 15] That should count more. That should weigh even more heavily on you. Not only am I marching toward the grave. I'm marching toward God. I'm marching toward God. This great God who created everything.

Do you remember how Solomon made a big deal in the first part of the Ecclesiastes about death in the grave? And he wanted that to sober you? And I said to you. I know one funeral. You're definitely going to attend.

Your own. Well that's perfectly fine. And he wanted that to sober you. Now he's moving more and more toward. Remember where death takes you. Death takes you and ushers you into. The presence of God. Whether you're a believer or an unbeliever. Where you will give an account of every word. Every deed. Every action. Every thought. Every attitude. What you do with your life matters to your creator. I think it's incredible that this creator wants us to enjoy this.

[61 : 18] So with all of that said. Verse 10. So. Remove grief and anger from your heart.

And put away pain from your body. Because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting. There's your third R. Remove. Dr. Barak summed it up this way. Michelle let's put this one up there for him. Mankind must never focus on the negatives. To the extent that they miss the pleasant opportunities. That God gives for their enjoyment. Ah. Then he adds this.

Enjoying the good things. Requires the proper perspective on the bad things in life. Folks that is profoundly wonderful. Greg I just think we ought to put those quotes up.

Where's the second part? Do the second part Michelle. Enjoying the good things. Requires the proper perspective on the bad things in life. So there's where your perspective comes in. Your perspective does matter.

[62 : 23] But where where are we going to get. A perspective. On the bad things in life. That help us live. In the good things. Where are we going to get that? I know where we're not going to get it.

There's only one place we're going to get it. And it's from God's word. So the main thrust of this seems to be this.

We're going to throw another one up there for Michelle. Safeguard your mind and heart and body. Against the disastrous effects of focusing on the bad in life.

We we. We. We all understand. That if God grants us many years. There's going to come time. When you're not going to be able to do the things you used to do.

You're going to wake up. And it's going to be like. Okay. All right. Where's that roller thing. And you're going to get down on the roller thing. And roll the knots out.

[63 : 24] So that you can stand up straight. And go do your coffee. Now these people say. You got that all backwards. You do your coffee. Then you do the roller thing. And I say. Yeah.

Coffee. Great enjoyment in life. It's going to come a time. When all of that's going to be true. And you're not going to be able to do the things.

You want to do. And you're not going to be able to go where you want to go. If he grants you. Lots and lots of years. There may come a time in your life. When somebody who really loves you.

Walks up and says. Give me your car keys. You're not going to be able to drive yourself. Wherever you want to go anymore. You're going to have to depend on other people.

So does that mean the end of your life? Does that mean. Despair and depression. For some people it has. To the point of suicide. So they kill themselves in the nursing home. Or in their room at the house.

[64 : 22] That they're. They were given by their kids. So they could take care of them. And they come in and find them dead. Because they killed themselves. You don't think that's real? It is real.

And it's sobering. It's another aspect of life. It's not the end of life. The end of life is when you stop breathing. And then you go be with Jesus. And it's a whole other ball game.

Then there's no more sin. I told somebody the other day. In a phone call. We were encouraging each other. I hadn't talked to this brother in a long time. And one of the things that I said to him at one point was.

You know John. I think as I have grown older and older. My greatest aspiration toward heaven. My greatest sense of desire.

For heaven. Beyond just meeting Jesus. Is to be done with sin. I'm sick of it. I'm sick of it. I'm sick of my sin.

[65 : 22] I hate it. I hate it. And I'm sick of what it does. Not your sin as much. Mine. Mine. Oh.

So what does he say? He says. Put away the grief. The sadness. That attends so much of what you experience. In a sinful. Put off the anger. And the bitterness. And the resentment.

And the malice. That can consume your heart. Because why? Because you have lived in this world. So many years now. With the injustice. With the anger of other people.

With the harshness of life. And if you let it. It will beat you down. And it will make you angry. And bitter. And cynical inside. You will look at the whole world. And say. Ugh. And there won't be any

reflection of Christ.

Coming out of your heart. And your character. Because you've given it over to the darkness. Don't. Dude. Solomon says. Don't do that. I did that. And it wasted everything.

[66 : 23] Tainted everything. There is a higher. Better way. Friends. Put away. Put away. Put away. The pain. That you bring. On yourself. By holding on. To these things.

And allowing them. To define you. Have you ever seen this. In a Christian. Have you seen a Christian. That's grown older? Listen. I met a pastor one time. Who had retired. About a year prior. From the ministry. And he told me. As we were walking out a door together. He said. I can't tell you. How happy I am. To be away from those people. And all the stuff. That I had to go through. I've never been happier. In my life.

And he said it. Just like that. With all the cynicism. And bitterness. Just dripping out of his mouth. He learned to hate. His ministry. And he learned to hate. God's people.

Why? Harshness. Hardness. Criticism. No joy. It's real. And I'm preaching it real.

[67 : 20] What does Solomon say? Put it away. That means that there's a way. To do this. Or he wouldn't tell us. To do it. Make every effort. To develop. A lifestyle.

Of rejoicing. That's the antidote. It's just hard. To be. That kind of person. Bitter. Cynical. Full of hate. Looking at everything.

Glass. Half empty. Kind of person. When you're rejoicing. In the Lord. And you're. You're finding reasons. To be thankful. Again. This is not Pollyanna. This isn't denying.

The reality. Of what it is. It's just not letting it. Overwhelm you. And define you. You're not being defined. By the harshness. Of the world. You're being defined. By the heart. Of your savior. Big difference.

There is a way. And it's through. The door. Of rejoicing. It's as simple. As verse seven. You get up in the morning. And you see. That the light.

[68 : 15] Is pleasant. And that the sun. Is in the sky. There is a God. In the heavens. And he's holding it. All together. Another. Now. What am I going to do.

To serve that God today. One approach. Will honor the Lord. And bring a measure. Of true joy. To your life. The other approach. Will drive you. Into yourself.

It'll make you bitter. And cynical. It'll rob you. Of contentment. And it'll rob you. Of any sense of fulfillment. In your life. Now. Let me ask you. What then Jeff. Are we to believe. What are we to put. Into our minds. In dealing with this. All right. Let's put this up there. For Michelle. God's grace. And goodness. Make many things. In this life.

Beautiful. And worthwhile. As we receive. Life. As his gift to us. That's what you need. To believe. God's grace. And goodness. Make many things.

[69 : 11] In this life. Beautiful. And worthwhile. As we receive. Life. As his gift to us. That's the key. All right. And now. The second thing.

What are we to do. And invest in. Based on what we believe. Here's the second thing. We want to put up. Live. In a bold. Wholehearted. Devotion to God.

As you rejoice. In being alive. As you remember. God's goodness to you. And as you remove. The negative elements.

Of sadness. And anger. And pain. That can dominate you. If you allow them. The prime of life. And its opportunities. For you.

To take in the joys. Of living for the Lord. They really do fly by. So don't waste yourself. Or your walk with Jesus. By living in the hurts. Of life.

[70 : 04] I'm not saying. You won't experience them. I'm saying. Don't live in them. Don't camp out in them. Don't become a martyr. And a miser. A woe is me.

Kind of person. Remember folks. We are carrying. The hope. The love. And the message. Of our savior. To a world. Who sees all of this.

And has no idea. How to deal with it. They're trying to find. All kinds of ways. To deal with. Cope. With. The reality. That we've been preaching. That this is a harsh.

Hurtful. Horrible place. The only way for us. To see beauty. In this world. Is to see it. Through the eyes. Of our savior. Who lives in us. And we need to hold on to that.

All of this then. Builds on the idea. That if you're going to enjoy life. As God's gift to you. You must be willing. To wholeheartedly. Pursue the Lord.

[71 : 00] And wring out. Every drop of enjoyment. In life. You'll never find your pastors. Criticizing you. Or. Rebuking you.

Or admonishing you. About trying to enjoy your life. Yet. Remember. You'll give an account to God. For every bit of that pursuit.

We will remind you of that. We're not here to be the Holy Spirit. In your life. But we're here to say to you. Enjoy your life in the Lord. Just remember.

God has defined. What that enjoyment is. So be careful. Be sober. And be joyful.

Let's pray. Father your word. Is. Astonishing. It's arresting.

[71 : 57] It. It. There are times. It. It takes our breath away. It's so. We don't. I don't have any words. It's just wonderful. You're wonderful.

And so thank you. For being a good God. Who gives us a good word. Who teaches us. To live a good life. And you get to define good. God. So we look to you father.

The truth is. Is each one of us. Here now. Are bowing our heads. And our hearts to you. The truth is. Like I confessed. It's all too easy.

To have all the stuff of life. Assault us. And find ourselves. In a pity party. And in a woe is me. So help us. To suffer well. We're going to suffer.

Father. But I'm praying. That you'll help my brothers. And sisters. To suffer in godliness. We're going to be sad. And there's a time. For sadness. Solomon said.

[72 : 55] We're going to be heartbroken. There's a time. To be heartbroken. And grieved. To our core. There's a time. To weep. And we understand. All these things.

While we ask. Is that you help us. To navigate these things. To your glory. To your pleasure. Help us to deny ourselves. To take up our crosses. And to follow you.

To keep in mind. That you have given us. A good life. To be enjoyed. And so help us. To see the. Basic things. Around us. And in. In our lives.

That you've put there. And let us not. Take them for granted. Please forgive us. For doing that. And help us. To raise our eyes. To the heavens. And set our minds. On the things above.

Not that. And on the things. That are on the earth. Let us hope. Let us hope. In the godly promises. That you've made to us. And live by them.

[73 : 50] In Jesus name. And for his glory. We pray. Amen. Amen.