

Risk, Investment, and Getting Old

Ecclesiastes Part 15

Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:8 3-23-2014

Summary: To prepare for the difficulties of the future in this fallen world, invest. Take risks, but minimize those risks through diversification, hard work, and wisdom. Secondly, prepare for old age by enjoying your youth, which is done by remembering your Creator while you are young.

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11:1 Send your bread on the surface of the waters, for after many days you may find it. **2** Give a portion to seven or even to eight, for you don't know what disaster may happen on earth. **3** If the clouds are full, they will pour out rain on the earth; whether a tree falls to the south or the north, the place where the tree falls, there it will lie. **4** One who watches the wind will not sow, and the one who looks at the clouds will not reap. **5** Just as you don't know the path of the wind, or how bones develop in the womb of a pregnant woman, so you don't know the work of God who makes everything. **6** In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not let your hand rest, because you don't know which will succeed, whether one or the other, or if both of them will be equally good. **7** Light is sweet, and it is pleasing for the eyes to see the sun. **8** Indeed, if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all, and let him remember the days of darkness, since they will be many. All that comes is futile. **9** Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth. And walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all of these things God will bring you to judgment. **10** Remove sorrow from your heart, and put away pain from your flesh, because youth and the prime of life are fleeting.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 So remember your Creator in the days of your youth: Before the days of adversity come, and the years approach when you will say, "I have no delight in them"; **2** before the sun and the light are darkened, and the moon and the stars, and the clouds return after the rain; **3** on the day when the guardians of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, the women who grind cease because they are few, and the ones who watch through the windows see dimly, **4** the doors at the street are shut while the sound of the mill fades; when one rises at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song grow faint. **5** Also, they are afraid of heights and dangers on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper loses its spring, and the caper berry has no effect; for man is headed to his eternal home, and mourners will walk around in the street; **6** before the silver cord is snapped, and the gold bowl is broken, and the jar is shattered at the spring, and the wheel is broken into the well; **7** and the dust returns to the earth as it once was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. **8** "Absolute futility," says the Teacher. "Everything is futile."

Introduction

Are you prepared for the future? As we have studied through Ecclesiastes we have seen that there are a lot of pretty rough things that happen in this fallen world – are you ready for them?

“How can I be ready for them if I don’t even know what they are going to be?”

That is the question Solomon is going to answer for us in the last two chapters of the book. He gives us two crucial principles for preparing for the future.

Invest

11:1 Send your bread on the surface of the waters, for after many days you will find it.

There are two different ways this verse has commonly been interpreted. One way has been to take it as a reference to giving to people in need. And that is a possibility. There are strong arguments in favor of that view. I really wrestled back and forth, but I finally came to the conclusion that that is not what the author is getting at.¹ The context is not about generosity. The verses that follow are all about investments and risk taking. And for that reason most of the scholars I read agree that that is the topic here in verse 1 as well. The first word should be translated “send” not “cast.” And he specifies the surface of the water. Send your bread across the surface of the water. The word **bread** can represent your livelihood in general (kind of like our term “breadwinner”). It is used that way back in Ecclesiastes 9:11, where it is parallel with the word **riches**. So the point here is to take your income and engage in maritime trade – investing and doing business overseas.² That was something Solomon did.

1 Kings 10:22 the king had ships ... and once every three years the ships ... would arrive bearing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

That is how the Queen of Sheba and various other world rulers became so impressed with Solomon’s amazing wisdom – through his international business deals. And the idea here is not so much that it has to be overseas necessarily. The point he is making is about long term investment. You don’t get any return until **after many days**. In ancient times, doing business overseas meant waiting a long time to get a return on your investment.

And so he is establishing a very basic principle about preparing for the future. Invest. Wise people invest. Fools don’t. Fools care about right now. They are not interested in deferred gratification or deferred anything. They are not interested in sacrificing now in order to have a better situation in the future because they never plan ahead very far. So instead of investing, they prefer gambling. They don’t have to wait for an investment to grow over the course of years - they just want a big payoff right now. So they do stupid things like buying lotto tickets or going to casinos or any number of get rich quick schemes. When you try to get rich quick, the quick part works fine – just not the rich part. You get poor quick.

Not Just Money

It is foolish to gamble; it is wise to invest. And don’t just think in terms of financial investment. You can invest other things, like your time. Wise people will pour their time into things that have no immediate benefit. Like training – taking some courses. Or planning. You invest the time to get some

¹ If it were speaking about generosity, then the idea of throwing bread in water would give a picture that when you give to people, it seems like your money is just lost – like bread thrown into water that just dissolves and is gone. But I don’t think that is the picture because the word is “send” not “cast,” and he specifies the surface of the water. Sending bread across the surface of the water seems to fit the idea of sending grain on ships more than throwing bread in the water to be dissolved.

² I do not recommend the 2011 NIV in general, but I believe they did get the meaning of this verse right: **Ship your grain across the sea; after many days you may receive a return. 2 Invest in seven ventures, yes, in eight; you do not know what disaster may come upon the land.**

training or come up with a plan or schedule, and it takes up some of your time now, but it is like a stock that skyrockets in value. In the years to come it saves you far more hours than you invested.

You can also invest energy. You spend some energy now working out and getting in shape, and later it pays off because you have more energy all day long.

Ministry is an investment. I remember multiple times when some stranger would contact my dad out of the blue and say, “You probably don’t remember me, but years ago you stopped and shared the gospel with me. And I just want you to know that totally turned my life around. And now I’ve led the rest of my family to the Lord.”

And my dad had no idea until they told him years later.

Raising children is an investment, isn’t it? You are working to build things into them now, some of which won’t really yield any significant return until they are adults. One of the characteristics of a wise person is they tend to place a high value on investment.

Do Not Overreact to Risk

That is an important thing for him to tell us at the end of this book, because he has said so much in this book about the risks and dangers of this fallen, cursed, futile world. He keeps on telling us, “You don’t know what’s going to happen in the future, all kinds of things can and will go wrong; not even wisdom can guarantee good outcomes; very often outcomes are the opposite of what they should be; time and chance can strike at any time; fools can foul things up at any moment; terrible things can befall you,” etc. And he knows some people will read all that and think, “Man, there’s a lot of risk out there. I’d better just try to lock down what I have in case the worst happens.” So they hug all their possessions and money and everything as tightly as they can to try to avoid suffering any kind of loss. That is the wrong response. If your approach to the dangers of life is to tighten your grip on all your money and resources, eventually something will pry those things from your grip and you will be left with nothing. The best way to guard against the threats of time and chance is not hoarding, but investing. You need to take the resources you have and pour them out into something that will be likely to multiply them. Make an analysis of time and chance – discern what is likely to happen, and use that to get an increase on what you have so that when you take losses you will still be ok. But in order to do that, you have to take some risks.

Take Risks

3 If the clouds are full, they will pour out rain on the earth

You can’t predict the future. You don’t know if it is going to pour rain or stay dry.

...whether a tree falls to the south or the north, the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.

“I’m going to make this investment.”

“But what if a tree falls right on your investment?”

“Then I’ll pick up the pieces, make adjustments, and play the hand I’m dealt.”

That is the way a wise person operates. But fools will try to wait before acting until they can know for sure what is going to happen. The problem with that is you never do know for sure what is going to happen until it happens, and then it’s too late.

4 One who watches the wind will not sow, and the one who looks at the clouds will not reap.

“You’re a farmer. It’s the season for planting. You have to get the seed in the ground now in order for the harvest to be ready in time. Why aren’t you out there sowing?”

“Well, because – I don’t like the looks of this weather. When the winds blow like this, that means we might be in for a storm. I just don’t know if today is the right day.”

And he keeps making all his predictions about how things will go, and those predictions keep him from ever pulling the trigger on planting his crop. There is always too much risk. He is waiting for a time

when there won't be any risk, and in the process he ends up missing the window altogether, and so now this year there will be no chance at all of a crop – no matter what kind of weather comes, because he never even planted.

The same thing happens at harvest time.

“The crops are ready – why aren't you out there harvesting?”

“Have you seen those clouds? Clouds like that are never a good sign. I'd better hold off...”

And he holds off so long he loses his whole crop.

No one understands investing like a farmer. He takes all his money, spends it on seeds, and throws them into the dirt – and hopes for a seven or eight hundred percent return several months later. And there are 100 threats that could cause him to lose it all, but he takes the risk every year because the alternative is to just try to live off that money and that won't even last one year and it will all be used up.

Last week we saw that it is foolish to assume you know for sure what is going to happen in the future, and then presume upon that. Wise people take into account the possibility of things not going according to plan. But just as it is foolish to presume upon the future, it is also foolish to refuse to act until you know how everything is going to shake out. Some people will never act until all their ducks are in a row and everything is all squared away, and there is no risk. That is foolish because by the time you get all those ducks lined up, the opportunity will have passed.

God Approves of Risk

If you want to destroy just about any ministry, put someone in charge who is afraid of risk. Put someone like that on the board in a church plant and there is about 100% chance it will fail. People like that think any significant risk is irresponsible. They are like the guy who buried his talent. The servants who took risks and invested and made a return on their money were praised: “Well done, good and faithful servants!” But the one who didn't want to take any risk so he buried it in the ground and then returned it to his master with no increase – he was rebuked for being a wicked, lazy servant. God approves of risk-taking.

And if you question that, read your Bible and see if there is any place where God approves of farming – which is nothing but risk. One hail storm and you can lose your one paycheck for the entire year! I know a guy that happened to three years in a row. It is a risky profession, and yet - isn't the hard working farmer a noble character in Scripture? Or how about having children? Are you taking a risk when you conceive a child? By conceiving that child you are committing to love and care for that child all the way to adulthood (and many times even beyond that). And this is a person you have never even met. Before hiring someone to work for you, you do extensive interviews. Before ordaining someone as a pastor, we do extensive examination. Before entering into a business relationship with someone, you check that person out thoroughly. But when you conceive a child, there is no interview of any kind. You have no idea if this person will be outgoing or introverted, loud or quiet, big or small, academic or artsy, left brained or right brained, healthy or sick, – you know nothing about this person that is going to be a family member for the rest of your life. Not only that, but you don't know what is going to happen to your ability to care for this child. You could lose your job, lose your house, lose your health, lose all your money. Talk about risk! And yet is God in favor of childbearing in Scripture? Absolutely - the very first command ever given: be fruitful and multiply. God wants us to get out there and take risks.

Minimize Risk Through...

But on the other hand, God does not want us to take foolish risks. Investment is good, gambling and recklessness are bad.

“But how do I know the difference?”

That is where wisdom comes in.

1) Wisdom

Understanding the difference between recklessness and wise risk taking is a life-long process of gaining wisdom. Wisdom observes the direction God has been taking things, and what is likely and unlikely to happen, and plans accordingly. When we moved to this building, it was a risk because we had to commit to buy it within two years of moving in, and we didn't have the money. We would have to almost double in size before we would be able to afford it. Was that a risk? Yes. Was it a foolish gamble? No, because all signs were pointing in that direction, and so it was a good risk. Wisdom can look at a risk and determine what is most likely to happen. That is why wise people don't buy lottery tickets. They understand probabilities.

2) Diversification

2 Give a portion to seven or even to eight, for you don't know what disaster may happen on earth.

Diversify. You don't know what disaster might happen or where, so to guard against that, invest in multiple different places. The reason they say, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket" is because some disaster could come along and crush that basket and you lose everything. That is the point of a mutual fund – lots of different stocks in one fund so if one stock tanks, all the others still give you an increase.

3) Hard Work

5 Just as you don't know the path of the wind, or how bones develop in the womb of a pregnant woman,³ so you don't know the work of God who makes everything. 6 In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not let your hand rest, because you don't know which will succeed, whether one or the other, or if both of them will be equally good.

There is no telling what God is going to do. Is it possible that morning is not a good time because right after you sow there will be a huge rain that will wash all the seeds away? Yes. Could that happen in the evening? Yes. So what's the solution - don't sow at all? No, the solution is to sow in the morning and the evening, so that if disaster strikes one field, you will still have the other field. And maybe you will hit the jackpot and get both. But the wise person does not even expect that. He knows that in this life, you win some and you lose some. And instead of becoming paralyzed by the fear of losing some, wise people just assume that is going to happen and they get out there and go for as many wins as possible.

Enjoy Youth

So the first principle he wants to give us about preparing for the future is to make good investments. The second principle about preparing for the future starts in verse 7 - prepare for old age. Before ending the book he is going to give us his "enjoy life" speech one last time. This time he focuses on enjoying your youth.

7 Light is sweet, and it is pleasing for the eyes to see the sun.

In other words, it is good to be alive. It is a gift from God just to be able to wake up and experience daylight.

Enjoy Your Current Stage of Life

8 Indeed, if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all

³ The word translated **wind** is that word RUACH, which can mean wind, or breath, or spirit. The ESV translates this verse this way: **As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child...** You cannot predict what God is going to do any more than you can see the path of the wind or how God gives life to a baby in the womb. So just get out there and work – even though it is risky.

Enjoy all your years. So often people waste their childhood and teenage years wishing they were older.

“I can’t wait until I can drive.”

“I can’t wait until I graduate.”

“I can’t wait until I get married.”

“I can’t wait to have children.”

“I can’t wait to get my dream job.”

By the time all that finally happens, you have just wasted half your life waiting for the future to arrive. And it is not too many years after that that you find yourself thinking, “Man, I wish I were young again.” We waste the first half of life longing for the future and the second half of life pining over the past, and we end up missing life. So the Preacher instructs us – however many years you live, rejoice in all of them. And the only way to do that is to enjoy each stage of life while you are in it.

Several years ago I saw the photos of my high school class’s 20th reunion. I looked at those pictures and I thought, “What in the world? Who are these people? They just look like a bunch of middle-aged people.” Then I thought, “Oh, right...” They all looked so old. It didn’t seem like they could be my peers. So I looked in the mirror and realized I looked older than them! It goes by fast, so enjoy your youth while you can.

“Too late! My youth is long gone.”

Well, youth is a relative thing. Maybe you feel like you have one foot in the grave and the other foot on a banana peel, and your days in this world are about over. But the reality is, you are not as old as you are going to be. Raise your hand if you expect to be a lot older ten years from now than you are right now. In this next decade of your life you will face challenges that you don’t have now, so enjoy what you have now while you have it. My mom is starting up her Bible study again. Why? Because some of you ladies still haven’t learned the things she has to teach you, and so she needs to get that done while she is still young enough to do it, because she’s not going to be this young forever. Ecclesiastes 11 is not just for teenagers. If you are still breathing, then enjoy your life now, before things get harder and then you die.

8 ...and let him remember the days of darkness, since they will be many. All that comes is futile.

The days of darkness refer to death. And those days will be many. You are going to spend a lot more years dead than alive. And those days are futile - the closer you get to death the more the curse takes over. This is a fallen, cursed world, but the effects of the fall are weighted a lot more toward the end of life than the beginning.

Remember Judgment Day

So if you are one of those people who thinks, “Religion is for going to heaven when you die. I don’t want to become a Christian now because I want to enjoy my youth” – if you want to enjoy life, then it is crucial that you become a Christian so that you can enjoy your youth in the most profound way, and in a way that won’t backfire.

9 Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth. And walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all of these things God will bring you to judgment.

Once again he reminds us – enjoy your youth, but don’t enjoy it in a way that would displease God. When you enjoy your youth, always keep Judgment Day in mind, so that you enjoy it the right way and not the wrong way. You will have to give an account for the way you enjoy your youth. So keep Judgment Day in mind. Keep reward and punishment in mind. Someday you will be standing before the throne of God at the great judgment, and you will be thinking, “I am so glad I enjoyed that meal at the Cheesecake Factory the way I did, because now I’m receive some amazing rewards for doing that the right way!”

“I’m so glad I enjoyed my house the way I did, and I enjoyed my wife the way I did, and I enjoyed my job the way I did, because now I’m getting all this reward.”

But at other points we will feel the horror of regret: “Oh, I wish I hadn’t enjoyed that pleasure the way I did – in a way that dishonored and displeased God, because now I’m having to give an account and I’m suffering horrible loss because of it.” It is so critical that we always keep Judgment Day in mind so we enjoy God’s gifts the right way. I will get into more detail about exactly what will take place on Judgment Day next time, but for now the point is simply this: enjoy your life. And do it in a way that you will be glad about on Judgment Day.

Derek Kidner: “Joy was created to dance with goodness, not alone.”

That is a great statement. Joy and happiness dance with righteousness and godliness. That is God’s design.

God Wants You to Enjoy Life

Don’t ever think enjoyment and pleasure are sub-Christian. Some Christians came out of a background where “if it feels good, you should repent because it was probably sin.” So the goal of the Christian life is to learn how to deny all your desires. That is not pleasing or honoring to God. God does not want that any more than your wife wants you to spend your whole marriage burning with passion for another woman but somehow managing to control your impulses so that you always say *no* to your desires. Do you think your wife would be happy if you said, “Don’t worry honey – I’ve developed so much self-control that I have actually come to the point where I have zero pleasure as a man”? Would she say, “Oh, excellent. Great job!”? Would that honor her? No. It would be devastating to her, because what you would be saying is, “I don’t desire you or derive any pleasure from you at all.” What would honor her? It would honor her if you had passionate desire for her and her alone, and your life was *full* of pleasure because you are getting what you desire – her! God made marriage like that to teach us what He is like. He wants the same thing. He wants us not to deny ourselves what we desire most – he wants us to delight ourselves in Him, so He can give us the desire of our heart. That is why Augustine said, “Love God, and do what you please.” God wants us to be passionate people who desire good things and then run hard after what we desire. That is why He so often uses our desires to lead and guide us through life.

Throw off Sorrow

10 Remove sorrow from your heart, and put away pain from your flesh, because youth and the prime of life are fleeting.

Do not wallow too long in sorrow. Sometimes sorrow is appropriate, for a time. Proverbs 25:20 teaches that sorrow and grief can be like a warm blanket on a cold day. You wrap yourself in grief after some major loss, and during that time you need that blanket. You don’t want to go back to laughing and joking and the rest of life – you just want to hang on to your sorrow and continue grieving. That’s fine – for a while. But the time comes when we need to throw that off and get back into the flow of life. Sometimes we get stuck in sorrow. We just want to wrap up in that blanket indefinitely, and we start falling into self-pity, and our soul just refuses to recover from being sad. We cling to it and try to hold on to it, and in so doing we miss out on the joy God wants us to have. And the Preacher is warning us here not to do that. These years you are in right now – whatever degree of youth you have left – don’t squander it by wallowing in self-pity. You lost someone, or someone hurt you really bad, or you discover that you have some kind of defect – your mind is slow or your body isn’t very attractive or your athletic skills are at the not-so-impressive end or whatever. Something is wrong with you, or you lack something you wish you had, and you choose to dwell on that obsessively. And all the time you spend thinking about that, you are pressing your soul down under the water of sorrow. And the Preacher says, “Hey, you don’t have time for that.

Youth and the prime of life are fleeting.

If we lived to be 5000 years old maybe you could afford to blow a year or two being depressed about something that went wrong in your life. But life is short and youth is fleeting and you don't have much time left at this age you are right now, and there is a whole lot to be enjoyed – things God wants you to enjoy, and you will miss them if you continue to wallow in self-pity. Wise people know when it is time to just throw sorrow off and refocus on the joys of life.

Prepare for Old Age

Now, in case you are still not motivated to enjoy your youth and to do it the right way, the Preacher is going to scare you into doing it in chapter 12. Brace yourself, because chapter 12 paints a pretty terrifying picture.

Old Age is Hard

12:1 So remember your Creator in the days of your youth; Before the days of adversity come, and the years approach when you will say, "I have no delight in them"; 2 before the sun and the light are darkened and the moon and the stars, and the clouds return after the rain

When you are young, the storms come, and then after the storm, the clouds clear up and the sun comes out again and you recover. But when you are old, hardship comes, and you recover, and when it is all over and you tell people that you have recovered, you have to put “recovered” in quotes.

“Are you recovered?”

“Well, if you're talking about that one problem then, yes, I guess so. But if you just look at me you can hardly refer to this as a state of full recovery. The storm is over, but it's still pretty cloudy and dark.”

3 on the day when the guardians of the house tremble

Those are your hands. God gave you hands for the wellbeing of your body, but now those hands tremble. Your days of doing brain surgery are over. In some cases your days of holding a cup of coffee are over.

3 ... and the strong men stoop

Your big, strong arms and legs and back are now weak and drooping. You cannot even walk straight up and down anymore because it hurts too much. All your motions – including the way you walk, are calculated to control the level of pain.

3 ... the grinders cease because they are few

That's your teeth. They cease their grinding. They sit there, motionless in the glass beside your bed at night. And you think, “I never knew what a blessing it was just to be able to chew food.”

3 ... and the ones who watch through the windows see dimly

First it is glasses, then bifocals, then trifocals, and finally you get so it is a major skill just matching up the right distance with the right portion of your glasses.

4 the doors at the street are shut while the sound of the mill fades

Your hearing goes. You can't make out what people are saying when there is a lot of background noise. And eventually you get tired of just saying “What?” all the time, and you revert to just nodding and smiling. My uncle was going across the border from Canada to the United States once and the border agent said, “Where are you going?” And my uncle said, “I don't know.”

“Well, where are you from?”

“You have a nice day too.”

We laugh at that, but it is hard to live that way. You become isolated even in the middle of all your friends and family. And here is the worst part:

4 ... when one rises at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song grow faint.

You can't hear the things you want to hear, but somehow the things you don't want to hear are amplified. It is 4:00 in the morning and some bird outside starts chirping and it wakes you up! And you are thinking, "Man, if I have to be almost deaf, you'd think there would be some advantages! I can't follow a conversation to save my life, but then when I want to sleep suddenly I have bionic ears!" All your life you wanted to sleep in, but you had to get up and go to work. Now you are retired, you have no job, nothing to do, nowhere to go – you could sleep all day if you wanted to, and you are up at 4!

5 Also, they are afraid of heights and dangers on the road

Everything around you is danger. You think about taking your wife out on a date, but ... it's about to get dark.

"Maybe we should just stay home."

When you were young you didn't think twice about walking right up to a ledge, but now, between your vision and your balance and the shakiness – you're afraid. You see an icy walkway – and when you were young you wouldn't give it a second thought. You would run and see how far you could slide. But now you are genuinely afraid – because you know walking that little 15 foot section of icy sidewalk could result in a fall and another broken hip. When you were young you bought a house with stairs thinking, "This will keep me in shape." Then you got a little older, and got arthritis in your knees to where there so much pain going up and down that now you regret buying that house. And you get a little older still and you stand at the top of those stairs and think, "Wow, that's a long way down. Maybe I can just stay up here for a while."

This is something for young people to keep in mind when it comes to honoring older saints at church. When my kids were little, and they wanted to run full speed up and down the halls at church, I didn't think anything of it. I thought, "God made little kids to run – let them run. What's it going to hurt? If they trip and fall, that will just make them tougher." But then when I went to pastor a church with a lot of older people, one of them explained to me that when you get older, having a little kid suddenly go darting in front of you can really throw you off balance. Your reaction times are not what they used to be, you can't think as fast, and it is just really unpleasant and even scary to have kids running around you. So it is an act of kindness and honor to tell you kids not to run, and to help older people across the ice, and to come early so you can put some salt down on the walkway coming into the church. Life is scary and dangerous when your body becomes fragile and vulnerable to injury.

5 ... the almond tree blossoms

Whatever color your hair used to be, no one remembers now because all there is up there now is white.

5 ... the grasshopper loses its spring

Literally it says the **grasshopper becomes heavy**. You lose your "hops." I will never forget about six years ago when we were at the other building – I was leading the youth group at that time, and one week we went out and played basketball in the parking lot. I hadn't played in years. And I went to do my customary thing where I would jump up and grab the rim. It had been a few years, so I figured it might be all I could do just barely touch the rim, so I really got a good running start. And I ran, and jumped, and... nothing happened. I didn't go upward at all. I didn't even touch the bottom of the net! I was only 40 years old, and I was back to jumping like a toddler. Have you ever seen a toddler jump? They do the whole motion, but their feet never actually leave the ground. That's me. At the height of my vertical elevation on that jump I don't know if you could have fit a dollar bill between my feet and the ground. It is hard to not be able to do things that used to be easy for you.

5 ... and the caper berry has no effect

The caper berry was known as an aphrodisiac – to enhance libido. So you can pencil in your Bible in parentheses there, “Viagra.” You hit a certain age – not even Viagra helps. Enjoy your youth while you can because some abilities go away. Men, chase your wife now. And wives, slow down a little while things are still possible.

Enjoy Youth, Don’t Worship It

Week after week in this study we find ourselves asking the question, “Remind me again how all this is supposed to increase my joy in life? Won’t all this information about the troubles of old age just make people more depressed? And is this really such a good message anyway for our culture? Enjoy your youth because old age is hard? We live in a culture that worships youth as it is. Forty-year old women buy magazines with air-brushed pictures of 15-year-old girls on the cover and articles that promise, “You can look like this!” We idolize youth in this culture - won’t this chapter make that worse? No, because what this chapter teaches is how to enjoy youth without idolizing it. Our culture does idolize youth, but I don’t think they enjoy youth very much. Any time you turn something into an idol, enjoyment drops because you are trying to squeeze out of it something it can’t provide. People turn food into an idol and eat themselves sick. They make an idol out of sex, and they destroy their lives and never do get satisfaction and they never do find that satisfaction of soul that they so crave. Making an idol out of anything, including youth, is a sure ticket to misery. Our culture worships youth, but do you see young people full of exuberant joy? Go to the mall and just sit down and watch the young people. Do they look happy to you? Most of the time they look angry. Eight out of ten of them have probably considered suicide at some point. Our culture worships youth, but they are not enjoying their youth.

The fool says, “Wow, I’m getting old. I’m losing the one thing that can make me happy. That makes me depressed.” But Solomon wants to teach us to say, “Wow, I’m going to get old. I’d better enjoy what God has given me to enjoy while I still can!” You see, when you idolize something, that spoils the gift even while you have it because you think the loss of it means the loss of happiness. But if your happiness comes from another source – you understand that all happiness and satisfaction come only from the presence of God, then you know that when this gift of youth is gone, you will still have God, which means you will still have full access to joy and satisfaction. So instead of making yourself miserable because you so dread the loss of your youth, you are free to just enjoy it while you have it.

This chapter is a great message for our culture. Because the message is, “Instead of worshipping youth and getting depressed about losing it, worship God and enjoy what He has given you now.”

6 ... for man is headed to his eternal home, and mourners will walk around in the street; 6 before the silver cord is snapped, and the gold bowl is broken, and the jar is shattered at the spring, and the wheel is broken into the well; 7 and the dust returns to the earth as it once was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Enjoy the things you can do in this stage of life that you are in right now because it won’t last.

Conclusion

Remember Your Creator

So enjoy your youth.

“How do I do that, exactly?”

The answer is in chapter 12, verse 1.

12:1 So remember your Creator in the days of your youth

It starts with remembering your Creator while you are still young. In order to be able to handle the difficulties of old age, you will have to have years of enjoying life by remembering your Creator. If you

can see, look at something beautiful and remember that the beauty comes from your Creator. If you can hear, listen to some amazing music that points you to your Creator. If you can run, run somewhere, and remember that your strength comes from your Creator. If you have a steady trigger finger, shoot something, and put it on a grill and make it holy by giving thanks to your Creator for it and enjoy using those teeth God put in your head. Enjoy your good balance, your sharp mind, enjoy being able to go out at night, enjoy being able to sleep, enjoy your libido, enjoy your strength, and remember your Creator so when you meet Him on Judgment Day it will be gladness and not regret.

Benediction: Acts 20:32 "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Application Questions (James 1:25)

- 1) Are there any areas in your life where you feel you should take more risk? Or less risk? Or make greater investment in something?
- 2) Name a few benefits that go along with this stage of your life that God wants you to enjoy.