

Book:	Ecclesiastes
Series:	Two Ways to Live: Under the Sun or In the Fear of God
Lesson 15:	Wisdom & the Fear of God
Text:	Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:8
Date:	Sunday, May 12, 2013

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Next Lesson:	Ecclesiastes 12:9-14



TEACHING TIP

We're taking a larger section in this week's lesson that we had originally planned. Therefore, you may choose either (1) to take two weeks on this lesson, or (2) to teach this lesson this week and finish the second half of Lesson 9 (5:1-7 — will be provided for you) next week. Then, we'll finish Ecclesiastes 12:9-14 on May 26.

Colonial Hills
Baptist Church

Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

INTRODUCTION

Illustration: Anyone who has spent any time playing an organized sport is familiar with the term “fundamentals.” In February 2013, Doug Hix wrote in *Youth Fitness Magazine*,

Standing two feet away from the basket, holding the ball with one-hand above your head and simply snapping the wrist to make a basket. Grapping a bag of wiffle balls, putting one on a batting tee, then continually hitting wiffle balls in your garage. After speaking with multiple NBA, MLB and NFL players [about] the secrets to their success, several times it came back to [their] continually working on the fundamentals they learned as a child growing up.¹

Thus, skillful basketball players spend innumerable hours in practice working on ball handling, passing and catching, boxing out, layups, and free-throws. Wise baseball players hone their hitting, throwing, fielding, and base running; and determined football players continue to sharpen their footwork, ball security, tackling, and play reading. These fundamentals become the foundation upon which a successful athletic career is built.

Throughout most of the second half of this book, we have been discovering the “advantage” of wisdom to navigate this life of

“vanity.” Fundamental to such a life of wisdom is the fear of God, simply being rightly related to Him. Without a good grasp of this fundamental, wisdom will be short-lived at best or nonexistent at worst.

Solomon already made this connection between the fear of God and wisdom in his introduction to the second half of the book (5:1-7). In 5:7, he summarized his “wisdom on worship” (Lesson 9) with “fear thou God.” Now, as he begins to conclude this second half, he again draws a connection between one’s view of God and his manner of life. The fear of God is fundamental to a life of wisdom. In fact, Solomon almost stated it that way when he wrote in Proverbs 9:10, “**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom**, and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.”

Our passage for today illustrates this fundamental connection between understanding/fearing God and responding in wise practice, as is evident in the following conjunctions — “for” in vv. 1, 2, 6, 10; “yet” in v. 8; “but” in v. 9; “therefore” in v. 10. These verses dichotomize life into two simple divisions—work and play or enterprise and enjoyment. In our passage, the area of enterprise is dealt with in 11:1-6, and enjoyment is considered in 11:7-12:7. In both sections, the Teacher shows us how **being rightly related to God** (i.e., what we’ll call the “fear of God aspect”) **aids us in the right practice** (i.e., what we’ll call the “wisdom aspect”). In both points, we’ll trace these two aspects.

THE FEAR OF GOD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM IN OUR ENTERPRISE (11:1-6).

Read 11:1-6.

1. **Fear of God aspect: what we don't know about God's work**

In this section, the fear of God manifests itself in a humble, faith-filled recognition of what one does not know about God (cf. Isaiah 44:24ff). Throughout these six verses, the phrase “knowest not” occurs four times, and the key

statement is verse 5—“As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit [or wind], nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child, even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.”² Solomon outlines here three details of life about which the fear of God compels us to acknowledge our ignorance.

a. **Trouble: we don't know what (vv. 1-2)**

There are a couple possible interpretations for verses 1-2, and we’ll consider them under the “wisdom aspect” below. Meanwhile, the last phrase of verse 2 is very clear, and it provides us with the first detail of life that eludes our grasp—trouble. “Thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.” While we certainly know that we will face evil (e.g., besides the clear statements of Scripture affirming that, Solomon himself regularly witnessed it—2:21; 5:12, 15; 6:1; 7:14; 8:6; 10:5), we just don’t know what type of evil we’ll experience. This is not the first time we’ve learned this from Solomon—“In times of prosperity be joyful, but in times of adversity consider this: God has made one as well as the other, so that no one can discover what the future holds” (7:14). So, however we might engage in our enterprise, we must do so recognizing that we don’t know what kind of trouble tomorrow will bring (cf. Matthew 6:34).


b. **Timing: we don't know when (vv. 3-4)**

Verses 3-4 present us with a second detail that lies outside of our comprehension—timing. “If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth; and if the tree fall toward the south or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be” (v. 3). This is an echo of the earlier and lengthy discussion on timing in 3:1-15. Here, Solomon again recognizes a certain cycle to things, but expresses that

we are unable to determine the timing. Sometimes, we are able to watch and anticipate something, like clouds forming in preparation for rain (v. 3a). Even then, however, such observations are sometimes faulty (e.g., v. 4 warns against trying to “read the skies” in order to predict the “ideal time” for work), as we know by watching the local news and weather report. At other times, we are completely caught off-guard and unaware (v. 3b), as when a tree falls (sometimes in a good place and sometimes in a bad place). So, again, while we sense a certain routine and cycle to things, we aren’t able to predict the timing.³

c. Triumph: we don't know how (v. 6)

A final detail in which our knowledge of God’s work is limited is in the area of success. In the grace of God, there are built-in laws of successful triumph (i.e., the law of reaping and sowing), but we don’t always know how such success is achieved. Thus, verse 6—“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” In other words, he counsels us to work hard throughout the day, because we don’t know what point of effort will succeed.

 **Application:** How has faith been “fleshed out” in these verses?⁴ (1) *Life cannot be lived based only on what one sees; instead, we must accept the reality of invisible “things” at play. Thus, the healthy fruits of humility and dependence are also produced.* (2) *We must not be disheartened by those invisible realities, but instead see them from the hand of “God who maketh all.” Thus, a foundation for confidence and rejoicing is laid.* (3) *These verses join the secular and the sacred, for the one who fears God accepts both visible realities and invisible*

realities and learns to live simultaneously in light of both. These verses picture real, authentic, genuine faith—a person who simply lives like there’s more to life than he sees. He neither ignores the reality of this dualism (either by accident [he just doesn’t think about the sovereign God] or purpose [he tries to displace the sovereign God]), nor does he become anxious by it. He doesn’t fret about the past or attempt to manipulate the future. He simply takes each day at a time, allowing his fear of God and acknowledged ignorance of God’s work to give him wisdom for the decisions he can make (i.e., the “wisdom aspect” which we will consider next⁵).

2. Wisdom aspect: what we should practice in our enterprise

Truly, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” and thus the first point leads naturally into this. The “fear of God” aspect (i.e., acknowledging what we don’t know about God’s word) enables the “wisdom aspect” (i.e., skillful practice) in our enterprise. The God-fearer who admits his own ignorance about trouble, timing, and triumph will be compelled to practice wisdom in at least three different areas of enterprise. Here, Solomon gets intensely practical.

a. Investing: spread broadly (vv. 1-2)

Two primary interpretations are offered for verses 1-2: (1) Solomon is advocating philanthropy in giving generous “portions” to the poor; (2) Solomon is commending risk/faith (v. 1) and diversity (v. 2) in one’s commercial enterprises. The second interpretation is to be preferred for the following reasons: (1) Solomon’s own commercial activity (cf. 1 Kings 9:26-28; 10:22); (2) the ability to translate “bread” as “grain,” “food,” or “goods” (cf. Deuteronomy 8:3; Proverbs 31:14); (3) the focus on work throughout the context (cf. vv. 4-6); and (4) the reminder of v. 2b that disaster may strike at any moment.

So, the Teacher here becomes a Financial Advisor,⁶ warning against “putting all one’s eggs in the same basket” and suggesting,

*It is financially more prudent to explore multiple avenues for making one’s living and investing one’s resources (vv. 2, 6), which could involve giving a “portion” or “compensation” to several different areas (seven, or even to eight), because such diversification gives protection against unforeseen disaster in one or two of the areas.*⁷

In this first area of enterprise, our recognition of what we don’t know (i.e., the fear of God aspect) will compel us to wisely balance risk and diversity so that we are not impoverished by trouble.

b. Planning: don’t delay (vv. 3-4)

In these verses, the teacher turns his attention to the unknown of timing and from it extracts the following lesson—don’t sit around waiting for the ideal, most opportune moment; instead, since those times are completely out of your control, don’t delay but jump in now. Otherwise, we will fail to “sow” and “reap.”⁸ “Neither an ominous outlook (clouds full of rain) nor the unexpected event (a tree falling) must hinder our enthusiasm for life.”⁹

c. Laboring: work hard (v. 6)

Finally, the Teacher brings our inability to predict triumph to bear on our enterprise. To God-fearers who sense God’s law of reaping and sowing, but who don’t know exactly how to produce such success, Solomon recommends diligence and hard work. Since, we don’t know what part of our labor will “prosper,” we’re encouraged toward unremitting diligence (i.e., from “morning” until “evening”).

In summary, then, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” in our enterprise. When we are rightly oriented to God, acknowledging those things that He has hidden from us, we will have wisdom in our practice. Specifically, it looks like this:

- Limited knowledge about trouble → wisdom in investing
- Limited knowledge about timing → wisdom in planning
- Limited knowledge about triumph → wisdom in laboring



Application: How have you been challenged about starting your enterprise with the fear of God? How have you been challenged concerning humbly and trustingly accepting the unknowns in life (i.e., trouble, timing, triumph)? How have you been challenged regarding fear-filled wisdom in your investing? In your planning? In your laboring? *open discussion*

Transition: Life is simply divided into work and play, and in both areas, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” We’ve seen how the fundamental of fearing God facilitates wisdom in one’s enterprise; now we consider how the fear of God enables wisdom in one’s enjoyment.

**THE FEAR OF GOD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM
IN OUR ENJOYMENT (11:7-12:7).**

Throughout these verses, words like “sweet,” “pleasant,” “rejoice” (2x), “cheer,” and “remove sorrow” indicate a change of focus here from enterprise to enjoyment.

Read 11:7-12:1.

1. Fear of God aspect: what we do know about God's will

In the first point, the fear of God was evident in a humble, faith-filled recognition of what one does not know about God. Now, in this section, the fear of God is displayed in a sober, faith-filled affirmation of what has been revealed by God. Contrasting the repetitious “knowest not” in verses

1-6 are the commands here to “remember” (11:8; 12:1) and “know” (11:9). Solomon outlines here three aspects of life which the fear of God compels us to respect.

a. Death: we all face death (11:8)

Returning again to a familiar theme (2:14-15; 3:18-22; 8:8; 9:2-3, 11-12), Solomon reminds us that following a life, even of “many years,” are “many” “days of darkness” (cf. 12:7). An inescapable fact of life is that we are all hurtling towards the grave, and we only have one chance to live life. Thus, Qoheleth mutters again, “All that cometh is vanity.” This may mean either that what our future holds is *obscure* and *enigmatic* (cf. 8:14) or that life itself is *fleeting*. Certainly, both are true, having been expressed by Solomon elsewhere in this book and being repeated in the New Testament—“Ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14).

b. Judgment: we all await judgment (11:9)

Again, Solomon is writing nothing new in this section; he’s merely driving it home with more intensity. In 3:17, he affirmed, “God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.” Now, in the final section of the book, he reaffirms God’s judgment two more times (11:9; 12:14; cf. 12:7). This judgment will be thorough (12:14—“every work...with every secret thing... whether it be good or...evil”) and will address our choices concerning how we “walk in the ways of [our] heart and in the sight of [our] eyes” (11:9).

c. Aging: we all grow old (12:1-8)

Read 12:1-7.

In 11:9-10, Solomon is addressing a hypothetical “young man.” His burden is that the lessons he spent a lifetime learning “the hard way” may be more easily come by for his students. In these verses, he wishes to pass along a final lesson discovered in the fear of God, and he does so powerfully. His overuse of terms extoling youthfulness (“young,” “youth,” and “childhood” 6x in 11:9-12:1) are forcefully confronted by the inescapability of aging in 11:10b-12:7. Solomon drives home this point in several ways: (1) by declaring that “childhood and youth are vanity [or fleeting]” (11:10b); (2) by referring to old age as “the evil days...when thou shalt say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’” (12:1); (3) by metaphorically describing the aging process (12:2-6; cf. 2 Samuel 19:35); (4) by reminding us that we are merely “dust” (12:7; cf. Genesis 3:19; Psalm 104:29); and (5) by returning to his opening cry, “Vanity of vanities...all is vanity” (12:8). The chart below explains his many metaphors:¹⁰

Metaphor	Meaning
“sun...light...moon...starts [being] darkened” and “clouds return[ing] after the rain”	the “twilight years” or the “final years”
“the keepers of the house shall tremble”	the arms and hands tremble with feebleness
“the strong men shall bow themselves”	the legs are bent
“the grinders cease because they are few”	the teeth can no longer chew well
“those that look out the windows be darkened”	the eyesight is dimmed

“the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low”	the ears cannot hear well—even the noises of daily activities are not heard OR the lips
“he shall rise up at the voice of the bird; all the daughters of musick shall be brought low”	sleep is interrupted early but he cannot hear the songs of the birds
“they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way	he fears falling when climbing or even stumbling while walking ¹¹
“the almond tree shall flourish”	his hair turns white
“the grasshopper shall be a burden [or is burdened]”	he shuffles along at an awkward gait
“desire shall fail”	appetites are diminished
“man goeth to his long [eternal] house, and the mourners go about the streets”	he goes to the grave and a funeral procession follows
“the silver cord [is] loosed...the golden bowl be broken... the pitcher [is] broken at the fountain...the wheel [is] broken at the cistern”	perhaps analogous to our metaphor “kicking the bucket” ¹²

Illustration: In his autobiographical short story entitled, “Youth,” Joseph Conrad writes:

I remember my youth and the feeling that will never come back any more—the feeling that I could last for ever, outlast the sea, the earth, and all men; the deceitful feeling that lures us on to joys, to perils, to love, to vain effort—to death; the

*triumphant conviction of strength, the heat of life in the handful of dust, the glow in the heart that with every year grows dim, grows cold, grows small, and expires—and expires, too soon, too soon—before life itself.*¹³

Such aging is inescapable and culminates in “the dust return[ing] to the earth as it was, and the spirit...return[ing] unto God who gave it” (12:7). Kidner helps us grasp Solomon’s purpose here:

*So, in verse 8, with the experience of the whole book behind us, and finally with this chapter’s haunting pictures of mortality to enforce the point, we come back to the initial cry “Vanity of vanities,” and find it justified. Nothing in our search has led us home; nothing that we are offered under the sun is ours to keep.”*¹⁴

Application: If the fear of God aspect in the first point was meant to stir faith, the fear of God in these verses provokes us to sobriety. We’re brought back to the simple reality of 5:2—“God is in heaven, and thou upon earth.” The purpose or application of such sobriety is now considered.

2. **Wisdom aspect: what we should practice in our enjoyment**

Remember, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” and thus a God-fearing sobriety about life and the after-life leads us to walk wisely in life. The “fear of God” aspect (i.e., recognizing certain features of God’s will) enables the “wisdom aspect” (i.e., skillful practice) in our enjoyment. The God-fearer who God’s will regarding death, judgment, and aging will be compelled to practice wisdom in at least three different areas of enjoyment. Here, Solomon betrays a beautiful balance.¹⁵

a. Rejoicing: chose joy (vv. 7-9a) — death challenges the melancholy

Twice times in these verses, Solomon calls us to “rejoice.” Life is good even as “light is sweet” (v. 7). “The days of darkness” are coming and will be “many” (v. 8); in the meantime, it is “a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun” (v. 7). So it is that a God-fearing acceptance of the finality of death challenges the melancholy spirit to enjoy life and bask in the moment. Such joy is something we can chose (2:24a; 3:12-13a, 22; 5:18; 9:7-10), because it is a gift that God gives (2:24b-26; 3:13b; 5:19-20; 9:7b).¹⁶

b. Reveling: experience life (v. 9b) — judgment restrains the libertine

Solomon encourages us, “Let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes.” In other words, Solomon exhorts us to experience life, to revel in its pleasures, and to enjoy its multifaceted offerings; “Cheerfulness, here, is not merely permitted; it is commanded.”¹⁷ “Elsewhere Solomon had said that enjoying life consists of eating and drinking (2:24; 3:13; 8:15; 9:7), wearing nice clothes and pleasant lotions (9:8), enjoying marital bliss (9:9), and finding satisfaction in one’s work (2:24; 3:22; 5:18). Now Solomon encouraged his readers to do whatever their hearts desired.”¹⁸

Quickly following on the heels of that very gracious allowance is the equally gracious warning, “But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” Thus, the libertine who would abuse grace and use it as license for sin is restrained by the balancing reality of judgment and accountability.¹⁹ We are invited to live life to the fullest, but we must do so

within the realm of moral goodness.²⁰ Consider MacArthur’s comments on this healthy and important balance:

Enjoyment and judgment, though strange partners, come together in this section because both clamor for man’s deepest commitment. Surprisingly, one does not win out over the other. In a world created for enjoyment but damaged by sin, judgment and enjoyment/pleasure are held in tension. With too much pleasure, judgment stands as a threatening force; with too much judgment, enjoyment suffers. In the final analysis, both are prominent themes of life that are resolved in our relationship to God, the primary issue of life and this book.²¹

c. Relaxing: remove vexations (v. 10) — aging appreciates the moment

Complementing his admonition to find joy is his call to “remove [banish, NET/NIV] sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity [or fleeting].”²² In other words, because aging cannot be avoided, enjoy the freedoms and opportunities of youth (cf. 12:1). While it may be true that “the trouble with youth is that it is wasted on the young” (George Bernard Shaw), Solomon envisions a God-fearing, wise young person who foresees the disappointments of aging and slows down in order to maximize the vibrancy of youth. Since tomorrow will have plenty of disappointments (cf. 12:1-8), he puts away whatever he can of present frustrations.²³

“Sorrow” refers to vexation, which so often and so easily grips and overwhelms our heart.

In Ecclesiastes it refers to the perplexity (1:18), grief (2:23; 7:3) or irritation (7:9) caused by sheer experience of life. The ‘vanity’ of the world easily


*induces in us 'vexation', which hinders the joyful life of faith. The danger is that 'vexation' over the enigmas and irritations of life will grip the 'heart' and that disillusionment will lead to cynicism.*²⁴


Much modern day depression is undoubtedly due to a failure to “remove [vexation] from thy heart.” Solomon has had his encounters with vexation, and in the fear of God has learned to simply put it off. Now, he likewise recommends that wise solution.²⁵

“Evil...[of the] flesh” emphasizes physical weakness (cf. 2:22-23; 12:1). Thus, “No premium is placed on physical hardships as such. If the removal of bodily pain or discomfort is within reach, it should be taken. The perplexities of life are not solved by asceticism.”²⁶

In summary, then, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” in our enjoyment. When we are rightly oriented to God, acknowledging what He has revealed about the future, we will have wisdom in our practice. Specifically, it looks like this:

- Knowledge of death → wisdom in rejoicing
- Knowledge of judgment → wisdom in reveling
- Knowledge of aging → wisdom in relaxing

 **Application:** How have you been challenged about starting your enjoyment with the fear of God? How have you been challenged concerning humbly and soberly accepting the God-ordained future of life (i.e., death, judgment, aging)? How have you been challenged regarding fear-filled wisdom in your rejoicing? In your reveling? In your relaxing? *open discussion*

 Practically, what can we do to “remember now our Creator” (i.e., “pay attention to, consider with the intention of obeying”²⁷), the starting point of fearing God and living wisely? *open discussion*

CONCLUSION

If we want to walk wisely among the futility of life “under the sun,” then we must practice the fundamental of “fearing God” (cf. 12:13) in our enterprise and our enjoyment. Indeed, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

ENDNOTES

¹ <http://www.youthfitnessmag.com/fundamentals>

² “Spirit” can be translated either “spirit” (cf. 3:21; 8:8; 12:7—thus, Solomon is expressing ignorance about how a person is developed in his entirety—spirit and body—in the womb) or “wind” (cf. 1:6; 11:4-5—thus, Solomon is expressing ignorance about both the wind’s course and the baby’s development).

³ “We cannot control events even when we can anticipate them (the clouds and the rain). Nor can we precisely determine how events will work out; the tree falls where it will” (*New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer and G. J. Wenham, 4th ed. [Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994], Ec 11:1-6).

⁴ “Everything in 11:1-6 could be summarized in the word ‘faith’” (NBC, Ec 11:1-6). “The life of faith does not remove the problem of our ignorance; rather, it enables us to live with it. Faith flourishes in the mystery of providence; it does not abolish it” (Michael A. Eaton, vol. 18, *Ecclesiastes: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983], 162).

Also, “Whatever picture the Preacher is trying to paint for us, the moral is the same. Michael Eaton gives a good summary when he says, ‘(Cast) demands total commitment, ... and has a forward look to it (*and you will find*), a reward which requires patience (*after many days*).’ Surely the Preacher is telling us to step out in faith, or, as Jesus instructed his disciples, ‘launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch’ (Luke 5:4). Our lives should be lived with this kind of boldness. In the face of the grinding reality of life under the sun we have a heavenly perspective of a God ‘who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think’ (Eph. 3:20). The Christian should be someone who is constantly ‘pushing the boat out’” (Jim Winter, *Opening Up Ecclesiastes*, Opening Up Commentary [Leominster: Day One Publications, 2005], 139).

⁵ “Solomon used two activities to illustrate his point: the merchant sending out his ships (vv. 1-2) and the farmer sowing his seed (vv. 3-6). In both activities, a great deal of faith is required, because neither the merchant nor the farmer can control the circumstances. The ships might hit a reef, meet a storm, or be attacked by pirates and the cargo lost. Bad weather, blight, or insects might destroy the crop, and the farmer’s labor would be in vain. However, if the merchant and the farmer waited until the circumstances were ideal, they would never get anything done! Life has a certain amount of risk to it, and that’s where faith comes in” (Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Satisfied*, “Be” Commentary Series [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996], 19).

⁶ “The Teacher sees two great dangers connected to the making of money. The one is to become consumed with work and the quest for wealth, but the other is to fall into poverty (and the suffering it entails) through laziness or misfortune. He therefore counsels a safe and sane approach to financial security. It is not a program to get rich quick, but it will save one from many sleepless nights” (Duane A. Garrett, vol. 14, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993], 337).

⁷ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1208. Also, “in view of the possibility of disaster a person should make prudent investments in numerous ventures (to seven, yes to eight) rather than put all his ‘eggs in one basket’ (Ecc. 11:2; cf. Gen. 32:7-8 for a practical example of this advice)” (Donald R. Glenn, “Ecclesiastes,” in vol. 1, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985], 1003).

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁹ NBC, Ec 11:1-6.

¹⁰ “Solomon uses the imagery of aging, incorporating elements of a dilapidated house, nature, and a funeral procession to heighten the emphasis of 11:7-12:1” (*The MacArthur Study Bible*, ed. John MacArthur, Jr., electronic ed. [Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997], Ec 12:2).

¹¹ **Illustration:** “Wendell P. Loveless... was associated for many years with the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, especially radio station WMBI. He lived into his nineties and was alert to the very end. During one of our visits with him, he told me and my wife, ‘I don’t go out much now because my parents won’t let me—Mother Nature and Father Time!’” (Wiersbe, 19).

¹² “Most memorably of all, the pictures of verse 6 capture the beauty and fragility of the human frame: a masterpiece as delicately wrought as any work of art, yet as breakable as a piece of earthenware, and as useless in the end as a broken wheel” (Derek Kidner, “The Message of Ecclesiastes” [Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976], 103).

Also, “Solomon then referred to life under the two common figures of light (‘golden lamp,’ *jb*) and water (cf. Ps. 36:8-9 for a similar use of these two figures of speech). The dissolution of the body is suggested by light being extinguished: the silver cord holding a golden bowl (in which the light burns) snaps and the bowl is broken. Death is also referred to by water being unavailable: the pitcher which holds water is shattered and the wheel by which it is drawn from the well is broken” (Glenn, 1004).

For another possible interpretation: “*silver cord is loosed*. Perhaps this pictures a lamp hanging from a silver chain, which breaks with age, smashing the lamp. Some suggest this refers to the spinal cord. *golden bowl*. Possibly this refers to the brain. *pitcher... fountain... wheel*. Wells required a wheel with a rope attached in order to lower the pitcher for water. Perhaps this pictures the fountain of blood, the heart. *loosed... broken... shattered... broken*. All of these actions portray death as tragic and irreversible” (*MacArthur Study Bible*, Ec 12:6).

¹³ Quoted in Winter, 146.

¹⁴ Kidner, 104.

¹⁵ I find the NLT of verses 9-10 helpful—“Young people, it’s wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do. So refuse to worry, and keep your body healthy. But remember that youth, with a whole life before you, is meaningless.”

¹⁶ **Illustration:** “What a joy it is to anticipate each new day and accept it as a fresh gift from God! I confess that I never realized what it meant to live a day at a time until I was nearly killed in an auto accident back in 1966. It was caused by a drunk driver careening around a curve at between 80 and 90 miles per hour. By the grace of God, I had no serious injuries; but my stay in the Intensive Care Ward, and my time of recuperation at home, made me a firm believer in Deut. 33:25, ‘As thy days, so shall thy strength be.’ Now when I awaken early each morning, I thank God for the new day; and I ask Him to help me use it wisely for His glory and to enjoy it as His gift” (Wiersbe, 19).

¹⁷ *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* by E. W. Hengstenberg, 1869, quoted in Eaton, 165.

¹⁸ Glenn, 1004.

¹⁹ “The Preacher’s use of a command, not merely a statement, implies that there is a danger of indifference to or neglect of God’s kingship and judicial activity” (Eaton, 166).

²⁰ “The balance that is called for insures that enjoyment is not reckless, sinful abandonment. Pleasure is experienced in faith and obedience, for as Solomon has said repeatedly, one can only receive true satisfaction as a gift from God” (*MacArthur Study Bible*, Ec 11:9). Also, “So this verse, by insisting that our ways matter to God and are therefore meaningful through and through, robs joy of nothing but its hollowness.... joy was created to dance with goodness, not alone” (99-100).

²¹ *Ibid.*, Ec 11:7.

²² “Attention is often drawn to the contrast between Numbers 15:39 and Ecclesiastes 11:9f. The former is concerned with the danger of disobedience, which is traced to the state of the heart. The latter is concerned with joy, also coming from the heart. Indeed, all aspects of life spring from the heart (Prov. 4:23). Numbers warns against the former; the Preacher encourages the latter” (Eaton, 167).

²³ So, aging and death are a two-edged sword. For the secularist, they provoke the sentiment of poet John Betjeman, “But I’m dying now and done for / What on earth was all the fun for? / For I’m old and ill and terrified and tight” (*Sun and Fun*, quoted in Winter, 149). For the God-fearer, they provoke a desire to seize the vitality of youth, enjoy the moment, and put away vexation until its inevitable time. Notice Kidner, “To idolize the state of youth and to dread the loss of it is disastrous: it spoils the gift even while we have it. To see it, instead, as a passing phase, ‘beautiful in its time’ but not beyond it, is to be free from its frustrations” (99).

²⁴ Eaton, 166-67.

²⁵ “The meaning is that one should not be weighed down by vexation over the human condition to the degree that carefree happiness is impossible (v. 10)” (Garrett, 340).

²⁶ Eaton, 167.

²⁷ Wiersbe, 19.