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Work Diligently, Live Joyously and Responsibly Ecclesiastes 11:1 to 12:8

Work diligently, live joyously and responsibly DIG: What does "bread" symbolize? What happens when you "cast your bread" in verse 1? What are "the many days of darkness" and why remember them? How are youth and vigor pointless? What does the long sentence from 12:1 to 15:5a describe? In 12:8 the motto is repeated from 1:2. What does this signal?

REFLECT: How well do you manage your time? Money? Emotions? In what areas of life are your "investments" too concentrated? Spread too thin? How much do "eternal concerns" affect your daily decisions? What areas of your life are least influenced by your faith in God? Which are most? How can you remember your Creator in the days of your youth?

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.

Solomon closed **his** discussion on **people's** ignorance of the future **(9:1** to **11:6)** with some practical advice about **their** activities in view of such ignorance. To emphasize that mankind is ignorant of the future, **he** said: **You don't know** four times in **11:2** and **5-6**. But **he** counseled that ignorance of the future should not lead to inactivity or despair but to diligent labor.

1. Work diligently: Solomon noted that people are as ignorant of **God's** dealings in human affairs as they are of **the way of the wind** and the formation of a baby in its **mother's womb 11:5).** Moreover, people don't know which of their ventures **will succeed (11:6)** or what **disasters may come on the land (11:2)** and wipe out the results of their labor. But in view of the possibility of disaster, a person should make prudent investments in numerous ventures **into seven or eight shares**, rather than putting all his "eggs in one basket," as it were. With this strategy, a person can minimize their risk. Therefore, go ahead and **cast your bread upon the waters,** engage in business, because **eventually you will reap a return** by following this advice **(11:1).**

Switching to an example of **planting** seed and **reaping** a harvest, **Solomon** urged **his** readers not to sit around waiting for the most opportune moment to work, but to be diligent constantly. The future is beyond one's control as the acts of **God** in nature. **If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth. Whether a tree falls toward the north or the south, the place where the tree falls is where it stays.** So waiting for just the right moment to **plant** (when there is no **wind** to blow away the seed) or to **reap** (when there is no rain in **the clouds** to threaten the ripened harvest) would result in inactivity **(11:3-4).**

In watching for **the wind** a farmer has no idea which **way** it will go. He is as ignorant of that as he is something he cannot see such as a baby's **bones** being formed in its **mother's womb**. Mankind **cannot know** the future or **the work of God, the Maker of everything.** Using another merism – the polar opposites of **morning** and **evening** to indicate total days – **Solomon** urged **his** readers to work diligently, **planting** their **seed** all day long **until evening**, because they couldn't **know which planting would succeed, this, or that, or if both will do well (11:5-6).** Thus, in two examples, one from maritime trade **(11:1-2)** and one from farming **(11:3-4** and **6), Solomon** urged people toward constant, diligent effort and prudent diversified investment of their energies and resources, recognizing that all is in the sovereign control of **ADONAI**.[317]



Solomon has shown that human effort is futile because its results are not permanent and the prospect of **enjoying** those results are uncertain **(1:12-6:9)**. **He** has also shown that people cannot know which of their efforts will succeed because they are ignorant of **God's** plan and what the future holds **(6:10-11:6)**.

Now **the Teacher** returns to the theme of the **enjoyment** of **life (2:24-26, 3:12** and **22, 5:18-20, 8:15** and **9:7-9)**, and explicitly relates **it** to the idea of living responsibly before **God**. This is similar to what he had done at the first mention of this theme (**to see link click Ci – The Life of Faith**). The latter theme, that of living responsibility before **God**, is found at both the beginning **(11:9)** and the end **(12:13-14)** of this section.

2. Live joyously: Solomon wrote metaphorically of **light** and **darkness** as figures of **life (Job 3:20** and **33:30)** and **death (Ecclesiastes 6:4-5; Job 10:20-22** and **18:18)**. **He** characterized the future after **death** as obscure and mysterious, saying: **everything to come is pointless (8:10).** Therefore, **the Teacher** encouraged his readers to **enjoy life** as long as they **live** because **life**, like **the sweet light** of **the sun**, should be **enjoyed** before **the coming many days of darkness,** or **death,** their **eternal home (12:5)** will last forever **(11:7-8).**

Solomon reiterated **his** advice to **enjoy life**, emphasizing that **people** should do so in **their youth**. Elsewhere, **Solomon** had said that living **joyously** consisted 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 **he** encouraged **his** readers to do whatever their **hearts** desired. **Young people, if you spend your youth only having fun, if you use your early years just to entertain yourself, if you follow your heart as you live your life, and let your eyes be your guide.** However, those desires should be tempered with an awareness **that God** will judge **their** sinful actions **(11:9).**

As previously noted in **2:24-26**, **3:17**, and **7:15-18**, there is no reason to believe from either explicit or implicit arguments in this book that **Solomon** believed this judgment would take place in the afterlife. Instead, like other wisdom writers of his era, **he** emphasized temporal judgment within a person's lifetime. This may even be indicated in **11:10** where **the Teacher** said a person should **remove anger from your heart** (psychological)**; and keep from harming your body** (physical)**; for neither adolescence nor youth has any lasting value.**

Solomon underlined the thought of responsible living in one's youth by vividly depicting in a series of word pictures the increasing gloom and declining power of old age which culminate in **death**. These word pictures are arranged in three groups, each containing the word **before**, and modifying the basic duty: **Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.**[318]

3. Live responsibly: So remember your Creator in the days of your youth. The command to **remember your Creator** means to revere **ADONAI**, to keep **His** mitzvot faithfully, to serve **Him** responsibly, remembering that because **He** created people, everyone owes **Him** their lives. The description for **God**, **your Creator**, emphasizes **Him** as **the Author of life**, who gives it and takes it away **(12:7)**. **Solomon** advised responsible living in one's **youth, before the evil days come,** that is, the days of old age **when you will say, "They no longer give me pleasure" (12:1).**

Using various figures to depict the declining joy and waning physical powers of old age, **Solomon** advised responsible living before old age set in. The miseries of old age and the approach of **death** are likened to recurring rainstorms. **Before the sun and the light grow dim, also the moon and the stars; before the clouds return after the rain.** As clouds often block out the sun, the moon, and the stars, so old age is a period of diminishing joy **(light**) and increasing gloom **(dim)**, heralding the approach of the long night of **death under the sun. On the day when the guards of the house are trembling, and men of courage are bent over double; when the women stop grinding grain, because there are so few; when the women at the windows can no longer see out. When the doors to the streets are kept shut; when the noise from the grain-mill fades** because of loss of hearing**; when a person is startled by the chirp of a bird, yet their singing is hard to hear; When they will be afraid to go up a hill** because of lack of stamina**, and terrors will stalk the way, even though the almond tree is in bloom** as their hair turns white**; when the locust can only drag itself along, and the caper berry has no [aphrodisiac] effect – because the person is headed for his eternal home, and the mourners are already gathering in the marketplace (12:2-5).**

Solomon urged people to live responsibly **before death** comes, before **the silver cord** holding a **golden bowl** (in which the light burns) is **snapped and the bowl** is broken. **Death** is also referred to by water being unavailable: **the pitcher,** which holds the water, **is shattered at the spring, the pulley** which it is drawn from, **is broken at the cistern (12:6).** The final description of **death**, by which **Solomon** sought to motivate people to live responsibly was that of a reversal of creation. **The dust** of the body **returns to earth, as it was, and the spirit** (Hebrew: *ruach,* also meaning *breath*) **returns to God, who gave it (12:7)!** Obviously, this alludes to part of the **Genesis** account (see the commentary on **Genesis Au – God Formed Man from the Dust of the Ground, and Breathed into His Nostrils**

the Breath of Life). This makes it clear that **Solomon** was not referring to the return of individual human **spirits** to **Ha'Shem** for **judgment**. Similar descriptions of **the dust** of the body **returning to the earth** are found in **Job 34:14-15** and **Psalm 104:29-30**.

Having demonstrated the limitations of all human efforts **(1:12** to **6:9)** and of all human wisdom **(6:10 to 11:6), Solomon** then reiterated the motto with which **he** opened the book **(1:2)**: **Pointless! Pointless! Nothing matters at all (12:8)!** As stated before, this applies to all human endeavors **under the sun,** and cutting God out of the picture. Obviously, however, not included in this assessment is the advice to **enjoy life** as **God** enables, a course which **the Teacher** repeatedly recommended **(2:24-26, 3:12** and **22, 5:18-20, 8:15, 9:7-9)**, and which **he** had just discussed explicitly above. But apart from **enjoying** one's **lot** in life (see **Cr – The Crook in the Lot**), life **under the sun** is indeed **pointless**.[319]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for **Your** great wisdom! **You** made the great, powerful and fire-breathing dinosaurs. **"Look now at Behemoth, which I made along with you. He eats grass like an ox. Now look at his strength in his loins, and his power in the muscles of his belly. (Job 40:15-16).** What wisdom it must have taken to create Leviathan that can breathe out fire! **Out of his mouth go flames, sparks of fire shoot out. Smoke pours from his nostrils, as a boiling pot over burning reeds. His breath sets coals ablaze and flames dart from his mouth (Job 41:19-21).***

***Your** wisdom knows and understands the future as if it was the past. **You** foretold thru **Dani'el** the future kingdoms of the world and how the last kingdom would be **iron** mixed with **clay**, but **You** most powerful **God**, will set up **Your** Kingdom that will never be destroyed**. Now in the days of those kings [fourth kingdom-partly strong and partly brittle] (Daniel 2:40** and **42), the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will this kingdom be left to another people. It will crush and bring to an end all of these kingdoms. But it will endure forever. For just as you saw a stone cut out of a mountain, yet not by hands, crush the iron, bronze, clay, silver and gold, the great God has made known to the king what will happen in the future. Now the dream is certain, and its interpretation is trustworthy (Daniel 2:44-45).** Though mankind does not know the future – **You** know the future with complete certainty and as we follow and trust **You** to lead our lives, we can rest in **Your** love to guide us in our lives. We love to trust and to follow **You**. In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*