



# How to Engage Life

*Ecclesiastes 11*

## **BIBLE PASSAGE**

### **Ecclesiastes 11:1-10 (NKJV - New King James Version)**

<sup>1</sup> Cast your bread upon the waters, For you will find it after many days.

<sup>2</sup> Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, For you do not know what evil will be on the earth.

<sup>3</sup> If the clouds are full of rain, They empty themselves upon the earth; And if a tree falls to the south or the north, In the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie.

<sup>4</sup> He who observes the wind will not sow, And he who regards the clouds will not reap.

<sup>5</sup> As you do not know what is the way of the wind, Or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, So you do not know the works of God who makes everything.

<sup>6</sup> In the morning sow your seed, And in the evening do not withhold your hand; For you do not know which will prosper, Either this or that, Or whether both alike will be good.

<sup>7</sup> Truly the light is sweet, And it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun;

<sup>8</sup> But if a man lives many years And rejoices in them all, Yet let him remember the days of darkness, For they will be many. All that is coming is vanity.

<sup>9</sup> Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, And in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, And put away evil from your flesh, For childhood and youth are vanity.

## INTRO

As we approach chapter 11, we near the end of this "Under the Sun" treatise on the purpose of life.

- Solomon tested life to see if he could find some greater purpose and value apart from God by tapping into everything life had to offer: **wine, worldly wisdom, women, work, and wealth**. At the end of his life, having filled himself to the brim, he concluded that it was all vanity and grasping for the wind.

Solomon's equation goes something like this:

- ***Under the Sun - Uncertainty in life + the certainty of death = vanity and grasping for the wind.***
- ***Above the Sun - Uncertainty about life + the certainty of death + certainty about God = Life and that more abundantly***

Chapter 11 offers some practical wisdom about engaging certain aspects of your life to ensure more positive outcomes. NOTE: The principles we discover in this chapter have both physical and spiritual applications. I want to discuss both sides of those things today.

- **ALSO NOTE: At the end of chapter 11 into chapter 12, Solomon is going to directly address young people. His message? Enjoy life and do so wisely because pretty soon, you'll be old, miserable, and then die.**

I think the theme of this section is found within 5 words in verse 2:

***For you do not know... 4 times in 10 verses.***

Yep, that's about the gist of it!

- How's life going to turn out? You do not know.
- How's today going to be? You do not know.
- Is a tornado going to rip through your neighborhood this month? You do not know.
- Will your basement flood? Some rear-end your car? Do rabbits and raccoons ravage your garden? You do not know.

- Will your harvest be spoiled? Will you win the lottery? Will WW3 begin and leave us devastated? You do not know!
- What's going to happen in America before November 2024? You do not know!

Solomon wrote in Proverbs 27 a similar principle: **[Pro 27:1 NKJV] [1] Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.**

I'm confident that is the principle James pulled from when he wrote:

**[Jas 4:13-15 NKJV] [13] Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; [14] whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. [15] Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."**

Given that there's so much we don't know about life, there are some things we can do while we have the opportunity and trust the outcomes to the LORD.

## 1 Engage life taking some risks

### BIBLE PASSAGE

## Ecclesiastes 11:1-2 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>1</sup> Cast your bread upon the waters, For you will find it after many days.

<sup>2</sup> Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, For you do not know what evil will be on the earth.

### APPLICATION

Between scholars and commentators, Solomon's imagery has two potential interpretations, and I think both are valuable and biblical.

## A. INVESTMENT

In the context of this passage, Solomon seems to have farmers in mind. Perhaps some Missourians might understand this passage more clearly than I do! Solomon is looking at the grain fields being harvested, and has some advice:

### "Cast your bread upon the waters."

- Some indicate an appropriate translation: "***Send your grain out to sea.***"

The picture is that of merchant ships carrying this grain to various locations.

- **Give a serving of seven and also to eight if you do not know what evil will come upon the earth.** In other words, diversify your portfolio and don't put all your eggs in one basket. Send your shipment out on seven ships and, for good measure, an eighth because the other seven might get destroyed in a hurricane, hijacked by pirates, or hit a sandbar. You do not know!!!

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

There is some practical wisdom to be gleaned in work, business, and financial stewardship.

- **Have a financial portfolio that is spread out** in the event that one of your options doesn't pan out. Become proficient in multiple skills so that you have a leg to stand on if the rug gets pulled out from under you.
- **Have a long-term strategy** for the things you want to accomplish in life. "For you will find it after many days." ***You see, not every return is immediate. Learn how to plant seeds that will blossom later, which will be a blessing when you need it.***

## PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

The parable that comes to mind is the parable of the servants who were given talents by their master before he departed on a journey.

- Matthew 25 and Luke 19 record two similar parables, but they are also different.
- In one parable, three servants are given different amounts of talents (money) by their master according to their abilities. The one who was given 5 multiplied them to get 5 more. The one who was given 2 multiplied them and gained 2 more. They both doubled their return by wisely investing what was given to them. The one who had one buried in the ground out of fear that he might lose it. When the master returned, the one who failed to invest or even gain simple interest was thrown out and his talent was given to the one who yielded the most return.
- In the other parable, 10 servants are all given one mina (currency) and are told to do business until the master returns. They all had the same amount. The story ends similarly; one servant takes the one and multiplies it to 10. One servant takes the one and multiplies it to 5. One servant takes the one and hides it, never gaining any return or interest. His fate is also like that of the previous servant who failed to invest.

I think these two parables indicate the life of the believer between when Jesus left and when he returns.

- In one sense, he has given all of us ONE mina, that is, the gospel. No matter who you are, if you are born again, you have the same gospel that I have. We all have it, and we've all been called to take that gospel and do business before the master returns. How are you inventing that gospel? Have you planted it? Lived it? Told anyone else about it? I hope so because it will be measured one day.
- In another sense, regarding the gifts and talents God has given us, we all have a different amount, like the servants in Matthew. Some have many abilities and gifts, and others have few. It's ok.
- Sometimes people feel as if they have very little to offer. It's ok! You can't possess more than what God has given you. Always remember:

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## QUOTE

**“It's not about how many gifts you have but rather what you do with the gifts you've been given.”**

Pastor Josh

#### APPLICATION

God expects us all to invest and multiply the gospel and the gifts, talents, resources, and abilities he has given us for His kingdom.

- But for those who are too fearful to take a risk in order to invest in the kingdom, there will be a sad reality one day in eternity when they realize that they don't have anything of lasting value that came out of their life.
- ***Kingdom equity and return require faith, risk, and investment.***

#### QUOTE

**“Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat.”**

Theodore Roosevelt

#### APPLICATION

**And remember, not every spiritual investment yields immediate fruit! You might not see the results until "many days."**

- You've been witnessing to your coworkers and family members, but no one is getting saved.
- You've been serving behind the scenes, and you don't feel like anything is coming from it.

- But don't give up, Christian! Sometimes, your investment takes a long time to bear fruit!

## BIBLE PASSAGE

### Galatians 6:9 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>9</sup> And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

## ANOTHER POTENTIAL OPTION

Cast your seed beside the water:

- On the Sea of Galilee shore and the Jordan river, some scholars claim that casting some of your grain seed on the shores was a practice. The water would pick up the seed and carry it to another place where it would plant itself and bring forth a harvest for those who were poor so they could have food.
- It was a picture of generosity. In other words, hoarding goods for your own enjoyment only is vanity. Take what God has blessed and entrusted you with, and share it with others generously. You never know what that generosity might bring forth in the days to come.

**To Solomon, value was not just about what you obtain in life, but what you share and give away in life.**

- Remember the words of Jesus who said, **"It is more blessed to give than to receive."**

Verse 2 – Reminds us that there's always room for one more.

- If you set a table for 7, put an extra place for an eighth just in case someone is in need and you have the opportunity to bless them.
- Be generous and invest in many people; that way, if some evil comes on the land, someone that you've helped might be inclined to be generous to you.
- You shouldn't be kind to people just so that you might get something from them later but realize that kindness and generosity leave an impression.

I don't have time today, but go to an online Bible and search for all the instances in which God gives. It will blow your mind. Ultimately, generosity is one of the greatest ways in which we look most like Jesus. You can't out give God. You see, generosity is an investment! By giving out of your abundance, you sow seeds that blossom into blessings for others as well as yourself.

## 2 Engage Life with Faith

### BIBLE PASSAGE

### Ecclesiastes 11:3-4 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>3</sup> If the clouds are full of rain, They empty themselves upon the earth; And if a tree falls to the south or the north, In the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie.

<sup>4</sup> He who observes the wind will not sow, And he who regards the clouds will not reap.

### WHAT YOU CAN'T CONTROL

First, Solomon reminds us that things happen without our ability to control them.

- If the clouds are full of rain, there's nothing you can do about it. The rain will come whether you want it to or not... even if you're trying to do weather modification!
- If a tree falls, it doesn't care which way you want it to fall, or even if you want it to fall. It will fall regardless, even if it's on top of your house or car.



## APPLICATION

Verse 4—Yes, we need to use wisdom, think, and pray before we act, but if we approach life with too much apprehension, always wringing our hands, anxious about the things going on around us, and awaiting the perfect circumstances before we act, we will end up missing out on some great opportunities.

- ***Don't worry about what you can't control, but continue to do what needs to be done in order to experience life to the fullest.***
- ***You can't reap where you haven't sown, and you won't sow if you're constantly analyzing and never doing!***

## ILLUSTRATION

**General Stonewall Jackson needed to get his army across a river, so he ordered the engineers to build a bridge. He also told his wagon master to get the wagon train across the river as soon as possible once the bridge was completed. The wagon master—a former blacksmith—got a group of men together, and with rocks, logs, fence rails, and various other materials, they built a bridge and got all the wagons and artillery over the river safely. Early the next morning, the wagon master reported this to General Jackson, and the amazed general asked, “Where are the engineers?” The wagon master said, “They’re over there in a tent, drawing pictures and planning a bridge.”**

## APPLICATION

Now, if you are contemplating on doing something, and you're taking this as a thumbs up, I'm not responsible for what happens! But here's the truth, you'll never get anywhere if you're always worrying and never walking. Yes, make wise plans and strategies, but at some point you have to do something.

Take a step of faith. Share the gospel. Give a generous gift. go on a mission trip. Bless your neighbor. Serve at church.

Don't give yourself too much time because our sinful nature will always find an excuse to as to why it's not the right time. I love the words of Warren Wiesbe:

#### QUOTE

**“ For the believer, faith means obeying God in spite of the circumstances around us, the feelings within us, or the consequences ahead of us.**

Warren Wiersbe

### 3 Engage life with diligence

#### BIBLE PASSAGE

#### Ecclesiastes 11:5-6 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>5</sup> As you do not know what is the way of the wind, Or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, So you do not know the works of God who makes everything.

<sup>6</sup> In the morning sow your seed, And in the evening do not withhold your hand; For you do not know which will prosper, Either this or that, Or whether both alike will be good.

#### APPLICATION

We find the phrase "You do not know" three more times in these two verses.

- It's true; we know more now about how wind works and how babies grow in the womb, but the point is that ***There will always be things that we will not know or***

**understand because of our limited human nature.**

- ***Because we don't know every outcome or how everything operates behind the scenes, we should be diligent in our work.***

Sow in the morning, sow in the evening, sow at supper time! Why? Because you might be glad you did once harvest season comes around!

## BIBLE PASSAGE

**[Eph 5:15-16 NKJV] [15] See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, [16] redeeming the time, because the days are evil.**

## SPIRITUAL APPLICATION

What comes to mind is the parable Jesus tells of the sower, the seed, and the soil.

- In Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8, Jesus tells a parable of a sower who went and sowed his seed, which landed on four different types of soil: Shallow soil, Rocky soil, thorny soil, and good soil. Not all the seeds yielded a return, only those that fell on the good soil.
- For today's message, the principle is this: The sower doesn't know which soil will yield the harvest, so he casts his seed on all the soils!
  - He casts his bread on the waters, as it were. He serves seven, and eight for good measure. He casts the seeds in the morning and some in the evening. Why? Because he DOES NOT KNOW what will yield the best results.
- The beauty of carrying the gospel in the clay vessels is that it's not our job to determine the pH balance chemical makeup of the soil. It's not our job to determine the best time of day. It's our job to cast the seeds.
- You might see or know someone, and you think, "That person would never accept Jesus; their heart is too hard, they are too skeptical, they are wrapped up in too much sin..." **Hey, the gospel has the power, the Spirit draws, God saves. Just cast the seed!**

**QUOTE**

**“ Every person who is saved today was a plot of soil in which someone planted a seed.**

Pastor Josh

## 4 Engage Life with correct expectations

**BIBLE PASSAGE**

### Ecclesiastes 11:7-8 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>7</sup> Truly the light is sweet, And it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun;

<sup>8</sup> But if a man lives many years And rejoices in them all, Yet let him remember the days of darkness, For they will be many. All that is coming is vanity.

**APPLICATION**

**Question:** What are you expecting out of life? Sometimes, we refuse to look at life honestly, and it keeps us from taking advantage of every moment we have in front of us.

## ILLUSTRATION

This verse makes more sense to me now that I live in Missouri.

- Are you able to take a walk outside with the warm sun on your face, a nice breeze against your back, flowers blooming, and birds chirping? Better enjoy it! Because soon it will be sticky skin, wet clothes, mosquito heaven, revenge of the screeching cicadas, then dark, then cold, then windy!

Solomon warns us to remember the realities of life. It's nice when you have a moment of light, warmth, and brightness when the sun shines, but remember that won't last forever. In the next chapter he gets into his point. What's the point? You're getting old. Your eyes will dim. You'll just be happy if you can get from the bedroom to the bathroom without tripping, getting dizzy, or throwing out your hip.

***Remember the days of darkness, for there will be many! All that is coming vanity!!!***

## SPIRITUAL APPLICATION

If you live life expecting to experience no pain, trials, temptations, sin, or problems, you will eventually be caught off-guard by life and have nothing of substance to fall back on!

- This is not to be pessimistic but realistic. And this is what is so wonderful about knowing Jesus!
- Jesus clearly laid out the correct expectations in life when He said:
- **Jhn 16:33 NKJV - "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."**
- **Psa 62:5 NKJV - My soul, wait silently for God alone, For my expectation is from Him.**

## 5 Engage life while you still can!

### BIBLE PASSAGE

### Ecclesiastes 11:9-10 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>9</sup> Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, And in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, And put away evil from your flesh, For childhood and youth are vanity.

### APPLICATION

We've all heard, and probably some have said, "Youth is wasted on the young."

- There is irony in that statement. It's wasted because youth have the strength, energy, vitality, and ability to do so much with life but often lack the wisdom, care, and discipline to reach their potential.
- Solomon turns to young men and women who are at the peak of strength, health, and opportunity—those who are on the "sunny day" of life.

First, it almost sounds like Solomon is giving some very bad advice that some people would love to hear!

Walk in the ways of your heart (follow your heart, man!) and in the sight of your eyes (you see it, want it, take it!)

- But just remember, whatever you do, God sees it and will require an account!
- In other words, stop letting your heart be burdened with so many worries and anxieties if you're young. Let your heart be joyful, and tackle life and all of its opportunities head-on. But in doing so, always keep in mind that there is a way that

seems right to a man, and its end is death. Always remember that for everything you do, there is a God-given consequence of reward. Every seed you plant will one day bear its fruit, good or bad. If you remember your Creator and walk in the fear of God, you will not only enjoy life now, but you'll be able to eat good fruit when you're older.

## TWO THINGS THAT WILL SPOIL YOUR YOUTH

***Sorrow and sin - put away sorrow from your heart and wickedness from your flesh.***

## APPLICATION

If you're a child, youth, college student, or young married couple, there is no better time than now to find and apply godly wisdom to your life.

- You live in a world that has indoctrinated you to ***"do what you feel, follow your heart, love who you want to love, live for the moment, seek pleasure in all its forms. God's rules just want to restrict you. Come taste true freedom by experimenting with all the world has to offer."*** But just like in the Garden of Eden, the same deceiver is using the same tactic—tempting you with the fruit without revealing the consequences.
- Ask any grown adult in here who has walked that path, and they will ALL tell you the same thing: **Listen to the Lord now!**
- Solomon does the opposite. You can almost hear him saying, ***"Don't do what I did! I thought I knew what was best, but in wandering from the path of the Lord, I got nothing but vanity."***
- ***I love how Pastor Gary Hamrik summed it up:***

## QUOTE

**“In your life, don't include pleasure to the exclusion of God.”**

Pastor Gary Hamrik

## BIBLE PASSAGE

### 2 Timothy 2:22 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>22</sup> Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

## APPLICATION

At the risk of being overly redundant, let me sum it up to you in this way:

***The patterns you develop when you are young have the power to determine the life you experience when you are old. Stay away from evil and choose the joy of the Lord when you're young, and you will find a reward later in life.***

## CONCLUSION

You "DO NOT KNOW" so many things. But we should never be those who trade what we do know for what we don't.

As I heard it once put well, ***"We are not people who trust in an outcome; we trust in a person, and that person is Jesus."***

- We know God is good. We know every promise in Christ is yes and amen. We know we will all stand before Him one day, redeemed and forgiven by the blood of Jesus. Let's live our lives now by what we do know:
  - ***Let us engage life by taking risks for the kingdom***
  - ***Let us engage life with faith in the unseen.***
  - ***Let us engage life with diligence, believing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.***
  - ***Let us engage life with the right expectations, knowing that though difficult days are ahead, God is good.***



- ***Let us engage life while we still can! Every day we have breath is another opportunity to multiply what God has given us.***
-