

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes: Ecclesiastes 11

"Generosity & Diligence"

6/5/13

SUMMARY

In this chapter Solomon begins with encouraging benevolence and diligence as ways to guard against the uncertain future. By casting our bread upon the waters, willing to offer servings to many, and not withholding our hands in the evening, our benevolence may serve us well in the future should evil befall us. Likewise, things may happen beyond our ability to control or comprehend, but diligence in sowing seed and being mindful of the dark days to come can help to prepare us for their coming (1-8).

This chapter also introduces counsel from Solomon designed especially for the young. The young man is encouraged to rejoice, letting his heart cheer him. He is told to walk in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his eyes, yet with the knowledge that God will hold him accountable for all that he does. So remove sorrow (i.e., rejoice!). But also put away evil during the fleeting years of childhood and youth (9-10).

I. THE VALUE OF BENEVOLENCE AND DILIGENCE (11:1-8)

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. ³ If clouds are full of water, they pour rain on the earth. Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there it will lie. ⁴ Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap. ⁵ As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things. ⁶ Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well. ⁷ Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun. ⁸ However many years anyone may live, let them enjoy them all. But let them remember the days of darkness, for there will be many. Everything to come is meaningless.

A. AN EXHORTATION TO BENEVOLENCE (1-2)

1. Cast your bread upon the waters, you will find it after many days
2. Give servings to seven, and to eight, for you do not know what evil will come

ECCLESIASTES 11:1-2

In these verses Solomon summarizes that life involves both risk and opportunity. Because life has no guarantees, we must be prepared. "Give generously" because life has opportunities and we must seize them. Solomon does not support a stingy, despairing attitude. Just because life is uncertain does not mean we should do nothing. We need a spirit of trust and adventure, facing life's risks and opportunities with God-directed enthusiasm and faith.

B. AN EXHORTATION TO DILIGENCE (3-8)

1. Many things (like rain and wind storms) are inevitable (3-4)
 - a. We cannot stop the clouds full of rain from falling
 - b. Trees will lie wherever they fall
 - c. If we spend our time just watching and not doing, we will not sow and reap

ECCLESIASTES 11:4

Waiting for perfect conditions will mean inactivity. This practical insight is especially applicable to our spiritual life. If we wait for the perfect time and place for personal Bible reading, we will never begin. If we wait for a perfect church, we will never join. If we wait for the perfect ministry, we will never serve. Take steps now to grow spiritually. Don't wait for conditions that may never exist.

2. There are things we cannot comprehend (5-6)
 - a. Like the way of the wind (or spirit)
 - b. Like the development of the child in the womb
 - c. We cannot comprehend God's working; therefore do not restrict your efforts
3. There will be days of darkness (7-8)
 - a. It is great to be alive when one is well
 - 1) The light is sweet
 - 2) It is pleasant to behold the sun
 - b. But even if one lives many joyful days, they should know that evil days will come

ECCLESIASTES 11:7, 8

Solomon is no dreary pessimist in 11:7-12:14. He encourages us to rejoice in every day but to remember that eternity is far longer than a person's life span. Psalm 90:12 says, "Teach us to make the most of our time, so that we may grow in wisdom." The wise person does not just think about the moment and its impact; he or she takes the long-range view toward eternity. Approach your decisions from God's perspective—consider their impact 10 years from now and into eternity. Live with the attitude that although our life is short, we will live with God forever.

II. ADVICE TO THE YOUNG (11:9-10)

⁹ You who are young, be happy while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. ¹⁰ So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigor are meaningless.

A. REJOICE IN YOUR YOUTH (9a)

1. Let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth
2. Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes

B. DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF THE JUDGMENT (9b)

1. God will bring you into judgment
2. You will answer for all that you do

C. REMOVE SORROW AND EVIL (10)

1. Remove sorrow from your heart
2. Put away evil from your flesh
3. For childhood and youth are vanity

ECCLESIASTES 11:9, 10

We often hear people say, "It doesn't matter." But many of your choices will be irreversible—they will stay with you for a lifetime. What you do when you're young *does* matter. Enjoy life now, but don't do anything physically, morally, or spiritually that will prevent you from enjoying life when you are old.