

**Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:8**  
**February 23, 2022**

**III. Human Limits (6:10-12:8)**

**E. Time and Chance (9:11-10:15)**

**F. Living with Risks (10:16-11:6)**

**G. Youth and Old Age (11:7-12:8)**

DON'T FORGET YOUR QUESTIONS FOR ME!

There is an adage that is heard from time to time, with frequent variation: "Youth is wasted on the young." Solomon is going to close out the main body of Ecclesiastes by agreeing in a way with this statement; except, instead of flat-out lamenting this normal track of life, he's going to encourage youth to actually live accordingly!

In the Old Testament, much like today, *light* is used metaphorically to refer to life and joy; *darkness*, death or ignorance (cf. Pss 49:19; 58:8; Prov 20:20). Solomon begins in v. 7 by contemplating how *sweet* light is. After a book that pulls no punches when it comes to the reality of death and despair, such a statement about *light* seems like a breath of fresh air!

Nevertheless, with *many years* will also come *days of darkness* (v. 8). The longer we live in this world, the more *darkness* we see, and the more we're aware of it.

Therefore, Solomon exhorts the *young man to rejoice in [his] youth* (v. 9). Once the realities of adulthood settle in, we can never go back to youth. Solomon encourages the youth to *walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes*, which might seem poor advice at first, seeing as though the inclination of the heart is evil (Jer 17:9). Yet, when the joy of youth is balanced with an eye towards judgment, perhaps that sentiment isn't all that bad.

*Childhood and youth are fleeting* (v. 10). Just as we adults ought to rejoice each and every day with what the Lord has given to us, so also the young should rejoice in the days of their youth, knowing that they won't last forever, nor will they always be pleasant.

As we continue on into chapter twelve, Solomon composes a poem reminding the youth that bodies and minds will ultimately slow down. For this reason, he tells them to *remember your Creator in the days of your youth* (v. 1).

It's possible that vv. 1-7 are an extended metaphor for the deterioration of the body, but at the very least, it looks at several different aspects of creation to make the same point:

- the lights may shine now, but not always (v. 2)
- men and women must cease their functions as strength wanes (v. 3)
- the nights aren't always filled with restful sleep (v. 4)
- even nature follows suit (v. 5)
- the tools and utensils we use ultimately wear down (v. 6)
- the grave is the end of every man (vv. 5, 7; cf. 7:2)

One of the best ways we can prepare our children, grandchildren, students, is to prepare them to live in light of who God is, to live joyfully in all the Lord has given to them, yet mindful that it is fleeting.

Solomon ends the main body of his book by coming back around with where he began: *Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity* (12:8; cf. 1:2).