

## Daily Bible Study

### “Learn to Live a Little”

#### *Ecclesiastes 11:1-10*

*October 6– October 12, 2013*

**MONDAY** –This week our study brings us to **Ecclesiastes 11:1-10**. Solomon is now drawing near the close of his sermon and is giving us some rules for how we can Learn to Live a Little under grace and amidst the uncertainties of life. Observing and living out these practical insights which concern living by faith under God’s Sovereign hand will help a person lessen the vanity of life and temper its harsh evils. Solomon had asked if life was worth living as he began this book of Ecclesiastes and he spent considerable time and effort to experiment and investigate “*life under the sun*”. He concluded life is not worth living and gave arguments such as the monotony of life, the vanity of wisdom, the futility of wealth, and the certainty of death to support his conclusion. Being the wise man he was Solomon reviewed his arguments and thankfully brought God into the picture which made all the difference. He realized life seemed monotonous but was full of challenging situations from God all of them for their time and purpose. He saw that man’s wisdom couldn’t explain everything therefore it was best to trust in and follow God’s wisdom and avoid folly. He also learned that wealth could be enjoyed and used to the glory of God. Finally, as he knew death was certain for all men and no one can escape it, he teaches us to enjoy life now and make the most of the opportunities God gives us. **Ecclesiastes 11:1-10**: “*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.”*

Suggestion for Prayer: God, teach me from Your Word how to Live a Little for Your glory.

**TUESDAY** – **Ecclesiastes 11:1**: “*Cast your bread upon the waters, For you will find it after many days.*” There are some different ways scholars have interpreted this verse but the

conclusion doesn’t change regardless of what specific aspect we see being addressed here. Solomon is urging us to live by faith, stretch out with some action and adventure. Some of the ways this verse has been understood are as follow: Some see Solomon speaking about agriculture here and the sowing of seed (*Cast your bread*) in anticipation of a harvest of a crop. Some see a charitable illustration here. The *casting of bread* would be giving to poor and needy and in the act of generous supply God will be pleased and bring back a reward and blessing in His time (**2 Corinthians 9:7–8, Matthew 6:19–20**). Finally, the most common understanding of this verse is one concerning commerce. It sees a merchant who is operating a fleet of ships. This certainly reminds us of Solomon; “*For the king had merchant ships at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the merchant ships came bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes and monkeys*” (**1 Kings 10:22**). Solomon traded in this area and used his commerce as investment. Whatever picture you see here the lesson is the same. The word *Cast* speaks of a total commitment and has a future and forward look about it. The reward (*and you will find*) is here promised but is in God’s time and requires patience (*after many days*).” Solomon is telling us to step out in faith in life. Dare to do great things for God and His glory and God will repay and reap a harvest in His time. Jesus instructed the disciples in a similar way when He told them, “*...launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch*” (**Luke 5:4**). Our lives as believers should be lived with this kind of boldness. In the day to day grind of *life under the sun* we have an eternal, heavenly perspective and remember our Father is a God “*who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think*” (**Ephesians 3:20**). As we saw last week, we are not to be foolish and move without seeking God in preparation and “sharpening our ax” in His presence. But we are being told that when we have sought God’s wisdom we need to be aggressive and faith filled as we launch into the deep and *Cast our bread upon the waters*. The bread we cast upon the waters by faith may take a long time returning to us, but when it does, the joy will be wonderful (**Deuteronomy 15:10, Proverbs 19:17**). We will see a classic illustration of this from the life of George Whitefield this Lord’s Day.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me live by faith and step out boldly for You knowing that You will reward and bring home the blessings on investments in your kingdom.

**WEDNESDAY** – **Ecclesiastes 11:2-5** “*<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.*” As we continue we are now urged forward in this faith filled, lavish, generous work for God and at the same time are cautioned and guided to avoid reckless foolishness. The phrase *to seven and also to eight* is not to be taken literally but is a tool in Hebrew literature to speak of an undetermined plurality (to an indefinite number; for example, **Micah 5:4, Proverbs 30:15–31, Amos 1:3–13, 2:4**). The caution here in our vernacular would be, “don’t put all your eggs in one basket”. The

farmer must scatter as much seed as widely as possible (**Matthew 13:1–23**), the generous giver must share his possessions in several ways and with as many people as possible (**Luke 6:38**) and the businessman is to diversify. He is saying take a risk but spread the risk out; the picture of sending goods out by sea but with several boats and to several vendors and destinations is helpful here for our understanding. So we see wise caution but also an incredible trusting commitment. “*For you do not know what evil will be on the earth,*” should not keep us from faith fueled action but it reminds us of our dependence on God for results in everything we do. Faith is not throwing caution to the wind but it is *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* (**Hebrews 11:1**). **Verse 3** reminds us that we can be wholehearted in our faith because God is in control of everything. Solomon points us to “expected” events (*rain from full clouds*) and “unexpected” events (*if a tree falls to the south or the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie*). We know both expected and unexpected events and “disasters” are products of Divine providence (**Matthew 10:29**). **Verses 4-5** remind us that seldom will the conditions be ideal and if you wait for perfect conditions you will never *sow* and never *reap*. Only God the Creator knows how, when, and where the wind blows and He is the One who controls and determines the growth of the child within the mother’s womb (**Psalm 139:13-16**). There is a wonderful parallel between Solomon’s words and Jesus’ words to Nicodemus: “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (**John 3:8**). The Holy Spirit is sovereign as he moves within the hearts of men in the process of regeneration. We can only marvel and believe.

*Suggestion for Prayer:* Father, teach me to marvel and praise You for Your Sovereignty and perfect wisdom. Help me trust You and give myself away for Your service with complete abandon. Although I may not know everything about Your work, help me stand in awe of You.

**THURSDAY – Ecclesiastes 11:6-8:** “*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.*” Morning and evening points to every part of the day, or simply at all times. Similarly, in the New Testament, Timothy was told to preach the Word, “*in season and out of season*” (**2 Timothy 4:2**). Our commitment must be wholehearted and ungrudging for trust calls for action. *For you do not know* is a key phrase in this section which again highlights man’s ignorance but we must not allow ignorance to make us so fearful that we become either careless or paralyzed. Rather than make us fearful and or paralyzed into not acting, not knowing the future should simply make us more careful in what we plan and what we do. So although we don’t know what the weather or anything else for that matter will do, we must go out and *sow the seed*. Start living like the farmer. Daniel Webster called farmers “the founders of civilization,” and Thomas Jefferson said they were “the chosen people of God.” This hard work, both today and

in Bible times requires diligent effort and trust in unseen results as the farmer is at the mercy of what God sends or doesn’t through nature. So, use each day wisely; get up early and sow your seed, and work hard until evening. Do the job at hand, “*redeem the time*” (**Ephesians 5:15–17**), and trust God to bless the tasks you have accomplished. You and I are merchants and farmers in this adventure of faith we call life and we invest today in that which will pay dividends tomorrow. Send out multiple ships and plant multiple crops and trust God for the harvest (**Galatians 6:8–9**, **Psalm 126:5–6**, **Hosea 10:12**). **Verses 7-8** teach us to cherish each day of life and anticipate it as a gift from God. Remember **Deuteronomy 33:25**, “*As thy days, so shall thy strength be.*” *Truly the light is sweet...* ‘light’ is a common metaphor in the Old Testament, denoting God (**Isaiah 60:19**), and his covenant blessings (**Psalm 27:1**, **Isaiah 45:7**). In the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as light (**John 1:4–5**, **8:12**, **9:5**). Solomon is using the term to show what it is to truly be alive (**Job 3:20**, **Psalm 49:19**). Solomon earlier in Ecclesiastes spoke of the sun as a central object of life’s vanity (**1:3–9**, **2:11**, **17–22**, **4:7**) but here we are to *behold the sun* and enjoy its benefits. The farmer “makes hay when the sun shines” and so should we. Be grateful to God for the joyous moments we experience in this life on earth. Solomon quickly tempers this enthusiasm with warning in **verse 8**. Earthly joys are fleeting, and we are to remember *the days of darkness*. Both the trials of life and death itself remind us to have the proper perspective. Learn to live a little for one day you will live in the eternal light of Jesus joy and presence. “The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it and the Lamb is its light” (**Revelation 21:23**).

*Suggestion for Prayer:* Father, thank You for being light and life and for creating life in my soul and giving me The Holy Spirit. Help me to trust You and work hard as I sow the seed.

**FRIDAY – Ecclesiastes 11:9-10:** “<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.*” Solomon gives instruction here particularly to the young. Health, vitality and opportunity are often wasted and Solomon exhorts us not to waste precious years. Be careful how you walk and *know that for all these God will bring you into judgment*. Walk in God’s ways (**Deuteronomy 5:33**, **Psalm 1:1**), blamelessly (**Psalm 15:2**) and in obedience (**2 John 6**) and righteousness (**Proverbs 8:20**). We are to remove what would produce evil and sorrow in our hearts. True joy comes from a heart that is right with God (**Matthew 5:8**) and God’s judgment is to be the controlling principle of our behavior. Charles Spurgeon said, “Youthful sins lay a foundation for aged sorrows,” and he was right. So much more could be said about these verses but we will cover it more this Lord’s Day. The bottom line for us all whether young or old is to enjoy life, trust God and live each day to the full as we spend ourselves for God’s glory and the good of those He has placed us with while we remember that judgment for all we do is coming.

*Suggestion for Prayer:* Father, thank You for my life and years. Help me to live for Your glory.