

Ecclesiastes 11:7–12:8 | “Rejoice, But Remember”
Preached on October 4, 2026 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to Ecclesiastes 11, verse 7. *[pauseeee]*

We will be starting there, but we are actually going to cover the rest of chapter 11 and half of chapter 12. *[pause]*

The reason is because it really all goes together, that is, it’s all the same theme...

What we will find is Solomon’s instructions to the young about how to live *now* in light of *what is to come*. *[pauseeeee]*

My kids love running around outside or riding bikes and things like that. *[pause]*

I want them to do that and to have fun while doing it.

So when they ask me if they can do those things and I say, “Yes, you can,” I’m essentially saying, “Go have fun—enjoy!” *[pause]*

I really mean it, it’s not like I’m being deceptive, but I want them to have fun outside. *[pause]*

But here’s the thing—when I tell them that they can go, I usually have to remind them of some things...

I need to remind them to look both ways when they cross the street, to stay within a certain area, or something like that. *[pauseee]*

I want them to rejoice in the outdoors, but also, to remember certain things, as they do so. *[pause]*

That’s a little like what Solomon does here in this text: he wants his readers to rejoice, but remember some things, too. *[pause]*

I’ll READ just verses 7–8 to begin. *[READ 11:7–8]*

The first point that we see today is to...

I. Rejoice in your years, but remember the darkness coming. (11:7–8)

Many people do not have joy in life. *[pause]*

They look with jealousy at other people, who seem to have it all and who seem so happy.

They think, “Why can’t I have *that*?” *[pause]*

Or they think, “I’ll be happy when I get that new job, new product, new friend, better health, or better situation.” *[pauseee]*

Amidst all of our modern day conveniences, possessions, wealth, and technology, people don't seem to be getting happier, but more depressed. *[pauseeee]*

For many, joy seems to be always 'out of reach.'

They gain something, but do not gain joy along with it. *[pauseee]*

Others view life with only a negative lens, as they see life as simply something to endure, not to rejoice in.

But is this really the way we are to live life: with teeth gritted, all the way through? *[pauseeee]*

Many Christians do not realize that the Bible *commands* us to have joy, for here God is telling us to rejoice in life. *[pause]*

God is not pleased if you only and ever bear with life, but He wants you to enjoy it. *[pauseeeee]*

Verse 7 talks about how light is sweet, and it's pleasant to see the sun.

And this is teaching us that there's enjoyment to be found in this life—it's not ALL doom and gloom.

There *is* sweetness, pleasantness, and goodness to be enjoyed. *[pauseeee]*

When you meet some Christians, you get this feeling that life is only ever misery, but it's simply not true. *[pause]*

There is definitely hardship, and even this passage will get to that, but there's also joy to be had. *[pauseeee]*

The imagery of light and sun represent life, joy, and blessing. *[pause]*

Have you ever gone outside on one of those picture-perfect, beautiful, sunny days? *[pause]*

Isn't there this certain happiness that rises up in you as you look at it? *[pause]*

That's the picture of life here: it's sweet and pleasant at times, like that sunny day.

And so, Solomon is saying, "There's enjoyment to be found in this life, so rejoice!" *[pauseeee]*

Don't waste your life away in needless agony, but actually enjoy life! *[pause]*

So many need to hear this, including myself.

It's so easy to complain, and look at everything in a negative light, but we need to enjoy the good things of life. *[pauseee]*

This right mentality comes from seeing life as a gift from God.

This beautiful day, this wonderful moment, this great friend, this amazing meal, this simple pleasure of life is given by my good God. *[pause]*

Rejoice in being able to be alive, to experience happiness, to find pleasure in things. *[pause]*

Rejoice in the years that God gives to you because it's not sinful to enjoy the good things as gifts from God, but actually it's wrong NOT to. *[pauseeeee]*

I know for me personally, when I was younger, I wasted many days because I was focused on what I didn't have. *[pause]*

If you're like me, don't live in regret, but know that God is gracious, and has also given you today to rejoice in. *[pauseeeee]*

So Solomon has called us to rejoice in life, but he doesn't want us to float away from reality.

Because a person could easily take this too far, where they have this idealistic view of life, thinking that it will only and ever be good times.

But we need to be balanced by remembering that there are also dark days. *[pauseee]*

Verse 8 says, "But let him remember that the days of darkness will be many." *[pause]*

So rejoice, yes, but remember that there are hardships. *[pauseeee]*

As we already talked about: some people are only ever negative about life.

But there's an opposite extreme: some people have a romanticized view of life, whereby they expect life to be constantly amazing, and are rocked by hardship, when it comes. *[pause]*

Which way do you naturally lean? *[pauseeeee]*

Solomon is teaching here a very *balanced* view of life...

I will rejoice in my years, for God has given so many blessings, but I will also remember that life has many dark days, too. *[pause]*

We are not to be naive or oblivious to the reality of what life is actually like, rather, we should be *realistic*. *[pauseee]*

This realistic mentality helps me to enjoy the good things when they come.

So we can say, "Yes, this good time or this meal with my family is a blessing, and I will rejoice in it..."

I won't waste it by complaining or focusing on what's missing or how it could end badly." *[pause]*

But I'm also not going to be naive about life, for I know that joy is mingled with grief. *[pausee]*

When you are grounded in this way of thinking, then you don't miss out on the good things, but also, you aren't broken by the hardships that come along, either. *[pause]*

We take both delight and darkness seriously. *[pauseeee]*

Remembering the dark days actually helps us to rejoice in our years because we remember that our days are limited...

And that's where Solomon goes next, as he teaches us to...

II. Rejoice in your youth, but remember your Creator. (11:9–12:8)

Let's READ 11:9–12:1. *[READ]*

Now the first question that may come to your mind may be, "Who is considered young?" *[pause]*

Solomon doesn't give us a specific age, and the ages of who was considered young back then is probably different from ours since they didn't typically live as long.

So the best path forward isn't to give an exact age, but to consider that a young person is a person with strength, vitality, and opportunities. *[pauseeee]*

This means that even someone in their 40's or 50's today could be considered young, compared to someone in their 80's or 90's. *[pauseeee]*

For those of you who are considered 'older,' the passage will get to your stage next, but those considered 'younger,' this portion is for you. *[pause]*

You are to rejoice in your youth, letting your heart cheer you in these days, and this means that you should actually enjoy this stage of life! *[pauseeee]*

So many times, young people are longing and wishing to be older because of this or that, but the Bible calls you to not wish away this time. *[pauseeee]*

Young people sometimes think, "I just want to be out of school, or I just want to be married, I just want a job, I just want to be able to drive, or I want my own place." *[pause]*

There's nothing wrong with wanting those things, but do not let those desires spoil your days.

Take pleasure in the time you have *now*, while you are young. *[pauseeee]*

If you talk to many older folks, they would say that they would love to go back to those carefree days, those healthier days, those days with more opportunities. *[pause]*

You may not realize it, but in your youth, you have so much to be grateful for, so much to do, so many joys to be had. *[pauseeee]*

Solomon also tells young people to walk after their desires. *[pause]*

Now as Christians, our ears should immediately perk up because when we hear something like that, we usually think it's a bad thing. *[pause]*

Walking after our desires usually implies giving into sin, but this isn't necessarily talking about that, rather, it's talking about the desire to do things, while you are young. *[pause]*

So while you are young, if you desire to play sports, then play, taking advantage of your energy and athleticism. *[pause]*

If you have a hobby that you love, pursue that, because you won't always have that chance.

If you are able to do some traveling, then utilize that opportunity, because once you are older and have little ones and a full-time job, it makes it a lot harder. *[pauseeee]*

The point is to not squander your youth, but enjoy it, and the favorable circumstances that it brings. *[pauseeee]*

When you are young, you have less responsibilities, and you have more energy and better health—so make good use of the time. *[pauseeee]*

Now this instruction to walk after your desires isn't a 'blank check' to do whatever you want, even if it's sinful.

For he says right after that, "But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment." *[pause]*

This means that the instruction to walk after your desires is *tempered* by what God deems as right. *[pause]*

He's saying, "Pursue those things! But always remember that you are accountable to God for whatever you do." *[pauseeee]*

Young people: always live governed by the Word of God. *[pause]*

Someday you will have to give an account of your life to God, for He is your Creator and Lord, so take God and His judgment seriously. *[pauseeee]*

We could put it this way: enjoy life within God's good boundaries. *[pause]*

Many people see 'boundaries' as a blockage to joy, but actually, if you go outside of God's boundaries, that's where joy diminishes.

But true joy is found in living in the way that God has laid out. *[pauseeee]*

So Solomon has called young people to enjoy life, and a part of enjoying life is removing vexation and pain, as verse 10 says. *[pausee]*

A young person can easily be caught up in the hard, confusing, painful aspects of life. *[pause]*

Let's say that a teenager didn't get the part in the play that they really wanted.

Now, they can't stop being upset about it, and due to this, it sort of ruins their whole year because they let that situation get to them. *[pause]*

This is what can happen in some young people's lives...

They *obsess* over some issue at school or some issue with friends, and it causes them to lose the joy they should be having at a young age. *[pause]*

Solomon is saying, "Don't focus on or obsess over the negatives, so that you miss the delights all around you." *[pauseeee]*

Young people: rejoice in your youth, but here's something to remember, found in chapter 12, verse 1...

"Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them.'" *[pauseeee]*

Many young people think, "When I get older, I'll follow the Lord, but right now, I want to just have fun." *[pause]*

That's not the way, instead—enjoy life, yes, but also, live for the Lord now while you are young. *[pausee]*

The most important thing is to remember your Creator...

Know that He has made you, and that means that you belong to Him, and are accountable to Him. *[pause]*

He made all the good things that you get to enjoy, so always be grateful to Him. *[pause]*

Remember also His power: He powerfully ordered, governs, and controls the world, and He has the power to judge, as well. *[pause]*

Shape your life according to the Lord...

Revere Him, serve Him, worship Him, admire Him, commit to Him, trust Him, and live in light of His presence and power. *[pauseeee]*

You don't know how long you'll live, so don't put off living for the Lord. *[pause]*

You don't know what limitations you'll have later, or what opportunities will be gone. *[pause]*

If you don't remember your Creator in your youth, you may very well end up with a lot of regrets.

You could end up on a wrong path, or end up being unprepared for hardship in your old age. *[pause]*

No—live for the Lord now, setting good habits that will help you into the future. *[pauseeee]*

One pastor gave an illustration of an ice cream cone...

With an ice cream cone, you need to enjoy it while it's still cold, or what happens? *[pause]*

It melts, and then you don't get to enjoy it.¹

So also, don't waste the stage of life that you're in, but enjoy what's right in front of you, like that ice cream cone. *[pause]*

There may be a time when you can't enjoy it as much, so take advantage of now. *[pauseee]*

Chapter 12 makes that point by describing the natural decline that happens in old age—listen to Ecclesiastes 12:1–8. *[READ]*

These verses can be confusing at first because you're thinking, "What does he mean by things like the keepers of the house trembling or the grasshopper dragging itself along?" *[pause]*

The key is to see that Solomon is using a bunch of images to convey what old age is like. *[pause]*

We don't have time to go through every word picture, but let's think through what Solomon is doing...

He's teaching us that you only have your youth for a short amount of time. *[pause]*

Eventually, you will get older, and those opportunities will be gone, and you'll be much more limited in what you can do. *[pauseeee]*

There will be days where you will say, "I have no pleasure in them." *[pause]*

There will be hardships and sorrows when you get older, and many of the pleasures and delights of life will diminish.

And a big reason for this is because as you get older, your body is affected. *[pause]*

You now have trembling arms and hands, bent legs and back. *[pause]*

You start to lose teeth, and your sight dims. *[pause]*

¹ <https://www.trinityevangel.org/sermon/basking-in-the-sun-pt-2>.

Your hearing is impaired, yet you are up early at the sound of a bird. *[pause]*

You have new fears like heights or journeys, and white hair arises, but vitality and desire shrink. *[pauseee]*

When you are older, you are also keenly aware of how near death is...

Your life can sometimes feel like it's hanging on by a thread, or fragile, like a bowl or pitcher.

And when you die, you return to dust, and your spirit returns to God who gave it. *[pause]*

No wonder Solomon ends with saying, "Vanity of vanities"—life is so short and fleeting. *[pauseeee]*

Older folks, I want to talk to you now...

These verses show us that the Bible is realistic about old age. *[pause]*

The frailty and weakness and limitations that you feel in your body and in your stage of life are not some oddities happening to you...

They are a part of living life in this world. *[pauseee]*

The Bible is actually giving voice to your experience, and this means that God knows exactly what you are going through.

He knows and He cares, so cling to Him in your weakness. *[pause]*

Remember *your* Creator, reminding yourself that He has all that you need, even in your frailty. *[pauseeee]*

You may not have the same sight, but you can see Christ clearly through faith. *[pause]*

You may not have the same strength, but God can ever more be your strength. *[pause]*

You may tremble, but your faith doesn't have to, as you hold onto the Rock of Christ. *[pause]*

And physical death may be near for you, but you serve a risen Savior, "who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."² *[pauseeee]*

As we consider what this passage is teaching us today, we see that we are to...

Rejoice in life while you have it, but do so always remembering your Creator.

If you are older, rejoice in your years. *[pause]*

² 2 Timothy 1:10.

Even though you may have many hard days, you can still receive the good gifts of God with gratitude and joy. *[pause]*

Remember your Creator, and how He knows and cares, and someday, if you trust in Christ, you will be with Him forever. *[pause]*

Christ has secured the most important, lasting things for you through His death and resurrection. *[pauseeeee]*

If you are a younger person: take your stage of life seriously...

Don't squander your youth, but live in light of what's to come. *[pause]*

Understand that there are opportunities, blessings, and joys right in front of you that you won't always have.

So will you rejoice in your years or waste them? *[pause]*

Do so, always remembering your Creator...

Don't say, "I'll get to that church stuff someday when I'm older," but follow Him now. *[pause]*

Don't say, "There will be opportunities when I'm older to serve the Lord," because you don't know what the future holds.

You don't know how long you'll live, or what limitations you'll have when you're older. *[pause]*

Serve the Lord while you're young, knowing that it's always worth it. *[pauseeeee]*

Author Bryan Chapell gave an illustration of "A miner who...was injured at a young age, [and] became an invalid. *[pause]*

Over the years he watched through a window near his bed as life passed him by. *[pause]*

He watched fellow workers marry, raise families, and have grandchildren. *[pause]*

He watched the company he had served thrive without attempting to make adequate provision for his loss. *[pause]*

He watched as his body withered, his house crumbled, and hope for better things in this life died."³ *[pauseeee]*

How many people are like that man: watching through the window of life at everybody else's joy, but finding none themselves? *[pauseee]*

There's enjoyment to be found in this life, so will you rejoice? *[pause]*

³ <https://preachingandpreachers.com/2013/07/31/sermon-illustration-viewing-tragedy-through-the-lens-of-the-cross/>.

Don't just endure, but enjoy!

And do so, remembering your Creator—He made you, He has given you so many blessings, you are accountable to Him, and you are to live for Him and His glory. *[pauseeee]*

In 1 Timothy 6, it says that “God...richly provides us with everything to enjoy.”⁴ *[pause]*

He is the great gift giver,⁵ who gives rain, fruitful seasons, food, and gladness.⁶

But more than that, He has given us His precious Son to die for our sins so that we could be saved from condemnation and death. *[pause]*

How could we not rejoice?

And how could we not take advantage of the time that He has given us to live for Him?

⁴ 1 Timothy 6:17b.

⁵ A reference to James 1:17.

⁶ A reference to Acts 14:17.