

Study of Ecclesiastes: Lesson 12 – Chapter 11
Bellevue Church of Christ / Fall-Winter 2020 - 2021

1. What is the Koheleth instructing the reader to do when he says to "cast your bread upon the waters?" What does he say will be the result of this action? (v. 1; Matt 25:14-30)

2. Why does the Koheleth counsel the reader to "give a serving to seven, and also to eight?" How will this protect us from evil? (v. 2; 5:13-14)

3. What two examples are given of things that are inevitable? How should a wise man react to these things? (vv. 3-4; Eph 5:15-17)

4. What example illustrates our inability to comprehend the ways of God? (v. 5; Isa 40:28; Rom 11:33)

5. How does the Koheleth encourage diligence? Why should we be diligent in our work? (v. 6)

6. What is described as sweet and pleasant? What does this mean? (v. 7; Gen 2:17; 3:19)

7. What should we do every day that we have life? What should we keep in mind? (v. 8; 7:1-2)

8. What does the Koheleth encourage the young man to do? Yet what does he also encourage him to remember? (v. 9; 9:7-10; Matt 25:31-46)

9. So what else the Koheleth counsel the young man to do? Why? (v. 10; "vexation" 2:23 & 5:17; enjoyment 2:24 & 5:18; Col 3:8-14)

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Notes & Answers

Verses 1-6: Living in view of the uncertainties of life

1. What is the Koheleth instructing the reader to do when he says to "cast your bread upon the waters?" What does he say will be the result of this action? (v. 1; Matt 25:14-30)

Possibly an idiom encouraging the reader to be generous, but given the context of vv. 1–6, it likely refers to taking calculated risks in commercial endeavors.¹

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained," as a proverb says. Be like the merchant who uses his capital for trade, including trade across the seas. But be sensible, and do not gamble everything on one venture.²

Ecclesiastes 11:1 (ESV)

¹ Cast your bread upon the waters,
for you will find it after many days.

Ecclesiastes 11:1-2 (NEB)

¹Send your grain across the seas, and in time you will get a return. ²Divide your merchandise among seven ventures, eight maybe, since you do not know what disasters may occur on earth *Or on land.*

Matthew 25:14–30 (ESV)

¹⁴ "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷ So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' ²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' ²² And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' ²³ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard

¹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Ec 11:1). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

² Wright, J. S. (1991). [Ecclesiastes](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Vol. 5, p. 1189). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

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man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed,²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’²⁶ But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?’²⁷ Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.²⁹ For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.³⁰ And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

2. Why does the Koheleth counsel the reader to "give a serving to seven, and also to eight?" How will this protect us from evil? (v. 2; 5:13-14)

Because the future cannot be known, the author encourages people to make diverse investments. In advising this, the author probably attempts to prevent the situation described in 5:13–14—where a person loses his wealth in a bad venture.³

Ecclesiastes 11:2 (ESV)

² Give a portion to seven, or even to eight,
for you know not what disaster may happen on earth.

Ecclesiastes 11:1-2 (NEB)

¹Send your grain across the seas, and in time you will get a return. ²Divide your merchandise among seven ventures, eight maybe, since you do not know what disasters may occur on earth *Or on land*.

Ecclesiastes 5:13–14 (ESV)

¹³ There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt,¹⁴ and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand.

³ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Ec 11:2). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

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3. What two examples are given of things that are inevitable? How should a wise man react to these things? (vv. 3-4; Eph 5:15-17)

We are bound to recognize the God-given laws of nature (v. 3), but we cannot always forecast how they will operate. We often have to act before we can foresee all we would like to know about the future. The farmer who waits till he is completely certain of perfect weather conditions will never reap anything at all (v. 4).⁴

Ecclesiastes 11:3–4 (ESV)

³ If the clouds are full of rain,
they empty themselves on the earth,
and if a tree falls to the south or to the north,
in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.

⁴ He who observes the wind will not sow,
and he who regards the clouds will not reap.

Ephesians 5:15–17 (ESV)

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

4. What example illustrates our inability to comprehend the ways of God? (v. 5; Isa 40:28; Rom 11:33)

Life begins in mystery with the baby's conception and prenatal growth and continues with the mystery of the working of God's total plan.⁵

Ecclesiastes 11:5 (ESV)

⁵ As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

Isaiah 40:28 (ESV)

²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.

⁴ Wright, J. S. (1991). [Ecclesiastes](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Vol. 5, p. 1189). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁵ Wright, J. S. (1991). [Ecclesiastes](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Vol. 5, p. 1189). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

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Romans 11:33 (ESV)

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

5. How does the Koheleth encourage diligence? Why should we be diligent in our work? (v. 6)

Verse 6 sums up this section. Because the future is unknown, we must accept calculated risks and believe that though some of our ventures may fail, a sufficient number of them will succeed.⁶ The author advises working more in order to increase the odds of success since no one can be sure of the outcome.⁷

Ecclesiastes 11:6 (ESV)

⁶ In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

Verses 7-10: The Certain Future and Present Behavior

6. What is described as sweet and pleasant? What does this mean? (v. 7; Gen 2:17; 3:19)

First there is the happiness of life when vitality is high, when all things seem possible and the sun shines all the time. Life is lived in a world of vanity, and part of the vanity is the process of aging. On the day Adam and Eve disobeyed God, their bodies began to die (Gen 2:17; 3:19).⁸

Ecclesiastes 11:7 (ESV)

⁷ Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.

Genesis 2:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Genesis 3:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

⁶ Wright, J. S. (1991). [Ecclesiastes](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Vol. 5, p. 1189). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁷ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Ec 11:6). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁸ Wright, J. S. (1991). [Ecclesiastes](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Vol. 5, p. 1191). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

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7. What should we do every day that we have life? What should we keep in mind? (v. 8; 7:1-2)

See notes above, and in previous lesson on Ecclesiastes 7. Recalling one's mortality yields better appreciation and enjoyment of life.⁹

Ecclesiastes 11:8 (ESV)

⁸ So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 7:1–2 (ESV)

¹ A good name is better than precious ointment,
and the day of death than the day of birth.

² It is better to go to the house of mourning
than to go to the house of feasting,
for this is the end of all mankind,
and the living will lay it to heart.

8. What does the Koheleth encourage the young man to do? Yet what does he also encourage him to remember? (v. 9; 9:7-10; Matt 25:31-46)

People should enjoy life to the fullest while recognizing that there are consequences for their actions.¹⁰

Ecclesiastes 11:9 (ESV)

⁹ 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 the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

Ecclesiastes 9:7–10 (ESV)

⁷ Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.

⁸ Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

⁹ Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. ¹⁰ Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

⁹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Ec 11:8). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

¹⁰ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Ec 11:9). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

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Matthew 25:31–46 (ESV)

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

9. So what else the Koheleth counsel the young man to do? Why?
(v. 10; “vexation” 2:23 & 5:17; enjoyment 2:24 & 5:18; Col 3:8-14)

Youth is fleeting. The work of removing anxiety and frustration from the heart should begin early in life.¹¹ Obviously, young people face strong temptations, and vanity and frustration are as much a part of adolescence as vitality. So youth must say no as well as yes and must discard whatever damages mind or body (cf. Col 3:8–14).¹²

Ecclesiastes 11:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.

¹¹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Ec 11:10). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

¹² Wright, J. S. (1991). [Ecclesiastes](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Vol. 5, p. 1191). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

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Ecclesiastes 2:23–24 (ESV)

²³ For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity. ²⁴ There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God,

Ecclesiastes 5:17–18 (ESV)

¹⁷ Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.

¹⁸ Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot.

Colossians 3:8–14 (ESV)

⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.