

“Remember God”
Ecclesiastes 12:1-8
(Preached at Trinity, March 17, 2024)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citation will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 12** continues the instruction from the previous chapter. Solomon is sharing wisdom on life. Life is to be savored. It is to be enjoyed as a gift from God.
Ecclesiastes 11:7-8 NAU - "The light is pleasant, and *it is* good for the eyes to see the sun. ⁸ Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all!"
2. He gives particular instruction to the young.
Ecclesiastes 11:9 NAU - "Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes."
3. Youth is a season to be treasured. There is strength and vitality that slowly seeps away with age. Few have the wisdom and insight to appreciate the days of their youth. They presume it will remain unchanged. If old age is to come it is so far in the distance that it's worthy of little attention. When older men and women warn them of the brevity of life it seems like foolish ramblings that shouldn't be taken too seriously.
4. There are particular dangers with being young. Too often youth is lived with careless abandon and squandered away. They live recklessly, selfishly, without any thought of their duty before God.
Charles Bridges -
"The fact is, that *the young man* too often has no idea what temptation is. He realizes no need of any special warning. He fancies himself well able to be his own keeper. He has never allowed the thought, that none but God is capable of knowing what he is, if he be left to himself. Let him take his Bible, and learn by it what he has yet to learn—the knowledge of himself."¹
5. Solomon gives serious admonition in **Verse 1**.
Being young does not give us a pass on our duty before God. It doesn't lessen God's charge for us to be holy. God doesn't say, "Bless his heart, he's young and doesn't know any better."

¹ Charles Bridges, *An Exposition of the Book of Ecclesiastes* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860), 344.

I. The charge is to “Remember God”

Ecclesiastes 12:1 NAU - "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth"

A. On the negative side, this is a warning against forgetting God, of failing to give Him the worship and honor He deserves.

1. Most people simply go about their life as if God didn't exist. Remembering takes focus and purpose. Forgetting is simply a failure to engage the mind.

2. Over and over Israel was warned against the sin of forgetting God – our Creator, sustainer, protector – the Lord of all.

Deuteronomy 6:12-13 NAU - "watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹³ "You shall fear *only* the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name."

Deuteronomy 8:11 NAU - "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today;"

Psalms 9:17 NAU - "The wicked will return to Sheol, *Even* all the nations who forget God."

Romans 1:28 NAU - "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,"

B. On the positive side, it is a charge to remember.

Solomon charges the young to remember their Creator.

1. This is an oft repeated command. “Remember!”

In various forms, the Bible reminds us over 200 times.

a. God knows how prone we are to forget.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 – “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth”

Isaiah 46:9 – “Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me,”

b. This is an important element of the Lord’s Supper

Luke 22:19 NAU - "And when He had taken *some* bread *and* given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

2. When the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan into the Promised Land they were commanded to set up 12 stones as a memorial of remembrance. Lest they forget.

Joshua 4:6-7 NAU - "Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' ⁷ then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever."

Joshua 4:24 NAU - "that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, so that you may fear the LORD your God forever."

3. Solomon is reminding all that God is our Creator. We owe our existence to Him. Paul reminds us in Romans 11 –
Romans 11:36 KJV - "For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. "
- C. How do we remember God? How do we keep Him in remembrance?
1. By maintaining a constant sense of His presence.
 The word here means more than just holding something in our memory. It refers to commitment.
 2. Keeping God on our mind maintains His preeminence, His priority, His Lordship.
 3. Solomon tells us the essence of remembering God in **Verse 13 Ecclesiastes 12:13 NAU** - "The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is*: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person."
Deuteronomy 6:5-9 NAU - "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. ⁸ "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹ "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."
 4. Remembering God is to devote ourselves fully to Him. There is really no other way. As Charles Bridges puts it -
 "The man who is only half-hearted for God, may soon become a man fully on Satan's side."²
- II. There is a sense of urgency and priority in the charge.
Ecclesiastes 12:1 NAU - "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come"
- A. Solomon has the entirety of life in mind
1. Solomon puts an emphasis upon our youth, but it doesn't end there.
 The season for remembering our Creator is lifelong. All men must maintain faithful commitment to God. Learning this in our youth pays great spiritual benefits in old age.
 2. Solomon has in mind a priority of that which is to come that he calls "evil days." What are the evil days Solomon is speaking of?
Ecclesiastes 12:1 NAU - "before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them"
- B. Solomon refers to our old age as "evil days."
1. Solomon uses the Hebrew word, רָעָה רָעָה
 - a. Most English translations translate it "evil" days. By far, this is the most frequent translation of the word. We usually think of evil in terms of morality. Evil and wicked are seen as synonymous.

² Charles Bridges, *An Exposition of the Book of Ecclesiastes* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860), 344.

- b. The word, however, can also mean adversity, affliction, calamity. The CSV translates it:
Ecclesiastes 12:1 CSBO - "So remember your Creator in the days of your youth: Before the days of adversity come"
2. Our youth passes quickly and old age comes suddenly.
Ecclesiastes 11:10 NAU - "childhood and the prime of life are fleeting."
 3. For many the advancement of years brings pain and weakness. It means the loss of vitality.
Ecclesiastes 12:1 NAU - "the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them"
 4. Remember God before the light of life begins to grow dim.
Ecclesiastes 12:2 NAU - "before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain"
 5. **Verses 3-4** describe it vividly. Solomon uses a series of metaphors.
Ecclesiastes 12:3 NAU - "in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble, and mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few, and those who look through windows grow dim;"
 "in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble"
 Hands that were strong now shake and tremble.
 "and mighty men stoop"
 Our backs tire quickly and our legs are bent with age. We no longer walk tall and upright.
 "the grinding ones stand idle because they are few"
 Our few remaining teeth do not grind well.
 "and those who look through windows grow dim;"
 Our vision is only a fraction of what it once was. It was a horrible malady before corrective lenses were widely available.
 6. **Ecclesiastes 12:4 NAU** - "and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low, and one will arise at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song will sing softly."
 And our hearing fails – we can't hear the opening of doors.
 We can't even hear ourselves chew. And the sweet sound of birds are silent.
 7. **Ecclesiastes 12:5-7 NAU** - "Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. ⁶ *Remember Him* before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; ⁷ then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it."
 - a. We become more fearful – fearful of falling from high places. Of being attacked on the road.
 - b. Weakness continues to set in. Instead of the grasshopper leaping with energy, it drags itself along the road.

- c. Finally, as our hair turns white and our mobility is lost, we die - mourners lament our passing.
- C. The greatest tragedy isn't growing old. It is growing old without God.
1. What is life without God? What is the purpose of our being?
 2. The Preacher takes us back to where he began.
Ecclesiastes 12:8 NAU - "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "all is vanity!"
 3. How important it is for us to remember our Creator while we are young. Matthew Henry: "What our hand finds to do for God, and our souls, and our generation, let us do with all our might, because the night comes, the night of old age, in which no man can work; and, when our strength has gone, it will be a comfort to remember that we used it well."³
- D. Why is Solomon pressing the duty to remember God upon the youth?
1. Remember Him "before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed." Remember Him while the spring of youth is still fresh.
Because hearts are much more tender in the young than the aged.
 2. Human hearts do not grow softer as we age. They grow harder. The lost man becomes more and more dull and hardened to the things of God. He is dead and dying. Most Christian conversions take place among the young.
 3. In my experience of passing out tracts, the young usually receive the tract without hesitation, often with an expression of gratitude – "thank you." It is the older people who resist taking the tract, often with expressions of anger.
 4. The Bible presses the importance of the present.
Hebrews 3:13 NAU - "But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."
Hebrews 4:7 NAU+ - "He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."
 5. There is great warning for those who will not hear
Mark 4:25 NAU - "For whoever has, to him shall *more* be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."
Malachi 2:2 NAU - "If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name," says the LORD of hosts, "then I will send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them *already*, because you are not taking *it* to heart."

³ Matthew Henry, (1994). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson). p. 480

Conclusion:

1. Perhaps you are trembling in despair. "I've squandered away my youth." No! While we have breath turn to God in Christ.
2. Solomon's charge to the young is a charge for all. Seek God today, today while it is still called today. Seek Him while He may be found.
Isaiah 55:6-7 NAU - "Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. ⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon."
3. God is mindful of us through every phase of our life. He wants us to delight in Him each and every day and trust Him even to our last breath, knowing that He is with us.
Psalms 116:15 NAU - "Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His godly ones."
4. In **Verse 8** Solomon concludes as he began in **Chapter 1**. Without God life is futile.