

Norman C. Schwab  
Yacolt EVFree  
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**Don't' Put it off**  
**Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:8**

Some of you this morning may be wondering secretly to yourself. Am I starting to get old...er? Well, here is a little test you can take to determine. Perhaps the kids might want to answer for the parents and keep them honest. You May Be Getting Old If...

You're asleep, but others worry that you're dead.  
Your back goes out more than you do.  
You quit trying to hold your stomach in, no matter who walks into the room.  
You are proud of your lawn mower.  
Your arms are almost too short to read the newspaper.  
You enjoy hearing about other people's operations.  
Neighbors borrow your tools.  
People call at 9 pm and ask, "Did i wake you?"  
Your ears are hairier than your head.  
You have a party and the neighbors don't even realize it.  
Everything hurts, and when it doesn't, it doesn't work.  
Your little black book only contains names ending in MD.  
You get winded playing chess.  
You turn out the light for economic, not romantic reasons.  
Everyone speaks so low you can't hear them.  
People are much younger than they were when you were their age, but people your age are older than your are.  
Your knees buckle but your belt doesn't.  
You may be getting older if you... You sink your teeth into a steak and they stay there.

Anybody feeling older here this morning? Perhaps if you are feeling older this morning this might keep you awake this morning. A group of senior citizens were lounging on the patio of their retirement community. One looked up as a large flock of birds flew overhead. He nudged a companion who had dozed off, "Frank, you'd better move around a little bit. Those buzzards are closing in on us."

We all laugh because of the realities of getting older. We may want to deny it. Americans may spend six billion dollars a year on products to cover up and hide the effects of aging, but there is no getting around it.

No fountain of youth has been discovered. We are all getting older...some of you are just getting older faster than the rest of us. Look in the mirror it is a reality that none of us can escape. We all are growing older. Some may be in better shape than others. Some may be still considered young and growing up, but really we all are terminal. It's just a matter of time. Getting old is not for cowards and it is coming on us far quicker than we dare to admit. When we get older we tend to lose a step, our bones hurt, we don't recover as quickly, we get tired more easily, our motivation and drive and energy is low. We are not as teachable. The opportunities shrink. Our physical ability and even mental abilities fade. All these resources that we may have when we are younger darken and then disappear as we get older.

This powerful evidence speaks the reality of truth. It ought to be a strong incentive and motivation to our hearts against a lie that whispers in our ear. "You have plenty of time to follow Jesus and do some great things for His kingdom later in life. You can wait to do those things when you are older and have less responsibility, less pressure, more money, more time. Wait to do it until the kids are all grown and gone. Then. Then you will serve Jesus and follow Him.

Solomon wants to make a point for all of us who have believed that lie. Solomon wants to make a point very clear to us. We are all going to get old far quicker than we think...so don't put it off. Get right with God. Get going for God before it's too late.

Turn with me to the book of Ecclesiastes. This morning we will be studying the last few verses of chapter 11 and the first 8 verses of chapter 12. In the first few verses of chapter 11, Solomon encourages us to take a risk and plunge in. By faith "cast your bread on the surface of the waters". It may seem like an extremely wasteful thing to throw perfectly good bread into the river. It may seem like an extremely wasteful thing to throw your good time, money, resources, talents and gifts into people and places where it's not very clear it will ever bring you

any return. But Solomon wants us to know that we are to leave the results up to God. We don't know the activity of God v.5. There will be times when the wisest thing we can do is to simply plunge in. Certainly be wise. Certainly be a good steward and plan and train and prepare, but don't find yourself crippled by the paralysis of analysis. Don't wait to act and move, until the all the circumstances are perfect. If God is calling you to move then just do it.

In verse 7 Solomon begins to answer a second objection to those who may be thinking; "Yeah, I need to get right with God, but I've got plenty of time ahead of me...I'll do all that when I'm older. Yeah, I need to plunge in and get going for God, but I've got my whole life ahead of me. Right now I've got a lot of pressures, I'm starting this new business. I'm under a financial crunch right now. I'm trying to raise a family. I've got a lot of football to watch, fish to catch and deer to kill. I'll get going for God when I'm older.

So this is what Solomon has to say about getting older. Read with me in Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:8 (READ) v.7 I sure did miss the sun this week! It's sad to see the daylight hours getting shorter and shorter. I was spoiled by all the long days and great weather this summer. It is good for the eyes to see the sun. In fact, there are many people in the Northwest here who struggle at times with what is called Seasonal Affect Disorder, (SAD) and the lack of sun messes up the bodies natural cycle. It affects sleep and emotions. The doctors have discovered that if you sit in front of a full spectrum blue light...something like a substitute sun, even for a half hour a day, it can elevate your mood and help you sleep well. Indeed, light is pleasant and its good for the eyes to see the sun.

What is Solomon talking about here? It appears he is using the word picture of light to connect with life and youth and energy. Just as when its lighter longer we have more energy. We stay outside longer and do projects. Now I start thinking about bed around 9PM. (Wasn't that one of the signs of growing older?) In the next verse 8 Solomon seems to be

connecting darkness with aging, growing older. If you live long rejoice in all of the years God gives you. And remember the “days of darkness” while you are living them. This is not “remember” meaning look back on days in the past, “Why when I was a kid we used to....”. But remember here means to be very aware, don’t forget what will happen to all of us in the future. It’s like “remember you have a math test on Tuesday.” If we truly remember the test, then we will act on it and get ourselves prepared and study. To remember means we will not let it catch us by surprise. Remember means to wake up and act on what we know will happen in the future. We all will grow old. The “days of darkness” will come to us all and we will lose our motivation, energy, physical and mental ability. Look at that last line, “everything that **is to come** will be futility.”

V.9 Solomon gives a challenge to all of us who are young or at least consider to be young to enjoy the years of youth, rejoice in all of them. V.9 rejoice young man during your childhood. Let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood, or I think its safe to add, womanhood. While the sun is still shinning and you have your motivation and energy and vigor and strength and wits and talent and patience and hearing and strong back. Enjoy life! Follow the impulses of your heart. Follow your dreams and desires. Now this may sound like a call to fulfilling any sort of wild lust and sin that comes into your brain. No. There is a caution at the end of v.9. Young person. Enjoy life to the fullest but know that God will hold you accountable for all you do. You will be judged and rewarded for all that you chose to do.

The idea here is to enjoy fully the life God has blessed you with. Seize the opportunities of your present life right now. Don’t wait until you get older or dead...it will be too late then. Life is a gift from God for us to enjoy. When our hearts delight in Him we get the added benefit of delighting and enjoying in life. If we give our hearts fully to him, then we can do whatever our hearts desire for our hearts will desire what God desires. So plunge in. Take wild risky leaps of faith for God. Follow those

dreams. Expect great things from God attempt great things for God. Love God and do whatever you want. But know that we will all be held accountable for what we do. Every choice we make has a consequence. For every seed we sow there is a harvest that will be reaped. A lot of older people seem to have a mental file drawer jam packed with “regrets” and “wish I could have’s” and “sure wish I hadn’t of’s”. What time is the best time to get rid of those regrets? Sure. Make sure they never happen in the first place. Certainly God will forgive us for those words spoken in anger, but the consequences of a broken friendship don’t go away. Certainly God has promised to forgive us when we give into temptation but the effects linger don’t they. The very best time to deal with regrets is before they ever happen. Don’t do them in the first place.

V.10 Why put unnecessary pain onto your heart? The Bible says remove vexation from your heart put pain away from your body. Don’t waste away the prime of life on sin and cotton candy rewards. Prime life doesn’t last long, its fleeting. Don’t let sin govern your life when you are young. Remember God, Follow God. Do it now. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Enjoy the fully satisfied life that God has to offer you now while you can. Don’t be the one who is sitting on the retirement home patio with Frank worried about buzzards, wishing you could be young again and could have one chance, just one chance to do for God what you never bothered to make time for when you had the strength. When I was in college and seminary my grades were very important to me. That was my job. But I have not once looked back and wished I had studied harder. I do wish I had spent more time taking walks with my wife. Enjoy life now. True delight and satisfaction comes when we live inside the wide freedoms that God has crafted us for and to enjoy those. God is not determined to squash our fun, He wants us to totally enjoy it to the fullest.

CS Lewis writes “A car is made to run on gasoline, and it would not run properly on anything else. No, God designed the human machine to

run on himself. He himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.”

So. Solomon puts the punch to his thought in verse 1 of chapter 12. “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, or dark days come, these are the days when you are old and worn out and your motivation is so low “you have no longer any delight” in them. Before you get so old you have no energy, no motivation, no mental or physical capabilities Remember God in the days of your youth. Guess who that is talking to? Youthful people. People who are also young at heart. Solomon is not saying if you haven’t bothered to follow God while you were young don’t bother starting now because its too late. No, he is saying if you can read and understand this now is the time to get right with God and get going for God. Do it now before its too late.

He commands us to remember. Again, remember is not. Oh God, My Creator, Oh yeah I remember him. No. To remember here means for us to wake up and act on what we know. This is what Jonah did while he was in the belly of the whale. Jonah had worked really hard running away from God and trying to forget all about God but Jonah 2:7 says, “while I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord and my prayer came to Him into Thy holy temple.” To remember is to return to the Lord. To remember is to acknowledge Him is His presence continually, it is to walk in a relationship with the Lord. To remember is to refresh that first love you once knew when you first came to Christ. To remember is to discover the great glories and delight of God. Solomon says young people don’t waste your time. I did and it was a dead end street. I want to save you a whole load of pain and hurt and vexation. Discover anew the delights of God while you are still young. Get right with God and get going for God while you still can. Old age comes on way too fast.

Remember your Creator. Wake up and act on it.

Its interesting that he tells the youth to remember “your Creator.” Why? Because the people who are young need to remember that they are not self-created. We have been created by God. It is He who has made us and not we ourselves. We are dependant, not independent. We are totally dependant on Him so stop thinking that you have made yourself into what you are today. Stop thinking that you are superman and will never die. All of us have a terminal disease. All of us will eventually die. We must come face to face with that ultimate reality and live in keeping with it. The fact that we are aging should not cause us fear but it should motivate us. It should be an incentive to live as well as we can.

The next few verses in chapter 12 Solomon gives some vivid word pictures as to what the aging process is going to look like. V.2 when the sun and light and moon all get darkened. Remember light equals youth and energy, darkness equals old age and nearing death. And clouds return after the rain. That speaks of the cycle of life where the older ones become senile and physically weak and dependant just as they once were as a baby. Eating, sleeping and diapers, the same cycle returns.

V.3 The watchmen of the house trembles may refers to the arms and big bicep muscles. I listened as a couple of the high school boys pointed at their flexed biceps saying, “You better watch out for these dogs, once I turn them loose I can’t call them back.” When you old your muscles turn to trembling puppies and can’t protect if attacked. “mighty men stoop” Old people often must hunch their backs over. The legs that were once powerful to carry us now go weak. Ray Stedman says that you know your getting older when your knees buckle but your belt wont. “The grinding ones stand idle because they are few.” What do you think that is referring to. Teeth. Now days we have dentures, but back then it was a problem when they only had a couple of grinders left to chew their food. Those who look through windows grow dim. What? Yep. The eyes grow weak. After an eye appointment this summer, I went back to the doctor

and said, I don't you got that prescription just right, my computer is starting to get fuzzy. He asked my age and said well that can happen in your 40's, you are going to soon be looking at bi-focals. Now that makes me feel old.

v.4 The doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low. Our open doors, or our ears begin to malfunction. Sometimes we simply can't hear certain sounds and other times at 3AM in the morning a bird will wake us up with an annoying pitch. The reason you can hear it is because you have a more difficult time sleeping and every little thing will wake you up. "one will arise at the sound of the bird and the daughters of song sing softly." This is deafness brought on by old age.

V.5 Men are afraid of high places and terrors on the road. My father is 84 and I must hold his arm when we climb up bleachers. He doesn't want to climb the ladder to clean his gutters anymore. Older people are afraid of heights. Older people don't like driving at night. "The almond tree blossoms". I learned something interesting about the almond tree. The flowers of the almond tree blossom long before the leaves appear on the tree and the flowers are white/gray in color. What do you think that is referring to? Gray hair. Old men in the ANE had gray hair but no teeth to be able to eat the almond nuts. "The grasshopper drags himself along." Are you having a more difficult time getting out of bed? Are you stiff and sore just walking down to get the paper? Your getting older. "The caperberry is ineffective." Anybody want to guess what Solomon was referring to on that one? You guessed it Caperberry was used as an aphrodisiac to enhance arousal in old age. Solomon is saying, you know your getting older when Viagra doesn't even work anymore. It will be of great comfort to many of you to see that is the last on the list, and at least according to Solomon's list, the last thing to go. (Ray Stedman).

A man then goes to his funeral and the mourners go back out into the street after a 2PM memorial service and right back to their schedules and

work.

Point: v.6 Remember Him. Before its too late. Before you get too old and you have no body, or mind or motivation or energy. Remember God. Before the silver cord is broken, (perhaps referring to our spinal cord.) Before the golden bowl is crushed (perhaps referring to our brain.) Before the well is shattered. Perhaps our heart. Before the wheel at the cistern is crushed. This could be referring to our arteries caving in. All of these word pictures refers to death. Before we die. Before we get old...remember God when you are young.

Without discovering the secret to a satisfying life, the writer hear says, "Its' all vanity" Whats the point? If we have lived our whole life and yet still failed to get right with God and get busy for God, then our life will look like a bid waste. Maybe you look in the mirror and already see and old person staring back at you. Don't let the aging process keep you from following God. The effects of age ought to an incentive to all of us to get right with God and get going for God before its too late. Every hair we see growing out of our ears and nose ought to be a reminder to us, time is getting shorter, get going for God. Every time you walk into a room and forget why you went there ought to be an incentive for us to get right with God and get going for God. Every time we bite into a big thick juicy steak and we leave our dentures embedded in the meat it ought to be a motivator for us to get busy and get right with God. Youth. This is a message to you. Start now. Don't' put it off. Don't wait until your old.

90 percent of the people introduced to Jesus came in faith before the age of 22. Don't put it off. You know what the next highest percentage of people ages come to Christ. Those over 70. People who are faced with an inescapable reality and see they will not live forever open their eyes to do business with God. Perhaps today you may be less then 22 and need to do business with God. Perhaps you are over 70 and need to get things right with God. Now is always the right time to begin following God. Do it now while there is still time.

Ben Patterson has a theory about old age. He writes, "I believe that when life has whittled us down, when joints have failed and skin has wrinkled and capillaries have clogged and hardened, what is left of us will be what we were all along, in our essence. Exhibit A is a distant uncle....All his life he did nothing but find new ways to get rich. He spent his old age very comfortably, drooling and babbling constantly about the money he had made. When life whittled him down to his essence, all there was left was raw greed. This is what he had cultivated in a thousand little ways over a lifetime. Exhibit B is my wife's grandmother. When she died in her mid-eighties she had already been senile for several years. What did this lady talk about? The best example I can think of was when we asked her to pray before dinner. She would reach out and hold the hand of those sitting beside her, a broad smile would spread across her face, her dim eyes would fill with tears as she looked up to heaven and her chin would quaver as she poured out her love to Jesus. That was Edna in a nutshell. She loved Jesus and she loved people. She couldn't remember our names but she couldn't keep her hands from patting us lovingly whenever we got near her. When life whittled her down to her essence, all there was left was love; love for God and love for people. If we want to end like Edna, it starts long before you get senile and old. Now is the time. Now is the time to follow Jesus.