



Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:7

# LIVING WISELY WITH LIFE'S REALITIES

To live wisely, you have to be clear-sighted and realistic – ruthlessly so – in looking at life as it is. Wisdom will not go with comforting illusions, false sentiment, or the use of rose-colored spectacles. Most of us live in a dream world, with our heads in the clouds and our feet off the ground; we never see the world, and our lives in it, as they really are. This deep-seated, sin-bred unrealism is one reason why there is so little wisdom among us – even the soundest and most orthodox of us. It takes more than sound doctrine to cure us of unrealism. There is, however, one book in Scripture that is expressly designed to turn us into realists: and that is the book of Ecclesiastes. We need to pay more heed to its message than we commonly do. —J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*

## Ecclesiastes hits us hard with several truths about reality, about life “under the sun” in this sin-impacted world:

- This world is not concerned about you.
- This world is not controlled by you.
- This world will not satisfy you.
- There is something fundamentally wrong with this world and it won't be fixed by you or by me.
- The more you see of this world, the more it will tend to anger you, disappoint you, and depress you.
- Life is short, unpredictable, confusing, and frustrating.
- Death is certain.

## So how do you live in light of these hard realities of life?

- A. Get more and more angry and cynical.
- B. Live in fear and isolation.
- C. Escape through drugs, alcohol, entertainment, virtual reality, media saturation, constant distraction, self-indulgence, etc.
- D. None of the above.

In Ecclesiastes 11-12, the Teacher brings his Reality 101 class to a close and instructs us on how live within life's realities.

### 1. R\_\_\_\_\_ WITH WISDOM (11:1-6).

- Grow your money through investment (11:1).
- Give your money generously to others (11:2).
- Don't let fear cause you to do nothing (11:3-4).
- Make the most of every opportunity in this life and trust God with the results (11:5-6).

*Releasing one's bread upon the waters is a metaphor for trade. Such trade is risky, but it may yield a good reward.*

—Craig G. Bartholomew

*Whether Qoheleth is speaking here of business ventures or of plain generosity is difficult to be sure... or whether he speaks first of one, then of the other. ...Bread is the appropriate gift to the hungry and the risk of hard times could well be an argument for giving liberally while you can.*

—Derek Kidner

*One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.* —Proverbs 11:24-25

*Take calculated risks. That is quite different from being rash.*

—General George Patton

*Security is mostly a superstition. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.* —Helen Keller

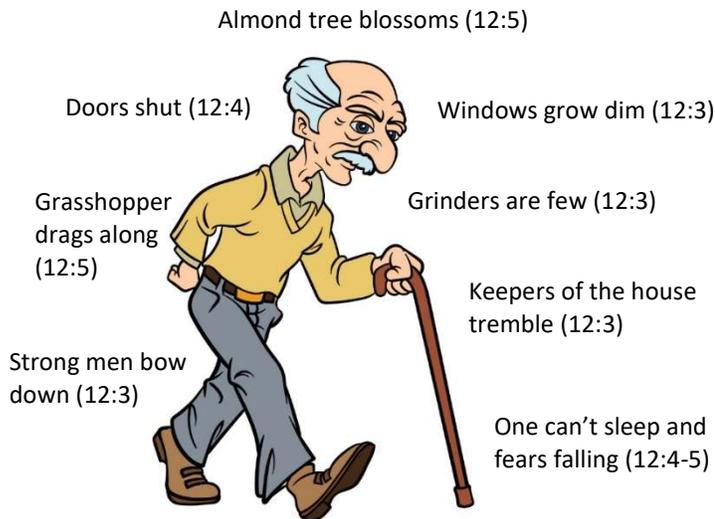
*Every man dies. Not every man really lives.* —William Wallace

2. R \_\_\_\_\_ IN THE GOODNESS OF LIFE (11:7-10).

- The light of life is sweet and pleasant (11:7).
- The darkness of death is a reality that is coming (11:8).
- Enjoy fully every day that God blesses you with (11:9a).
- Remove anger from your heart and sin from your body. God's judgment is certain and your younger days are short and too important to ruin with anger and sin (11:9b-10).

3. R \_\_\_\_\_ YOUR CREATOR (12:1-7).

- Remember God while you are young (12:1a).
- Remember God before the difficult days come (12:1b).
- Remember God before your body starts to feel the effects of old age (12:2-5).



- Remember God before death strikes you (12:6-7).

*Remember your Creator  
before the silver cord is broken  
and the golden bowl is crushed,  
the pitcher by the spring is shattered  
and the wheel at the cistern is crushed;  
then the dust will return to the earth as it was,  
and the spirit will return to God who gave it.*

*Life is short, accept that.  
Life is good, enjoy that.  
And prepare to meet God.*

—Ray Ortlund

*For Qohelet, enjoyment is not  
only permitted, it is commanded;  
it is not only an opportunity, it is  
a divine imperative.*

—Choon-Liong Seow

**Sorrow (11:10).** Hebrew, *ka'as*,  
“anger, vexation, frustration.”

**Evil (11:10).** Hebrew, *ra*, “bad,  
evil, pain, distress, adversity.”

*In the Bible, remembering, parti-  
cularly on the part of God, is not  
the retention or recollection of a  
mental image, but a focusing  
upon the object of memory that  
results in action. —Nahum Sarna*

*Remembrance is far more than  
mere mental assent. It represents  
the radical difference between a  
worldview in which humankind is  
central and autonomous and one  
in which God is central.*

—Craig Bartholomew

*We are each, in our earlier years,  
building the house in which we  
shall live when we grow old. And  
we may make it a prison or a  
palace.*

—David Gibson

*Man is a strange sort of creature,  
a ray of heaven united to a clod  
of earth; at death these are sep-  
arated and each goes to the place  
whence it came. ...This makes  
death terrible to the wicked,  
whose souls go to God as an  
avenger, and comfortable to the  
godly, whose souls go to God as  
a Father, into whose hands they  
cheerfully commit them, through  
the Mediator, Jesus Christ, our  
Savior!*

—Matthew Henry