

DON'T GO QUIET

GM // newbies // online

This is the very last sermon in Ecclesiastes.

If it's your first time with us I recommend going back and listening on our website or app.

Ecclesiastes is an honest book about hard subjects.

It doesn't give easy answers ... it gives honest ones.

It focuses a lot on death and the quickness of life.

Right at the end it takes an interesting twist.

He begins by addressing a particular demographic.

Teens and 20's listen up.

Ecclesiastes 12:1

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";

There is something special about being young.

No back aches, dieting, bills, or pills.

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I remember the days when I could eat 2 oreos and not gain weight.

When there was more hair on my face than on my back.

Young people ... enjoy this time of your life.

Make the most of it.

Us old guys/gals look back on our youth with fondness.

We had more energy, more time, more passion ...

It was naivety, exploring, learning, creating, ...

Finding out who you were and what you wanted to be ...

On top of all that ... there was very little responsibility.

Enjoy it ... b/c it won't stay that way.

The days are coming when you will lose the pleasure and passion of youth.

It is described here in a very winsome, funny way.

Ecclesiastes 12:2-8

2 before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the

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rain, 3 in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, [hands shake] and the strong men are bent [shoulders hunched], and the grinders cease because they are few [teeth ... need we say more], and those who look through the windows are dimmed [eyes], 4 and the doors on the street are shut [ears] —when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low— 5 they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms [hair goes gray], the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails [guys ... he went there ... grasshopper interesting choice], because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets— 6 before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, 7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. 8 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.

Young people ... feel sorry for us old guys/gals.

If you wonder why we can get cranky ... “Don’t make me read those verses again!”

But it’s true ...

I’m in the middle of my life.

I’m identifying with this more and more.

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I have to say, it takes some intentional thoughtfulness and focus to remember that life is good.

That is what is so great about prayer and praise.

It reminds me that God is so good, his blessings are abundant, ... "I have a lot to be thankful for."

When I was young I took all this for granted.

Anyone younger than me in this room ... I want you to hear this.

Use the days of your youth wisely.

If you talk to an old Christian and ask them what they could change about their life.

Most of them wish they didn't squander their youth.

The world tells us that youth is the time to "sow your wild oats."

Live it up b4 your 18 or 21 or whatever.

Go on your sin world tour while you can.

That's the conventional wisdom.

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But you speak to anyone wise and they won't give you that advice.

If I could get a mulligan on life it would be my years 13-21.
So much wasted time pursuing vain/empty things.

What would I do differently?

I'd take my studies more seriously.

I'd use my money more wisely.

But more than all of that, I would do exactly what he says hear, "Remember your Creator."

Which means ...

Leverage your time by putting God and His kingdom first.

All the Christian OG's should be getting Pentecostal with their Amen's right about now.

Young people ... you matter!

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You don't have to wait to graduate high school or college or get married for God to use you.

One of the biggest missionary movements of the last 150 years was among students in America.

It started with Dwight Moody challenging university students to leverage their lives for Jesus.

That movement grew rapidly over the next few decades as 10'000's of students said "Yes" to living radically for Jesus.

Those young people leveraged their lives for Jesus in ways that are still making impacts today.

Young people ... you're poised for this.

You can use this part of your life and channel it toward something bigger than the American dream.

Do it while the hands, shoulders are strong ... and you have teeth and full head of hair.

In Ronald Rolheiser's book, *Sacred Fire*, he talks about this unique stage of discipleship.

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**We are always struggling and doing battle with something, but the forces that beset us change with the years. When we are young and still trying to establish an identity, these forces are very much embedded in the chaotic, fiery energies of restlessness, wanderlust, sexuality, the quest for freedom, and the sheer hunger for experience. The struggle with these energies can be disorienting and overpowering, even though they are the engines that drive us and propel us into adult life. --
Ronald Rolheiser**

It's in this stage of life that we most identify with the prodigal son.

The vanities of life's pleasures are pulling at us.

Satan has a plan for puberty.

But so does God.

Have you ever thought why God made puberty happen at the stage of life it does?

Was he setting us up for failure?

Puberty is when our brain is going through significant development, we are growing in knowledge, we are trying to figure out our identity (what makes "me" unique).

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You know what would be a good idea ... throwing in a bunch of hormones into that cocktail.

Our emotions are heightened, our sexual drive is on full blown after-burners.

We have all this energy, drive, angst, turmoil going on inside us.

This stage of life is both wonderful and terrifying all at the same time.

For the parents ... mostly terrifying. :)

But here is the tragedy.

In the 10-12 years when youth need us most ... we get passive and pull away.

This void is damaging to them.

While every parenting/mentoring role is important ... the data is saying that in this time of life men play a more important role.

Satan knows this and so he's done his work tearing down the fathers role.

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Men, we've dropped the ball.

We've been dropping the ball for decades.

This dad-void is hurting our sons and daughters.

Dad deprivation stems from the lack of father involvement, and secondarily from devaluing what a father contributes when he *is* involved. Whether our children become financially rich or poor--or emotionally rich or poor--depends increasingly on whether they grow up dad-rich or dad-poor. -- Warren Farrell, PhD, *The Boy Crisis*

An African game park was in need of male elephants. So they culled two adolescent bulls from another game park.

These adolescent males began to exhibit dangerous, aggressive behavior. Very uncharacteristic.

The wise old game warden knew how to fix it.

He brought in two old bigger bull elephants.

Almost immediately the behavior problems corrected.

Men, the problem is that we think disciplining the next generation isn't a good use of our time.

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Our job is to pay the bills, and leave the praying to the women.

That is a lie from the pit of hell.

They need our direction and guidance.

Fathers... our role is to pray, play, preach ... as well as provide.

I'm not talking just on Sunday.

The next generation need more from us, not less.

Ecclesiastes 12:9-10

9 Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. 10 The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

The next generation can't thrive unless we get involved in their lives.

I remember when my dad taught me the mechanics of a jump shot in basketball.

I was 11 and my jump shot was horrible.

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But he kept on making time to practice with me and make sure I didn't give it up just b/c it was hard.

The more I practiced the more my muscles got stronger, and my form got better, and my range grew.

That was time well spent with my dad.

Most of my fond memories are of my dad teaching me stuff.

How to change a car's oil filter.

Good life stuff.

But the best stuff that I value today (probably valued less back then) was him teaching me the Bible.

Old grasshopper teaching young grasshopper

He could do that b/c he was a student of that book.

And you can only teach what you know.

Some of us think.

"That's not me ... I'm not wise like Solomon."

You don't need to be a published author/theologian to disciple others.

You don't have to study the Bible two hours a day and learn Greek and Hebrew.

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There's an old saying, "In the land of the blind the one-eyed man is king."

You don't have to be a scholar, but you do need to be a student.

Acts 4:13

13 Now when they [scholars/rulers] saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Make time to be with Jesus: prayer and bible.

A little bit of time with Jesus gives a long way.

We see from this how Jesus set the pattern.

He taught, trained, and modeled ministry for his twelve disciples.

And those twelve apprentices turned around and repeated his example.

Paul had Timothy and Titus.

Peter had Mark.

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We read in Titus how the older women should teach and train the younger women.

B4 anyone's feelings get hurt ... it says "older women" ... not "old women".

My wife benefited from relationships with "older women" modeling a life of how to be a wife/mom/disciple etc.

Some of them were "old" / some of them were just a couple of years "older".

The point is that community is key.

B/C that is where truth is lived out.

It is put on display and tested to see if it holds up.

Don't understand this concept of parents who let their kids make the choice of coming to church.

You're the parent!

You're kids don't make a lot of good decisions.

They need exposure to the church community see learn truth and see it lived out.

People write lots of books about new ideas and theoretical truths that are untested.

It's easy for professors to spout ideologies from a podium but keep their lives hidden.

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I'm not interested in reading a parenting book by an author whose kids are in jail.

Our lives together will be the greatest apologetic for truth.

Our lives should proclaim and demonstrate the Gospel.

Ecclesiastes 4:11-12

11 The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. 12 My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

People are going to measure the Gospel through our lives more than our words.

“What fruit is that truth bearing?”

It says in verse 11 “the words of the wise are like goads”.

A goad, whether or not you are wondering, is a pointed stick.

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Farmers/ranchers use it to move cattle and sheep to where they need to go.

The modern goad is the cattle prod ... with an electric shocker at the end.

The point is that if an animal is going the wrong direction ... “out comes the goad and changes their mind.”

The Bible calls us sheep.

Sheep aren't very smart and are always heading in the wrong direction.

A couple of decades ago, in rural Turkey, a newspaper reported that while some shepherds were taking a lunch break their whole flock walked right off a cliff and died.

What did they need?

A wise shepherd with a goad leading them away from danger.

That is what the Bible does ... it guides us.

That's why God doesn't call us to follow his suggestions.

He calls us to follow his commands.

His commands guide us away from the danger of sin and death.

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God isn't a divine bossy pants who needs to have his way.
He is a loving father.

A good dad cares about the well being of his kids.

Good parents drill into their kids that playing tag on the road isn't okay.

We want them to fear us when we give those kind of commands.

B/C ultimately its for their good.

I remember one of my cattle prod moments.

I was reading the part in Matthew where Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven."

I was young, in my early 20's and walking myself right off the cliff.

And then that verse hit me like an electric prod hitting a cow's hindquarters.

I could say Jesus is Lord with my lips ... easy enough.

But my heart was far from God.

I could proclaim the truth, but my life didn't demonstrate it.

I wasn't surrendered to the Father's will.

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And that's the main thing.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Solomon is saying, "This is the final analysis from Ecclesiastes."

Life is chaotic, unpredictable, unsafe ...

It is full of paradox and mystery.

So what are we to do?

Remember God and live in surrender to his will

This brings us full circle to the beginning of this chapter.

Young people, remember your creator.

What is the conclusion of how to live?

Fear God ... don't forget him.

We can't fear what we forget.

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Remember who God is and what He's done ...

That is good advice for young grasshoppers and old grasshoppers ...

One of the ways we remember God is through communion.

We are reminded that Jesus came fully surrendered to God and died for our sins.

Communion is a time to remember and stand in awe of God's grace and justice.

It's a time to remember and recommit ourselves to following Jesus.

But if you are not a Christian ... communion is a reality check.

It is a sign of judgment ...

We just read how God knows every single thing you've done, even the secret stuff.

And all of it will be judged.

Now this doesn't sound nice.

It's not a popular picture of God.

We want God to be love ...

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Which is a poor way of saying ... we want him to be soft on sin.

But God is just and he won't let any sin go unpunished.

God has never been nor will ever be soft on sin.

Justice is what He is ... not a feeling he has.

He cannot deny himself or change.

That would make him imperfect / unholy.

But the good news is that Jesus came to die for your sins.

He took your punishment on the cross.

By faith in Jesus you can be forgiven, justified, and accepted into the Father's love.

The Bible says if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Before we start communion ... how is God calling you to respond today.

Let's take a minute to respond in prayer.

If you pray for salvation, I'd love for you to come and tell me after the service.

PRAY

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