

Ecclesiastes 11:1–10

Exhortation to Works of Charity and Right Living

1. *“Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days. Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, for you do not know what evil will be on the earth.”* (Ecclesiastes 11:1–2, NKJV)

The picture here is of generosity. To “cast bread upon the waters” suggests giving freely without expecting immediate return. Just as bread cast on water seems wasted, so acts of charity or kindness may appear fruitless—but in time they return with blessing. Since we cannot know what trials or disasters may come, it is wise to live generously now. By sharing with many, we are both obeying God’s heart of compassion and preparing for the day when we ourselves may need help.

Application: Be generous even when it seems inconvenient. Do not hoard what God has given you, whether resources, time, or encouragement. One day, you may find yourself reaping what you have sown into others’ lives.

2. *“If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth; and if a tree falls to the south or the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie. He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.”* (Ecclesiastes 11:3–4, NKJV)

Just as clouds inevitably release their rain and fallen trees remain where they fall, some things in life are fixed beyond our control. However, the warning is against paralysis through over-analysis. If a farmer waits for perfect weather, he will never sow or reap. The same applies spiritually and practically—waiting for the “perfect” time often keeps us from action.

Application: Do not let fear of uncertainty keep you from obedience. Step out in faith even when conditions don’t look favorable. God calls us to live by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

3. *“As you do not know what is the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes everything.”* (Ecclesiastes 11:5, NKJV)

There are mysteries of life that science still cannot fully explain—like the formation of a child in the wombⁱ or the unseen paths of the wind. In the same way, God’s ways are far beyond our understanding. His works cannot be reduced to formulas or predictions.

Application: Trust the Lord even when you cannot trace His hand. Faith does not demand full understanding but rests in God’s wisdom and sovereignty (Proverbs 3:5–6).

4. *“In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; for you do not know which will prosper, either this or that, or whether both alike will be good.”* (Ecclesiastes 11:6, NKJV)

Because life is uncertain, we should live diligently and spread our efforts widely. Morning and evening sowing pictures steady, faithful labor. Since we cannot know which efforts will bear fruit, it is best to keep at the work God places before us.

Application: Be faithful in serving God daily. Some of your efforts may not seem fruitful immediately, but over time God brings a harvest (Galatians 6:9). Do not limit yourself to one opportunity—use every season of life for His glory.

5. *“Truly the light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun; but if a man lives many years and rejoices in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. All that is coming is vanity.”* (Ecclesiastes 11:7–8, NKJV)

Life under the sun can be sweet—each day is a gift from God. Yet life is fleeting, and the days of darkness (whether trials or death itself) will come. Without God, even long years of life are ultimately empty.

Application: Rejoice in the simple blessings of life while remembering its brevity. Thank God daily for His mercies, but live with eternity in view (Psalm 90:12).

6. *“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 in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.”* (Ecclesiastes 11:9, NKJV)

Here the Preacher gives both freedom and warning. Youth is a time of vitality, dreams, and pursuits. Enjoy it, but do not forget that every choice will be brought before God. Joy is not license for sin but an invitation to live responsibly in the fear of the Lord.

Application: Young or old, live with joy—but always with accountability to God. True freedom is not the absence of restraint but the presence of responsibility before Him.

7. *“Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity.”* (Ecclesiastes 11:10, NKJV)

Youth is short-lived, and its vigor quickly fades. Because of this, one should not waste it in bitterness, reckless choices, or sinful living. To remove sorrow and put away evil is to live wisely, knowing that every stage of life is temporary.

Application: Don’t waste your present season of life. Whether young or old, use your time to honor God. Replace sinful pursuits with what endures. Live so that you will not look back with regret but forward with hope.

Closing Reflection

Ecclesiastes 11 teaches us to be generous, diligent, joyful, and God-fearing in a world full of uncertainties. We cannot control life’s outcomes, but we can choose to live faithfully before the Lord. Every season of life is an opportunity to sow seeds of righteousness, kindness, and service, trusting that God will bring about His purposes in His time.

ⁱ That’s a thoughtful question! The Bible (Ecclesiastes 11:5) even points to this as one of the mysteries of God’s work: *“As you do not know what is the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes everything”* (NKJV).

From a biological standpoint, here's a clear summary of how bones develop in the womb:

1. **Early Development (Weeks 3–8):**
 - In the embryo's earliest stage, the skeletal framework begins as **cartilage** (a softer, flexible tissue).
 - Specialized cells called *mesenchymal cells* group together and begin forming the “blueprint” for bones.
2. **Primary Ossification (Week 7 onward):**
 - Ossification means the process of bone formation.
 - Most bones develop through a process called endochondral ossification, where cartilage is gradually replaced by bone.
 - Blood vessels enter the cartilage “model,” bringing bone-forming cells (*osteoblasts*), which start depositing calcium and minerals.
3. **Growth During Pregnancy:**
 - By the second trimester, most major bones have begun to harden, though they're still flexible.
 - The skull, for example, stays in sections (soft spots called fontanelles) so the baby's head can compress during birth.
 - Bones continue lengthening as cartilage growth plates remain active.
4. **Final Trimester:**
 - The skeleton keeps strengthening, though it remains softer than adult bones.
 - After birth and through childhood, the growth plates keep lengthening bones until full maturity.

Spiritual Reflection

Even with all the scientific details, Solomon was right—there's a mystery here. No human truly orchestrates how life is woven together in the womb. Psalm 139:13–14 says: ***“For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”***

This reminds us that every unborn child is a living testimony of God's creative power. Science may be able to describe the *process*, but God is the One who designs, directs, and sustains life from its very first breathless moment.

Personal application: Whenever you feel uncertain about the future, remember that the same God who fashions bones in the hidden place also shapes the details of your life. Trust Him with what you don't understand, because He is working even in the unseen.