



[Ecclesiastes 11:9-10](#)

(9) Be happy, young man, while you are young,
and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth.
Follow the ways of your heart
and whatever your eyes see,
but know that for all these things
God will bring you to judgment. (10) So then, banish anxiety from your
heart
and cast off the troubles of your body,
for youth and vigor are meaningless.

[Ecclesiastes 12:1](#)

(1) Remember your Creator
in the days of your youth,
before the days of trouble come
and the years approach when you will say,
"I find no pleasure in them"-

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Halfway through verse 9, we could argue for Solomon being an early advocate for the youth culture, promoting the idea that young people should be happy-go-lucky and do whatever their hearts desire. But Solomon was much wiser than the modern supporters of the youth culture. In the last half of the verse and the next, he adds the proper countering [wisdom](#). Yes, Solomon does say, "Have fun. Enjoy your youth. Pursue your desires," but he adds *three major qualifications* to what may seem at first blush to encourage self-gratification. These qualifications take the form of warnings and provide the proper perspective.

The first warning is to **be aware that [God](#) is watching, and He will surely bring us into account for our sins.** This greatly modifies his admonition to pursue [joy](#) and cheer. There is good amusement and sinful excess. The good times Solomon tells the young to seek must be proper fun, that is, wholesome and productive enjoyment. He wants them to be happy and find worthwhile pleasures but not the kind that will return upon them with some sort of penalty later.

The second caution, which appears at the end of verse 10, is to remember that **childhood and youth are vanity.** The years up to adulthood pass like a snap of the fingers. Yet, this is not all that Solomon means. It can mean, not only do the years fly by, but they are also, in most people's cases, useless, futile, unsatisfying, or unproductive. In other words, our early years are not the most important of our lives. It is an interesting way of looking at our young years. If all we do is have fun, then our lives will indeed be futile, unproductive, unsatisfying, and useless. However, if we use our youth in the right way, then those years become meaningful and productive. Something good will transfer from our immaturity to enhance our adult years.

Notice that Solomon prefaces his conclusion that youth is vanity by saying, "Remove sorrow from your heart." To the younger generation, that means, "Let's party!" but that is not what he means. More exactly, he instructs us to get rid of those things that will *cause* us sorrow: the urges and desires that will trip us up and produce grief later. In other words, he advises us to use our younger years to learn how to avoid and rise above heartache-producing lusts. A tall order!

He parallels this with "Put away evil from your flesh." This defines what he means by "remov[ing] sorrow from your heart." Solomon, however, first approaches the problem on the level of the heart, one's mind and emotions—character—where the removal of wrong desires must begin. Once we set our minds to do what is right, evils of the flesh are more easily controlled.

Solomon's third admonition appears in [Ecclesiastes 12:1](#): **Seek God early, and life will be much better.** He counsels young people to use their youthful energy, ambition, and mental acuity in His service, in doing what is right, before the human machine starts to wear down and lose its idealism,

vigor, and zeal. Because of life's experiences, people become tired and jaded as the years progress. If we seek God when young, it is often easier to embrace Him with our whole being. And when those darker days come, we will have the strength to bear them.

He urges young people to seek God *before* experiencing the world—and accumulating the baggage and penalties of [sin](#) and flawed character. It is far easier not to get into a bad habit in the first place than to overcome one. So, he says, "Don't even go there!" Many adults in God's church would give anything not to have lived so long in [the world](#) because, despite their later conversion, they still suffer the consequences of sins they committed in it. Never going out into the world at all can save many tears.

For some people, having seen the world, they are so disgusted by it that their revulsion to it acts to keep them from it, but it does not work that way for most. Once people "enjoy" the lusts of the flesh and the eye and the pride of life ([I John 2:16](#)), they are more easily drawn back into them. Solomon asserts that by [seeking God](#) when young, a person will avoid many troubles and live a more fulfilling life.

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Wisdom for the Young \(Part One\)](#)

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