

## Remember Your Creator In Your Youth

Ecc. 11:9-12:7

### Introduction:

1. That life has a cycle is evident in this text.
2. It is a fact known well by those who are old, and a fact soon to be realized by the young.
3. "The prime of life is fleeting." We may try to deny it with wrinkle creams, hair dye, tummy tucks and face lifts, but no one escapes it.
4. The Preacher's instruction: Remember your Creator in your youth before the deterioration of old age encompasses you.

### Discussion:

- I. It is appropriate that we give our Creator the best years of our life.
  - A. It is a reasonable way to honor the Lord.
  - B. The priests of Malachi's day were condemned for failure to show respect to the Lord (1:6-14).
    1. They presented the blind, the lame and the sick for sacrifice.
    2. They viewed their worship as "tiresome" and "disdainful."
    3. The Lord deserves the best we have to offer.
  - C. We should give our lives to Him.
    1. All of our years.
    2. And it is appropriate that we give Him our best years.
  - D. But it is easy for us to be self-centered rather than God-centered.
    1. Being God-centered does not mean that we cannot enjoy life (11:9).
    2. We are actually encouraged to "follow the impulses of our heart and the desires of our eyes." Young people have plans and expectations. They are looking to the future.
    3. This is the way it should be, but do so in view of the fact that you live your life before God and you will answer to Him for the choices you make. Listen to what He teaches and make wise choices.
    4. "So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body."
    5. If you want the most out of life, then listen to what the Lord teaches. If you want to find happiness, listen to the Lord. If you want grief, anger, hardship choose the way of the world.
- II. Youthfulness and old age affect a congregation (in positive and negative ways).
  - A. It is not uncommon to hear older people criticizing those who are youthful.
    1. They throw up their hands and ask, "What's the world coming to?" as they observe the drugs, alcohol and promiscuous sex of a younger generation.
    2. These judgments are justified against some, but not all.
  - B. I look at the young people of this congregation and rejoice. They are filled with life and exuberance and a positive outlook for the future. They excel in athletics, music,

education. That's all very impressive, but they are excellent in character and their devotion to the Lord. They are influencing their friends and relatives to honor the Lord. Already they are making an impact on the world for good. Their light is shining brightly. When they are away at college they connect with Christians in other places and I hear about the work they do and the good behavior they demonstrate.

- C. They contribute life others.
  - 1. These people go on to form families and bring up children and form congregations that influence the world for good.
  - 2. They are honest in their work.
  - 3. No one looks down on their youthfulness, instead they look up to them (1 Tim. 4:11-16) as bringing salvation to the ears of all who witness who they are.
- D. Old people need to honor and respect them.
  - 1. Yes, sometimes in their inexperience they run ahead and make mistakes.
  - 2. Their leadership needs to be tempered to listen to older heads.
  - 3. Rehoboam followed the advice of the young men and divided the kingdom (1 Kings 12:6ff). Such happens in congregations today.
  - 4. But such is not always the case, for there are those who listen to the Lord. They temper their judgments with good advice from mature heads. Cf. Solomon's instruction to his son (Proverbs). Paul's instruction to Timothy. Special instruction to young women and young men (ex. Titus 2:4-8).
- E. Older people have positive things to offer a congregation of God's people. Leadership/guidance. Wisdom/knowledge. Stability. Money.
  - 1. Can be both positive and negative, like the things that young people bring to a congregation.
  - 2. Too much exuberance can lead to acting without wisdom. Knowledge can lead to arrogance (1 Cor. 8:1).
  - 3. Too much stability can stifle growth.
  - 4. Accumulated finances may reflect covetousness (Lk. 12:13ff; 16:19ff; 18:18ff), fear of the future and lack of faith in God's provision (2 Cor. 8-9).
- F. One of the things that I have seen is congregations gradually becoming older. They lose their young people for various reasons. Some to the world. Some to lack of encouragement. Some to moves for work. Some because old people hesitate before change and doing something new. Some because old people are more concerned about the things of this world than the things of God and instill these values in their young people. The people in the congregation gradually become older and die out.

III. We need to learn to bridge the generations. There doesn't have to be a gap! We need one another.

- A. We don't need to be talking down to one another. We need to be talking to one another. We don't need to be isolated from one another. We need to be integrated with one another.
  - 1. Yes, we need time with those our own age, but we need time with those of other ages too. Don't get so wrapped up in your relationships with those your own age that you miss the value of others.
  - 2. Some of my richest experiences have been with old people. Some of my richest

experiences have been with young people. I have decided I like young people better.

- B. God intends us to bridge such gaps.
  - 1. What is He trying to do in Ecc. 11:9-12:7?
  - 2. What's the message of Deut. 6?
  - 3. Why the special passages like Titus 2:3-8? 1 Tim. 1:2, 4:11?
- C. How do we do it? Don't need some "program," just individuals willing to work with each other. Individual leadership and initiative. Don't need some special recreational or entertaining activity but we need to work together in the kingdom of God. Singing. Praying. Teaching. Giving. Evangelizing.
  - 1. By inclusion rather than exclusion. Use young people in the work of the congregation. Student teachers. Mentoring relationships like Paul and Timothy.
  - 2. By integration rather than separation. Look for ways.
  - 3. By appreciation rather than depreciation.
  - 4. Attention rather than neglect.
  - 5. Remember our purpose: "furthering the administration of God" (1 Tim. 1:4); "stimulating one another to love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24); "seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33); "doing all things for the sake of the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:23).

Conclusion:

- 1. How youthful are you?
- 2. 93 years youthful? 86? 63? 40? 20? 12?
- 3. The work is the same. We are in it together and when we work together gaps are bridged and the people of God perpetuate their heritage into the future.