

SOLOMON LESSONS FROM A FALLEN KING

STUDY SIX

Sound Advice from an Old Rebel

Ecclesiastes 11:9–12:7

The one message that lingers from the life of Solomon is this: the time to walk with God is now, not later.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

PUTTING off doing something important is called procrastination.

The term, *procrastination*, is based on the Latin root, *crastinus*, which means “tomorrow”—the favorite word of those who procrastinate.¹ They know what they should do, and they fully intend to do it . . . tomorrow. But when tomorrow comes, they delay the task until the next day. When that day comes, they put it off to the next day and the next, forever writing their *shoulds* on tomorrow’s to-do list.

Eventually, procrastinators reach the end of their lives, never getting around to doing what they intended. And then it’s too late.

Solomon knew what he should’ve done. Early on, God etched Solomon’s priorities in the bedrock of his kingdom: “Follow me and obey my decrees and my commands as your father, David, did” (1 Kings 3:14).

Solomon started well by building the temple for the Lord (6:1–14). Then crafting luxury palaces, cavorting with foreign dignitaries, and courting idolatrous women led his heart astray. Perhaps he thought, *I’ll obey the Lord’s commands tomorrow—after I’ve had my fill of fun today.*



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But *tomorrow* never came for Solomon. After decades of pursuing fortune, fame, and pleasure, all he had to show for his life was an empty soul. Reflecting in Ecclesiastes, Solomon remorsefully wrote,

*As I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—
like chasing the wind.* (Ecclesiastes 2:11)

Ecclesiastes brims with sound advice from an old rebel who learned life's lessons the hard way. It contains a trove of wisdom that Solomon wished he had obeyed in his younger years and that we can follow . . . today.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

“How much better to get wisdom than gold!” (Proverbs 16:16). Invite the Lord in prayer to pour His riches into your heart as you study His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Ecclesiastes is biblical poetry, specifically, wisdom literature. The book reads like a personal journal, in which Solomon recorded his lifelong search for meaning. His journey to find the “good life” led him to many dead ends, and, in the book, he often shakes his head wistfully: “Everything is meaningless” (Ecclesiastes 12:8). And yet, he kept on searching. In the end, he discovered the one pursuit that offers the greatest satisfaction, and it was right in front of him all along: “Fear God and obey his commands” (12:13).

As his life was closing, Solomon turned to young people to help them avoid his pitfalls. Let's gather around this wise old rebel and listen to his sound advice.

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Observation: Solomon's Advice to the Young

Biblical poetry is full of metaphors and figures of speech that add beauty to the passage and make the author's points memorable. Fully engage your imagination as you observe the pictures that Solomon paints with his words.

What did Solomon affirm about youth in *Ecclesiastes 11:9*? What did he offer as an important reminder?

What additional reminder did Solomon write in *Ecclesiastes 11:10*? Observe this verse in the *New English Translation* as well.

Solomon penned a third reminder in *12:1*. While enjoying the fun of youth, what number one priority must young people always keep in mind?

The next verses elaborate his point that youth should make their relationship with God top priority. List the poetic images Solomon employed in *12:2–5*.

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Finally, Solomon spoke to his young readers about death—a subject we all must face. What vivid word pictures did Solomon use in *Ecclesiastes 12:6–7*?

Death is inevitable—sooner than you expect. Do you think that you have many years left to turn your life around? Maybe not. Right when you think you will seek God, some disease racks your body, and you can't make up for lost time. Solomon's counsel is, "Don't wait!" —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Principles for All Ages

Interpretation digs into the meaning of a biblical passage and discovers valuable gems of wisdom. A principle states truth in a way that applies to all people, in all cultures, and at all times. Review the verses you observed and, under the following headings, write a principle for each subject.

Accountability—*Ecclesiastes 11:9–10*

Principle: _____

Priorities—*Ecclesiastes 12:1*

Principle: _____

Aging—*Ecclesiastes 12:2–5*

Principle: _____

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Death—*Ecclesiastes 12:6–7*

Principle: _____

Deny it all you wish, but death will happen, unless Christ comes first. The one lesson that lingers from the life of Solomon to this present day is this: the time to walk with God is now, not later. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: A Legacy of Wisdom and Foolishness

When Solomon died, he left behind a legacy that was a mixed bag. In his books, we find some of the wisest words ever written, but in his memoir, we read a tragic tale of foolishness. Solomon soared to the heights of opulence, fame, and knowledge. And yet, he possessed nothing of lasting value when he died. How could that be? Because in his old age, he turned his heart from his Lord.

Solomon passed down both wisdom and foolishness to his son, Rehoboam. Which path did Rehoboam take, according to *2 Chronicles 10:1–15*? How was Rehoboam like his father?

The nation suffered because of Rehoboam's foolishness, which he learned from Solomon. The most important lesson we can learn is don't put off following the Lord.

Rehoboam refused to listen to counsel, and he rebelled against God, just like Solomon had done. That rebellion was duplicated in the entire nation. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: Solomon's Message to Us

Solomon's solemn reflections on aging and death cause us to think about our own mortality and how we're spending our lives. "Remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do," Solomon advised (Ecclesiastes 11:9). How might this reminder influence your choices today?

Solomon also reminded us that "childhood and the prime of life are fleeting" (Ecclesiastes 11:10 NASB). How do these words guide your priorities today?

Finally, Solomon advised, "remember your Creator now" (12:6). The word, *remember*, means to consciously call something to mind and focus on it. How can you practically call your Creator to mind and focus on Him today? Here are a few ideas to get you started.

- I remember the Creator when I operate with the mind-set that God be glorified in all aspects my life.
- I remember the Creator when I view life as God views it.
- I remember the Creator when I prioritize what is important to God.
- I remember the Creator when my first thought is to please Him.

Throughout your day, say to yourself, "I will consider God's way in this matter, and then I will do it." It's a simple spiritual habit, but what a difference it will make. If Solomon could have his life back, that's how he would live!

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, Your Word reminds me that it's never too late to start doing what's right. Help me to be ready when the day of my death comes and I enter Your presence. Make my heart completely Yours today and every day. In Christ's name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2014), "procrastinate."

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