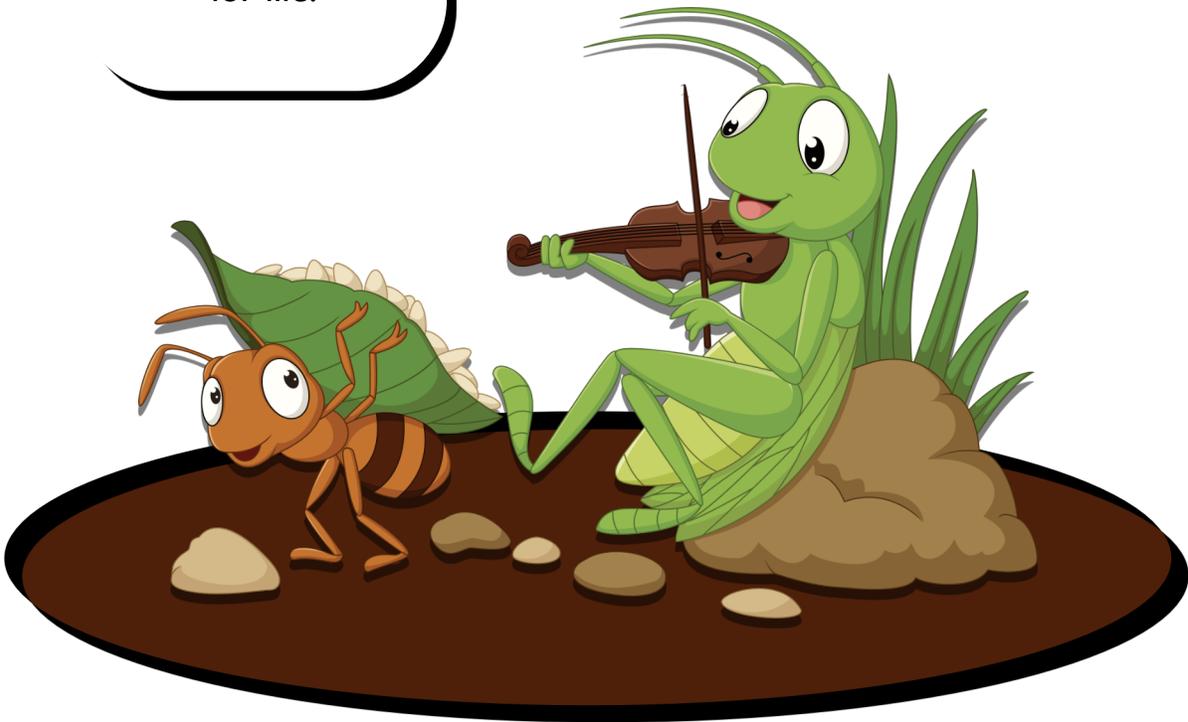


God is a safe place to hide,
ready to help when we need
him. We stand fearless at the
cliff-edge of doom, courageous
in sea-storm and earthquake.

(Psalm 46:1–2 The Message)

Life prepares us
for death and
death prepares us
for life.



LIFE SHOULD PREPARE US FOR DEATH AND VICE VERSA

1. REJOICE: We prepare for life now and later by living with an enjoyment of life that is tempered with a reverential consciousness of the coming judgment of God, 11:9.

- (Ecclesiastes 11:9 ESV) **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 the sight of your eyes. **But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.**

Important Note: We gain personal knowledge of our Creator when we walk in his ways. Although by the grace of God we can begin this process at any point in our lives, the Preacher in Ecclesiastes exhorts us to begin at a young age. Those who take this path develop an intimate relationship with God that yields blessing after blessing throughout their life and into their later years.

- A. We are instructed to freely enjoy the very good world God has created and given to us—our lot in life.
- B. Living in this way we grow in our understanding of the generous, majestic nature of our Creator.
- C. Living in the Creator's world in the ways of the Creator we also grow in our understanding as to who we are—those who have been created in his image.
 - (Genesis 1:28a, 31 ESV) **And God blessed them.** And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth ... 31 **And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.**
 - (Genesis 1:27 ESV) **So God created man in his own image,** in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
- D. We also grow in our understanding of who our Creator is and who we are to be when we live in view of the future judgment of God.
- E. We, the children of God, live with the purifying hope that one day we will see God as he really is—in the fullness of his purity.
 - (1 John 3:1–3 ESV) See what kind of love the Father has given to us, **that we should be called children of God; and so we are.** The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, **we are God's children now,** and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, **because we shall see him as he is.** 3 **And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.**

2. REMOVE: We prepare for life now and later by as much as is possible removing the things that bring frustration, anxiety and pain, 11:10.

- (Ecclesiastes 11:10 ESV) **Remove vexation from your heart,** and **put away pain from your body,** for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.

How do we do this? God must teach us. He does this as we learn the scriptural principles of right living and obey them.

REMOVING VEXATION FROM OUR HEART ...

- A. If at all possible, live at peace with the people around us—work, family, neighborhood, church, school, etc.
 - (Romans 12:18 ESV) If possible, **so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.**
- B. Form our most intimate relationships with godly people—our partners in righteousness.
 - (2 Corinthians 6:14–15 NLT) Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. **How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness?** How can light live with darkness? 15 What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? **How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever?**
- C. Trust God with our lives and seek his kingdom and his righteousness first.
 - (Matthew 6:33–34 ESV) **But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,** and all these things will be added to you. 34 Therefore **do not be anxious about tomorrow,** for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.
- D. Do not be anxious but instead pray.
 - (Philippians 4:6–7 ESV) **Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.** 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- E. Involve ourselves with other believers who can bring strength and stability to our lives—ideally in a church fellowship.
 - (Hebrews 10:24–25 ESV) **And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,** 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, **but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**

F. Trust in the LORD and make him our trust and he will refresh us and produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

- (Jeremiah 17:7–8 ESV) **Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD**, whose trust is the LORD. 8 He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and **does not fear** when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, **and is not anxious** in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.

PUTTING AWAY PAIN FROM OUR BODY ...

G. We are to care for our physical body as the temple and the possession of God.

- (1 Corinthians 6:19 ESV) **Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you**, whom you have from God? You are not your own.

H. We must never offer any part of our body to sin.

- (Romans 6:13 NIV) **Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness**, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; **and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness**.
- (Galatians 5:19–21a ESV) **Now the works of the flesh are evident**: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

I. We are to present our physical bodies to God.

- (Romans 12:1 ESV) I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God**, which is your spiritual worship.

3. REMEMBER: We prepare for life now and later by remembering our Creator before time passes us by and we go into eternity unprepared, 12:1-5.

- (Ecclesiastes 12:1–5 ESV) **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”; 2 before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, 3 in the day when the keepers of the house

tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed, 4 and the doors on the street are shut—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, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, **because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets**.

A. When we remember our Creator during the course of our lives, then we will know God powerfully and experientially in our old age.

i. Many find themselves with a hollow, empty faith in God in their old age because they don't know/see the God of the Bible.

ii. God is only a rumor, a forgotten memory, because they walk in the name of a lesser god.

- (Micah 4:5 ESV) **For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever**.

iii. They chose to walk in their own light and so remain in darkness.

- (Isaiah 50:10–11 ESV) **Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God. 11 Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who equip yourselves with burning torches!** Walk by the light of your fire, and by the torches that you have kindled! **This you have from my hand: you shall lie down in torment**.

B. Essential to remembering our Creator is to discipline ourselves to not forget our Creator.

i. Through this discipline our Creator grows us up and blesses us with a powerful trust in him that sustains us through our later years.

ii. Through this discipline our trust in, dependence on and pleasure in God increases as our ability to find pleasure in this world decreases.

iii. This discipline prepares us to face our lessening ability to find pleasure in this world by turning our attention to the glory that is to come.

- (2 Corinthians 4:16–18 ESV) So we do

not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 **For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,** 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

C. We will be prepared for the coming years of our frailty—our increased vulnerability and uncertainty resulting from aging.

D. We will be prepared for the coming years of our feebleness—our diminishing strength and vigor.

E. Examples in Scripture of the many blessings we enjoy when we remember the name of the LORD.

i. We will know the LORD in the night.

- (Psalm 119:55 ESV) **I remember your name in the night, O LORD,** and keep your law.

ii. We will know he is with us in trouble.

- (Psalm 91:14–15 ESV) **Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.** 15 When he calls to me, **I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him** and honor him.

iii. We will trust in him.

- (Psalm 20:7 ESV) Some trust in chariots and some in horses, **but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.**

iv. We will find our help in him.

- (Psalm 124:8 ESV) **Our help is in the name of the LORD,** who made heaven and earth.

4. RETURN: Prepare for death before our dust returns to the earth, 12:6-7.

- (Ecclesiastes 12:6–8 ESV) **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.

- (Genesis 3:19 ESV) By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you **return** to the ground, for out of it you were taken; **for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**
- (Psalm 90:1–3 ESV) Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. 2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. 3 **You return man to dust and say, “Return, O children of man!”**
- (Ecclesiastes 3:20 ESV) All go to one place. **All are from the dust, and to dust all return.**
- (Psalm 103:13–14 ESV) As a father shows compassion to his children, **so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.** 14 **For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.**
- (Daniel 12:2–3 ESV) **And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.** 3 And **those who are wise** shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and **those who turn many to righteousness,** like the stars forever and ever.

5. RUIN: If you do not prepare, you will not end well, 12:8.

- (Ecclesiastes 12:8 ESV) Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.
- (Ecclesiastes 8:12–13 ESV) Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, **yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God,** because they fear before him. 13 **But it will not be well with the wicked,** neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, **because he does not fear before God.**
- (Galatians 6:7–8 ESV) Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 **For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption,** but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.