



Hurry! Before It's too Late

Introduction

Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

“According to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, surgeons perform more than ten million cosmetic procedures each year, almost none of them medically necessary. Journalist Beth Teitell worries about all that plastic, not so much because it is unsafe or unwise, but because all the women her age who get plastic surgery will make her look older by comparison... Whether she knows it or not, Teitell is confronting one of the reigning idolatries of modern times: the cult of youth. For people who know they are getting older, worshiping this god or goddess demands tireless efforts to stay young. But many young people worship the same deity. Rather than respecting their elders, they look down on ideas that seem old-fashioned. They only want what is new and trendy. It is hard for them to imagine that they will ever grow old. Given the choice, some of them would rather die first.

Whether we are young or old or somewhere in between, Ecclesiastes can help us. The Preacher who wrote this book teaches us to celebrate the joys of life at any age. But he is also honest about the troubles that come with growing old. By the wisdom of the Spirit he calls us to live well, however old we happen to be.”¹

Open It

1. **What's something you were obsessed with when you were a kid that you barely think of now?**

Read It

Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

¹ Philip Graham Ryken, *Why Everything Matters: The Gospel in Ecclesiastes* (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus, 2015), 116–17.

Explore It

2. **When does the author say people should remember their Creator?**
3. **In verses 1-7, the author uses vivid language to describe different aspects of aging. What are some ways he describes it?**
4. **How does the author describe the words the Preacher wrote?**
5. **What warning does the author give about paying attention to anything that isn't given by the one Shepherd?**
6. **What does the author say is "the whole duty of man"?**

Apply It

Time flies by quickly. It seems one moment you're a young child in grade school and the next minute your hair is gray. "Inside every old person is a young person wondering what happened."² The author of Ecclesiastes begins the last chapter of the book by telling us to focus on God early in our lives. He doesn't want us to wait until our old age. He knows years turn into decades and death will come before we know it. There's no better time than now to acknowledge God and make Him a priority in our lives.

7. **When our lives are busy it can be easy to put off things such as regular prayer, Bible study, and worship. But we need these activities to grow closer to God. What is one aspect of the Christian life that you've been struggling with lately?**

² David Gibson, *Living Life Backward: How Ecclesiastes Teaches Us to Live in Light of the End* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 131.

8. How can you begin to get that spiritual activity back into your life on a regular basis?

9. What are some significant decisions that are made when we are young that can impact us for a lifetime?

When the author writes about “the evil days” that are to come, he doesn’t mean old age is evil. He’s describing the challenges of old age. We slow down, our bodies hurt and don’t work the way they used to, and our minds may not be as sharp as they once were.

10. If you’re age 30 or over, what’s one way you can already see or feel age setting in? If you’re under age 30, what’s one fact of age that you’re least looking forward to?

Americans spend billions of dollars each year on creams, shots, surgeries, trainers, and supplements that are designed to help them to look young and live as long as possible. One clinic in Las Vegas describes itself as an “age-management practice” that is designed to do everything possible to help you live a long life. They charge a very hefty fee and many people pay it!³

11. Why do you think we prize youth in our culture?

12. Read Proverbs 16:31. What should the difference between non-Christians and Christians be in regard to their attitude to the aging process?

There are many self-help gurus in our country who write books that sell thousands of copies and speak to sold out crowds in large arenas. These teachers rarely speak about God or His Word. Instead, they offer nuggets of their own advice designed to help people live the good life.

13. Why does the author of Ecclesiastes tell us to beware of anything beyond the words of Scripture?

³ Gibson, *Living Life Backward*, 132–33.

The focus of the book of Ecclesiastes is encouraging God's people to fear Him and keep His commands. Fearing God involves understanding who He is and living our lives with this truth in mind.

14. How does fearing God and obeying His commands lead to truly living the good life?

15. The final verse of Ecclesiastes warns that all people will someday stand before God in judgment. What kind of an impact does this have on your desire to focus on fearing God and obeying His commands?