
LOVING JESUS, LOVING PEOPLE, PLOWING A COUNTER-CULTURE

LEADER DETAILS:

- **MAIN TEXT:** Ecclesiastes 11:1-10
- **MAIN IDEA:** 5 wise ways to live in your youth that can lead to a life of joy.
- **GROWTH FOCUS:** Think of ways for members in your group to share responsibility.
- **ICEBREAKER:** What is something you really enjoyed when you were a kid?

ANNOUNCEMENTS: (Full details at: emergence.church/digital-bulletin)

- **Student Ministry's Winter Retreat - February 20–22.** High Point Bible Camp – Pennsylvania
 - **The Why** – Huge opportunity for students to form deep friendships with other students and leaders, and to begin and grow in their faith.
- **Short-Term Missions** – multiple opportunities coming up. Fill out the form for more info!
 - **The Why** – Whether near or far, we want to bring the good news of Jesus, as we have opportunity. Short-term missions can have a profound impact on our spiritual growth.
- **Ringwood Chili Cook-off** – March 1st after services!
 - **The Why** – A community building event. Also, to invite a friend out for church. Maybe they don't like church but do like chili—they'll end up getting chili and Jesus.
- **Prayer and Fasting – Tuesdays from February 24 – March 31.** In-person prayer in Totowa and Ringwood at 7:00AM.
 - **The Why** – Fasting is one of the spiritual disciplines that helps us draw closer to God by reminding us of our dependence on Him. We want to be intentional as a church to practice this corporately at times. This season, we are praying and fasting as we head toward Easter, preparing our hearts and petitioning God to move in power to see people saved.

GETTING STARTED:

- **Pray:** This helps everyone to prepare their hearts as you head to the discussion
- **Watch Community Extras Video** (length 3:53 – questions from video are included below)

LAST WEEK'S GROWTH STEP FOLLOW-UP:

[Leaders: These follow-ups are meant to offer some accountability while being low-pressure. Keep it casual, like, "If you were able to try this last week, how did it go?" Sharing is optional; it's always okay to pass.]

Outward Action: Enjoy one good gift from God this week with a heart of worship!

Inward Prayer: Ask God to reveal an area where you can take a step to be more intentional.

SERMON DISCUSSION: (quality of discussion over quantity of questions you get through)

Intro – Don't Wait

Read Ecclesiastes 11:9a

As we have focused on throughout this series, to “rejoice” is something that we are commanded to do (Phil 4:4-6 from last week), and something we grow in. Here in this passage, we see the call to “rejoice in our youth”. Pastor Ryan made a point that we shouldn't wait to live in the joy that God wants us to have as we follow Him (ultimately through faith in Christ). Whether we consider ourselves young or not, we are as young as we are going to be – and so don't wait.

- Either in the past or currently, what's an area of your life where you think subtly or have thought, “I'll take my faith more seriously later” or “I'll really enjoy God when things settle down”?

[Leaders: Going right to the “current” areas this early in the discussion could be intimidating, depending on where your group is at. Talking about the past is often easier. Also, a reminder that we always have areas of growth, so there's no shame, and leaders willing to model that by sharing helps. So, give some space for the group to engage, but this might be one where you kick it off to warm the conversation.]

In the sermon, we looked at five ways of thinking and acting in our youth from Ecclesiastes 11:1-10 that leads to joy in the present and sets us up for long-term joy later in life.

#1 – Commit to Financial Freedom

Read Ecclesiastes 11:1-2

Pastor Ryan pointed out that “casting your bread upon the waters” is often taught to mean it is wise to diversify your resources and opportunities. He affirmed that, but even more a call to live generously, and in financial freedom. Real joy isn't found in building wealth, but in blessing others with what God entrusts us with. When you're free from money controlling you, there is more joy.

- When you think about your current approach to money — spending, saving, giving — would you say you're mastering it, or is it mastering you? What's one practical step you could take toward greater financial freedom and generosity starting now?

#2 – Don't Wait for Perfect Conditions: Just Do the Work

Read Ecclesiastes 11:3-4

These verses point out that if you spend your whole life watching the wind and clouds, you'll never plant and you'll never harvest. In other words, if you wait for perfect conditions, you'll never do the work needed to reap the harvest. There will always be a reason to delay, but joyful, fruitful people move forward faithfully anyway. Especially when you're young, these efforts stack up.

- Where in your life are you tempted to wait for better conditions before stepping in (spiritually, relationally, physically, at work, etc.)? Why do you think? What would it look like to “just do the work” this week instead of waiting for it to feel easier?

#3 – Nothing is Certain: Just Take Action

Read Ecclesiastes 11:5-6

Just like we don't fully understand how life forms, we don't know which opportunity will prosper. In the sermon, Pastor Ryan made the point that nothing is certain, so take action! We should pray, plan, and seek wisdom, but then we move. The only guaranteed “no” is the one we never act on.

- What is one example from your past where you failed to act and you regret it? Or, currently, is there something you've been overthinking or delaying because you're afraid it might not work out?

#4 – Start Enjoying Your Life Today

Read Ecclesiastes 11:7-9

Here we see the call again to rejoice in our youth in a way that receives God's good gifts with gratitude. The path of sin is boring. Real joy is found in walking with God, enjoying His gifts, and joining His mission.

- What is one simple, everyday gift from God that you tend to overlook? how could you intentionally slow down and enjoy it this week as an act of worship?

#5 – Steward Your Body and Brain

Read Ecclesiastes 11:10

In these verses, it says to put away vexation from our hearts and pain from our bodies. Pastor Ryan talked about even though we all have some fears, we shouldn't build an identity around anxiety. Also, he mentioned how we shouldn't treat our bodies carelessly. You get one mind, one heart, one body. Especially when you're young, stewarding our minds and bodies build habits that will shape the decades ahead.

- When you think about your mental and physical health, where do you feel you have good habits now? Where can you grow to steward your mind and body better, and what's a step you can take towards that?

GROWTH STEP THIS WEEK

Outward Action: If you have an area where you know you just need to take action, follow through on it this week!

Inward Prayer: Plan to try fasting with our church this upcoming Tuesday (February 24th). Whether for a meal, or for the day, and ask God to teach you joy in your dependence on Him.

PRAYER TIME

Pray for discernment for the steps God is calling us to take to live more in the joy he has for us in Christ now.

Pray that we wisely take steps forward in whatever God is calling us to, instead of staying stuck in inaction from fear or conditions not being perfect.

Pray for wisdom of what it looks like to honor the Lord more in our Minds and Bodies for His Glory.