

CHASE

"THROWING CAUTION TO THE WIND" ECCLESIASTES 11:1-6

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Money – I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes. 2 Corinthians 8:7 *But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us--see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*

The Teacher's wise counsel in Ecclesiastes 11:1-2 has been taken in a couple of different ways. While some modern commentators assume he was referring to commerce, from antiquity to modern times these verses have been taken by others to refer to *charity*.

In verse 1 he says, "Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again," and in the next verse he says, "Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land." The Targum reads, "Give your nourishing bread to the poor who go in ships upon the surface of the water, for after a period of many days you will find its reward in the world-to-come." More recently, one commentator writes: "thus begins the exhortation to benevolence, which continues to the end of the third verse . . . Verses 1 and 2 are parallel. Each exhorts to benevolence. Verse 2 is the authoritative commentary on v. 1. Being so sure that men would sense this, the author abbreviated what, given in detail, would have run about as follows: 'let the

Faith flourishes in the mystery of providence; it does not abolish it.

— Michael A. Eaton

bread of charity go out as ships do that venture to take their precious cargo over the face of the waters.' That is the equivalent of saying: Do your charity upon a venture; there will, indeed, be a reward; let the reward encourage you; but remember that, as vessels must oftentimes be waited for long before the profit of the venture is received, so you may be obligated to wait a good while before the reward of your investment comes back to you; but come back it will. The emphasis lies upon the certainty of reward as well as upon the fact that this certain reward will not be received at once: patient waiting is the right course to follow in this matter . . . The thought of the preceding verse is repeated and unfolded in v. 2. As is often done in the Scriptures and in all speech, classical and vernacular, the case is first stated in a figure to challenge attention-'Cast thy bread upon the waters,' then a plain, literal statement is given to avoid all possibility of misunderstanding-'give a portion.' The expression, 'to seven, yea, even to eight,' is one that is patterned after several similar ones in the Hebrew and in other languages to express an indefinitely large number without asking one to be exact in his count. The thought is this: let your gift be given to a good number of the needy, say seven, but do not stop short with that; if another person is found to be in need, try to help him, too, cf. Mic. 5:5" (H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Ecclesiastes*, 255, 57-58). In a nutshell, the Teacher is advising his readers to be adventurously charitable to others who in turn will one day be charitable to them (v. 1). He is advising them to be generous to a fault as long as they can for disaster will one day rear its ugly head and they will need others to give to them.

For Discussion

"Don't put all your eggs in one basket" makes sense when it comes to financial investments. Do you think the same advice is applicable to charitable giving as well? And if you do, how so?

day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

- 1 Cast your bread upon the waters,
for after many days you will find it again.
- 2 Give portions to seven, yes to eight,
for you do not know what disaster
may come upon the land.
- 3 If clouds are full of water,
they pour rain upon the earth.
Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north,
in the place where it falls, there will it lie.
- 4 Whoever watches the wind will not plant;
whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.
- 5 As you do not know the path of the wind,
or how the body is formed in a mother's womb,
so you cannot understand the work of God,
the Maker of all things.
- 6 Sow your seed in the morning,
and at evening let not your hands be idle,
for you do not know which will succeed,
whether this or that,
or whether both will do equally well.

Cf., another translation

- 11:1 Send your grain overseas,
for after many days you will get a return.
- 11:2 Divide your merchandise among seven or even
eight investments,
for you do not know what calamity may happen
on earth.
- 11:3 If the clouds are full of rain, they will empty
themselves on the earth,
and whether a tree falls to the south or to the north,
the tree will lie wherever it falls.
- 11:4 He who watches the wind will not sow,
and he who observes the clouds will not reap.
- 11:5 Just as you do not know the path of the wind,
or how the bones form in the womb of a pregnant
woman,
so you do not know the work of God who makes
everything.
- 11:6 Sow your seed in the morning,
and do not stop working until the evening;
for you do not know which activity will succeed -
whether this one or that one, or whether both will prosper
equally. (NET)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Highlight "cast" in v. 1.
- * Circle "bread" in v. 1.
- * Highlight "give" in v. 2.
- * Box "for" indicating *reason* in vv. 1, 2, 6.
- * Underline the numbers "seven" and "eight" in v. 2.
- * Underline "clouds" in vv. 3, 4.
- * Double underline "tree falls" in v. 3 and "wind" in v. 4.
- * Box "as" and "so" indicating *comparison* in v. 5.
- * Circle "wind" in v. 5.
- * Bracket "morning" and "evening" in v. 6.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. The advice given in verse 1 has been taken in two different ways. Compare the translation in the NIV(c)2011 (see note on **Cast** v. 1) and identify them.
2. The advice given in verse 2 is closely related to that in verse 1. Identify the two different ways it has been interpreted (see note on **Give** v. 2).
3. The numbers "seven" and "eight" are used *figuratively* in verse 3. Explain their significance.
4. What's the point of verse 3 and how does it relate to "you do not know" in verse 2?
5. What's the point of verse 4 and how does it relate to verse 3?
6. Explain the use of *comparison* in verse 5.
7. The NIV translates Hebrew word ruah "wind" in verse 5; the ESV translates it "spirit." Explain which translation you think better fits the context.
8. "Sow your seed" is another *figurative* expression; what does the Teacher mean by it?
9. **Discussion:** Talk about the wisdom of "diversification" from the Teacher's point of view.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

While the familiar proverb, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket," is about eggs, it isn't about eggs only. If it were, it would not have the "incommunicable quality" that says "this sentence is proverbial" (Roland E. Murphy, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 22, *Proverbs*, xxii). Readers recognize that tacit quality in the saying; it conveys sage advice regarding eggs that applies to other things as well. Don't make everything dependent on only one thing or put all your resources in one place; instead, diversify your assets to reduce risk and maximize your opportunity for gain. The figurative use of "eggs" and "basket" is reflected in the following paraphrase of the proverb: "Don't risk everything on a single venture." Can you say, "Computer backup"?

The Teacher alludes to both sides of the diversification coin in Ecclesiastes 11:1-6. In verse 2 he says, "Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land," i.e., reduce your risk of loss through diversification. And in verse 6 he says, "Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well," i.e., maximize your opportunity for gain through diversification.

Commentators debate as to whether the Teacher had *charity* or *commerce* in mind when he said, "Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again" and "Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land." Some say he had charity in mind. One of them writes: "Men and women must judiciously and courageously venture forth in benevolent charity without selfish motives, for such help must be given with the confidence that there is a dependable order and plan in the world and a 'God who does all' . . . 'Be liberal and generous to as many as you can and then some,' is the way we would say it. So, make as many friends as you can, for you never know when you yourself may need assistance. Instead of becoming miserly just because you fear that the future may hold some evil reversal of your fortunes, leaving you in poverty and want, you should all the more distribute to as many as possible so that you can have the blessing of receiving in the event of such reverses. In fact, says Proverbs 19:17, 'the one who had pity on the poor lends to the Lord; and that which he gives will be paid back again' (See also Luke 16:9)" (Walter C. Kaiser, *Ecclesiastes: Total*

Life, EBC, 113-114).

Others say he had commerce in mind. One of them writes: "This is not an exhortation to charity but advice on investments. To cast bread upon the waters is to engage in commercial enterprises involving overseas trade (cf. 1 Kgs 9:26-28; 10:22). Eventually the investment will pay off. 'Seven' and 'eight' represent a wide diversity of investments. Such diversification is necessary because it affords protection against unforeseen calamity in one or two of the enterprises. An English equivalent is, 'Don't put all your eggs in one basket'" (Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 338).

So, is the proverb about *charity* or is it about *commerce*? Perhaps it's about both; its ambiguity suggests as much. As one writer says, "it is difficult to be sure which of these [charity or commerce] he chiefly means, or whether he speaks first of one, then of the other" (Derek Kidner, *A Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance*, 97). The Teacher is likely reflecting on the value of diversification to limit risk and maximize gain. His proverbial statements in verse 1 and verse 2 regarding diversifying one's interests would then apply equally well to charity and to commerce. Not to mention that they apply to other aspects of life as well, e.g., education/learning, relationships/friendships, volunteering/serving, etc.; that's the genius of a proverb. And even if he had charity in mind and *not* commerce, or vice versa, the wisdom of his words would still pertain to both.

In verses 3-5 the Teacher warns against *procrastination*, the kind that results from trying pick the perfect time to act. In a world where no one knows for sure what's going to happen next, trying to "time the market" is impossible. When the clouds fill with water, it rains. When the wind blows, trees fall. Farmers who spend all their time waiting for perfect windless conditions for sowing or perfect dry conditions for reaping will find themselves paralyzed and do neither. There are oh so many things that people do not know. They don't know the way of the wind or how a fetus grows in its mother's womb. Likewise, they do not understand what God is up to in the world. Twice in verses 5 and 6 the Teacher says, "You do not know." But ignorance is no excuse for inaction as far as he is concerned. Better to act and leave the outcome in God's hands than not to act at all.

Therefore, in verse 6 the Teacher advises, "Sow

your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle." Continuing the farming analogy he tells his readers to go ahead and get with it. The *merism*, "in the *morning* and at *evening*" suggests wholehearted action while his agrarian language refers to all human activity. One commentator captures the gist of verses 1-6 in their larger context this way: "Thus Solomon has repeatedly coaxed, urged, argued, pressed, and begged us as wise men and women to get off the dead center of attempting to outguess God and His

works. We must earnestly and diligently get into life's work. It is enough to know, as far as the progress and result of our work are concerned, that God is also at work. It is enough to know that he has given us the knowledge of the broad spectrum of His plan. Therefore, we will not deliberately withhold our energies or refrain from working. That small amount of admitted mystery in the divine plan will not hinder us from becoming active in life to the glory of God" (Kaiser, 116).

The Message of the Passage

Reduce your risk for loss and maximize your opportunity for gain by diversifying your investments, financial and charitable, because you do not know which ones God will bless.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **Cast** Cf., "Ship your grain across the sea; after many days you may receive a return" (NIV(c)2011). "The translation of this verse is simple from a philological perspective, but its proverbial and metaphorical nature makes it difficult to understand. What does it mean to send your bread upon the waters? A popular interpretation understands the verse to refer to charity, a view that has been espoused from antiquity to modern times. The Targum, for instance, reads 'Give your nourishing bread to the poor who go in ships upon the surface of the water, for after a period of many days you will find its reward in the world-to-come.' In support, modern scholars cite other ancient texts like 'the Instructions of 'Onkhsheshonqy' (19:10) ["Do a good deed and throw it in the water; when it dries you will find it"] (James L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, OTL, 179)] and the Arabic proverb: 'Do good, throw your bread on the waters, and one day you will be rewarded.' However, there is nothing in the verse itself that hints that Qohelet had charity in mind" (Tremper Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, NICOT, 255, 56).

v. 2 **Give** The syntactical structure of verse 2 is similar to verse 1 ("initial imperative and concluding motive clause [marked by initial ki]") implying a close relationship exists between the two (256). And so, one commentator concludes: "The interpretation of this verse depends on that of the previous verse. Qohelet may advise diversifying one's investments in several ships, or he may counsel the befriending of several persons who would help if one's own circumstances were reversed" (Crenshaw, 179). And another adds: "Thus, those commentators who understand v. 1 to refer to charitable giving continue that theme into the present verse. Distribute your charity to many people. I, however, prefer to understand the verses as referring to business activities" (Longman, 256). Commentators are clearly divided as to whether the Teacher had commerce or philanthropy in mind. "Wardlaw contended that the expression Give a portion derived from 'the custom of masters of feasts sending portions from before them to the different guests at table' (cf. Gn. 43:34), 'or from the practice, on festive occasions, of distributing gratuitously to the poor' (cf. Ne. 8:10)" (Michael A. Eaton, *Ecclesiastes*, TOTC, 141).

v. 2 **seven, eight** "The numerical sequence $x \dots x + 1$ (to seven, or even to eight) often expresses an indefinite number. On other occasions, however, the higher number is to be understood literally. Roth considers that in this passage the sequence refers to a 'somewhat indefinite numerical value'. It is more likely, however, that it urges the vigour and full measure of enthusiasm which is required, just as the sequence in Amos 1:3-2:6 'probably signified that the measure of guiltiness is more than full'" (140, 41).

v. 3 **clouds** "These two verses form a *chiasmus* (vv. 3a, 4b: clouds; vv. 3b, 4a: falling tree/wind). Verse 3 speaks of a storm and means that it is inevitable that disaster sometimes will occur. 'If clouds are full' means that when the time for such a calamity comes, it cannot be avoided. The proverb about trees falling simply means that whatever will happen (i.e., the inevitable) will happen" (Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 338). "R. N. Whybray is surely correct when he identifies the point of the first illustration as that of 'inevitability' and the second as 'randomness.' From both illustrations, Qohelet makes the point that humans do not control what is happening around them. The implications of this observation will become clearer in the next verse. In terms of the second illustration, Michael Fox makes the apt observation that north and south serve as a merism meaning 'whatever direction' it falls" (Longman, 257).

v. 5 **wind** Cf., "As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child" (ESV); "Just as you do not know how the breath comes to the bones in the mother's womb" (NRSV). The NIV takes the Hebrew word [ruah, "wind," "breath/life," "spirit"] to mean "wind,' since it is used that way in the previous verse and no indication is given of a change in meaning (see Donald R. Glenn, "Ecclesiastes," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 1003). Other English translations take it to mean the human life or spirit, which gives the verse a certain unity and fits well with the thought of the growth of the human fetus (see Eaton, 142; Garrett, 338). In either case the point of the verse is the same.

v. 6 **sow** "Some commentators have taken Sow your seed to refer to the begetting of children (e.g. Graetz), following the Talmud and Midrash, but this is hardly suitable to the context" (Eaton, 143). "The image of sowing need not be taken erotically, for 11:4 refers to actual planting of seeds. The word *zera'* may symbolize a number of human activities. The sense is then to get on with one's work despite abysmal ignorance about divine mysteries such as the paths of the wind and the development of a fetus" (Crenshaw, 181). "Qohelet now gives his advice, and, as we might expect after 11:4, he tells his readers to go ahead and act anyway. Though he uses agrarian language here (plant your seed), he likely intends this to stand for all human activity" (Longman, 258).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Special programming note: Because of our two limited programming Sundays (August 11 & 18) and our Move Up series (August 25 & September 1) texts and Core Competencies may vary from adult *Scrolls*. This week kids' teaching will be focusing on Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 and *Giving Away My Money*.

As summer is coming to a close, I find myself reflecting on some of my experiences in the last couple of months. There are many great moments but one of the greatest was the week we spent at kids' camp. There are lots of reasons that was an awesome week—many kids made decisions to trust the Lord, many others took a new step with Him, we played hard and enjoyed being together. But a definite highlight of the week was watching kids (and some adults) conquer their fears and step out to do something hard and out of the ordinary. Many jumped off a high dive for the first time, some zipped down an amazing zip line, others leapt from a very tall power pole trusting the harness to catch them in air, many of us were launched into the sky and then dropped into the lake from the blob. All of these activities had one thing in common—we had to decide to take a risk. We had to decide to overcome and just do it! As we head into a new school year, I want us to take a risk of another kind. Let's not compromise but live on purpose for His glory. I'm praying that our kids would decide they are going back to school not conformed to the world but transformed by God's power! And, that our families would embark on an adventure of faith pursuing Him despite the risks.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

1. Read verse 5 again. What are some things we cannot understand?
2. Read Proverbs 11:24. What happens to the man who gives freely? What about the one who withholds?

What Do You Think

This passage is a challenge for us to be courageously generous with our resources (time, money, talents). List ways your family is "casting its bread upon the waters."

What R U Going To Do

Sometimes our faith journey requires doing something risky or out of the ordinary. Maybe it's time for your family to pray together daily, plan to take a mission trip, share Christ with a neighbor, or serve together at church. Pray as a family and ask God to lead you in your next step and then go for it!

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Giving Away My Money - I share my money to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

No memory verse this week!

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.