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How does or how should coming old age affect today's living?

Where are you most tempted to act independently?

The sermon suggests that we start and end dependent and that the goal in between is "absolute dependence on God." What do you think about that?

What is your biggest worry and how can you give it to Jesus?

How can you engage with the invisible people in our world like many of the aged?

What will it take for you to believe you are "okay" in Jesus with no fear of judgment?



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November 5, 2016 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church
Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:14 Remember Your Creator by Andy McDonald

Under the direction of Tom Tivachi it's great to have the Forest Lake Academy Band with us today.

I'm especially glad to have all these extra young minds present because there is a special youthful angle to today's text and so to today's message.

As we open God's word let's pray. Father, thank you for the privilege we have to worship you. You have revealed yourself and we are wowed. You and your love, who you are is amazing. Today as we look at these words of the wise man may they, by your spirit, awaken us to realization of our dependence on you. IJNIPA

Today is our daughter's birthday. When she arrived she began our journey as parents. For those of you who have experienced this role you know the life changing power of just being who you are and then from the moment that baby takes its first breath you are changed. In that moment I went from Andy to Daddy, my greatest role, ka-boom, just became mine that frosty morning at Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga Tennessee when Whitney took her first breath.

One of the things that struck me that day, and about which I continue to be reminded every time I'm in the presence of an infant is their utter dependence.

Oh I'm amazed, like the Psalmist, that they are fearfully and wonderfully made. I stand in awe at the miracle of life that from a couple of cells multiplication and division has produced a whole and complete human. Hands and heart, legs and lungs, eyes and ears, the miracle of a life that wasn't and now is amazes and humbles. What's the chance?

What's the chance that these two humans called parents would have their paths cross, meet, and catch each other's eye across the crowded room, fall in love, that a sperm would find an egg, and all the what ifs of history that brought them to be, have now come together in this moment and this new person with eternal potential has arrived in the universe. WOW!

But independent from others, there is absolutely no chance for survival as a new human. We may be opinionated early. We may seek self-differentiation a few months ahead of schedule. We may seek to "do our own thing!" But there's not one of us humans alive today who could have made it independently.

In our earliest year or years we aren't consciously aware of our dependence, I don't think—can't be sure because I can't really remember being an infant or toddler!!

It seems we are unconsciously self absorbed. We know when we are discomforted and we seek to discomfort the world around us until someone meets our need. We don't really know how to ask so we scream or cry with the voice we have to seek food, or comfort, or to be changed, or to get whatever it is we feel we need.

But even in our earliest moments of seeming independence we are blissfully unaware that we aren't really independent we are just having a moment of independence.

For the next number of years our parents work to simultaneously control us and make us independent! Parents even suffer their own self conflict in this journey. Our own egos desperately want to be needed so we want our child to depend on us, to need us, while in our more sane moments we know our duty is to develop maturing young people who will become healthy independent thinking and acting adults.

Today in our society we have this life stage called adolescence. Before the industrial age, before the urban technology, before big industry became the reason for life, people simply moved from child to adult! When we read about youth in scripture often it is more about adults who were younger than it was about children. And in 19th and early 20th century the identification of adolescence brought on the movement of young adults from the work place to the school.

But before there was this designation of adolescence there was still no doubt that to live in this world is a pleasant experience and especially so for the young.

Today rather than going verse by verse through our passage of Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:14 I just want to tell you what I learned, what I believe Solomon, in all his wisdom as the wisest man ever to live, is wanting us to grasp.

The first thing, and young people listen up, the wise man says, enjoy life. Especially enjoy life while you are young. What does that mean? It means while you are young and vital follow the promptings, walk in the way of your heart. One translation puts it this way: “Think and feel through what you will do and then do it.”

Set some goals, make a plan, chase your dream!

If you are young and you are listening to this message PLEASE hear this wise counsel. We don't often tune our ears to hear this kind of Biblical counsel.

But here's chapter 11:9 in the NLT

“Young man, it's wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do.”

Chase your dream but remember God. Chase your dream and vs. 10 says to banish grief and pain, or banish anxiety, or in the words of Jesus “Don’t worry about your life.”

Parents here’s a challenge for us. Our kid or our young adult comes to us with what seems like a crazy dream, or maybe a calling from God. And it doesn’t seem to provide the financial support we think they should be considering. We see hardship ahead. Maybe it isn’t as prestigious as we think it should be or it seems risky, or it doesn’t seem to challenge all their abilities, and you know what we may say: “So if you chase this dream, if you follow this calling what will you eat? Who’s going to buy you your clothes?”

But Jesus said “So don’t worry, saying ‘What shall we eat? Or What shall we drink,? Or What shall we wear? For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you as well. Don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Parents do you want Jesus as your kids career counselor?
Do you want Jesus or the wise man Solomon advising your baby?

Oswald Chambers wrote: “God’s purpose is to enable me to see that He can walk on the storms of my life right now.” We so focus on the goal the end and Jesus is all about the journey. Chambers suggest that God isn’t working toward a particular finish—that his purpose e is the process itself...What people call preparation, God sees as the goal itself! You’re in school to be in the now.

Listen up young people chase your dream. Follow God’s call. Dare great things and let God teach you in your youth the goal.....
dependence on him.

I learned this week that the wise man isn’t interested in mediocre living. But that connected to God in intimacy with God his ideal is

that we chase our dream and change the world, and there is no fear because God is with us. We banish anxiety and cast off worry because as Jesus said, our Father knows what we need before we ask.

So we engage. And if we fail we learn and move forward and if we succeed we celebrate.

This essence is captured in a quote from Theodore Roosevelt from which Brene' Brown got one of her book titles. The quote says this:

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood: who strives valiantly...who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.”

Living this way will awaken in us a dependence on God.
Mediocre living can work just fine independent from God.

The last chapter of Ecclesiastes opens with great counsel:
“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.

Remember your creator. When we hear the word remember we think of looking back. Going to an alumni reunion and remembering. We think of picture albums and family vacation videos. We use that word remember almost synonymously with recall. But in the Hebrew language while it can mean recalling the past it can also mean “reflect on the future,” “bear in mind,” “don’t forget,” or even “think about.”

Solomon says to bear in mind and think about your Creator while you’re young. Life is full of mystery, a zillion questions that seem unanswerable. We need God’s guidance. We need to hear God’s voice speak into our lives. We need the creator to guide his creature.

And if we let this happen when we are young the chance of life's last lesson sticking goes up.

We enter this world very dependent and with the exception of an accident or sudden death we leave very dependent and in between the wise road is to live dependent on God.

There's just one way to live—live a natural life of absolute dependence on God.

If we can “Remember our Creator” in the good days of youth and maybe we can graciously step into the last act of our lives with surrender of dependence on God.

“Every element of our own self-reliance must be put to death by the power of God. The moment we recognize our complete weakness and our dependence upon Him will be the very moment that the Spirit of God will exhibit his power!” (May 5 My Utmost for His Highest)

Solomon says to remember to think about our Creator while we are young before age has its way.

David Edward Lynch wrote this poem after caring for his mother in her last days. He titled it “The Old People”

They're there, but it's as if they're not
hunched over with bent backs,
gnarled hands pressing hard on walking sticks
clutching clackety walkers
in wheelchairs being pushed along
they grace our world almost in quiet submission -
some still talk out, that's true
and so they should

The old people
they're part of the scenery
"nothing so unordinary" one might say
shuffling tedious slow to shops
do we ever consider
their plight
do we notice them that much?

The struggles that advanced years bring
ageing minds searching longingly for something
long past that can never be regained
memories of a time when life and limb were
free and strong
Age crept up and bones grew brittle
legs, bodies now old and worn
they need a caring hand to move them from here to there
someone to lift them - they can't stand up

Sadly there's many with minds
that are in steady decline
unable to remember
what's just been said
the thread of conversation
lost in mid-sentence
they ponder
"who was that visitor?"
Heads bowed
daytime sleep
takes over

There comes a time when their minds
are almost depleted -
faces no longer have relevance
existence prevails
a veil has crept over their former selves
some still cheerful but they're just not

the same
others looking out from crushed eyes
they depend on family, friends, carers
to bear their burden
to see to their needs

Deterioration comes quick or slow
some perhaps even oblivious
to their own suffering
they linger on in an alzheimeric state
until the end
leading to a final resting
when at last they are free
peace has come
life so good and long
the last few years took their toll
the final bell has rung
all suffering now gone.

We end so like we began dependent. And Solomon says that the conclusion of the whole matter is that we Fear God and keep his commandments. I like Eugene Peterson's paraphrase. Fear God. Do what he tells you.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing whether it is good or evil.

I read those closing lines of this book and they could be terrifying. Everything I've ever done and everything I've ever thought brought to the light.

But hear the good news. Dependent on Jesus Christ there is no fear of judgment.

In his conversation with Nicodemus that night Jesus words in John 3:16 are most familiar. But to grasp how good that news was and is we must read on through the first line of vs 18

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it. There is no judgment awaiting those who trust him.

We arrive dependent at birth and a time comes when we journey back towards being dependent and the wise man says in that vast middle don't start imagining that you can do it yourself. There are too many bumps too many mysteries beyond your understanding so live remembering your creator, thinking about your real and present dependence on him. Live in complete devotion to him and then you can chase your dream, answer his call and forget the uncertainties that lie ahead because you are walking in dependence on Jesus.