

Our Misspent Youth

I like the term "*misspent*". It accurately represents what happens in our younger years. The time is used up (*spent*) with no way to retrieve it. It is used foolishly and wastefully (*miss*).

Often a new dad grooms his son for a career as a professional athlete only to discover he is too short, frail, or uncoordinated to fulfill dad's dream. A mom may aim her daughter at Harvard for a law degree. While dad tosses the football to Junior mom keeps Sissy's nose in the books. When the girl gets to be a senior in high school she falls in love and marries. She does not go to college which hurts her mom, but even worse, she hurts her husband and children by not being trained in cooking, cleaning, and care giving.

Children are often aimed at college, sports, or jobs. The dad who is a farmer expects his son to learn the trade and take over when he is old enough. However, the son chooses a degree in business and an office job. His training is *misspent*.

The ultimate goal of most parents for their children is monetary success. They go to college to get a good job, or they go straight to work after high school. The desired end is always to make a comfortable living with a great deal of money. **Should this be our goal for our children?** Just as the boy who does not become an athlete or farmer and the girl who becomes a mom instead of a lawyer, so the training aimed only at wealth is misdirected. It results in *misspent* youth.

Children should be prepared for adulthood. They must learn responsibility. They must face consequences when they fail. They must know they can always go to their parents when they are in need of an answer. They should also be allowed to play. There are many things that are needed for the well balanced and properly developed child.

After Solomon discusses the accomplishments of his life he declares them to be *vanity*. He felt much of his life was *misspent* as he tried to find **the purpose for living**. His great wealth, many wives, and successful projects did not fulfill him. He recognized this when he came near the point of death.

We often miss a crucial point in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes. The message is not only about old age and death, but also about finding **the purpose of life** while we are young.

Ecc1 12:1 ***Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth***, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; The evil days refer to the pains of aging (2-5a). The aging ultimately ends in death (5b-7). In the following section Solomon reminds us that he is a preacher who is trying to find the right words to deliver a valuable message. He wants to lay down a truth, that if followed, will result in a life not spent in *vanity* (8 -11).

Notice to whom he is directing this message: 12 *And further, by these, **my son**, be admonished:* The information is to benefit the youth who must make the right decisions early. He must plan his course of action. He must remember God while he is young and making his choices. Solomon goes on with the message: *of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh*. Many items are going to bide for our time. There are books, school, sports, girlfriends, and activities. The body can get exhausted without finding the proper direction.

The wise king concludes his book by cutting to the chase. 13 *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man*. This is the purpose of our existence; Why God created us in the first place. Recall he described God as *the Creator* when he told his son to *remember* Him (12:1). If we fail to fulfill the purpose for

which God designed us we will not like the end result. 14 *For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

We try to increase our child's **mind, muscle, or money** while they are growing. What about their **morals**? Why do so many parents allow the child to govern themselves in areas of right and wrong? Youth is *misspent* if it does not include God and His righteous word!

Prov 20:11 tells us, *Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.* A child very quickly develops a reputation as a brat or a blessing. Do not let the child do the wrong things.

Prov 22:15 says, *"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."* Children are naturally prone to poor choices. They do not have the experience to recognize the consequences of their actions. It is up to parents to drive out the foolishness. This is not talking about wholesome fun. Children can and should play and pretend. The foolishness is the tendency to follow peers into sin.

Play is good, but it is not wrong to give our children chores. Some parents think a child should be able to "goof off" endlessly. They think their life is made for complete recreation until they hit 18. God's word teaches us better. Lam 3:27 *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.*

Some parents provide their children with no directions at all. They feel in time the child will reveal his aptitude and will make his own decisions. Basically they only want their children to stay out of their way. They regret this when they are older. The child becomes a wicked adult who has no interest in his parents. Prov 29:15 *The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.* Is there any worse way to *misspend* a youth than to leave a child alone? Ron Roberts