Crossroads International Church Dr. Rick Griffith

9 November 2014 Message 15 of 17

NLT 40 Minutes

**What to Do with an Uncertain Future**

Title

***Ecclesiastes 11:1-6***

**Topic:** Ignorance

**Subject:** How should your uncertain future influence you?

**Complement:** Give generously, invest wisely and work hard since you don't know your future.

**Purpose:** The listeners will embrace their risky future with assertive wisdom.

# Introduction

### Interest: [We have an unknown future—and that gives different responses from us.]

Secret Life of W. Mitty

#### In the 2013 movie, “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty,” Ben Stiller epitomizes the longings for adventure that many of us have for our future. Yet the future is unknown.

• Trailer

##### Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HddkucqSzSM

Office

##### Walter lives what I call “the cautious life.”

Negative

##### He handles negatives for *Life* magazine— an insignificant, dead-end job.

##### A company reshuffling forces him out.

Enemies

Couple

Backpacker

##### So he dreams how he could ever see his dream woman there again. His “secret life” refers to his daydreaming about doing something he deems significant.

##### So he, all-of-a-sudden, dares to embrace what I call “The Adventuresome Life.”

Jet

• Boat

• Skate-board

##### This leads him to Iceland…

##### He takes on a shark in the ocean…

##### Skateboards towards a volcano…

##### …all with dreams of being a “real somebody” in his future. Why? He wants to embrace his uncertain future with confidence, risk, and no fear.

Back to Future

• Close up

#### None of us knows the future.

Hope & Change

##### The 2008 US presidential election was won on “Hope and Change” in the future.

##### This very weekend we see one of those changes—The Reformation Project—a so-called “Bible-based, Gospel-Centered, LGBT Inclusion” conference!

LGBT

Marriage

##### None of us knows the future of the institution of marriage.

Ukraine

##### We don’t know what’s going to happen in Ukraine or any other place.

### Need: How *does* the uncertainty of the future affect you?

Head Scratcher

#### How does an uncertain future influence your giving?

#### How does an uncertain future influence your investments?

#### How does an uncertain future influence your work?

### Subject: How *should* your uncertain future influence you?

Subject

### Background: Solomon also didn’t know the future—but he encouraged us to embrace it.

Live!

#### Solomon's advice is, “Don’t just exist—*live*!”

#### “Don’t be satisfied with ho-hum existence—*live*!”

### Preview: Today we will see how our ignorance of the future gives us wisdom about money (11:1-3) and work (11:4-6).

Money  
• Work

### Text: This timely counsel is in Ecclesiastes 11:1-6.

Text

(Here Solomon first says that your uncertain future affects your view of your money—so...)

# I. Give generously and invest wisely (11:1-3).

MP

[Hold money loosely but discerningly since you don’t know the future.]

1 NIV

[“Cast your bread upon the waters,” says the NIV. What will you get? Soggy bread? The point?]

## Give generously, for your gifts will return to you later (11:1).

### Give freely [but not indiscriminately] (11:1a).

• NLT

#### The NLT sees this exclusively referring to business profits [read NLT].

#### However, can’t it also refer to giving?

##### We do this as a family, as we support about seven missionary families—Poolman (Thailand), Roxas (Philippines), Shehadeh (Jordan), Gleason (Nepal), Low (Hong Kong), Berkey (Venezuela), Children of Promise (Africa). We also manage giving from our USA church to students from Mongolia and India.

##### Our church supports work outside of Singapore with 20% of the offerings given.

20%

### Unselfish giving will eventually result in blessing (11:1b).

2

## Don't hoard, but give and invest since you don’t know the future (11:2).

### Diversify investments and giving (11:2a).

### Don’t "put all your eggs in one basket" since you don't know which ventures will fail (11:2b).

One   
basket

#### It is wise to put those eggs into different baskets.

Three   
baskets

#### Why? Uncertain future. No one knows which eggs will hatch.

Road

$

#### Diversify! Susan and I discovered yesterday that we have our retirement planning divided into nine different sources of income. Since we don’t own a home, this is especially necessary in our case.

#### One husband told his wife, “Yes, our investments are diversified: 20% out the window, 65% down the drain, and 15% gone with the wind.”

Cartoon

#### We diversify as a church too. CIC regularly supports cross-cultural missionaries in Thailand, Myanmar, and a family headed to Indonesia. Semi-regular gifts go to Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Mongolia.

One egg car

Map

#### The idea here is instead of giving or investing in a single egg…

Pizza

#### We spread the risk.

## God's providence controls everything that man can’t control (11:3).

3a

### Man can't stop the clouds from giving rain (11:3a).

• 3b

### Man can't control where trees fall (11:3b).

• The Point?

### The point?

#### God's providence controls everything that man can’t control.

• God’s providence

#### So give generously and invest wisely!

MPI

(So our ignorance of the future gives us wisdom regarding *money*. This ignorance tells us to give generously and invest wisely. But also, our ignorance of the future should also improve our attitude toward *work*. Your uncertain future affects your work, so…)

Subj  
• $  
• Work

MP

4 NAU

4 NLT

# II. Work hard due to your uncertain future (11:4-6).

[Don’t let your ignorance of the days to come lead to apathy.]

## Idleness or procrastination never helps anything (11:4).

Idleness not good

### Don’t wait for the wind to die down (so the seed won't be scattered) or you’ll never plant seed (11:4a).

### Don’t watch the clouds (to make sure it won't rain) or you’ll never harvest a crop (11:4b).

### It’s amazing the ingenuity lazy people can show—too bad they don’t take all that creativity and apply it to actual work!

Laziness  
(6 slides)

## We don’t know how God works (11:5).

5a

5b

### We don't know which direction the wind will take (11:5a).

### We don't know how the fetus bones form in the womb (11:5b).

### We can't know how God controls everything any more than we can know the wind or prenatal growth (11:5c).

## Work at many tasks since you don't know which ones will succeed (11:6).

6

### Work diligently all day long in different tasks (11:6a).

### Work this way because you don’t know if any or all of your efforts succeed (11:6b).

#### I have expanded by original appointment by WorldVenture at SBC to ICS, CIC and other nations because I don’t know which efforts will succeed. Through TBB we have Bible teaching in 38 languages, as I’m not sure which ones will be blessed or get downloaded via the biblestudydownloads.com site.

Cicfamily  
.com

Ministries God gave

#### At cicfamily.com we post the sermons, not knowing how many downloads.

#### We “cast our bread upon the waters” with the belief that God will bless these efforts, but we have no idea which language or message or book will succeed.

Sermons

Subject

(How should your uncertain future influence you?)

# Conclusion

### Give generously, invest wisely and work hard since you don't know your future (MI).

MI

### Ignorance of the future should give us wisdom about money and work (MI restated).

### What are the Main Points of these six verses today?

#### Give *generously* and invest *wisely* (11:1-3).

MPII

MPI

#### Work *hard* due to your uncertain future (11:4-6).

### How does your uncertain future affect you in these areas?

App

#### Walter Mitty only got it partly right—to live with adventure. Yet he never did anything that benefited *others*. This is where you and I must be different, to the glory of God.

• Own Way

Mitty

#### Someone said, “Do one thing every day that scares you.”

Get scared

##### When was the last time you broke away from your routine and did something unusual (and even a bit strange) without being overly cautious?

Be **bold** or *italic*

##### Don’t misunderstand. I’m not saying to be stupid, but to entrust yourself to God in new areas!

#### Giving: To what extent do you give out of love without concern for return?

Donate

##### The issue is not amount, though we certainly need the giving here to improve as we lack about S$1000 monthly.

CIC Giving

##### The key person Jesus approved for giving was a widow who gave two mites—two tiny copper coins worth less than a cent. Since then, most have given her credit for only *one mite!* Either way…

Widow’s Mites

##### As someone has said, It may be small, but if it’s your all, it’s enough” (Mark 12:41-44). Are you giving him your all?

Small but enough

#### Work Hard: What job have you been putting off due to being overcautious? If you were waiting for a sign, this is it!

Sign

### Prayer

Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### He has just concluded advice on how to deal with a foolish authority figure by cautioning against criticism.

### The larger context is our ignorance of the future: “Solomon closed his discussion on people’s ignorance of the future (9:1-11:6) with some practical advice about their activities in view of such ignorance. To emphasize that man is ignorant of the future Solomon said, ‘You do not know’ three times (11:2, 5-6); he also said, ‘You cannot understand’ (v. 5)” (BKC).

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### None of us knows the future.

### Nevertheless, we need to live now in light of the future.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### This time period had the largest maritime trade in Israel’s history.

### It was also a time of prosperity when people may have been tempted to just hold on to what they already had—not take any risky investments.

# Questions

### Is the casting bread upon the waters” referring to giving or to investments (11:1)? *Is there a difference?*

### What are the dangers inherent in delaying generosity (11:1)?

### What kinds of misfortune might Solomon be referring to here (11:2)?

### On 11:4 BKC notes,

"Solomon probably has in mind individuals who waste their time and energy observing the obvious, talking about the inevitable, and worrying about both. What profit is there in living life this way? There is none… Solomon is exhorting us to get down from the spectator's stands and run onto the playing field" (Swindoll, *LOTRE Study Guide*, pp. 111-112).

### Why would not knowing the future be a motivation to work hard (11:6)?

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

**Subject:** We should give generously, invest wisely and work hard

**Complement:** since we don't know what the future holds.

# Possible Illustrations

### My friend Paul lives "the cautious life." He does as little as possible so he won’t make a mistake

### What is the Christian philosophy of risk?

#### Not knowing all the facts causes some of us to be overly hesitant and too cautious in life.

#### "The habit of always putting off an experience until you can afford it, or until the time is right, or until you know how to do it is one of the greatest burglars of joy. Be deliberate, but once you've made up your mind—jump in" (Tim Hansel, *When I Relax I Feel Guilty*, 95).

### The Ligonier Ministries 2014 survey of 3000 Americans was released this week (Nov 1) on “The State of Theology”

### I run a website that costs me S$1000 a year with “no return.”

### How can helping the poor be sustainable?

### "For Those Who Dare to Be Bullish" (Adapted from *LOTRE Study Guide*, 112)

#### Start living it up today and never quit.

#### Remember that wisdom must accompany action.

#### Watch out for enemy attacks during lulls in the action.

### "Aggressive living is threatening [only] to those who refuse to live that way" (*LOTRE Study Guide*, 112).

# Possible Applications

### Diversify your treasure, time, and talents.

### Give generously.

**What to Do with an Uncertain Future**

***Ecclesiastes 11:1-6***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*: The way you should live in light of your uncertain future is to give generously, invest wisely, and work hard (11:1-6).

# I. The way you should live in light of your uncertain future is by giving generously and investing wisely (11:1-3).

## Give generously, for your gifts will return to you later (11:1).

### Give freely [but not indiscriminately] (11:1a).

### Unselfish giving will eventually result in blessing (11:1b).

## Don't hoard, but give and invest since you don’t know the future (11:2).

### Diversify investments and giving (11:2a).

### Don’t "put all your eggs in one basket" since you don't know which ventures will fail (11:2b).

## God's providence controls everything that man can’t control (11:3).

### Man can't stop the clouds from giving rain (11:3a).

### Man can't control where trees fall (11:3b).

# II. The way you should live in light of your uncertain future is by working hard (11:4-6).

## Idleness or procrastination never helps anything (11:4).

### Don’t wait for the wind to die down (so the seed won't be scattered) or you’ll never plant seed (11:4a).

### Don’t watch the clouds (to make sure it won't rain) or you’ll never harvest a crop (11:4b).

## We don’t know how God works (11:5).

### We don't know which direction the wind will take (11:5a).

### We don't know how the fetus bones form in the womb (11:5b).

### We can't know how God controls everything any more than we can know the wind or prenatal growth (11:5c).

## Work at many tasks since you don't know which ones will succeed (11:6).

### Work diligently all day long in different tasks (11:6a).

### Work this way because you don’t know if any or all of your efforts succeed (11:6b).

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will embrace their risky future with assertive wisdom.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: In the 2013 movie, “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty,” Ben Stiller epitomizes the longings for adventure that many of us have in life. Yet the future is unknown.

### Need: How does the uncertainty of the future affect you?

### Subject: How *should* your uncertain future influence you?

### Background: Solomon also didn’t know the future—but he encouraged us to embrace it.

### Preview: Today we will see how our ignorance of the future gives us wisdom about money (11:1-3) and work (11:4-6).

### Text: This timely counsel is in Ecclesiastes 11:1-6.

(Here Solomon says that your uncertain future affects your money—so...)

# I. Give generously and invest wisely (11:1-3).

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## Don't hoard, but give and invest since you don’t know the future (11:2).

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## God's providence controls everything that man can’t control (11:3).

### Man can't stop the clouds from giving rain (11:3a).

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(Our ignorance of the future not only gives us wisdom regarding *money*. It should improve our attitude toward *work*. Your uncertain future affects your work, so…)

# II. Work hard due to your uncertain future (11:4-6).

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(How should your uncertain future influence you?)

# Conclusion

### Give generously, invest wisely and work hard since you don't know your future (MI).

### Ignorance of the future should give us wisdom about money and work (MI restated).

### What are the Main Points of these six verses today?

#### Give *generously* and invest *wisely* (11:1-3).

#### Work *hard* due to your uncertain future (11:4-6).

### How does your uncertain future affect you in these areas?

#### Unlike Walter Mitty, our adventure is to the glory of God.

#### Someone said, “Do one thing every day that scares you.”

#### Giving: To what extent do you act out of love without concern for return?

#### Work Hard: What job have you been putting off due to being overcautious?

### Prayer



**Rick Griffith**

9 November 2014

Message 15 of 17

**What to Do with an Uncertain Future**

***Ecclesiastes 11:1-6***

# Introduction

### In the 2013 movie, “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty,” Ben Stiller epitomizes the longings for adventure that many of us have for our future. Yet the future is unknown.

### How *should* your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ future influence you?

### Solomon also didn’t know the future—but he encouraged us to embrace it.

# I. Give \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and invest \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (11:1-3).

## Give generously, for your gifts will return to you later (11:1).

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# Conclusion

### Give \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, invest \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and work \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ since you don't know your future (Main Idea).

### How does your uncertain future affect you in these areas?

#### Unlike Walter Mitty, our adventure is to the glory of God.

#### Someone said, “Do one thing every day that scares you.”

#### Giving: To what extent do you act out of love without concern for return?

#### Work Hard: What job have you been putting off due to being overcautious?

**Thought Questions**

1. Read Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 aloud. What's Solomon getting at in verse 1? What example can you give in your own life?

We need not distinguish too much between giving or investing—both have a return!

1. In verse 2 is Solomon referring to giving, investments, or both?

Probably both—maybe even referring to Solomon’s shipping fleets

1. What does Solomon advocate and why does he advocate it in verses 5-6?

Be faithful as you don’t know what God will do in the future

1. How does this passage apply to your own Christian experience?

Don't invest my time all in one ministry or financial savings program