



Initiative and Enjoyment

Ecclesiastes 11:1-10

Average News Day: Hurricane Ike, volatile stock market, presidential race, Iraq, Afghanistan, failing banks, troubles in the EU, Russia and Georgia, tainted milk, Astros lose, home values fall, gas prices rise, researchers discover bananas are bad for us, ...

Be careful! We can respond to this kind of a world in some ways that are not good: anger, fear, anxiety, frustration, apathy. The worst response of all is probably passivity—just giving up and coasting.

In a world with many things we don't control and many things we don't know...ongoing initiative is crucial. (11:1-6)

- The things we don't control:
- The things we don't know:
- The things we still must do:

Even our difficult world can be a delight...when enjoyed in the paths of God. (11:7-10)

- Same beautiful forest, vastly different trails.
 - A delightful world on an ugly path is vanity.
 - A delightful world on God's path is enjoyment.
- The thing we still must do:

Expected believer's day: initiate, walk in God's paths, enjoy.

Big Idea: In a world with many things we don't control and many things we don't know:

- ...ongoing initiative is crucial. (vv 1-6)
- ...joy is available in the paths of God. (vv 7-10)

“Walking Papers”

Practical helps for walking the Christian walk each day this week.

- **Today:** What is your typical response to the average (bad) news day?
- **Monday:** Are there any ways you would like to modify your responses? How?
- **Tuesday:** In what ways and areas are you taking good initiative in your life?
- **Wednesday:** In what ways and areas are you taking poor initiative in your life?
- **Thursday:** What are the biggest things that you don't control and that worry you? Take some time to give them to God right now. (Phil 4:4-9)
- **Friday:** How could you get “on God's path” in greater ways? So, I will...
- **Saturday:** How could you enjoy God's world more? So, I will...

“Companionship Papers”

Dialogue questions for helping each other in the Christian walk this week.

GETTING STARTED:

- What is the most disconcerting thing that you do not control?
- What is the most disconcerting thing that you do not know?

LOOK AT THE TEXT:

- Verse 1: What is the initiative commanded in this verse?
- Verse 2: What is the initiative commanded in this verse?
- Verses 4 and 6: What is the initiative commanded in these verses?
- Verse 8: What are the initiatives commanded in this verse?
- Verse 9: What are the four initiatives commanded in this verse?
- Verse 10: What are the two initiatives commanded in this verse?
- What are the things that we cannot control that are spelled out in this passage? Which ones have we experienced in the past month?
- List the things that we cannot control that are spelled out in this passage. Which ones have we experienced in the past month?

LIVE DIFFERENTLY—you can also use questions from the Walking Papers above:

- In the face of your world, with its uncontrollable and unknowable things, what are two specific initiatives you will take this week to increase your obedience to God and your blessing to others?
- In the face of your world, with its uncontrollable and unknowable things, what is one specific change you will make to get more squarely on God's path?