

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on June 25, 2017**

**"Ecclesiastes and Proverbs –
Center Your Creator in the Days of Your Youth
(Classes, Career, Cars, Cash and Crushes)"**

[In today's sermon on Youth Day, "Ecclesiastes and Proverbs – Center Your Creator in the Days of Your Youth", Pastor Craig Kuhlman shows our teens and those in their 20's that their most common 5 milestones (Classes, Career, Cars, Cash and Crushes) can be positively achieved when they place God in the center of their lives.]

Notes

Introduction:

- Today is Youth Day.
- And some feel more youthful than others.
- And tomorrow is pastor Craig's 100th day here at New Hope!
- So it's time to reflect and it all starts with our youth (teens and those in their early 20's).

- At age 14, Craig was praying every day these 3 crucial prayers – become a member of WCG; have a happy and successful life; marry a woman in the church and he would make enough money so that she wouldn't have to work if so chose not to.
- That was 6 or 7 years before he ever met his wife Nan.
- For whatever reason, God chose to answer those prayers at a young age.

- By the time pastor Craig was 40, he met many of the goals he set out to establish.
- A happy and successful life meant that he had a decent income to raise a family.
- At age 45, pastor Craig was offered a presidency role at a trust wealth management firm and did that for the last 10 years of his career.
- Now, along his life, Craig felt that God was at his center, because he allowed God to be there. And that makes such a difference.

Today is an upbeat time for our youth:

- Today is a time for our youth to stay centered, centered in our Creator
- There are 5 milestones we'll be talking about today.
 - The first two, "careers and classes", are green lights.
 - The last three, "cash, cars and crushes", are yellow or caution lights.
- Now we know these milestones will happen, but when we place God in the center of our life, not only is our life better but we also become better at life.

King Solomon:

- When Solomon was appointed King of Israel, God granted him one wish, whatever Solomon wanted. It's recorded in 1 Kings 3.

- And what did Solomon ask for – wisdom, wisdom to rule.
- And that really pleased God.
- God told him that because he hadn't asked for a long life, nor wealth, He was going to make Solomon not only the wisest man to ever live up until then or will ever will live, he was also going to be blessed with long life and wealth, as well.
- Proverbs was written in the earlier years of King Solomon's life and has a much more up-beat tone to it.
- Ecclesiastes was written in the later years of his life and was more reflective.
- Both books give us tremendous insight on how to deal with life.

Careers:

Proverbs 1:1-7 (Message Bible), These are the wise sayings of Solomon, David's son, Israel's king – Written down so we'll know how to live well and right, to understand what life means and where it's going; A manual for living, for learning what's right and just and fair;

To teach the inexperienced the ropes and give our young people a grasp on reality. There's something here also for seasoned men and women (not just the youth), still a thing or two for the experienced to learn – Fresh wisdom to probe and penetrate, the rhymes and reasons of wise men and women.

7) Start with God – the first step in learning is bowing down to God; only fools thumb their noses at such wisdom and learning.

- So Solomon, in essence, is saying, "Make God the center of your life. And when you do that, things will be different."
- And so the context for today for our teens and 20's is: career and classes – 2 primary green lights, while, cash, cars and crushes can get us off track along the way.
- Here is how to sum up careers: in your late teens and early 20's, it has to be your primary focus.
- Now is the time to mold and shape and set that foundation with God in the center.
- And when you do, you get better at life in making those career choices.
- There's a tool out there that one can take – www.16personalities.com that can help you understand what you are good at from a career standpoint.
- The key is to stay at a career. Pastor Craig, changed jobs or employers but stayed at the same career for 30-35 years.
- Now, in Ecclesiastes, Solomon reflects back on a key aspect of life – careers and jobs.

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 (Message Bible), After looking at the way things are on this earth, here's what I've decided is the best way to live: Take care of yourself, have a good time, and make the most of whatever job you have for as long as God gives you life. And that's about it. That's the human lot. Yes, we should make the most of what God gives, both the bounty and the capacity to enjoy it, accepting what's given and delighting in the work. It's God's gift! God deals out joy in the present, the now. It's useless to brood over how long we might live.

- Now remember, Solomon had everything – he had wisdom, wealth, relationships and possessions, but his one focus, from his reflection on life, was jobs or careers.
- So when we spend time intentionally at our career and then staying at it, life gets better.
- Now comes the preparation for a career.

Classes:

- Whatever you want to be good at, there's always preparation involved, time and effort involved, practice and more practice involved.
- Proverbs tells us that if we frivol time away, then things don't happen.
- Things happen because of intentionality.
- We need all of the training and the classes we can get to help us be successful in our career.
- Pastor Craig entered college with a plan of what he wanted to do, which is not so popular these days.
- Classes doesn't always mean going to college – it can mean tech training or apprenticeships – in other words gaining the background and the support of what you decided to do as a career.

Proverbs 23:22-25 (Message Bible), Listen with respect to the father who raised you, and when your mother grows old, don't neglect her. Buy truth – don't sell it for love or money; buy wisdom, buy education, buy insight. Parents rejoice when their children turn out well; wise children become proud parents. So make your father happy! Make your mother proud!

- People can argue that the Bible was for some other period of time and it doesn't really relate to us today.
- Or the wisdom of years ago, doesn't really apply today.
- But they're wrong. Centering your life in God makes a difference.
- Now, you're still going to face those hassles of life anyway.
- But having God centered in your life, makes a world of difference in dealing with life and its trials.

Cash:

- This is the first of three cautions: cash, cars and crushes.
- How can cash derail us?
- Now there are two different financial philosophies – “A penny saved is a penny earned” and “He or she who dies with the most toys wins.”
- Craig grew up with the philosophy about he who has the most toys wins and his wife Nan grew up with the philosophy about the penny.
- Then after their honeymoon, there's what's called, “the blending of the balance sheets” which took some time.
- So, credit cards and the way you spend money can be detrimental.
- Craig's caution – in your 20's be very careful of contractual debt.
- Now school debt is kind of common today – and that's OK.
- Pastor Craig makes a distinction between an investment in education that's going to earn you a cash flow versus going into debt over living an exorbitant lifestyle.

- Think twice about signing up for that credit card whose expenses you are planning to roll over each month and not paying it off completely.
- Building debt is so easy to do.

Cars:

- The next caution is cars (or any other type of expensive item you desire.)
- Pastor Craig has a love for sports cars and convertibles.
- So, if you are going to venture into toys, like cars, be cautious, they're expensive, so first you better figure out a way to pay for it.
- So when your wife asks you how you are going to pay for that new car, you better have a financial plan nailed down.
- So you can still enjoy life's pleasures, but they still bring a caution that they don't derail your career and success in life.

Proverbs 11:28 (Message Bible), A life devoted to things is a dead life, a stump; a God-shaped life is a flourishing tree.

- Notice – there's nothing wrong with possessions.
- And many times, God gives us the desires of our hearts, because He is a gracious God.
- Balance is the way to stay focused on the green light milestones of life.

Crushes:

- The last caution is crushes.

Proverbs 18:22 (Message Bible), Find a good spouse, you find a good life – and even more: the favor of God!

- So God is all about finding a good spouse.
- And when you find a good spouse, a good life comes with it.
- Now the \$64,000 question is – how do you do that?
- And that's where caution comes into play.
- And, pastor Craig believes, when your life is centered in God, God brings that spouse to you.
- Now there are no scientific studies to prove this, but Scripture does.
- We know that crushes come and go, because they are temporary – Craig gave an example of his 2 year high school crush.
- And so when we are in a relationship with another person, we need to ask, "Is this someone that I could be married to for the rest of my life?"
- Now back in the Old covenant, there was quite a focus on sexual sin and how it was harmful.
- There's a reason why God gave the instruction that sex outside of marriage, fornication, is wrong.
- It's not because God is a prude or doesn't want us to be happy and intimately involved.
- But when we enter into a sexual relationship, with the chemistry God has designed us to have, that binds us to that person.

- And in that binding process, we become emotionally tied to them in such a way, that if we later find out that they aren't the spouse for life, we are setting ourselves up for a lot of heartache.
- So, when you are in your 20's, these are things for you to consider.
- The Proverbs we just read is very positive, but there are also several Proverbs that are negative – "It's better to live in a rickety old house alone than with a nagging spouse."
- So, be careful who you bind yourself to for the next 30 to 40 years.
- Now, it's OK to nag a little bit.

Now or Later?

- One of the most predictive pieces of social science research was conducted by bringing a number of children into a room where there was a marshmallow set in front of them.
- And they were told that they could have this marshmallow right now, or if they waited, they can have 2 when the white jacketed guy comes back.
- The man came back in about 3-5 minutes.
- And what they found was that a number of the children ate their marshmallow, but there was a few that still had their marshmallow in front of them.
- Now they followed those children who didn't eat their marshmallow for the next several decades.
- They found that those children who delayed gratification were not only healthier, they had stronger marriages and they made a lot more money.
- So they found that when has the ability to delay gratification (cash, cars, and crushes) was a tool for success.
- So earlier, when asked why they didn't eat the marshmallow, a common answer was they just didn't look at it.
- And secondly they just kept telling themselves two is better than one, so I'll just simply wait.

Proverbs 3:5-12 (Message Bible), Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil! Your body will glow with health,

Your very bones will vibrate with life! Honor God with everything you own; give him the first and the best. Your barns will burst, your wine vats will brim over. But don't, dear friend, resent God's discipline; don't sulk under his loving correction. It's the child he loves that God corrects; a father's delight is behind all this.

- And so, we find centering our lives in God, choosing the right path, and the other aspects of life come with it.
- From Solomon's perspective, he choose heaven – he made the right choice – he choose wisdom and everything else came with it.
- God want us to love life – but the key to life is to go through Him and choose heaven – and then the aspects of a good life we might want, could come with it.

Meet me in the Center?

- Here's the challenge Craig is setting out to our teens and those in their 20's.
- He'll meet you in the center, if you'll meet him in the center.
- Craig's center is – he's got about 8 weeks before the Grace Life/Anthony Walton/Bermie Dizon Huntington Beach Bash happens in order to drop 40-45 pounds of weight.
- Now Dr. Kurt Lewin, the father of social psychology, says that when you go public, you are much more accountable and much more likely to stick with your commitment.
- So this is pastor Craig's commitment to our young people.

- In return, he would like, at least 5 young people to meet with him together at least 4-5 times in the next 8 weeks, talking about life centered in God and talking about careers and cars, cash, crushes or whatever else they want to talk about and they will also explore Ecclesiastes and Proverbs.
- So, if our youth wants to see pastor Craig drop those 40 pounds, are they willing to join him in this center of accountability group? That's the challenge!
- Pastor Craig then asked for at least 5 of our youth to come forward and accept his challenge – 7 accepted.
- Craig then had all the elders come forward to ask for a special blessing and commitment on these young people here.
- Fred Stevens was asked to give the blessing.

Closing Prayer