

An Empty Life? (13): Advice to a Young Person

By [Dr. Derek Thomas](#)

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If you have your Bibles, I'd invite you to turn with me to Ecclesiastes 11. Solomon, who calls himself the Preacher, who was the king in Jerusalem in this book, the Preacher has been arguing to us that apart from God, apart from a faith relationship in God, life is empty and meaningless. And contrary to what we often hear today as believers, he furthermore says that the only life that is truly intellectually capable of doing justice to our reality is the life of faith.

We so often hear people say things like this to conservative Bible believing Christians, "Well, to be a Christian, you have to check your brain at the door." And the response of Solomon to that is, "Well, actually, to be an unbeliever, you have to check your brain at the door." Because one of the things that he has said in this book about this life that we live in is that "human wisdom cannot supply meaning to it. It is incapable intellectually of accounting for the realities of this life, and, at the same time, coming up with a life system that will work in this world." In other words, he says that "the life system of the unbeliever has to borrow on the life system of the believer in order to be able to cope in this world." And he's explored various ways that people try to find meaning in this life. And he said, "Fun won't supply meaning in this life. Work won't supply meaning to this life. Family will not supply the ultimate meaning that you're looking for in this life. And affluence, money, things, material blessings will not supply ultimate meaning to this life."

And all along he's been giving us hints as to what does supply ultimate meaning in this life. The first, biggest, longest hint that he gave us we found in Ecclesiastes 3. When he had that beautiful section that we've heard sung before about "a time for birth" and "a time for death" and a time for this and a time for that. And he's pointing in that whole passage to the truth of the providence of God over all things. And his beliefs that God is in control of everything and is working it out for the good of His people are at the very core of his philosophy of life and answer to the cynicism of the world. So when you get to Ecclesiastes 11, he is beginning to wrap up his argument. In fact, by the time that you get to Ecclesiastes 11, he has already entered into his final exhortation. He's calling us into the life of faith: to reject the life of faithlessness, the life of unbelief, the life of indifference to spiritual things. He's calling us. He's exhorting us. He's saying, "Choose this day whom you will serve." But the form of chapter 11 is almost like

a letter to a young person. It's almost like a grandfather sitting his grandson or granddaughter down and saying, "Now let me tell you a little bit about life." So, once again, he catches you off guard with his form; but he's already into his "M game." Let's hear God's Word then in Ecclesiastes 11.

Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days. Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth. If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth; and whether a tree falls toward the south or toward the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies. He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap. Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things. Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good. The light is pleasant, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun. Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all, and let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. Everything that is to come will be futility. Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things. So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.

Amen. And thus ends this reading of God's holy, inspired and inerrant Word. May He add His blessing to it. Let's pray.

Lord, we ask that You would give us heavenly wisdom to understand this heavenly wisdom. And not only to understand it, to embrace it in the very core of our hearts as we approach this life. That we might not live it as merely under the sun, but under the gaze of watchful, caring, merciful Almighty Providence. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now at first when you hear Ecclesiastes 11, you're thinking with Yogi Berra of "dŕja vu all over again." This is just like chapter 10. We get this sort of Colombo interrogation. Where is this going? We get this meandering set of proverbs. We get this non-linear logic again. That's maybe your first reaction to Ecclesiastes 11. But not so. No. This passage is a unified meditation on how we ought to respond to the uncertainties of this life, and the trials of this life, and the difficulties of this life, and the hurts of this life, and the pains of this life in light of God's overarching providence.

Look at this passage. It breaks very clearly into two parts: verses 1-6 and verses 7-10. The first six verses of the passage teach us how to contemplate our

general approach to life in light of the uncertainties of life. Those verses ask us to remember God's providence and then to approach the uncertainties of life in light of that providence. And so it speaks to our general approach to life and labor in light of the uncertainties and trials of life. Then, in verses 7-10, the second part of the passage, this text addresses the issue of our happiness in light of our contemplation of coming death and judgment. So the two parts of the passage deal with our general response to the difficulties and unexpected events of this life; and then, secondly, what about happiness in this life?

It is also the beginning of the Preacher's conclusion. Ecclesiastes 11 and this whole section along with chapter 12, is a sustained call to decision. The Preacher has put the life of unbelief and indifference in the scales next to the life of faith, of trust in the living God and in His merciful, kind and wise providence: and he has found the life of unbelief lacking. He has weighed it in the scales. He's showed you it doesn't work. And now he's commending to you out loud the life of faith. He's calling you to choose the life of faith. He's saying, "You must not delay. Today's the day for whole-hearted faith whether your life is adverse or comfortable because we're marching towards the day of death." And so this whole section is his "M game." He's wrapping up; he's concluding; and he's exhorting.

As we look at the two parts of this chapter together for a few moments today, perhaps it will help us to note eight points of argument along the way. Six points of argument in the first part of the chapter, verses 1-6; two points in the second half of the chapter, verses 7-10.

I. A call to bold, confident living, in light of the uncertainties of life and certainties of God's providence — *A proper response to the twin truths.*

His first point of argument comes in verse 1 and 2. In verses 1 and 2, he is asking you to meditate with him on what is the proper response of a person to twin truths that he has taught throughout this book. The twin-truths are this: That life under the sun is empty; Life lived apart from God is empty; and God is, in fact, providentially ruling this world for the good of His people. How do you respond to this life, in all its twists and turns, in light of those two truths: that life apart from God is empty and that God is providentially in control of everything?

Well, there are different responses of people to the difficulties of this life. And he is calling us to a bold, confident approach to living life in light of the uncertainties in life because of the certainty of God. He calls us to boldness and confidence and trust in our living, not because life is certain. It's not. In fact, he has made certain that we understand that life is not certain. But we are to live in light of the certainties of God. This is a call to an adventure of faith. Listen. "Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days." Now, I dare you: try that at the ocean some day. Sprinkle some bread crumbs on the waves, and

see how many of them you find later. And yet he says, "Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days. Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth." He's calling you to live boldly and to trust God because life is uncertain, but God is in control. So, therefore, he says, "Go for it!" You see, there are different ways that you could respond to the uncertainties of life and, especially, the heart-breaking uncertainties of life: you could curl up in a fetal position and just pull back; you could become cynical; you could just be cynical about everything; you could make fun of everything that's meaningful, everything that's beautiful, everything that's joyful; you could just be cynical about it; or you could just be paralyzed, fearing the next bad thing that's going to happen.

In staff meeting, we were praying for a minister who's just verging on retirement. His wife was diagnosed with a virulent, aggressive, terminal cancer. The doctors have given her two months. He wrote to a friend, and he said, "We had so many plans for our retirement together. Those plans are gone." Now how do you respond to that? You could get cynical about it, or you could be bitter, or you could be paralyzed. But the Preacher says, "Live boldly and confidently!" Uncertainties? Yes, sir. Absolutely. The whole ball of wax is uncertain, but God is not uncertain. He is certain. He is in control.

Now apart from pagan responses to the difficulties of life, there are, frankly, a variety of Christian responses. There are some Christians who take comfort in this life this way: they say, "Well, my choices will determine my future. I'll make my future by my choices, but here's how I'm comforted. God knows how it's going to turn out."¹ Now, friends, there is comfort in the fact that God knows how it's going to turn out. I assure you there is comfort in the knowledge that He knows the future and that He holds the future. But it's the first part of that proposition that worries me a little bit. You know, if I'm going to determine my future, I'm nervous all ready. And I'm really nervous if you're going to determine my future. It's a frightening thing to think that we human beings are determining the future. Let me let you in on a little secret: We're not. And so our friends who take comfort by saying, "Our actions determine the future, but we take comfort because God knows what the future is; they've only got half of the comfort. And part of what they're saying is absolutely dead wrong. That's not the way you comfort yourselves in the face of life's uncertainties. Because, very frankly, some of the things that are most significant in our lives we do not choose. Think about it: Some of the most significant events in your whole life are things that you had nothing to do with in choosing. They just happened.

And then there are other friends who say, "Well, here's how I get comfort: our actions determine the future. The future's not set; it's as yet uncertain. And our actions determine the future. And we take comfort, not because God knows the future, because God doesn't know the future. We take comfort because God has

¹ The Arminian position

to take risks too, just like we do.² Now these dear folk are utterly deluded. They're wrong on both counts. The Bible makes it clear that God does know the future. And so the idea that God doesn't know what's coming, from a biblical standpoint, is utter rubbish. And they take comfort that God has to go through the same processes of choices in the face of an uncertain future that we do, and so He can sort of guide us along the way because He's been at that game for a long time. And there's no comfort in that view of finding comfort in this uncertain life.

And then there's a view that we might call a hyper-Calvinist view, which is really a sub-Calvinist view because it denies the importance of human responsibility. And it basically says, "The future is settled. God's in control. So it doesn't matter what I do. And I'm gonna take comfort because God's in control, and it doesn't matter what I do." Oh, that's not a biblical response, and, by the way, that's not what Calvin taught. I know you've got a lot of friends who tell you that's what Calvin taught. That's not what Calvin taught.

No, the answer of Proverbs is very, very clear. Life is uncertain, but God is certain. And my work, my actions, my responses are the instruments of the Almighty God in bringing about the fulfillment of His purposes. So, you better get out of my way. I'm going to live boldly. I'm going to live confidently. I'm going to live trusting He's in control. I don't know what the future holds. I'm going to live life for all its worth. I'm not going to be afraid of the next thing that's coming around the corner. A wise man, you see, invests everything that he has in the life of faith. That's what he's saying in verses 1 and 2: "Seven portions! Ah, go ahead—eight! Throw it all out there. Invest everything that you have in the life of faith." So how do life's uncertainty and the certainty of God's plan lead us to live? With bold, confident action. That's what he says.³

II. A call to bold, confident giving, in light of the uncertainties of life and certainties of God's provision. — *Proper response regarding our generosity to the needy.*

Now let me go back right to verses 1 and 2 for the second point that he makes, for the Preacher is not only talking about how we live life, but how we give in life and, especially how we give to those who are in need because many commentators, and you can find this in the wonderful Matthew Henry *Commentary*, and in many of the commentators from the age of the Puritans. And he points out that the Preacher is speaking to us about our proper response to the uncertainties of life regarding our generosity in giving. For this proverb, "Cast your bread on the waters," there's actually a parallel in the Middle East and it's speaking about philanthropy, the giving to those who are in need. And so the Preacher may be specifically illustrating this broader point about living life with

² The Open Theist position

³ The Calvinist position

bold confidence by zeroing in on the issue of our philanthropy.

You know, there's nothing like uncertainty to impact philanthropy. The last five years in the stock market and in Christian giving in America is a case in point. There are Christian ministries out there in big trouble now. Why? Look at the markets. You've got your answer. But that's not all of the answer. It's because some people are so scared about what's happening that they pull back in their giving. And so charities like the Salvation Army and others in the midst of difficulties that we're facing nationally, are also facing troubles.

And so the preacher is saying here, "Cast your bread upon the surface of the waters. Divide your portion to seven or even eight. You don't know what misfortune may occur." He's saying that "our generosity to the needy is not because there are no uncertainties in this life. Our generosity to the needy is not because the market is gonna go up in the next year. Our generosity to the needy is because of our confidence in God's provision." So just like we respond to life's uncertainty in the certainty of God's plan by bold, confident living, so also in our generosity we respond by bold, confident giving. We trust God.

III. An acknowledgment of human inability to anticipate or prevent or change the exigencies of life under the sun.

The third point of argument he makes this for grand point in verses 1-6, you'll see in verse 3. Here he's asking you to think about what is the proper response to those un-anticipatable, unfixable uncertainties of life. If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth. And whether a tree falls towards the south or to the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies. This verse is an acknowledgement of our human inability to anticipate, or to prevent, or to change the exigencies of life under the sun. If it's gonna rain; it's gonna rain. If a tree is gonna fall; it will. And it will lie where it falls. You can't stop the uncertainties of life from happening. The point of the verse is clear: we can't control the uncertainties of life. Whether we can generally anticipate them. Ok, there's a cloud. Looks pretty fat. It's probably gonna rain. Or whether we can anticipate them at all: as in when the tree's gonna fall and in which direction it's going to fall.

If we can't control the difficulties of life, so what's the response? Well, the response is clear from the context of verses 1-5. We are to trustingly contemplate the fact that we are not in control of the uncertainties of life, and, therefore, the way we get comfort is not gaining control. We're never going to gain control of those things, but, at the same time, we must realize God's control, His overarching providence. And we must resign ourselves to trust in that providence. And I say resign ourselves deliberately. Ultimately, we should be able to joy in those things. However, sometimes it takes a long time before you're able to joy in God's providences, especially when they're hard. Remember Francis of Assisi? Some of you probably have that prayer of his, especially those

of you with young children, that prayer of his that hangs in your kitchen. Do you remember how it goes? *Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.* That is not far from what Ecclesiastes 11:3 is saying. “Trust God. Realize the things that you can't change. Be serene in your acceptance of those things that you can't change, but bold and courageous in dealing with the things that you can.”

IV. Don't be paralyzed by the *what ifs* of life — go for it, so and reap, as providence allows.

Then the fourth part of his argument comes in verse 4: “He who watches the wind will not sow, and he who looks at the clouds will not reap.” He's saying, “Sitting around and thinking about the uncertainties of life is not going to accomplish anything.” He's saying, “Don't be paralyzed by the *what ifs* of life. Go for it! Sow! Reap! Providence will determine what you sow and what you reap, but go for it! Go ahead and do it!”

Jesus has a parable about this. Do you remember Jesus' parable of the talents? Three guys get money. One: a lot, one: a little, one: one. The guy who gets one coin buries it. Why? Because he's afraid. Afraid the investment will go bad, and he'll get in trouble. When the master comes back, who is he angry with? The guy who buried the talent. Why? Because he did not boldly trust in the providence of God. Don't be paralyzed by the “what ifs” of life. That's the fourth point.

V. Don't be paralyzed by trying to figure out the secret will of God, we don't even understand wind and babies.

The fifth point is in verse 5, “Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.” Here Solomon is saying, “Realize the limitations of your understanding. You're limited in your understanding of even temporal things. Remember that when you're trying to think out what God's doing in His secret providence. As you contemplate the activity of God, realize that you don't even understand wind and babies. And don't be paralyzed trying to figure out the secret will of God.”

How do you find comfort in this life of uncertainty? Not by pondering the “what ifs” of life; not by removing the uncertainties of life. You can't do that. Not by figuring out God's secret plan. You can't do that either. None of those are places that you go for comfort in response to the difficulties of this life. What's his conclusion?

VI. So, work hard, go for it, take your best shot, “sin boldly”

Point 6, verse 6: "Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good." He's saying, "Work hard! Go for it! Take your best shot! Be boldly confident, not because life is certain, not because you can be assured of a good, short-term outcome, but because of the certainty of God, the certainty of His promise, and the certainty of His final victory. You see, our boldness in the life of faith is not motivated by a certainty in the short-term outcome but in the certainty of God.

We're now in the season of sports clichés. The best season of the whole year for sports clichés is college football, because you've got all of those wonderful announcers out there, especially color commentators, that are going to be saying things like this: "He plays with reckless abandon," whatever that means. Or, "They left it all on the field today, boys." Or, "They're gonna have to play like there's no tomorrow." Or, "Let's give 110%." I've always wondered what that would look like: giving 110%. Or, "You've gotta want it more than they do." Or, "Get after it!" Well, let me say that all of those things are just slightly secularized and hyperbolic versions of a fundamentally Christian approach to providence. You do not know what it coming.

Now what's the response to that? Assume the fetal position? Paralysis? No! You boldly approach life in trust with the God of providence. Because your boldness is not rooted in the certainty of what you face but in the certainty of His ultimate control. Why is it that we love it when the hero is outnumbered 1,000 to 1, and he goes, "Ok, I'll take those odds." Well, there are a lot of reasons why we like that. But underlying that is a realization that, frankly, those are our odds every day. Except they are usually worse. That's the kind of life we're facing. It's the kind of life filled with uncertainties and heartbreaks. Why is it that we're moved when we hear that report from the Marine reporting back to the aircraft carrier in the South Pacific in the middle of the Second World War? The Marines have found themselves in a bigger trap than they thought they were going to get into, and he radios in, "Casualties heavy. Enemy numbers uncertain. Status report: We are winning." Well, why is it we like that? Because underlying is the recognition of boldness without any guarantee of the short-term outcome.

But the question you see has more than that. We have the confidence of the providence of God. Why is that we're moved when we read that speech that Churchill gave before the Parliament on May 13, 1940, when he says, "On Friday evening, last, I received from His Majesty the mission to form a new administration. I say to the House as I said to the ministers who have joined this government, 'I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat. We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many months of struggle and suffering. You ask, 'What is our policy?' I say, 'It is to wage war by land, sea, and air. War with all our might and with all the strength God has given us and to wage war against a monstrous tyranny never surpassed

in the dark and lamentable catalog of human crime. That is our policy.' You ask, 'What is our aim?' I can answer it in one word, 'It is victory. Victory at all costs. Victory in spite of all terrors. Victory however long and hard the road may be, for without victory there is no survival.'" Why is it that we're moved by that? Well, we're moved by it for a lot of reasons. It's glorious oratory. It was a crucial time in human history and in the history of the twentieth century. But we're also moved by it because that is precisely the Christian's response to all the uncertainties of life: boldly, confidently living in faith. The short-term outcome? We no more know it than we know what the stock market is going to do next year. The final outcome however is certain, and, therefore, we are not indolent. We will leave it to God. No need for me to do anything. We're bold in our activity; trusting in Him.

You see, faith flourishes in the mystery of providence. Faith doesn't solve the mystery of providence. Faith doesn't tell you how everything is going to turn out along the way. Yes, the Lord gives you some peaks and some encouragement sometimes. But the glory of faith is that it flourishes when it doesn't know what God's secret purposes are. It trusts and obeys and boldly believes and acts. Well, that's one half of it.

VII. Rejoice in life.

How do you respond in the life of uncertainty? Bold, confident, believing living. What about the happiness part, though? Very quickly look at verses 7-10. The Preacher is very serious about your pursuit of happiness, and not a shallow happiness, not a happiness that is merely pleasure. But he knows that God means for His children to experience joy in this life, and so he urges us to be serious about rejoicing in life: "Let him rejoice in all his years!" Verse 9: "Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes."

Now don't misunderstand what he's saying. He's not saying, "Live it up while you're young." He's not saying, "Party on, Wayne. Party on, Garth." He's not saying, "Look. You're going off to college. God will look the other way for the next four years." He's not saying with Robert Herrick, "Gather ye rosebuds while you may." He's not saying with the Tams, "Be young. Be foolish, but be happy." That's not what he's saying. No. He's saying this: "This life is meant by God to be savored with enthusiasm and joy, so savor it with enthusiasm and joy early, for two reasons: It's going to slip by very quickly and that joy is not found easily or automatically. Therefore, savor it, then, with enthusiasm and joy, knowing that the end will come."

VIII. Remember judgment.

Now that's not all he says because he knows how every guy in the room is gonna take this. Remember 9b. Look at the second half of verse 9. "Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things." He's saying, "I've got my eye on you in Oxford. I got my eye on you in Starkville. I got my eye on you in Athens, or wherever you are. Remember the judgment," he says. So in the kind of joy you pursue, you make sure that it's the kind of joy that on the last day, when you're standing before My bar, I will say, "My son, My child, My daughter; I'm so delighted that you found that joy." And it's not a tawdry joy that you will be ashamed about before the bar of divine judgment. Rejoice in life! But remember the judgment.

What's the believing response to life? To trust God's providence and to live boldly in relationship with Him. And apart from that: Life is empty and the only way you can cope with it is to check your brains at the door. And so Solomon says, "Be wise. Believe God. Trust His providence, and live for Him. With every drop of life, live for Him." Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, this life can only be lived through You. You died so that we could live this life. You live so that we can live this life. By faith in you we live this life. Grant to every seeking soul Your spirit's work of new life that we might trust and rest in You alone for salvation as You are offered in the Gospel. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

A Guide to the Morning Service

Thoughts on Worship

"Think of it this way: Worship is simply about value. The simplest definition I can give is this: Worship is our response to what we value most. That's why worship is that thing we all do. It's what we're all about on any given day. Worship is about saying, "This person, this thing, this experience (this whatever) is what matters most to me . . . it's the thing of highest value in my life." That "thing" might be a relationship. A dream. A position. Status. Something you own. A name. A job. Some kind of pleasure. Whatever name you put on it, this "thing" is what you've concluded in your heart is worth most to you. And whatever is worth most to you is—you guessed it—what you worship. Worship, in essence, is declaring what we value most. As a result, worship fuels our actions, becoming the driving force of all we do. And we're not just talking about the religious crowd. The Christian. The churchgoer among us. We're talking about everybody on planet earth. A multitude of souls proclaiming with every breath what is worthy of their affection, their attention, their allegiance. Proclaiming with every step what it is they worship. Some of us attend the church on the corner, professing to worship the living God above all. Others, who rarely darken the church doors, would say worship isn't a part of their lives because they aren't "religious." But everybody has an altar. And every altar has a throne. So how do you know

where and what you worship? It's easy: You simply follow the trail of your time, your affection, your energy, your money, and your allegiance. At the end of that trail you'll find a throne, and whatever, or whoever, is on that throne is what's of highest value to you. On that throne is what you worship. Sure, not too many of us walk around saying; "I worship my stuff. I worship my job. I worship this pleasure. I worship her. I worship my body. I worship me!" But the trail never lies. We may say we value this thing or that thing more than any other, but the volume of our actions speaks louder than our words." (Louie Giglio)

The Psalm and Hymns

All Creatures of Our God and King

A call for "everything that hath life and breath to praise the Lord." The text derives from Francis of Assisi, circa 1225. He wrote it shortly before his death, but it was not published for some four hundred years. The theology of his original text has, it should be said, been beefed up by the translator. The majestic tune is itself venerable, dating from the early 1600s. Let's sing it in the spirit of Psalms 148 and 150.

Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven (Psalm 103)

This song takes up the praise of "King Jesus," for which Paul and company were persecuted, as we discovered in the morning Scripture reading. Henry Lyte, author of "Abide with Me" (generally considered to be one of the ten best hymns in the English language), gave us this hymn. It is a rather free new covenant paraphrase of Psalm 103 and one of the most jubilant hymns he ever wrote. It was published in a hymnal for his own congregation called *Spirit of the Psalms* (1834). Lyte was the son of English parents, was born in Scotland in 1793 but spent his early life in Ireland. This song is well known and loved by our congregation.

God Moves in a Mysterious Way

This grand hymn moves us to the contemplation of the awesome, sovereign, wise, fatherly providence of God—a theme very evident in Ecclesiastes. William Cowper, the hymn's author, who gave us so many glorious hymns, spent a lifetime struggling with depression and spiritual doubt. He stands as a reminder that true, good and mature Christians are often assailed by dark seasons and trials of the heart, mind and soul. Perhaps these are among the most difficult because so ineffable.

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

The first stanza of William Williams' great hymn "Guide Me" was originally written

in Welsh and then translated into English by Peter Williams. The last two stanzas were also written in Welsh and translated by William Williams himself. The tune “Cwm Rhondda” (you’ll have to get Derek Thomas to pronounce that!) is a classic. The imagery of the hymn is drawn from Israel’s march to Canaan—an apt image for the Christian pilgrimage in this life “under the sun” but “under the Son.”

This guide to worship is written by the minister and provided to the congregation and our visitors in order (1) to assist them in their worship by explaining why we do what we do in worship and (2) to provide them background on the various elements of the service.

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