

**A youth bible study on Ecclesiastes 12:1-2 for both individuals and groups:**

*Remember your Creator while you are young, before the days of trouble come and the years when you say, "I find no pleasure in them." When you get old... (New Century Version)*

You know the saying, “You don't bend an old tree”. You know what a bonzi is? It is those miniature replicas of large trees. In essence they're the same, just kept small by trimming the roots. You don't make a bonsai from a grown tree. I have a friend who's a missionary to Japan. As a boy his parents were also missionaries to Japan for a few years and made him accustomed to the land. The missionary organisation they are working for know that if they don't get a child in church, they won't do it as an adult. You don't make a bonsai from a grown tree.

In the western world it is not much different. Most conversions take place before adulthood.

**Why do you think this is the case, according to our Scripture?** (When a group bible study first discuss and get a consensus, before turning to the answer. The same implies for the following questions.)

The first reason is because 'Remember' can become complicated. Once the demands of life kick in, the quantity of things to remember quickly quench the 'Remember' of God and His world, in a world that has actually no place for God and faith – only reason and reasonableness. To remember God as the 'Creator' is not easy in a world where human reason is in control and creation is marginalised in the swelling of technology and scientific answers. In the Dark Ages it was easier to remember God, as creator, because one needed God to create here and right now in day-to-day provisions. God was needed to give bread and clothes and health today.

Do you see that this remember has to do with faith? Faith in a God quickly becomes abstract when the answers of technology and science do an apparently better job, in the pressures and evidences of life. This is only to be persuaded by rhetoric, the same as what happened with Eve in the Garden of Eden. The truth in rhetoric is not what is right and wrong, but how something is being said. Right is what is persuasive, like the apparent right of the lie of the snake in the garden of Eden.

**What are the days of trouble and what contradiction is hidden in it?**

The contradiction is that trouble days actually create faith, like the example of someone in the Dark Ages as stated above. You know the saying “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church”. In trouble days of persecution, in e.g. former Russia or China today, the church grows the fastest. The Trouble days of our text can't then be difficult days per say.

The trouble days of our text are when the voice of the world, and the voice of reality, calls one to make sense of life. Sense is the love of money, the excess accumulation of possessions, status etc. As a young person life is still in the future and the voice of the world is to take hold of this future with a this-worldly-paradise mentality. To get the best job possible, to get the dream house build, to drive a neck-turning car. Trouble days are when God is not necessary in a carefree world or in a man made system that solves all problems.

### **When will one not find pleasure in God anymore and what is the warning?**

In short, one will not find pleasure in God anymore when the sacrifice to follow Jesus becomes to demanding. When the first love for Jesus demands a death to self and its desires. The warning is that there is an invisible line when one finds no pleasure in God anymore. Once one has crossed this line, turning back becomes almost impossible. The most dangerous lie, out of hell, is “Later”. “You can decide for Jesus later, after you have done this and that”. “Later, on your deathbed you can turn to Jesus, like the thief on the cross”. My friend, later you will have no desire.

### **When is one old?**

Old is very relative. For you, as a teenager, I might be old, but you know I don't think so. I still think I have a few years left in my body and I rather think people in an old age home are old. My previous supervisor is 66 and doesn't think he is old; both his parents turned 100 before they died. On the other hand, I once heard of a drug addict in Amsterdam, who at the age of 21, said her life is over and she's just waiting for death. She was older than my previous supervisor.

Old is relative, but very much has to do with lifestyle as well. Old has to do with this world, but when we have Jesus we have eternal life in us and old gets a new colour. The right lifestyle is to remember Jesus with the right ethical guidance, no drugs, alcohol, wrongs friends etc., and interesting enough that'll put old age in the right eternal perspective.