

‘SMOKE & MIRRORS’
(Wisdom from Above for Successful Living ‘Under the Sun’)
Studies in Ecclesiastes

‘Mirror, Mirror on the Wall...’

Every morning the evil queen would look into her magic mirror and ask, “*Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who’s the fairest one of all?*” The mirror, which could never lie, would always answer, “*Oh my queen, you are the fairest one of all.*” In this children’s fable, the queen’s vanity was satisfied until the next day when she would ask the same question and get the same answer as before.

But when a young girl named Snow White turned 7 years old, she rapidly turned into a young woman who was as *beautiful as the day* and more beautiful than the queen. When the queen asked the mirror her question as usual, she did not receive the usual answer. The mirror that couldn’t ever lie said something like, “*Oh queen, you are the fairest here, it’s true, but Snow White is a thousand times more beautiful than you.*” The vain and evil queen was so enraged with jealousy that she employed a *hunter* to find Snow White and kill her. You probably know the rest of the story of the evil queen’s demise and eventual death.

Mirrors are made to tell the truth, whether you like it or not. If you don’t like the reflection looking back at you, it isn’t the mirror’s fault, nor is it the mirror’s job to make us better than we truly are. But trick mirrors that alter the image of the one standing before it have a built-in curvature intended to lie and feed the human vanity of our sinful nature.

Trick mirrors of magicians and carnival *fun houses* are like the distorted images of this world that send back a deceptive reflection about this world *under the sun*. Smoke screens cover up warnings from God in His Word about sin and its consequences. Flawed mirrors distort sin into causing it to seem more satisfying, fulfilling and inconsequential than the Bible says it is.

Commercial advertising and television shows that glorify liquor, sensuality, and rebellion have curved mirrors that make evil seem right and good seem stupid. Pagan educators who exalt evolution and Freudian psychology are bent on twisting biblical truth and moral purity into seeming obsolete and repressive. Entertainers who spout out vulgarity and immoral comedy making it seem normal and acceptable to progressive people today distort God’s hatred of all such perversity.

Modern day preachers and priests contort the doctrines of Scripture into *fluffy inspirational thoughts* instead of the authoritative, inerrant Word of God. Politicians and business people who lie all the time to get elected or fatten their *bottom line* profits have rationalized their unethical behavior as normal and acceptable.

This world is like the *curvy mirrors room* in a carnival *fun house* with *flim-flam* con men and women leading gullible souls to applaud them are like dastardly magicians telling sinful people ‘*you are the fairest of all*’ when the exact opposite is true according to Scripture.

For **10 chapters in Ecclesiastes**, Solomon has exposed the smoke and mirrors deceptions of life *under the sun* that preys upon people’s *vanity* and eagerness to *chase after the wind* at the expense of their lives and souls. Now, in the final two chapters, the Lord through Solomon summarizes how a believer in this world (*life under the sun*) can have an abundant, fulfilling life that pleases and blesses God (*life under heaven*). We are born into a world that is full of smoke and mirrors, but we don’t have to be fooled by them.

With the Holy Spirit to blow away the smoke screens and God’s Word to reflect His will and ways to us with undistorted insight about everything and everyone, we can avoid *chasing the wind* (*wasting our life*) and *foolish vanity* (*exaggerated opinions of self or others*) and have a happy, fruitful, spiritual life ‘*under heaven*’ all our days, here ‘*under the sun*’.

‘All Clear!’
(The ‘Clarified’ Christian Life)
Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:1

A Simple Life ‘Under Heaven’
(Faithful generosity – Prosperous living, not a ‘vanity’ existence)
11:1-4

The 1st verse implies investing in ventures beyond where you are – It implies that life *under the sun* should be lived with a sense of adventure-- using your time, talent and treasure exploring beyond the horizon.

Verse 2 implies diversity of investment and faith in being as generous as you can (*servicing 7*) and even a little more by faith (*also to 8*). And to do it while you can because you have no idea whether some *turn of events* in your life may prohibit it if you delay.

Verses 3 and 4 teach that the good life regards the good things God has filled in our life (clouds full of rain) need to be dispersed in order to do good in the earth. Although details of our plans can’t always be 100% predictable (where the tree falls), we must move ahead by faith, not always expecting totally perfect conditions before doing what seems to be God’s will.

- *Talk about this enthusiastic way of seeing your time, talent and treasure as the Lord’s provision entrusted to you for investments by faith in life.*
- *Discuss your understanding of ‘Christian stewardship’ of what God gives you. Do you have to be rich to live like this? If not, how do you have to live in order to be generous and adventurous?*

A Good Job ‘Under the Sun’
(Fruitful productivity – Purposeful activity, not ‘chasing the wind’)
11:5-8

The context of these verses is that the man’s occupation is a farmer. The principles of work given can also be applied to any job one is employed with (*job, school, church responsibility, etc.*). Verse 5 teaches that just because you don’t understand everything about something doesn’t mean that you should stop doing it. In fact, you learn a lot about something by doing it over and over. Verse 6 is about being a diligent, hard-worker who by faith does as much as he can while expecting *good* to come of it in the end. Verses 7-8 tell us that our life passes by like a day in which we know night is coming when our work won’t continue, so get a job you are good at and do it with joy and faithfulness while you can. That’s all God expects – do your best in all you do. To just work at something to make money or be successful by the world’s standards is *vanity* (v 8).

- *Are you working at something you feel this way about right now? If not, is this because you aren’t doing your best ‘as unto the Lord’ at it or because it is not something you are good at or designed by God to do?*
- *Do you think what you are doing is what you will do the rest of your life? Is it in some way contributing toward your goal for a vocation?*
- *What do you think it is that God wants you to do with your life to feel like vs. 5-8 above?*

A Spiritual Walk in the World
(Future accountability – Prudential behavior, not a ‘foolish lifestyle’)
11:9-12:1

These verses are about keeping God and His ways #1 in both your daily lifestyle and your life’s work.

- *Discuss how these verses have proven or are proving to be a ‘guiding light’ principle for you. How much influence does future accounting day before God have upon what you do and don’t do in your daily life? Your choices in life? Your relationships?*