



**EAT,
DRINK
& BE
MERRY**

RAY
ORTLUND

A GOSPEL CALL TO BOLD ENJOYMENT

“Few voices today resonate with a delicate balance of pastoral care, biblical clarity, and personal authenticity. But thankfully, the Lord has given us Ray Ortlund, who calls the church to spiritual maturity and to abundant, joy-filled living. He has exemplified this refreshing sacred assignment for many decades—following Christ with integrity, leading the church passionately, and loving his family whole-heartedly while making space to simply enjoy the life God has given to him. I’m thankful for Ray’s example and for the holy reminder in the pages of this book to milk the goodness out of life for the glory of God.”

Priscilla Shirer, author; Bible teacher

“Ray Ortlund has written on a truth that is desperately needed and yet somehow forgotten: that feasting is holy, laughing until your cheeks hurt delights the heart of God, and playing until your body is tired and soul is full is part of God’s good design for us. In *Eat, Drink, and Be Merry*, Ray masterfully shows us from Ecclesiastes that one of God’s great desires for us is in these short lives we’ve been given is the enjoyment of his grace found in the everyday and ordinary.”

Matt Chandler, Lead Pastor, The Village Church, Flower Mound, Texas

“Uplifting, insightful, and, above all, full of wisdom—I wish this book had been around thirty years ago. Written by a true sage for those looking for more of the grace and joy of Christ in their lives.”

Sam Allberry, Associate Pastor, Immanuel, Nashville, Tennessee;
author, *One With My Lord*

Eat, Drink, and Be Merry

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Eat, Drink, and Be Merry

A Gospel Call to Bold Enjoyment

Ray Ortlund

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*To the memory of my father,
Raymond C. Ortlund Sr.
The greatest man I have ever known.
I love you, Dad.
I wish I had loved you more.*

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Preface

THANK YOU FOR OPENING this book. Here's why I've written it. You and I are being assaulted every day—pressured, even overwhelmed—by our modern culture of soul-numbing distraction. And we need a plan just to save our sanity.

The book of Revelation is blunt. It portrays our world with two shocking metaphors: a whore tempting us and a beast intimidating us (Rev. 17:1–2; 19:19). In our generation, it looks like the whore is working overtime, and we're so tired of being degraded. But the deeper truth of it is even worse. The whore *is* the beast—just dressed up in the latest fashions.

How to respond? One way is anger. And we see a lot of anger these days, don't we? In a way, it's understandable. But I, for one, don't trust our moral fervor. It gets mean, ugly. Anger is a dangerous substance. The Bible puts a warning label on it (James 1:19–20).

A far better strategy of response is the opposite, and one we never talk about: enjoyment. Yes, *enjoyment*. It's a smart strategy both for prevailing over these disastrous times and for building a better future.

The Bible—the most serious book in the world—calls us to that enjoyment, and I can *prove* it.

It's why I've written this book. This is my *happy* protest, and I'm asking you to join me in it. Anger and rage and finger-pointing aren't sustainable. They're a crushing burden. But enjoyment can carry us forward, now and forever.

So through this book, I'm hoping you'll give yourself permission to dive right into what one scholar calls “the bliss of being alive.”¹ And that sheer bliss is not something God says he *might* allow us to receive. God *commands* us to receive it—as the *wise* way to live!²

Enjoyment is *profoundly insightful, powerfully strategic*.

One of our best trend-watchers, describing your generation, begins a recent book with a chapter titled “The Surge of

1 Derek Kidner, *A Time to Mourn and a Time to Dance: The Message of Ecclesiastes* (InterVarsity Press, 1976), 98.

2 William F. Buckley Jr., quoted in *Vintage Muggeridge: Religion and Society*, ed. Geoffrey Barlow (Eerdmans, 1985), 158: “Happiness pursued cannot be caught, and if it could, it would not be happiness.” That is why I use the word *receive*. When we turn to God, holding out the empty hands of faith, surrendering to him, that is wisdom. And *great* things start happening.

Suffering.”³ And my generation is to blame for it. We cooked up this crazy idea of ever-present technology and smartphones and social media. You and your friends are suffering as a result. Anxiety, depression, exhaustion (and worse) are all on the rise. At the same time, the playful curiosity, the bold risk-taking, the rollicking good fun that all of us enjoy and need—those life-giving experiences—are declining.

God cares about that. And he has something to say about it in the ancient book of Ecclesiastes. There God counsels us to walk the path of joy *as* the path of wisdom. As if joy and wisdom combine perfectly! It’s why I love Ecclesiastes. And I hope you’ll find its insights as delightfully freeing as I do.

At one level, Ecclesiastes says something we all know: *Life is short*. That’s obvious. And yet, it isn’t obvious. I turned seventy-five a few months ago. Me, seventy-five? I was in my thirties just five minutes ago! You might not be seventy-five and half-dead like me. Still, you get it.

But at another level, here’s what Ecclesiastes wants us to think about more deeply: *Life is good*. Life is short, *and* life is good. It’s not an either/or. It’s a both/and. And what makes your short life good is the grace of God *giving* your life to you, moment by moment. Your part is to receive it. Not deserve it

3 Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation* (Penguin, 2024), 21–45.

or achieve it or control it. Just receive it and enjoy this good gift from God that is *your life*.

Sometimes we might get to thinking, “I *really* want to live it up. So getting close to God—that’s the *last* thing I want!” Ecclesiastes says the opposite: God is the great giver of everything truly desirable. For example,

- Eating, drinking, and finding enjoyment come from the hand of God (Eccl. 2:24–25).
- Wealth, possessions, and the ability to enjoy them are gifts of God (Eccl. 5:18–19).
- Joyful feasting, along with productive work, are given to us by God (Eccl. 8:15).
- The simple joys of home life are of God and worthy to be celebrated (Eccl. 9:7–9).

How crazy, then, are we? We’re walking down the street, looking to have a good time, when we see God coming our way. So we cross the street to avoid him. We hope he doesn’t notice and call to us, because we think he’ll only spoil our fun. But the truth is the opposite. What drains the life out of us is not God. It’s this glittering, flashy, fraudulent world with its never-ending 24/7 grandiose hoopla and vulgar sensationalism and cheap spectacularization. It’s *exhausting*. God doesn’t rob us of life. His

grace restores us. He enriches us with the greatest gift of all, Christ himself, the living one who gives us true life (Rev. 1:17–18).

Jesus said, “The Scriptures bear witness about me” (John 5:39). That includes Ecclesiastes. In Leviticus, for example, Jesus is the lamb sacrificed for our sins. In Kings, he is the leader who rules us nobly and defends us powerfully. In Isaiah, he is the protester against social evils and the prophet of a brighter day. The Old Testament keeps showing us Jesus from different angles of vision.

Through Ecclesiastes, Jesus comes to us as the sage who holds up a freshly picked flower and says, “This flower is dying. But its bright color is still beautiful, and its rich fragrance is so lovely. God your Father created this beauty, this fragrance, for *you*. And your time to enjoy it is *now!*”

So let me ask you: Do you ever feel like that person on the street that I described a second ago? Maybe you want enough of Jesus to feel forgiven but not so much of him that he takes over? I’m here to say: The further you go with him, the more alive you will feel. Jesus said, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and *all these things* will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33).⁴

4 Raymond C. Ortlund, *Let the Church Be the Church* (Word, 1983), 44, quotes Henry Drummond: “Don’t touch Christianity unless you are willing to seek the Kingdom of Heaven first. I promise you a miserable existence, if you seek it second.”

So cross that street back to where Jesus is. Seek his kingdom first. And he'll prove himself to you. He gives *everything* really enjoyable.

Do we need to worry that too much of *that* is going around?

Ecclesiastes is asking us, Are you aware that God, in his *wisdom*, is offering you *bold enjoyment*? What if God is counseling you toward more laughter, more parties, more walks by the lake, more checking in on a lonely neighbor, more visits to the art museum, more having friends over for dessert, and maybe even getting a new puppy? What if a wisely joyous new you will have more to offer your suffering generation than an overly serious you could ever bring to the table? What if *wise joy* is the most underrated strategy for a better future for all of us? And if that is true, and it is, then why hold back? Why even wait?

Your life is short. Your life is good. God thinks so. Let's you and I think about it together, okay?

*Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and
let your heart cheer you in the days of your
youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the
sight of your eyes. But know that for all these
things God will bring you into judgment.*

*Remove vexation from your heart, and
put away pain from your body, for youth
and the dawn of life are vanity.*

ECCLESIASTES 11:9-10

Why I *Love* This Passage, and Why You Can Too

WE'VE ALL HEARD the old saying, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die!" Where did that come from? Some trace it to Shakespeare. Others to Epicurus. But the prophet Isaiah comes closest. He quotes the outlook of his generation, as their world was falling apart: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (Isa. 22:13).¹

Their "surge of suffering" landed hard on them. The way they saw it, life was short but *not* good. So they did what made sense in the moment. They jumped into a binge of self-indulgence. And why not? If this world is all we have, and we don't have it for long, why not grab what little it does offer before even *that* turns to dust?

¹ The apostle Paul alludes to Isaiah's verse in 1 Corinthians 15:32. See also Luke 12:19.

Their orgy of insanity—the same temptation pressures us too. Our world today is in crisis. We see it, feel it. But panicky selfishness isn't what we want. You and I know too well the bitter aftertaste of sin. Nor do we want to run scared in the *opposite* direction—into dark, legalistic, religious austerity. It can seem holy, in a smug kind of way, and safely distant from the urgent needs of our world. But both the drunken joyride and the dark monastery will break our hearts.

There *is* a true way to follow the real Jesus as we slog through this trainwreck world. It's why he gave us the wisdom books of the Bible:

- *Job*, for enduring catastrophic suffering that makes no sense,
- *Proverbs*, for navigating everyday life with skill and even success,
- *The Song of Solomon*, for revering romantic love as a gift of God, and
- *Ecclesiastes*, for accepting our limits and savoring our joys.

Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes to help us do two things on our journey through this life: accept the shortness of it *and* enjoy the goodness of it.

That's why I've titled this book *Eat, Drink, and Be Merry: A Gospel Call to Bold Enjoyment*. Do you hear how this rallying cry is *not* the same as “Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die”? What a crazy roll of the dice *that* is! It misses out on real enjoyment. But Ecclesiastes shows us where solid happiness can be found all along our way. Why risk coming to the end of our journey burned out and bitter, when we can grow wise and even saintly—cheerfully saintly?

Our Both/And Lives

Here is what Solomon wants to say to you. It's a nuanced message: Day by day, your life is unfolding as a both/and mix:

- *both* futile *and* worthwhile,
- *both* short *and* sweet,
- *both* quickly passing *and* deeply wondrous.

Your daily experience is not a simplistic either/or—either pointless or meaningful, either disappointing or rewarding, either nothing or everything.² Your story includes contrasting

2 Francis Schaeffer would often say, “If you seek perfection or nothing, you will get nothing every time.” William Edgar, “10 Things You Should Know about Francis Schaeffer,” Crossway, April 11, 2016, <https://www.crossway.org>.

shades of color, diverse ingredients in the recipe, clashing chords in the music.

A wedding day, for example, is euphoric. The honeymoon, even more euphoric. Then the Monday morning after the honeymoon, you both get up and go back to work. Same on Tuesday. No big drama. Plenty of blah days. That's life—*both* spikes of happiness *and* stretches of ordinariness, even drudgery. Ecclesiastes looks at that nuance, and says, “Your both/and reality is really worth living!”

Ecclesiastes gives us the wisdom that accepts the blahs and savors the joys. In fact, what deserves to *stand out* to us is the joys. After all, what we're up against is *massive*. The whole universe is in “bondage to corruption” (Rom. 8:21). “*Everything* is broken,” to quote Bob Dylan.³ But even within this cosmic death-spiral we're stuck in, *joy keeps showing up*. Why? Because God is here, and God is good. If you've given your heart to him, your earthly joys are prophetic whispers of your eternal future in Christ, which is *even more massive*.

Sorrow is temporary. Joy is eternal. Wisdom gets that. I wrote this book to urge you to believe it. J. I. Packer, a profound theologian, captures the vision:

3 Bob Dylan, “Everything Is Broken” (Special Rider Music, 1989), <https://www.bobdylan.com>.

I hold the heady doctrine that no pleasures are so frequent or intense as those of the grateful, devoted, single-minded, whole-hearted, self-denying Christian. I maintain that the delights of work and leisure, of friendship and family, of eating and mating, of arts and crafts, of playing and watching games, of finding out and making things, of helping other people, and all the other noble pleasures that life affords, are doubled for the Christian; for . . . the Christian tastes God in all his or her pleasures, and this increases them, whereas for other people pleasure brings with it a sense of hollowness which reduces it.⁴

If that's true, and it is, then let's not settle for grim resignation. Let's be bold. Let's reach for defiant cheerfulness. Your mortal life in this world will never rise to the ultimate breakthrough, where everything is overflowing with perfection. But still, your ordinary life is a good gift from God above. You don't have to be amazing. In fact, it's unwise—downright wrong—both to demand what we cannot have and to degrade what we do have. C. S. Lewis said it well:

⁴ J. I. Packer, *God Has Spoken: Revelation and the Bible* (Baker, 1993), 14.

The settled happiness and security which we all desire, God withholds from us by the very nature of the world; but joy, pleasure, and merriment He has scattered broadcast. We are never safe, but we have plenty of fun, and some ecstasy.⁵

As I write these words, it's October here in Tennessee, the best month of the year. The temperatures are moderate, the humidity is low, and the trees are exploding with bright autumn colors. Vermont, it isn't. Still, it's *gorgeous* outside. But a change is coming. Soon it will be the long, dark months of winter. The trees will be bare, the skies dull gray, and the cold wind will bite.

Here's my point. I can respond to the inevitable loss of my Tennessee October in two opposite ways. One response is a sneer: "Sure, it's nice out today. But it won't last. *Meh*." The other response is a smile: "Today is awesome! And it won't last long. So I'm going to take it all in *right now*!" The wise response is obvious. Wisdom *enjoys* this brief life.

Welcome to Ecclesiastes! Even more, welcome to *Christ*.

5 C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (Macmillan, 1962), 115. Then Lewis explains why God has arranged our experience in this mixed way: "It is not hard to see why. The security we crave would teach us to rest our hearts in this world and oppose an obstacle to our return to God; a few moments of happy love, a landscape, a symphony, a merry meeting with our friends, a bath or a football match, have no such tendency. Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home."

A Surprising Strategy for Sanity

In Ecclesiastes 11:9–10, Christ himself is speaking to you. He is saying that your youth, especially, is no time *either* to cave to this world’s orgy *or* to cower within religious austerity. Right now is your time for this: “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth.” That’s biblical wisdom counseling us, “Youth is your *prime time* for living to the max!” A surprising strategy for sanity, right?

My son Eric, in his commentary on Ecclesiastes, gets to the point:

Have you noticed how young people are delighted with everyday occurrences which adults hardly notice? Children splash in the bath, throw snowballs, jump in puddles; teenagers listen to the latest bands, make their own music, play sports . . . and adults trudge to the office.⁶

Don’t get old before you get old. And if, like me, you are old, get young again. Throw a snowball. Play a sport. We all have more than enough days for trudging to the office.

I’m hoping this book persuades you that God’s path of wisdom for you is *both* serious *and* delightful—more of both

⁶ Eric Ortlund, *Ecclesiastes* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2024), 174.

than you might expect.⁷ Following Christ will *both* deepen you *and* free you. It's a brilliant strategy for glad sanity and steady integrity—all the way.

So, whatever your age, let me ask you this. Laughing heartily at a good joke, reading a sonnet from Shakespeare, taking a walk with a grieving friend, watching *The Hunt for Red October* for the umpteenth time, giving an anonymous gift to a struggling neighbor, staring at the nighttime stars, welcoming into your experience a thousand other earthly delights—is *that* the sage counsel you were expecting from the all-holy God above? In Ecclesiastes, he is saying to you, “Eat, drink, and be merry? Yes! Don't miss out!”

How This Passage Unleashed Me

Here is my own personal reason for *loving* this passage in Ecclesiastes. It's one of my favorites in all the Bible. Verse 9 sets the tone: “Rejoice, O young man.” And believe it or not, I was a young man once—just after the last Ice Age! And I came to a moment in my young life when I needed

⁷ Derek Kidner, *A Time to Mourn and a Time to Dance: The Message of Ecclesiastes* (InterVarsity Press, 1976), 98: “Candid as ever, these verses [in Ecclesiastes] match the delight of existence with the seriousness of it. Each joy here is confronted by its opposite or its complement; there is no softening of the colors on either side.”

permission from no one less than God to “go for it” with cheerful confidence.

For me, that was a change.

I had grown up in a wonderful home and a healthy church. But along the way—I don’t know how—a feeling just rubbed off on me that “good Christians,” the really earnest people, rise above their common earthly existence. They wouldn’t enjoy wine with dinner, or dance to music with a beat, or stop to marvel at a spectacular sunset. They’re hyper-focused on self-denial and cross-bearing and world missions.

At a more conscious level, my ever-present Christian duty, flashing with neon lights in my conscience, was basically this: “Do not love the world or the things in the world” (1 John 2:15). Now, mind you, that verse really matters! But my problem was, I was thinking piecemeal. I was turning one single note in the symphony of the Christian faith into the whole musical score. And trying to actually *live* that way was no fun. I had to keep propping up a super-spirituality God never wanted. In fact, I was *dishonoring* Christ—by miniaturizing him. I did not perceive him as my great hope for *everything* true, wise, and downright happy in the whole of life, now and forever. Such an uplifting thought never entered my mind. By now, I know how wrong that mentality is. But back then, it felt right. Grim, but right.

Maybe you understand. Maybe you too know what it feels like to navigate daily life under a cloud of vaguely defined failure—all because of the “you” that is *never* fervent enough, *always* too worldly. And not because anyone imposed on you an impossible list of man-made rules. But maybe no one ever showed you the glorious goodness of God, your kind Creator and gracious Redeemer, as *the* beautiful insight at *the* defining center of authentic Christianity.

When I started seeing God’s overflowing goodness to me, I changed.

What turned me around was this: *I fell in love with the most beautiful woman in the world.* Did she love Jesus? Yes. Wholeheartedly! And she liked me too. As our romance grew, something deep within me, a boldly biblical faith, finally took over. My whole outlook on this God-created world began shifting from anxious guardedness to confident enjoyment. With happy thanks to God, I started walking forward with expectancy, wonder, and the kind of holiness that creates *more* room to maneuver.

That outlook, that wisdom, is what I want for you too.

So let me take you back. Here’s how God used Ecclesiastes, of all things, to detonate that explosion within me. It was April 1969. I was a sophomore in college and *wildly in love*. On September 12, 1968, I had met Jan Giles. She came from

way up in Minnesota. To me, a California boy, that seemed like Siberia! But there she was, this amazing woman appearing out of the mists of an almost mythical northern land—and she was *so real!*

We began dating. As things warmed up over the next few months, I held her hand. After a while, I even kissed her. I was utterly smitten.

But then something bad happened. Really bad. Early that April, I called Jan to ask her out yet again, *and she turned me down*. Why? She had already accepted a date from another guy for that Friday night! Instantly, I saw there was only one thing to do. It was time to ask Jan to “go steady” with me.

Does anybody even use that phrase anymore? Back then, “going steady” meant the guy and the girl agreed to date each other *only*. And of course, the next step after that was getting engaged. And then getting married. Which was what I wanted!

But the gravitas of it all landed on me. Asking Jan to go steady was *a big deal*. I had to be sure. A lot was at stake for both her and me. So I wanted *God* to be in this decision. I was no saint, mind you. (I’m not much of one even now.) But I did want God’s blessing. So there I was in my dorm, Fischer Hall, Room 301, at Wheaton College. I picked up my Bible, and I played “Bible roulette.” That’s when you

open the Bible at random and read until a verse jumps off the page and, *voila*, “God has spoken!” Not the best way to read the Bible, obviously. But I didn’t know any better. In hindsight, I wonder if the angels above were saying, “Lord, we *must* send this doofus to seminary! He has *no* idea how to read your Word!” But I also wonder if our merciful Lord winked at them and said, “Watch *this*.”

Anyway, I really did want his guidance. I didn’t want to cook the answer up myself, as mere wish-fulfillment. So I decided to read from the most irrelevant book in all the Bible. Then I’d *really* know the answer was from God. You can picture me there, flipping the pages of my Bible to the book of Leviticus. But on my way, the thought popped up, “No, Ecclesiastes is even *more* weird!” So to Ecclesiastes I turned. I began reading:

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,
vanity of vanities! All is vanity. (Eccl. 1:2)

I’m thinking, “Yep. Definitely weird. This will do just fine!”—having no idea how *perfect* Ecclesiastes really is for a young man searching for answers.

So I’m sitting there, plowing through Ecclesiastes. Chapter 1, chapter 2, on and on. I finally come to chapter 11—and

BAM! God's 2x4 lands right upside my head in the most thrilling way:

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. (Eccl. 11:9)

I wasn't sure what to make of the last part of that verse. But the first part? I thought, *There's my answer! A direct hit!* God really had spoken. He had answered my question, and his answer was wonderfully positive. It took me all of one nanosecond to decide, "Alrighty then! I am *so* going to ask Jan Giles to go steady. The Bible says it's okay with God. Walking in the ways of my heart and the sight of my eyes—thank you, Lord!" So I called her back. (More on that in a moment.)

The discovery that those words, on page 635 of my Bible, opened up to me—here is how I could have said it:

God my Father in heaven above is affirming my young manhood. He is inviting me to rejoice in my experience of life. And right now the joy of it includes asking Jan Giles to go steady with me. In fact, God's answer is even better than I'd hoped for. This verse is addressing not only my

question in this moment but also the entirety of my life. God isn't promising Jan will say yes to me. But he *is* giving me the green light to follow my crazy-in-love-heart and ask her. My Father above is saying to me, "You like her, don't you? She really *is* wonderful. I know. I created her. So ask her! Don't miss your chance! But also, don't be selfish. You will answer to me for how you treat her."

I did call her back. I asked her out for Saturday night the next weekend. And she accepted. (Huge sigh of relief!) We went out for a nice dinner at the Nordic Hills Country Club, near Wheaton, the evening of April 26, 1969. Sitting there at the table, I asked Jan to go steady with me. She said yes! It was *magic*. The next year we got engaged. The year after that we got married. And here we are, fifty-three years later, with four children and their spouses, fifteen grandchildren, many precious friends, and tons of stories of God's loving care in good times and bad.

And what put my feet on this thrilling path so long ago as I sat there in my dorm room? What guided me in that defining moment, with so much on the line, far more than I could foresee? What made the difference was *the wisdom of Ecclesiastes*.

To this day, I can't think about it without emotion. I am so grateful to God.

By his grace, I stumbled onto the biblical wisdom that freed me to *live*. I discovered that God above did not despise this young man. He did not perceive my youth as a stupid phase for me to get through as quickly as possible. He did not regret creating me with sexual energies and longings for love. He perceived my youth as a gift I could enjoy, with his cheerful blessing and fatherly guidance. God in heaven above was giving me the okay to walk in the ways of my heart and in the sight of my eyes because young manhood and young womanhood are glorious gifts from his heart to us.

Leviticus has its own wonderful message! I know that by now. But Ecclesiastes is how I was liberated, even commanded, *to enjoy life with a happy conscience before God*.

See why I love this passage? And why you can love it too? Your youth isn't a problem. It is a privilege. God thinks so. Ecclesiastes 11:9–10 is his escape route from holding back in “defend mode,” and it's his open door to living boldly in “discover mode.”⁸ Why not trust him and walk right through that open door?

I'm not young anymore. It's your turn now. And I want you feeling affirmed as powerfully as I did. This passage is in

8 These two categories come from Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation* (Penguin, 2024), 69–70. He writes, “If we want to help young people thrive—at home, in school, and in the workplace—shifting them into discover mode may be the most effective change we can make” (p. 70). Solomon would agree.

the Bible for that very reason—to help *you* believe that God your Father encourages you to *enjoy* the bloom of your youth, and all your years thereafter.

Let's Break the Silence!

But who is saying such things to your generation? Where are the mature voices trumpeting this happy message to you that I so needed at that defining moment? The Bible is offering you a powerful strategy for God-centered wisdom in a world falling apart: “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth.” I *never* hear serious preachers of the Bible declaring that. But it *must* be declared. It's in the Bible, plain as day, because you need to know something really important. *God* is calling you, especially as a young man or a young woman, to receive gratefully and enjoy fully the human adventure he himself is setting before you. You need to stop holding back. It's time for you to live boldly. If you'll hold onto God's word, it will hold onto you, and you will not regret following its counsel.

So as you read this book, here's what I am asking: May I have the privilege of being a fatherly voice to you? The wisdom books of the Bible speak with the voice of a father, even a grandfather, in the family of God. In that gentle way, I want to ask you, in the holy name of Christ, to *make the*

most of the life God is giving you. You won't get your chance twice, and it passes quickly. Don't miss out on a single joy God has for you.

This sage counsel offered in Holy Scripture—that *you can let the good times roll*—no one less than God your heavenly Father is saying so.

Wow. Who knew?

So let's take the next step.