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Ecclesiastes 9:1-10

"Have A Blast While You Last!"

April 14, 2013

Shall we open our Bibles this morning to Ecclesiastes 9:1?

This book that Solomon wrote is amongst those in the Old Testament that are known as the Books of Wisdom or the Books of Poetry. And we've mentioned to you before, they're unique - because running from Job through the Song of Solomon (behind where we are), these books are interested in your present-tense daily walk with God. So everything there really speaks to today. How are you doing with the Lord today? And even when prophecy is mentioned, it is always in light of how you're doing with the Lord today. As such, they make the presumption that if you're reading them you really do want to do better in your walk, and also they address all of the difficult areas of life. Job talks about why the righteous, the people of God, would suffer. And David and others teach us how to pray in the Psalms as you get to kind of eavesdrop in. And Solomon talks to us in Proverbs about daily living and how we apply God's Word. And then you get to this book, where Solomon addresses the issue - can you find life, real life? Is there a purpose to life if you remove God from it?

And so we've been studying this book for quite some time - with Solomon. As a young man, Solomon had followed his dad, David, to the throne, and when praying asked the Lord for wisdom to try to live up to his father's legacy. And the Lord gladly answered Solomon. In fact, he gave Solomon more wisdom than any man who had ever lived. And he said to Solomon, "I'm so glad you didn't ask for what normally young men would ask for - money and power and riches and honor and glory. But I'll give you those too, along with wisdom," and Solomon did good for a while. He led the people in the ways of the Lord, but then as he got older, he began to marry these different women from different countries, and his heart was turned away from the Lord. And this book was written later on in life, where Solomon was convinced somehow that he could find purpose in life apart from God; that somehow there was something out there that would fulfill him. And he chronicles his journey of discovery, if you will, as a very powerful ruler that, really, he had enough money and power to not say no to anything. He could have tried it all. And as he writes out his conclusions and his expectations, he found that everything in life without God is really futile, it's empty, it's short-term. That God has better plans for man than what we see around us. He wants to forgive man

that has fallen into sin. That He wants to give you an eternal hope in His Son. That He has joy for you and peace. That He has a desire to bless your life. That the roads in the world that say, "Come this way, life to be found," really lead nowhere. They're a bunch of empty roads with empty promises.

There are several places that Solomon writes this journal entries in - day in and day out - that he surfaces, if you will, that he comes to the things that he knew before, the wisdom of God, and he picks it up again. And he makes some pretty good insights for us as he breaks through the clouds, and he talks about the glorious things of God. But then he kind of falls back down into that life "under the sun" understanding, the horizontal life. Fortunately, by the time you get to chapter 12, he ends up where he started - back with God where he belongs. And I fully expect to see Solomon, one day, in heaven.

Here in chapter 9, Solomon brings us face-to-face with our last enemy, especially the first ten verses, death. And he wants to give us some determinations about how we live as believers headed for eternity as opposed to how the world views death and what it does to accommodate themselves, knowing it's coming. What are the distinctions or differences between the believer and the unbeliever, since all of us are heading for eternity and passing through death's door alone? And he makes great distinction. In verse 1, he will tell us that there are those who are the righteous, those that know the Lord, and, in fact, in chapters 9-11, Solomon makes this contrast constantly - the fool and the wise, the righteous and the unrighteous, the believer and the unbeliever, if you will; and the viewpoint. And, in fact, in verse 1, he talks about the righteous wise whose works are in the hands of God. In verses 3-6, he says, "Here's the way the world looks at death." But then he gets to verse 7, and he says, "But you, God has already accepted your works, so you can live this way" as opposed to the world that can't even get close to living that way. So it's a comparison of viewpoints of life and death, with death being the common denominator. Everyone dies.

If you go to the magazine rack at a bookstore and look at the titles, you'll see topics of just about everything - from people to hobbies to interests to how to be stronger and be richer and be wiser; where to buy a house, where to buy a car, where to buy a boat; what kind of animal to get, how to raise them; nutrition. You name it, it's there. There's no book, I'm Planning On Dying This Week. No book like that; or I'm Dying, What Can I Do? None of those. And maybe it's because they like periodicals, and it's hard to mail to a guy who's dying this week next month, I

guess. But, more importantly, I think the issue is because death is inevitable, you would think we'd talk more about it, but we don't. People like to move away from the subject, even though everyone alive is one day going to die. The minute you were born, you were headed for death. You know not when it will come, but you know that it's waiting.

There were plenty of folks in the Bible who, looking ahead, said, "It's almost my time," and they were right. There are others, like Isaac, who was just sure he wasn't going to live another week, who ended up living sixty more years. You can't know always, but you can be ready, and that's really the key. The world won't look at death because they write it off in so many different ways, not wanting to deal with it. The church, though, if they figure death into their life, can really live the way God intended. But most folks just don't want to talk about it.

I heard the story of a little guy who was in church with his mom and dad because he didn't feel good about going to Sunday school on his own. And so the pastor was talking about how man had come from dust and that he would return to dust, and we're all born, and God breathed life in the dust and all. And by the time he was done, the kid was just in tears. And the pastor said, "What's wrong with you?" He said, "Well you said I'm dust! I come from dust, I'm going to dust. Is that right?" He said, "That's right. Does that bother you?" He said, "Well, you gotta come to my house because under my bed someone's either coming or going. I don't know what it is." (Laughing)

There is so much confusion, isn't there, about dying - in the world. Not to you and me as God's people, but to the world. You really don't know if you're closer to the day of your birth or to the day of your death, although the older you get, the clearer that becomes as well.

Well Solomon, here in these ten verses, looks at life and death, and he speaks about the outlook that we, as believers, have as opposed to those who live in the world. We can look - with great realistic expectations - at life. He will tell us what we already know - that death is the common destiny of all men. But I'll tell you what. The cheerful activity is only reserved for the wise man. Life to be enjoyed is only afforded the believer, the saint, the one who knows The Lord. And if you have that outlook that God gives to those who believe in Him, then you can live well and without regrets. And by the time you come to the end of your life, you will be happy that you have lived it the way that you did. Our artwork on this series of

studies says this, "Let none say in the end I've wasted it." Because you don't want to have a life lived with regrets. You want to one day stand before the Lord, having done all that you can do to serve Him.

I heard a story, and I'm telling you more stories today because death is not a happy subject so I've got stores - don't worry. Or it can be, but it usually isn't. Three guys die, and they all die on the same day, and they go to heaven, and there's an orientation. That's in the Bible; you'll find it. (Laughing) And the angel that is giving them orientation says to them, "Now look. I looked down on the earth today, and all three of you are having funerals today. I see your bodies lying in the caskets, and what I want to know is - what do you hope they're going to say at your funeral?" And the first fellow said, "Well, I hope that they say I was a wonderful doctor and a good committed man who gave himself to his craft and always served his patients well." The angel said, "Very good. And you?" And the second guy said, "Well, I just want to be known as a good husband and a good father and a good friend to everyone who knew me, a faithful guy that you could count on." The angel said, "Very good." And he says to the third guy, "Well, what about you?" And he said, "Well, let me think about it a minute." He said, "I guess if I could hear what they would say, I would most likely hear them say, 'Hey, I think he's moving.' " (Laughing) That's pretty good. You'll laugh more later. That was pretty funny right there. (Laughing) But here's the guy that has a few regrets. "I still want to go back and do things over."

Well here's what Solomon says, verse 1. Solomon says, "For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God." That's the good news. "People know neither love nor hatred by anything they see before them. All things come alike to all: One event happens to the righteous and the wicked; to the good, the clean, and the unclean; to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner; he who takes an oath as he who fears an oath." On the heels of chapter 8, where Solomon concluded that those who know the Lord can enjoy life because though they don't know everything about what's coming, they know that God's in charge. In fact, he said in verse 15 last week, "You can enjoy your life because you've committed yourself to the Lord who knows what is coming, into His capable hands." The saints of God can rest because the future is in His hand. However, no one knows what's coming next so only the believers can find real rest in the unknowns, if you will, of life. Notice that Solomon said at the end of verse 1, "People don't know love or hatred by anything that they see," or "You don't know

what's waiting for you tomorrow." Whether it is easy or difficult, whether it is life or death, love or hate, we really don't know what's coming. So the only hope that you and I can have is that God, in charge of our lives, knows what's coming and takes care of us accordingly. Watches over us. In chapter 9, Solomon takes it to the inevitable conclusion, then, of the day of our death because the end of our unknown futures includes the day of certain death. But only saints can live well in anticipation of it. The world will find death catching up with them one day, and they'll be totally unprepared to meet the Lord. And again, with all of our unknown tomorrows, God knows the day of our arrival. He has a hand in it. He knows the day of our departure. He has a hand in it. You have an expiration date stamped on you somewhere. Only God knows. I think it was Corrie Ten Boom - years ago, she used to say, "I don't know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future." That's the distinction for the believer and those that are in the world, and it is a great place to find rest, isn't it? We can live lives far differently than the world - who's not sure what's next - because we can lay our head on the sovereignty and the goodness and the oversight of God. That I can trust my future to Him. I wrote in my margin, "The future is my friend when Jesus is my Lord." That's the way it is for us. And I can live, then, without regret; and I can live in the world differently than the person who doesn't know that.

When Jesus told the parable of that rich fool in Luke 12 - who had been so successful in the world, and he was really excited about early retirement; and he said to himself there in Luke 12:19, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry," the Lord said in verse 20, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" And then the Lord said in verse 21, "So is he who lays up treasure for himself" here, really, "and is not rich toward God." I mean, this is all that he knows, this life. But we, the saints, know from the Lord what's coming, and we rest in His love, and we walk with Him daily, and we look forward to one day sitting before Him with great joy. This isn't your home. For the world, this is all they know, this is all they have. But this isn't your home. This is like - you're sitting in the foyer, you know? This isn't home. You go, "Hey, it's a beautiful looking foyer." Great, but who lives in the foyer? You're gonna go into the house pretty soon. The Lord's going to come and bring you in. And you can rest knowing that the Lord, who knows the middle and the beginning and the end of your life, will see you through it.

Now, he says a couple of things that are important. Verse 2 - death is unavoidable. Everyone's common destiny is to die. Goodness can't escape it, wisdom can't overcome it, evil doesn't face more than it. Death will come for all. And notice from verse 2 that death is no respecter of persons. The billionaire will die, and the homeless guy will die; the president will die, and those who don't vote at all will die; the young, the old, the good looking, the not so much, the educated, the class clown, the well-liked, the very much hated - they're all going to die. Look around here. They're all dying. (Laughing) Get in your car, look in every car that goes by. The restaurant, check everybody out. Go on TV, watch TV for a while. Everyone you see there, a hundred years from now, is gonna die. There is no one left of all that you see. It's all gonna die. It's sobering, isn't it? But it's healthy.

Two people every second of every day die. And death will have the last word in the life of the righteous and the wicked and the good, and the clean and the unclean, and the church-goer and the "stay-at-homer," and the worshiper and the one who refuses to worship, and the swearer and the one who won't take an oath. All will die. But not all will die well. Inevitable that everyone dies, but how do you die? That famous prophet, Woody Allen, once wrote, "I'm not afraid of death. I just don't want to be there when it happens." Look, people die differently, and though death is not a respecter of persons, how you die and where you go very much is. When Jesus was crucified, He was crucified between two thieves who died very differently. The one died defiant to the very end - mouth going, self-justified. The other, in the final moments of his life, found repentance, and Jesus was able to say to him, "Today you'll be with Me in paradise." One died well. The other not so well.

When Voltaire, who was the famous aggressive atheist who cursed God every chance he got and swore publicly he would destroy Christianity in his lifetime, died, the nurse who cared for him wrote a book, and she said, "I've never seen anyone die in such despair. I will never again attend the death of someone because of what I saw with Voltaire. And Voltaire cried out for hours, 'I've been abandoned by God. I'm on my way to hell.' " A contemporary of his, John Wesley, last recorded words were, "This has been good, but best of all - the Lord's waiting for me." So different. Mahatma Gandhi, on his death bed, said, "For the first time in fifty years I find myself in darkness and am praying for some light. Oh, God, help me." His contemporary, Dwight L. Moody, said this when he died, "Earth is receding, heaven is opening, and I hear God calling my name." There're a couple of different ways you can die. Everyone's gonna die. That's inevitable. But how? You die very

much open to debate because though death is *not* a respecter of persons, how you die usually depends upon how you live - and your destination as well. There're only two things that last forever - the Word of God and your soul. They're going to live forever. Dying and destination are very much respecters of persons even though death is not. How are you going to die?

There is a woman who was buried in an Indiana cemetery several years ago, and her tombstone made the news because she had written a poem on it, and the poem said this, "Pause stranger as you pass me by, as you now are, so once was I. As I am now, so you will be. So prepare for death, and follow me." Well, some joker who had the grave next to her wasn't dead yet, but he bought a little tombstone, and he put it on his grave. And it said, "To follow you, I'm not content until I know which way you went." (Laughing) Well that's the issue. Where you went is the issue. Death is a common destiny, but after that, the destiny of men is no longer common. For believers in Jesus, the death that you have to die has already been died. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). That's the gift of God. You've already been delivered from death.

When Martha came running out, angry at Jesus for not being there for Lazarus before he died, He said, "Martha, I am the resurrection and the life. If you believe in Me, even if you die, you're going to live. And if you live and believe in Me, you'll never die" (John 11:25-26). Your perception and your perspective and your outlook of life will be so different than those in the world that really don't know where to look or where to turn.

Solomon begins, in verse 3, to talk about it, and I want you to notice the evil that is "under the sun." He is looking at life from a horizontal perspective. He's mouthing to us the words of the humanist, the unbeliever, if you will - how he views life. He said, "Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead." And here's their beliefs - it's better to be alive than dead. There's hope when you're alive. "But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion," even though, in life, a lion could do a lot more of what he wanted than a dog. "For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun," here on the earth. To them life, for the most part,

is it. You don't know. So they write it off. "Live for now, man. You don't know what's coming next."

Death is so greatly misunderstood in so much of the world. It's amazing to me what people come up with when they set the Bible aside. Without God they know as little about death as they do about what's coming tomorrow. And I find that even believers have a very weird sense of death sometimes. It's not a biblical view at all. They just come up with stuff. I had a lady a couple of years ago said to me, "I can't wait to get my wings and fly." And I go, "You're not getting wings!" (Laughing) "Pretty sure of that." Or they'll say to me, "Well, I can't wait for my pets to end up in heaven." Your pets are not going to heaven, as far as I know. A couple of horses will be there - you gotta ride those back. We make these weird, misinformed judgments based solely upon what we create for ourselves to deal with the inevitability of death. The Bible has plenty to say to us of things that we should be able to hang on to. But even the believers, they tend to be so misinformed. "Oh, your soul's gonna sleep, and then one day you're gonna wake up." No, you're going to heaven. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). Get it right, man. Read your Bible.

I heard a story of a family that took a vacation at the beach. And they had a great time until the little boy ran up to his dad and said, "Dad, you gotta come with me right now. I found the most horrible thing." He said, "All right." He went with him, and there lying in the water, kind of on the shore, was a dead seagull. And the boy started to cry and said, "Dad, what happened?" Dad wanted to kind of couch it for him in compassionate terms, so he said, "Well, honey, the bird died and went to heaven." And the little boy looked and he said, "Why did God throw it back?" (Laughing) Hmmm.

Look, the view of the unbeliever is that death ends it all. Beyond that, there is nothing, or if there is, we don't know. "So your hope is found here. Better a living dog, having to get by, just not even getting much freedom, than a lion who can roam free. He's dead. I'd rather have a little, just be alive. You just gotta be alive. It's all about being here. Being alive." But they're hopeless in death. They write about it. No awareness, no consciousness, no memory, no more participation. And if you're misinformed about death, then it will do something to the way that you live. If death ends it all, then you'll do everything you can to preserve it here, to fuel it here. You won't miss out on a thing. "It's all about this and now!" We think about life in terms of 80 years on the earth. God speaks about life as 10 million

years to come. Death isn't the end. By comparison, it is simply the beginning. But it is vital because these times of this life are where you choose where you're going to spend eternity, who you're going to look to, where your hope is going to be. The Bible is filled with great hope, not hopelessness. But look, there's life after death - for everyone. One way or the other, judgment or life.

You know, when that rich man died there in Luke 16, and Lazarus, and they both died, and the rich man went to hell it says, and Lazarus went to reside in Abraham's bosom, the rich man cried out, "Could you please dip your finger in some water? I'm in such torment, and comfort me." And Abraham said, "Well, you had your life. You lived your life. You made your choices, and so did Lazarus. And now you're there, and he's here, and besides, there's a gulf between us that we can't come where you are, and you can't come where we are." And then he said, "Well, could you at least send someone back and warn my family? I've got five brothers. Tell them there's a place like this." And Abraham said, "Well, they have Moses and the prophets. Let them read the Bible." He said, "Oh, no. They won't believe the Bible, but if someone were to raise from the dead, they'd believe him." And Abraham said, "If they don't believe the Bible, they will also not believe one - even if he rises from the dead." There was great cognitive awareness and consciousness after the grave. We need to be ready. Who can be ready? You and I can be ready. The world can't. Their view of life is so different because their view of death and what's coming is so faulty.

There was a wife whose husband was an attorney. He was dying, and she'd always gone to church. He would never go, and on his death bed, he said to her, "Honey, could you get me the Bible?" She said, "All right!" She went and got it and gave it to him. He started frantically looking through the pages. She said, "Honey, what are you doing?" He said, "I'm looking for a loophole." (Laughing) There aren't loopholes. If you know the Lord, and you know His Word, and you look to Him, then you will not need to look for loopholes. He'll meet with you, and you'll be ready to stand before Him. But the world doesn't know that, so they comfort themselves with fanciful kinds of ideas about comfort that isn't there at all. I had a guy say to me, and maybe you've heard it before. I said to the guy, "Without Jesus you're going to end up in hell," and he said, "Well that'll be all right. All my friends will be there." I said, "That's not biblical at all, pal. You'll be by yourself, screaming in agony, wishing you'd made a better choice. There'll be darkness and wailing and gnashing of teeth. That's not going to be a good place for you to go." Or they'll say, "Well, I'm going to heaven." I'll say, "Why?" They'll say, "Because I'm really a

good guy. If God doesn't want me, He doesn't want anybody." That's not biblical either. "Well, I pray. I count my lucky stars. I cross my fingers." That won't work.

So what does verse 7 say? Solomon then says, "Go," speaking again to the believer, "eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works." From the consideration of the lost and the believer from verse 1, the righteous, to the certainty of death and the perception in the world of death, Solomon turns and says to the saints, "Enjoy your life." Now, if you read these six verses, you get to verse 7, and you think to yourself - it's going to be a pretty somber verse. But instead, Solomon says, "Go and enjoy yourself - believers. You and the Lord have already got it all worked out. Your life now is good, and the future is even better." He said literally, "Have a blast while you last. Have a blast while you last. Go and enjoy the blessings of God." And so he speaks to the saint, who he'd mentioned in verse 1, and he turns to him now. You know, it's interesting that so many people start to worry about the future, and they get all bogged down. They can't live anymore. "Oh, I'm gonna get sick one day. How am I gonna handle that?" I don't know. How about you eat lunch today and enjoy yourself, and the Lord will take care of the future.

I heard of an ant that spoke to a centipede. He had 100 legs, and he said, "How do you know which leg to move next?" And the centipede said, "That's a great question. I have no idea." So he started thinking about it, and after a while, he realized he was very confused - now he can't move at all. (Laughing) People do that. They get so bogged down with the insoluble complexities of life and death and the future, they just fail to enjoy life. Thank the Lord, man. God is good, and God will take care of me. Notice what he says in verse 7, "Add joy to your meals. Eating and drinking are the basics of life, and since you don't know when your last meal will be, enjoy every one of them. Thank the Lord."

Years ago, we were in Hawaii with Pastor Chuck. I was teaching with him at a Pastors' Conference, and one of the guys at the church that was holding the conference worked as a master chef in one of these really fancy hotels in Hawaii. And so he invited all of us to go eat, and they would just serve us - like, treat us. And it was awesome! We never ate so good. But the fun thing about eating with Pastor Chuck is, he loves eating. If you're eating with people, you've got to eat with people who like to eat, you know? The guy goes, "No, I'm cutting back on that. I don't want one of those.....I'm looking for....." No, I don't want to eat with you.

(Laughing) I want to eat with someone who's going, "I just want to eat!" Well, he doesn't do that, but he does describe every bite. "Wait till you see the texture of the....did you taste it? Did you taste.....? Oh, yea....." Now you're eating with all the excitement that he's got. And we sat right next to him, and Debbie and I were just....."We're done," and then he does this, (Whispering) "Now the desserts are coming." (Laughing) And he'd tell you about all the desserts, and there were like six different ones and, "I've been here before, and this is what you get, or you can have that." I tried to get a little bit of everything, and oh, it's so fun to eat with someone who loves eating, who enjoys it.

And Solomon said, "Look, you're going to die, but you know where you're headed, and your works have been accepted by the Lord. You're the righteous. God's got you in His hand. So you go and enjoy life, man. Just don't let this overwhelm you." Your presence in His presence is already assured.

Then he says in verse 8, "Let your garments always be white, and let your head lack no oil." Now, in Solomon's day, like in most biblical times, clothes were utilitarian. By that, I mean you wore them because you needed them. They didn't have a closet full of clothes and still have nothing to wear. That's our problem. They had something to wear every day. It covered them up. It protected them from the elements. It helped them when they were working. That was about it. And sometimes you would keep a special outfit for the times of Temple worship, or someone was getting married - you'd have something special and costly, and you'd keep it; you wouldn't wear it, but you'd have it around in case. The oil's always the same. It got rid of how bad you smelled by the end of the day. It was olive oil mixed with spices. It was intended to make you tolerable, I guess. So, here's Solomon's point. "Look, make every day of your life like it's a special day. Enjoy the routine. Pull out the best garment. Pour out the special oil. Enjoy what God is doing. Let every day be a special occasion. Don't get locked in to the mundane. Joyfully go through your routine." Paul was in a prison on death row when he wrote to the Philippians in chapter 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" That's God's will for the saints.

He says in verse 9, "Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity;" In this world that has very little to offer man itself, there is this blessing of God in your home. Enjoy your marriage. Enjoy your wife. Enjoy your husband. As these days pass upon the earth that are kind of vain "under the sun," find your joy in your

household. It doesn't say "put up with her all the days of your life" though, unfortunately, many marriages deteriorate to survival rather than bliss. But look, life is too short to allow the most intimate relation we have been given by God to dwindle and sour. So, love your wife, love your husband, thank God for your family. Enjoy what God has given to you. Keep love at its peak. How do you bring joy to your marriage? You keep Jesus right in the middle, and you commit yourself to someone. There's a huge difference between commitment and tolerance. We hear it all the time, "Oh, we're just together for the kids." That's tolerance. That's not commitment until death do us part. It isn't some wishy-washy, "I'll love you until you get fat," or "I'll love you until you get ugly," or "I'll love you until my feelings change," or "I'll love you until I find Mr. Right." No, no, no. Forever. And with all the marriage counseling we've done over the years, I'll tell you what. There're only two things you need in marriage: you need commitment, and you need communication. That's it. You need a commitment - "I'm going to stay with you, you're my wife, my husband. You're the one that God has brought into my life. Whatever else comes, we're going to work through this. But that's where I've got to start." And then you need a lot of forgiveness and mercy and "I'm sorry's" and clemency hearings, you know, where you forgive one another. (Laughing) But for marriage to have staying power, it's got to have commitment. It's got to have joy.

Want to hear another story? You may not like this one. Yes or no? Okay. You said yes, just so you remember when I'm done here. An elderly couple goes to McDonald's, and there's a fellow behind them in line. And these folks look pretty old, and the fellow says to the woman, "Could I have one Happy Meal please? And an extra cup." So they bring the food out, and he cuts the hamburger right in half and sets it on her side and his side, and he doles out the French fries like this, and then he gets two cups - half a drink each. And they sit down to eat. He starts eating, and she's watching him. Well the guy sitting across from them thinks, "You know, I'll bet they're just too poor to buy their own Happy Meal. I'm going to go ahead and offer to buy them another one." And he goes up to the table and says, "Look, I don't mean to interrupt you guys. I know you're having lunch, but I just watched you buy one Happy Meal, and there're two of you. Could I buy you another one?" And the fellow said, "Oh, no no. It's not about money. We just love sharing everything. We've been at this for 58 years." And he said, "Well that's so awesome. Why is it that you're eating, and she's not?" He said, "Well, it's my turn to use the teeth!" (Laughing) I asked, you said yes. Look, it's commitment, right? It's commitment! You can't fault their commitment. So, love your wife, and be committed to her. It'll be the way you can be blessed by the Lord.

And then finally, the middle of verse 9, "for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going." Look, enjoy your labor. Tomorrow, most of you are going to go back to work. Some of you love your jobs. Others, maybe you struggle with it. I think every job can reach some level of boredom rather quickly when you do the same thing over and over. Unless the Lord is involved, I think your attitude will eventually stink. I saw a guy last week who got a new job, and I said, "How is it?" He goes, "Oh, it's great. So fulfilling. The people are great." I'm thinking, "Yeah, I'll give it a year. Then you tell me what you think." But if you really want to add joy to your job, take Jesus to work with you. Seek to serve Him. Colossians says, in chapter 3:23-24, "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." So, go to work with Him. It'll change drudgery into ministry.

So what a life I can live, right, knowing my life is temporary here, but my eternal future is secured by Christ. I know that I'm dying, but am I living? Everybody's dying. Not everyone's living. If you've lived with joy, and you've lived serving the Lord, then you can one day die without regrets. But Jesus is going to have to be at the center of your hope, and His Word is going to have to be what drives you. C.S. Lewis said, "Joy is the serious business of heaven." It should be our serious business as well. God wants you filled with joy - but realistically so. Are you living? Or dying? Well, you know you're dying, but are you living?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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