

Taking Life for Granted

(Ecclesiastes)

What would it take for you to be happy? Would it take a purchase? Or if I could only win the lottery.

Last May, a 76-year-old California woman was overjoyed to discover that she won \$51 million in lottery, but now she is suing her son for allegedly commandeering her Mega Millions prize and spending much of it on cars, homes and cash gifts.

Urquhart had played the lottery for 18 years, purchasing tickets twice weekly, according to her declaration.

"Ronnie Orender was not supportive of my weekly lottery ticket purchases. He discouraged me from playing and told me it was a waste of my money," Urquhart wrote in the declaration.

After collecting the winnings, Orender went on a shopping spree, purchasing four homes and 10 cars, a watercraft and a motor home, according to Urquhart's complaint. Additionally, court documents allege Orender made cash gifts of about \$350,000 to his daughters.

"Of the total lottery winnings received, I have received approximately \$125,000 in cash, a Lincoln SUV and I have been provided a house to live in, but I am not the owner of the house," Urquhart said.

Urquhart and her husband, Bob, are seeking \$32 million in damages for fraud, conspiracy to commit fraud, and financial elder abuse, according to the complaint, which was filed in Kern Superior Court on April 23.

Would you then be happy? Would it take an achievement? Would you then be happy? Would it take an experience? Or an accomplishment? What would it take to make you happy? Fill in the Blank.

Do you really think that if when you filled in the blank with what ever you think would make you happy, that you would be happy? What has been the experience of millions of people? They bought the possession that they thought would make them happy only to be disappointed in six months.

If only I can retire, I will be happy. Now they are bored.

Some people worked really hard to retire. "More than one person has worked hard and looked forward to a comfortable retirement only to have a heart attack and become either

an invalid or a statistic. Or the peace of retirement is shattered by a crisis in the family that begins to drain both money and strength” (Wiersbe, *Be Satisfied*, p. 74).

If only I could make six figures, I would be happy. If only I could get married. You achieve, purchase, accomplish all these things and you are still not happy.

So you make another list of things to chase in order to be happy.

Philosopher, Peter Kreeft, says that life is a wild goose chase with no goose.

Solomon in Ecclesiastes, confesses that he was on a wild goose chase with no goose. He chased pleasure but found no happiness (2:1-3). He chased wine, women, and wealth. His autobiography of those backslidden years is Ecclesiastes 2:1-11. Solomon experimented with pleasure (2:1-3), building projects (12:4-6), Solomon spent 7 years building the Temple and 13 years building his own house. Solomon also experimented with possessions (12:7-10). The result of his experiment is in 12:11, “all was vanity and frustration.”

Ed Young observed, “The loneliest day in our lives is when we experience our wildest dreams and come away empty. Success cannot fill us. Money cannot satisfy. The wealthy person’s chief advantage over those who are not is that he or she has already discovered that money does not bring happiness. True success is being right in the middle of God’s plan (page 105-106).

Solomon certainly does not discourage goals and dreams about the future. Solomon also has regrets about the past. But Solomon’s focus now in his life is the present. Enjoy what God has given you NOW.

1. Because Life Is Brief

A. Solomon uses the word “vanity” 38 times in Ecc. Vanity means transitory or fleeting. Vanity is the same word as Abel. Abel was appropriate name for the youth whose life was cut short by a brother’s murderous hand. Abel’s life, like his name, was transitory and fleeting.

Read Ecc. 8:12-13 For the unsaved life is a shadow.

1. The unsaved person’s life is brief, like a shadow. It only exists as long as the sun is up. Jesus spoke of a certain rich man in Luke 16:19-25.
2. The unsaved person’s life is void, like a shadow. David spoke of life like a shadow in Psalm 144:3-4. A shadow is the empty outline of life, no joy.
3. The unsaved person’s life ends in darkness like a shadow as Jude 13 states. Describing the unsaved, Jude wrote, “to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.”

The Puritan pastor Thomas Watson said, “Eternity to the godly is a day that has no sunset; eternity to the wicked is a night that has no sunrise.”

B. Solomon therefore advises, use every day to its fullest for the Lord in 9:10.

1. The wise believer cannot control death (9:1-6)
2. The wise believer uses every day to its fullest (9:10)
 - a. Our labor is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58)
 - b. Whatsoever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for you serve the Lord Christ” Col. 3:23-24).

2. Because Life is Frustrating

In 10:1, Solomon says life sometimes has a dead fly in the perfume which decays and sends forth a stinking odor. Life sometimes stinks. Job agreed in Job 5:7.

- A. Wisdom cannot remove frustrations 1:13-18. Wisdom can make work easier (10:10).
Solomon was a walking Google.
- B. Pleasure cannot remove frustrations 2:1-3.
- C. Wealth cannot remove frustrations 2:4-11.

Paul despaired of life in 2 Cor 1:8

J. Don Jennings, at the height of his ministry at Highland Park Baptist Church, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, home of Tennessee Temple University, got so frustrated that he threw a hymnbook while in the pulpit. Soon afterwards, he suffered a mental breakdown.

When Alan Redpath was pastor of Moody Memorial Church he had nervous breakdown in the pulpit. One of the prerequisites of pastoring Moody is the writing of books. Erwin Lutzer is pastor of Moody today. Redpath swore at his deacons and congregation from the pulpit and had to be dragged off the platform. Alan Redpath later said, “I made one major mistake – I replaced worship *of* God with work *for* God.”

3. Therefore enjoy the life God has given you in (2:24; 3:13; 5:18; 9:7-9).

“Don’t plan to live---start living now. Be satisfied with what He gives you and use it all for His glory” (Wiersbe, p. 75).

- A. Life is a Gift from God (2:24-25). Job put it this way, “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away.” Not only is God the creator of the Universe but you and me (Psalm 139:13). Not only does God sustain His Universe but He sustains you and me (Col 1:15-19).

B. The blessings of life are a gift from God (3:13). “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father” (James 1:17).

If we focus more on the gifts than on the Giver, we are guilty of idolatry. The unsaved worship life instead of worshiping God the Giver of life.

If we complain about life instead of enjoying the blessings of life we are guilty of ingratitude.

If we hoard God’s blessings instead of sharing them, we are guilty of selfishness.

C. The ability to enjoy the blessings of life is also a gift from God (5:18-20).

A commentator says it great. He says that “Every one of us walks around the earth with a can of peaches and Jesus is the only one with a can opener.”

But if we yield to His will and use what He gives us for His glory, then we can enjoy life and be satisfied (9:7-9).

One of the things my wife and I like to do is go by Subway and get a 6 inch sub and take it the park. Sit and eat and watch the ducks on the lake. And if I am in big spending mood we will ride the peddle-boats.

Wealth is not just eating good food, but enjoying the food you eat. The unsaved are like a wealthy person ordering Ruth Chris’ most expensive steak. Cutting the steak, which has been cooked to perfection, putting the piece of steak in the month which has no taste buds.

Wealth is not having a lot of stuff, it’s enjoying whatever you have. Wealth is having memories of the times that God enabled you to be happy. And wealth is having people you love to be happy with and to do good for. That makes you wealthy.