

Apart from God, life is empty

However happily we may get along without God in the short run, we always find in the long run that life without God is a tiresome, unsatisfying business. The unavoidable truth is that **apart from God, life is empty**. Separated from our Creator — alienated from Him by sin — the thing that we call “life” is hardly worth the name. With Paul, we may well be moved to cry, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (**Rom. 7:24**).

After exploring every thinkable avenue of worldly fulfillment, Solomon summed it up frankly when he said, “Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun” (**Eccl. 2:11**). If we are as honest as Solomon, we are eventually forced to admit that it is God who makes life in this world worthwhile. “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil” (**Eccl. 12:13,14**). Only in a right relationship with Him can we truthfully claim that life has been good.

That is not to say that faithful Christians are the only ones who enjoy life. It is possible to disregard God and still enjoy many of the pleasant things that this life has to offer. But without a recognition of God the problems of this world have no adequate explanation — and without God the best that we can do is “eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (**1 Cor. 15:32**).

As Christians, we may be guilty of taking the goodness of life for granted. We may have forgotten how oppressive life can be apart from the blessings we enjoy in Christ. We need periodically to pause and remember the “aimless conduct” (**1 Pt. 1:18 NKJV**) from which Christ rescued us. We must never lose the ability to empathize with the man outside of the Lord who, “having no hope and without God in the world” (**Eph. 2:12**), is still bogged down in a life without ultimate profit.

This week, as we rise to meet each new day with joy and anticipation, let’s remember the millions in the world, many of whom live right around us, who are lost and struggling to believe that life is worth living. Let’s show by the way we live that Jesus Christ came “that they may have life and have it abundantly” (**Jn. 10:10**).

Monday: Luke 12:13-21

Key Idea: We can come to be rich in material things and still have an empty life.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus say our life does not consist of? If a person “lays up treasure for himself” but is not “rich toward God,” how would you describe that person’s wealth? His success? His happiness?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 21:31**.

Tuesday: Romans 6:15-23

Key Idea: As Christians, we can see that the life of sin is a dead end street.

Questions for Family Growth: What does Paul mean by the question, “But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed?” (v.21)? What is the “end” of those things? What contrast is drawn in v.23?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 22:1.

Wednesday: Ecclesiastes 12:13,14

Key Idea: Nothing in life matters very much if we do not reverence and obey God.

Questions for Family Growth: What should be our most important goal in life? If we leave out that priority, does it limit how good life can be for us in the short term? What about the long term? What is the “judgment” spoken of in v.14?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 22:2.

Thursday: Psalm 127:1,2

Key Idea: If God does not allow it, nothing we can do on our own will achieve success.

Questions for Family Growth: Why can't we achieve the kind of life we want by our own efforts, without any help from God? How can we explain the fact that some people seem to be able to do this? What advice do we get in Jas. 4:13-17?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 22:3.

Friday: 1 Corinthians 15:58

Key Idea: When we do God's work, we are accomplishing something that is eternally good.

Questions for Family Growth: What is the “work of the Lord” that Paul speaks of and why is it “not in vain”? Do you think that doing the Lord's work helps us to get more out of all the other activities of life? How so?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 22:4.

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