

Life is a Vapor

One look at the headlines over the past months and we become anxious, sad, angry, even despondent.

How as Christians do we respond to a society that has lost their mind?

Should I spend my days responding to every wrong?
Should I spend my days isolated from the rest of the world?

My discipleship group has been reading the book of Ecclesiastes in recent days. In it the preacher uses the term “Vanity” – Where the things of life that we seek after have the appearance of being important, yet like a vapor when we go to grab them, we’re left with nothing in our hand.

Such are many of the pursuits in our life.

As we think on the scenarios of the day, we must first take a look at who we are.

It’s like the airplane speech they give before each departure. If the oxygen masks are deployed, we’re first supposed to put one on ourselves before our children.

Why? If we pass out trying to help them, we’re of little help to ourselves or them.

So let’s look at what God truly wants of us as individuals. (Homebuilders)

There are three passages that I want us to contrast tonight to paint this picture.

The first passage came up in a conversation that Matt, Angie & I had a lunch one day, that is all too common for many of us today.

1. Our Roles – Prov. 31

Proverbs 31 is known as the chapter on the “Virtuous Woman”.

Prov. 31:10 – “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price *is* far above rubies.”

From that point until Vs. 27 it goes through this laundry list of wonderful things that this virtuous woman does for her family.

Although this is a list specially mentioning ladies, a similar list could be compiled for a Christian man.

The issue becomes that as we read this it can give the impression that we need to be all things to all people at all times.

Should we right ever wrong, help in every cause? Which then?

It’s like the old act on talent shows where the guy would have a bunch of poles sticking up in the air and he would start spinning a plate on one pole and then start a second, third &

fourth. Quickly heading back to keep the first one spinning. The goal was to see how many he could keep spinning.

Do you ever feel that way?

If not, you're fibbing

We feel the weight of our spouse, our kids, their activities/teams/clubs, our household, our parents, extended family, friends, church family & ministries – Then there's work.

How do we keep all of these plates spinning? (feeling the anxiety rise)

We're not going to answer this yet. Let's build some more onto this.

2. Our Days – Psalm 90:9b, 10 & 12

“...we spend our years as a tale *that is told*. The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away... So teach *us* to number our days, that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom.” Psalm 90:9b, 10 & 12

Next we add from Moses' psalm the mindset that our days are limited. (from a man that lived 120 years)

We're here a short period and Moses said “we spend our years **as a tale that is told**”. “for it is soon cut off, and we fly away”

This is good to think about as many of use head back toward normal life.

We start thinking – I work and work. I'm missing things at home, or when I'm home I'm not actually able to be with my family.

My days are zipping by a rapid pace and I only have 8, 4, 2 years before the kids are off to college and out on their own.

Fathers' are cuddled in the corner singing “the cats in the cradle and the silver spoon, little boy blue and the man on the moon. When you comin' home Dad? I don't know when, but we'll get together then. You know we'll have a good time then.”

When we were discussing all this at lunch we used the metaphor of an abacus.

Too often in life we are looking at our life as all of these items at once and to a certain extent on a level playing field.

- During the day and at the end of the day, we count the number of things done on our mental abacus. $5+9+3+4 = 21$

The problem is this is a destructive and counter-productive to how God would have us to live.

Let's go back to those two sets of verses and add one more set.

1. 31 – Virtuous Woman
2. 90 – Number Our Days

3. Our Focus – Matt 22:37-39

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

Let's tie these together.

God's number 1 & 2 desire for us is

- Love the Lord thy God with everything we have
- Love others – How? As thyself
 - This is a whole lesson in itself, but out of our love for God, we are to gain a HEALTHY love for ourselves (honest view) that is then reflected on to others.
- In other words, God has no desire for us to be stressed out, exhausted, angry, miserable individuals serving and loving

What can we do then?

Back to #2 – Teach us to number our days

- We should not look at it as a count down until our demise.
- Rather, it is a call to take hold of our “tale” (90:9b) that will be told

This directly connects with #1 – The Virtuous Woman

- Notice the things that she did
- First, do you think she did all of those every day? No Way in the World
- Second, notice the motive in the items that were done.
 - Too be noticed – NO
 - For the care of those entrusted to her care first & then others

As we go back to our abacus. It has to be changed from a simple arithmetic device.

Rather, the rows have be divided into sectors.

- First, the realization that we are humans with limitations
- Second, God wants His children to love Him and He will help us. We can't do what He wants if we dislike ourselves and our lives.
- We must divide life into sectors of responsibility and priority.
- We must then be honest with these realizations and take the steps that are necessary.

Abacus

- God has entrusted me with the responsibility of raising my kids in the fear & admonition of Him.
 - They need spiritual guidance, physical & mental training, they need security
 - That means they need a parent that is seeking God in their own life to help lead them
 - That means they have parents that are nurturing their relationship as a role model

- This does not mean they are in every club, team, and activity that comes down the pipe to the detriment of the families priorities (this is an ebb and flow that we have to be willing to make the hard choices on)
- This does not mean that we are crushing them by missing some of their games. We should try to encourage them, but this helps them learn how priorities are made.
- God has given a means to use our skills and support our family.
 - This is a high priority in which we would should do our best.
 - This, however, has to tie into “numbering our days”. Our work will take whatever we give.
 - How will I have my tale told? Hard worker – Yes
 - This is where we sometimes have to make a call
 - Am I working to make a name for myself?
 - Is this for power and influence?
 - There is absolutely nothing wrong with a sense of fulfillment from your work and seeing something completed that you had a hand in – That is the fruit of our labors.
 - However, the priority of work can get out of balance
- God has given us the ability to help those around us – to share Christ’s Gospel and love and to treat them with love and respect.
 - This is important, but must be kept in the proper order.
 - There are time where the message of the Gospel is hard to hear when their physical & emotional needs are so great.
 - However, even when meeting felt needs our ultimate goal even in our pursuit to help is to share Christ and then to disciple them (not a bait and switch, but combined)
 - When our lives our carried out in this proper order we help others to help others as well – A mindset and heart change occurs toward our fellow man.

As we look at the abacus

- There are parts we must always be moving
- Others, that just get moved when there’s free time to do

We are way too reactionary.

Learning to number our days is not sitting down to make our To Do List, rather it is considering that “tale” we feel God wants us to tell with our life and taking the necessary actions to make sure they occur.

I used to tell the college class – If you don’t live your life, nobody else will.
Trying to spur them to put themselves out there to live and serve.

For us, I would tweak it – If you don’t set your life’s direction, everyone else will.

Christians are not to live a life of fear and aggravation.

We are children of the King. We are forgiven.

We need to live deliberately, having more forethought – You make the decisions based on God’s Word and direction and stop letting the voices of our society force our direction.

God will be honored, your family will be blessed by your decisions, People will be saved and This world will be shown Christ and His love.