

The God Life Part 2: "Living The Good Life" 04.15.12

Scripture: Luke 12:13-31 / 2 Peter 1:5 NIV



Intro: We have begun a new sermon series! "Living The Good Life." We started last week and we learned one basic truth that will be the central lesson of our series: "If you want to live the good life, you must live the God life!" We learn these lessons from Peter, who writes to us in 2 Peter from a unique perspective. A) He followed Jesus and heard him teach for 3 years. B) Now he is at the end of his ministry (and life) and reflecting on how to live out what Jesus taught. **Peter writes:**



"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."
2 Peter 1:3-4



(Review details of verse.) We might suspect that God does everything for us. But then Peter writes a surprising thing to us in verse 5:

"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness;"

This is the truth that will carry us through the rest of the series....



God makes the good life possible. But I must also MAKE EVERY EFFORT!

God does not just zap us into goodness. It's not like in the Matrix movies where we receive instant knowledge and instant ability. Without God's power and promises that come from the Divine Nature living in and through us, the good life would be utterly impossible. With God's nature inside us, the good life changes from **IM**possible to possible. In everything we will learn in the next 6 weeks we must *make every effort!*

The first place that we must work (make every effort) is goodness itself:



My first effort in living the good life is DOING GOOD!
"... add to your faith goodness;" 2 Peter 1:5b

Do you see it in Peter's instructions? We start off with faith. This is given to us by God Himself. We believe in God. We know God lives and exists in us. We participate in the Divine Nature. To this faith we add "goodness." Also "virtue." Means "excellence of character," which never comes without testing. Requires practice so we become good at doing good! ...Of doing good even when it's not convenient for us.

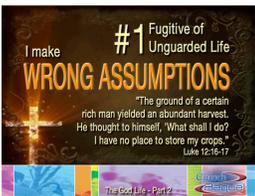
We start with faith, and to it we make every effort to add goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection and love. The foundational starting point is faith. Our ending goal is love. The 2nd step is goodness, which interestingly comes before "knowledge."

This is just the opposite of our Western Culture. We go to school to learn. We learn first and then we do. Not so in Christianity. Peter tells us to start with doing good. The first step to living the good life is doing good for others. Through the lessons we learn in doing good for others, we gain the knowledge for everything else we will need.

Verse in
ProPresenter

Jesus taught us that this was critical. In fact he put it into a warning:
"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed!"
Luke 12:15 NIV

Greed. Covetousness. Selfishness. Wanting things for myself. Thinking first of myself. These things come naturally to us. Any child does this without training. And adult does this without thinking. That's why Jesus puts it into such dire warning. "Watch!" "Guard!" There is a beast inside. With God's help and our "making every effort to guard" we don't have to lose to greed. But if we are not careful. If we don't exercise our goodness by making every effort, the natural inclination of our selfish desires will take over. Jesus tells us that if we don't guard ourselves, we will make the wrong assumptions, which lead us to misdirected gumption, while making false presumptions. Lets examine each one:



1st Fugitive of Unguarded Life: I Make WRONG ASSUMPTIONS.
If we allow ourselves to act according to our own selfish desires, without purposely working with God in our lives to do good to others, we will inevitably live according to wrong assumptions. Jesus tells a story, a parable, to help us learn the need for exercising the good.

"The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'" Luke 12:16-17 NIV

The rich man in this story is the story of every man doing what comes naturally. The man (and we) make 2 wrong assumptions. (1) our abundance is the result of our own hard work. Certainly work is necessary and without work we would not accomplish anything. But it is easy to leave God out of the equation. Remember it is the combination of God + us that makes for the abundant harvest. Where would our crops be without the sunshine or the rain?

(2) We assume that the purpose of all our work, the result of our harvest, is to serve ourselves... "to store my crops." God, however, graciously gives us abundance so that we might share with others. So that we might give. God is a giver. He gave us life. He gave us His son. He gave us this world, this country, this job, this family, this church. He gives and gives and gives. If we want to be like God - which is to say like Christ - then we want to be givers too! Looking for the larger place to store my crops not only is the wrong assumption, but the wrong "lesson": (a) lessens my dependance on God to provide for me in the future; and (b) lessens the blessings He wants to give to others right now.



2nd Fugitive of Unguarded Life: I Work With MISDIRECTED GUMPTION.

Working with the wrong assumptions inevitably leads us to work in the wrong direction. Here is where we must be especially vigilant to keep our guard up. Sailors who cross the oceans check their bearings often throughout the day and night because a small difference in degrees can make a large difference in thousands of miles in destination! Consider the misdirected gumption of the rich man:

"Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" Luke 12:18-19 NIV

The rich man moves in two wrong directions. (1) He works hard to tear down his barns and build bigger ones, when really he should be working hard to do good for others, sharing his surplus grain. (2) He stops working because he thinks he has accumulated all he needs.

“Take life easy; eat drink and be merry.” We have another word for it today. A more dignified word, but it means the same thing. “Retirement!” We even have commercials for retirement planning, which when you think about it really comes down to building bigger barns. The purpose of work is not to arrive to the place where we never have to work again! The purpose of work is to live the good life: doing the good for others that God wants to accomplish through us. It’s the first order of business after faith. And it’s something we never stop doing! Why? **Because when we stop purposefully doing good (“adding to our faith”), not only do we make wrong assumptions that lead to misdirected gumption, but also...**



3rd Fugitive of Unguarded Life: I Live (and Die) With FALSE PRESUMPTIONS.

We think we’ll be around forever, but our days on this earth go by so quickly. We live shorter lives than we think we will. Our biggest investments of time and effort are often directed in the direction of the least amount of eternal reward. In a word, we are foolish! What’s the difference between assumption and presumption? When our assumptions intrude upon someone else... in this case, God.

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' Luke 12:20 NIV

Only twice do we see Jesus use this word for fool, ἄφρων, in ancient greek the base meaning was diaphragm. The seat of understanding was the inside where breathing happened. The “a” in front makes it the opposite. Like the lungs without a diaphragm, a breathing machine without breathing. A mind without understanding. Foolish! A harsh word spoken to someone who lived a lifetime without ever getting the purpose for his life!

The rich fool (and we too) think we will have more time. But our days are numbered. We only have so long to do the good we have been put here to do. Ultimately everything we have earned will go to someone else! Either purposefully with intent during our lives, or through our estates at death. We can’t take it with us. **A U-Haul never follows a hearse!**



Conclusion: So what IS the point to this life? To live the good life as much as possible, which is to say to do as much good as possible. Jesus put it in other terms: to be **rich towards God!** (v. 21) We usually have wrong ideas about getting rich. Sure sometimes someone wins the mega lottery or receives an inheritance. Rarely do such people keep their wealth long. Becoming rich - like even the rich fool - takes work. Hard work. Dedication. Thinking. Strategy. Labor. Dedicated persistence.

The same is true about being rich towards God. We don’t accidentally or without intent suddenly find ourselves rich towards God. God certainly does His part. He makes it possible. He saves us. He starts the relationship. It cost Him everything - including His Son! But ultimately to make something great out of this God relationship will take effort on our part too. And that begins with purposefully and unselfishly doing good for others. When we do and without knowing it, we will kill off our wrong assumptions, our misdirected gumption, and our false presumptions.