

A WISDOM LITERATURE LIFESTYLE

Is it possible, in today's rapidly changing world, to identify an enduring lifestyle that will consistently bring peace and give direction to all the choices and challenges of life, from generation to generation? I believe it is. It should come as no surprise that these ideas are not new. In fact, we can see this lifestyle described over three thousand years ago.

A biblical lifestyle can be derived from the poetic books of the Old Testament. This comes from blending several themes from the books of Ecclesiastes, Job, and Proverbs. Ultimately this lifestyle is focused entirely upon seeking God first and seeking him with all of our heart and mind.

Solomon experienced more than any other man of his time, and perhaps our time as well, in respect to wealth. He used his creative energy and wisdom and developed many building projects in addition to the glorious Temple. Yet, the theme of Ecclesiastes reflects what he learned from long pursuit of happiness from wealth and possessions. He states repeatedly that all is vanity except for the pursuit of God. When this basic idea is coupled with the theme of Proverbs chapter two, the greatest commandment - as Jesus taught in Mt 22:37 - emerges. *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."*

It is clear in this "poetic lifestyle" that God is to be the focus of our lives at all ages. Solomon details this in the last two chapters of Ecclesiastes and in various places in Proverbs, particularly chapter seven. While he does substantiate the joys of youth, he does not make allowances for succumbing to its lusts. This standard is one that belongs first to parents, as the "untrained" youth (*"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."* Pr 22:6) are much like the young man of chapter seven (*"And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding,"* vs. 7). The book of Job reveals more truths to incorporate into this lifestyle. God allows Job to be tested to great extents. Job never waivers in defense of his self-righteousness. Eventually God reveals how powerful He is and how small in comparison Job is. In this, Job sees that the Lord is to be trusted in all circumstances, whether good or grave.

A lifestyle derived from the wisdom literature of the Old Testament is one in which the individual places God first above all other things, trusts in Him completely in all circumstances, and embraces Him at all stages of life while passing this ideology on through the generations. If we can learn to embrace this lifestyle more fully, no doubt our lives will be more balanced, we will have less stress and more peace, and a spiritual thread of truth will be woven into our families to keep us close together and close to God.

CHAD PRINCE

RELATIONSHIPS

Many times when attending a social gathering, wedding or funeral we see a person there that we cannot "place" as to their relationship with the event. At the hospital the day of Ray McManus's tragic accident, someone asked what my relationship to Ray was. Since then, I have thought about my different relationships with Ray and I would like to share some of them with you.

First, Ray and I were neighbors. We lived about a country mile apart but in the country that is still a neighbor. We both built a brick house in the later part of 1999 both on a dirt road Ray's 0.141 miles off County Road 59 and mine 0.266 miles off County Road 59. We shared a lot of stories while building our houses. I related so much to Ray's article in the Harvester in early 2000 entitled "Home at Last".

Ray and I were both blessed with two wonderful children: one boy and one girl; the girl being the oldest. Both of Ray's children as well as my daughter (and probably my son when old enough) were involved in the high school marching band. Therefore, we were both in the band boosters organization and very active with the band.

Ray and I both were engineers and both of us went to Auburn University. Ray however had degrees from other schools as well and multiple career paths. Ray and I were friends with a lot in common.

Ray and I both married young ladies from Randolph County, Alabama that were members of the Church of Christ. Both of us, through the influence of these young ladies, were added to the Church of Christ. Both of us became teachers of the gospel, teaching at various congregations. One method both of us used to

prepare a gospel lesson was to use a parallel comparison to some worldly idea. For example, the title of this article could be used as a parallel to your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Since it has been brought it up, what is your relationship with Jesus Christ? Have you heard the word of God taught? (*"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* Rom. 10:17) If so, did you believe it with all of you heart? (*"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."* John 3:36) I mean did you truly believe it to the point that you now have faith? (*"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* Heb. 11:1; *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."* Heb. 11:6) Are you now willing to act on that faith and to repent of your past sins? (*"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:"* Acts 17:30) Are you willing to confess publicly that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? (*"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* Rom. 10:10) Are you willing to be baptized for the remission of your sins so that God can add you to His church? (*"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."* Acts 2:38-41) And after this, are you willing to remain faithful? (*"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."* Rev. 2:10) If you have done all of this and sin, are you willing to repent and pray for forgiveness for sins? (*"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."* Acts 8:22) Only by following these steps can one have the type of relationship with Jesus Christ that leads to a home in heaven.

Back to the question at hand, what was my relationship with Ray McManus? As you can see from this discussion, Ray and I shared many different types of relationships. However, the relationship

with Ray that I cherished most was that because of our relationship with Jesus Christ, Ray was my brother in Christ.

MARK CARPENTER

Unless you can create the WHOLE universe in 6 days, then perhaps giving "advice" to God isn't such a good idea.

You say: "It's not worth it"

God says: It will be worth it (Romans 8:23)

You say: "It is impossible"

God says: All things are possible (Luke 18:27)

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES

Feb.
18 - 20

PLACE

Napoleon Church
Woodland, AL

SPEAKER

Joe Hill
(Hager Hill, KY)

East Napoleon Church of Christ is located in the Napoleon community approximately ten miles east of Wedowee, Alabama just off County Road 56 on County Road 621. Friday and Saturday night services began at 7:00 p.m. Sunday morning services began at 10:30 a.m. Sunday evening services began at 6:00 p.m.

Members of the Lord's church have been meeting at East Napoleon since 1915. Current Sunday speakers include Mike Kirby and Chad Prince (alternate first Sundays), Donald Thompson (second Sunday), Bill Prince, Jr. (third Sunday), Junior Bowen (fourth Sunday) and Sonny Riggins (fifth Sunday). Various brethren speak on the second and fourth Sunday nights. Wilbur Bass speaks fifth Sunday night. Third Sunday night is congregational singing. Each first Sunday night the congregation meets with the Mt. Carmel Church of Christ in Woodland. Visitors are always welcome.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. When David first escaped Saul, to whom did he go?
2. What kind of work did the Prodigal Son take?
3. According to James 1, what should we put away?
4. What happened to the stars in the sky after the sixth seal was broken, as recorded in Revelation?
5. What was the celebration called after fifty years of farming the promised land?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Where did Jeremiah instruct Baruch to put the deed he gave him? IN A CLAY JAR (Jer. 32:14)
2. After punishment from God for continued disobedience, what sound will send the Israelites fleeing even if no one is chasing them? THE SOUND OF A DRIVEN LEAF (Lev. 26:36)
3. What will turn to joy, according to John 16? GRIEF (John 16:20)
4. Who had Jeremiah beaten and put in stocks? PASHHUR (Jer. 20:1)
5. What did Moses command in Deuteronomy To be read at the end of every seven years? THE LAW (Deut. 31:11)