

**September 30, 2007**

**“The Object Of Life” (ideas from John Ortberg)**

**Ps 90: 10, 12 NCV**

Steven Wright said, “I intend to live forever. So far, so good.”

In the last few months my father-in-law passed away, my uncle passed away (my dad’s brother), my brother-in-law’s dad passed away, another brother-in-law’s mother passed away and my dad passed away. And what I realized is that I am now the next generation...that will be going. I remember quite a while ago saying at a dinner table, “I don’t know where the time goes, it seems like the weeks just fly by so fast” and my dad said, “weeks? Wait till the years fly by so fast!” He was saying the older we get the faster the time seems to go. Our lives on earth are relatively short, about 70 to 80 years.

Ps 90:10 NCV

Our lifetime is seventy years  
or, if we are strong, eighty years.  
But the years are full of hard work and pain.  
They pass quickly, and then we are gone.

And in Psalm 90:12 (NCV) it say, “Teach us how short our lives really are so that we may be wise.”

I’ve read that in Jerusalem 100’s of synagogues are built by Jews from all over the world. One group of Jews from Budapest built one according an ancient custom, which is to put a coffin right in the wall of the building. There is no body in it, of course, just a casket built right into the wall. It is there as a silent reminder that life is short and so they should live wisely. Sooner or later we all end up the same way, in a box.

Ever play the game, Monopoly? We actually have two Monopoly games at home. The regular version and a New York Met’s version. I hear now they have a new version you can play without cash ... all you need is a “credit card.” It is suppose to make the game go faster. I guess that’s good. I never really liked playing the game (I’m not much for board games anyway, but) Monopoly always took so long to play. I didn’t own the game growing up, but, my friend, Barry, who lived across the street from me had the game, and always wanted to play. Barry was merciless. I’d throw the dice and land on Park Place. Of course he owned it and had 4 hotels on it.

“You owe me a million dollars!”

“Ok, let’s see...ah, I’m \$3 short. I owe you \$3.”

“No, way, pay up!”

“I’m going to pass go in a few turns and get \$200, I’ll give you the 3 bucks then.”

“No way, you owe the money now, pay up.”

“I already told you I don’t have it.”

“Alright then start mortgaging off your property!”

It wasn’t fun.

But one thing about the game of Monopoly, when the game is over it all goes back in the box (to borrow a title from John Ortberg's book). When the game is over everyone is equal again. It doesn't matter how much property my friend had, or how much money, or who owned Broadway or Park Place or how many houses and hotels we owned. The game comes to an end, all the pieces go back in the box and the game is put away...game over. In the end everyone is equal again.

That's a good lesson for life, isn't it? In the end we all end up the same way. You don't have to be a Christian to understand that lesson.

Ever hear how comedian Jerry Seinfeld put it? :

"To me, if life boils down to one significant thing, it's movement. To live is to keep moving. Unfortunately, this means that for the rest of our lives we're going to be looking for boxes.

When you're moving, your whole world is boxes. That's all you think about. "Boxes, where are the boxes?" You just wander down the street going in and out of stores, "Are there boxes here? Have you seen any boxes?" It's all you think about.

You could be at a funeral, everyone around you is mourning, crying, and you're looking at the casket. "That's a nice box. Does anybody know where that guy got that box? When he's done with it, you think I could get it? It's got some nice handles on it. My stereo would fit right in there."

I mean that's what death is, really – the last big move of your life. The hearse is like the van, the pall bearers are your close friends. The only ones you could really ask to help you with a big move like that. And the casket is that great, perfect box you've been looking for your whole life."

The Jews just celebrated Yom Kippur – the day of atonement. They are taught that every person should fully repent one day before they die. When someone asked, "But how will I know when that day is?" He was told, "Treat every day as if it were the day before your last." In other words, you should arrange your life around what matters most...start today!

Remember the story Jesus told once? Luke 12:16-21 NLT

And he gave an illustration: "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. 17 In fact, his barns were full to overflowing. 18 So he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store everything. 19 And I'll sit back and say to myself, My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!'

20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get it all?'

21 "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."

An elderly man lay dying in his bed.

In death's agony, he suddenly smelled the aroma of his favorite chocolate chip cookies wafting up the stairs. He gathered his remaining strength, and lifted himself from the bed.

Leaning against the wall, he slowly made his way out of the bedroom, and with even greater effort forced himself down the stairs, gripping the railing with both hands, he crawled down the stairs.

With labored breath, he leaned against the door-frame, gazing into the kitchen. Were it not for death's agony, he would have thought himself already in heaven: there, spread out upon waxed paper on the kitchen table were literally hundreds of his favorite chocolate chip cookies.

Was it heaven? Or was it one final act of heroic love from his devoted wife, seeing to it that he left this world a happy man?

Mustering one great final effort, he threw himself toward the table, landing on his knees in a rumped posture. His parched lips parted: the wondrous taste of the cookie was already in his mouth, seemingly bringing him back to life.

The aged and withered hand trembled on its way to a cookie at the edge of the table, when it was suddenly smacked with a spatula by his wife.

"Stay out of those," she said, "they're for the funeral."

The rich fool had plenty and thought it was all for him. He just needed one more barn, one more harvest, one more chocolate cookie. Then out came the spatula and *Whack!* "Hey, they don't belong to you. 'Stay out of those, they're for the funeral.'"

When Jesus summed up the lesson of the story He said (v21) "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God." He didn't want us to miss the point, the object of life, according to Jesus, is simple: "...Have a rich relationship with God."

I could not beat Barry, but I can have a rich relationship with God. Your life, with the help of Jesus Christ, can be a life that makes God smile. When the game is over, all that will matter is how God judges our lives.

Have a rich relationship with God begins by giving God what He desires most of all. And what God desires most of all is *you* – your heart, your complete devotion. It's funny, we say we believe in an All-Powerful, Supreme, God, then live like He doesn't matter. Or we are too busy for Him, or too selfish or just plain sinful. But, God never stops loving us, nor stops wanting us to be with Him, so we can know Him better and have a rich relationship with God.

My parents lived in St. Kitts for awhile. My dad was a foreman of a factory down there. The people who worked in the factory and others that they met there very poor. My mom was struck that though these people were poor they were very generous. Friends shared everything – the little they had – with other friends. When the object of our lives is not about our possessions, but rather it is about having a rich relationship with God, then we will also love people.

Cars, homes, jobs, money, clothes, jewelry, exercise machines, cosmetics...and everything else in the world is temporary. It will not last. These things give us a little thrill, but the thrill fades. If you are living for these things, then you are living for what is temporary. Temporary satisfaction, temporary fulfillment, temporary meaning. These things will leave you empty. Even your outward body, is temporary, the person inside will live on, but not the body you are living in. We see so many commercials on TV, we have these home shopping stations on TV, trying to convince us of how great these items are, and how we have to have them. There is just one word they never use ...*Temporary!*

There is only one thing in this room that is not temporary. There is only one item you will be allowed to take with you from this life into the next.”

Then you leave this life for the next, what will make you rich in God’s eyes? People.

Build your life around the eternal. Have a rich relationship with God. Have a strong, moral, holy inner character, and invest your life in helping other people have a rich relationship with God.

When you go home imagine taking some stickers that say “temporary” and some that say “forever.” Put a “temporary” sticker as a reminder on your car, front door of your home. Walk around the inside of your home and put a temporary sticker on all the furniture. Put one on the front of your check book. Put a sticker on all the clothes in your closet. Put them on your iPod, TV, exercise equipment, on your BBQ, and any other appliance. Then take your “forever” stickers. Put them on your family, friends, your boss, and co-workers. Then put one on the strangers who work where you shop and at the pharmacy. Make sure you put one on the person you most dislike. And don’t forget to put one on your forehead as well.

All that matters, the Bible says, Gal 5:6 NLT, “What is important is faith expressing itself in love.” Everything done out of love for God will last. The object of live is to be rich toward God.