

MEN'S LIFE BLOOMINGTON & GOD @ WORK

Tuesday, September 27, 2016

Nice Start, Let's Get Going

Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13-14; Psalms 92:12-14

Definition: Each day brings new opportunities to get wiser and learn how to do things better. Don't think of yourself as getting "older" – look at each birthday as a new opportunity to apply the wisdom you've accumulated. Have the mindset that the past is preparation for the future. You're not winding down - you're gearing up for what lies ahead. Think of it as "Nice start, now let's get going" – here's where the real work begins.

Segment Questions:

- How old were your parents when you were born? What are some words of wisdom that they or other older adults passed on to you while you were a young man?
- When Solomon was young, how do you feel he envisioned his life would be lived? What type of old man do you think he expected to be?
- The passages from Ecclesiastes and Psalms give different perspectives on growing old. What insights do these passages give?
- How does a focus on priorities tie into the axiom of "Nice Start, Let's Get Going..."

Action Questions:

- What are some areas of life where you feel priorities are really important? Be specific about why you feel this way. Are there any areas where priorities don't matter?
- If you are an older man, turn to a younger man at the table and offer one piece of advice. If you're younger man, turn to someone older and ask them something you'd like to know.
- Where on this spectrum do you tend to lie? At one end is a mindset that we view our past with regrets and avoid thinking about it. At the other end, you view your past with gratitude for what your past has taught that you now apply towards the future. Which way do you most naturally lean?
- At what point in one's life does this idea of "nice start" apply? Should it ever end?

At the 2015 Global Leadership Summit, Jim Collins made the statement “Real creative impact accelerates, if you choose, after 50 years of age.” He went on to say that he had a friend who had a “nice start” birthday party at age 69.

I’ve noticed that many of my peers in their 50s and 60s start to talk a lot about the downside of aging. No doubt, a lot of it stinks. I turn 60 in two days. Instead of being discouraged, I’ve resolved to build on Collin’s comments and I’ve come up with a personal axiom of “Nice Start, Let’s Get Going.” A devotional by Tony Dungy gives some great insight. It’s titled, “Continually Checking Your Priorities.”

Don’t let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor him in your youth before you grow old and say, “Life is not pleasant anymore.” . . . Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone’s duty. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad. 12: 1, 13-14

King Solomon was highly successful by most people’s standards—he had fame, fortune, status, comfort, and power—but his life did not end well. That’s because those things don’t satisfy us. I’ve seen too many people seeking things that aren’t worthy of all the time, expense, and effort to get them. Time eventually shows which of our pursuits were ultimately empty. Excessive time at the office watching game film, or chasing after fame, fortune, or fleeting pleasure. All empty.

We’ve seen how Christ’s priorities are different from the world’s value system, and most of us have to reevaluate our priorities from time to time in order to line them up with what’s truly valuable. We don’t want to end like Solomon did—knowing the key to a meaningful, fulfilling life but never living up to what we know to be true. But how do we shift our priorities? How do we make the changes we want to make?

A life centered on Christ will not only help to free us from the uncertainty of our tomorrows and worries about success and achievements—what Solomon called “chasing after the wind.” It will redirect our focus toward what really matters. It will put finances, health, relationships, and our goals for the future in the right perspective. When we “chase after God” rather than chasing after the wind, we find that our relationship with Him rearranges our priorities.

It’s never too late to put things in order and enjoy the blessings God has placed all around us—blessings like a beautiful sunset, the face of a newborn baby, the laugh of a child, or any other evidence of His work in our lives. Shifting our priorities will require some changes, and it isn’t always easy. Solomon said the key to a meaningful, fulfilling life is God. If we make Him the center of our lives, He changes our perspective and our purpose. (From **Uncommon**, September 21)

There are three things I love about Coach Dungy’s perspective. 1) The reminder of what really counts; 2) The ongoing nature or reviewing our priorities; 3) The importance of finishing well.

To that last point, we have many great biblical examples of people who were used mightily by God in their senior years. Abraham fathered a nation, Noah built an ark to save humanity and Moses let people to freedom. Paul, Peter and John wrote some of the best of the New Testament. May we always look at each new day as an opportunity to build on what God has started with the mindset of **let’s get going**.

But the godly will flourish like palm trees and grow strong like the cedars of Lebanon. For they are transplanted to the Lord’s own house. They flourish in the courts of our God. Even in old age they will still produce fruit; they will remain vital and green. Psalm 92:12-14