

NBC Devotional
June 23, 2021
“Lessons I've Learned”

“Well, I’m just about finished, as the 30th approaches. I’m thankful for the 15 years God allowed me to serve NBC. I was 55 when elected and was wide-eyed and excited to serve NBC. After traveling thousands of miles representing NBC in various gatherings, leading through the many changes, and the challenges we have experienced, I am ready to pass the torch. I have no regrets, just a heart of gratitude.” - Extracted from an email from President Graves today.

I turned on the evening news.
Saw an old man being interviewed
Turning a hundred and two today.

Asked him what's the secret to life?
He looked up from his old pipe,
Laughed and said, "All I can say is,

Don't blink, just like that you're six years old.
And you take a nap,
And you wake up and you're twenty-five.
And your high school sweetheart becomes your wife.

Don't blink, you just might miss.
Your babies growing like mine did

Turning into moms and dads.
Next thing you know your better half,

Of fifty years is there in bed.
And you're praying God takes you instead.
Trust me friend a hundred years.
Goes faster than you think, so don't blink.

No, don't blink.
Don't blink.
Life goes faster than you think.
So don't blink.

Songwriters: Chris Allen Wallin / Casey Michael Beathard

Sometimes it is difficult to get your mind around this season in life. Don’t get me wrong – I am thankful for the rich and productive years God has given me. I’m thankful for my wife, children, grandchildren, and the many friends God has gifted me with. As a bona fide, card carrying member of the senior adult community, I would share with you a few lessons I have learned through the years.

1. LIFE IS FRAGILE – HANDLE IT WITH CARE.

13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."

14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." James 4:13-15 (NIV)

James is speaking directly into the culture of his time. Cities were primary market centers, not entirely unlike modern shopping centers. Cities were divided into different sectors based on what products were being sold or services being offered, much like a modern department store.

These city markets provided an outlet for farmers and craftsman to sell or barter their goods in what was primarily a noncash society. We know that Paul was a tentmaker, so when he entered a city, he could ask where the tentmakers were. He would make acquaintances in the tentmaker area, join with some family, and start working with them. (Acts 18:2-3)[1]

The decision to go to a certain city, take goods, and trade them for a profit was only common sense to the merchants. They probably knew people in this city, knew there was a market for their goods, and made careful plans to go.[2]

But, making a living by traveling to another city is not the issue for James. I don't think he has an issue with living life or providing for your needs.

The point James is driving home is life is fragile, handle with care.

14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

This statement carries a shock value to it. In fact, I would just as soon skip over this verse. But you need this verse to capture the point James is making. Life is fleeting, moving, temporary. Don't blink.

What does one say or do when facing this reality?

James puts it in perspective: What we do while we are living should be centered on God's will for our lives.

15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

Jesus taught us to depend on God and His care for us. In the Gospel of Matthew 6:25-34, NIV, Jesus says we should not worry about the basic necessities of life, what you eat, drink, or wear. He asks in, **27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life[a]**? Then he teaches us how we should live:

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

The uncertainty of life is not a cause either for fear or for inaction. It is a reason for realizing our complete dependence on God.

Life is fragile, handle it with care by trusting completely in God's design and will for your life.

2. LIFE IS ETERNAL – HANDLE IT WITH CONVICTION.

To live life with conviction is to recognize our need for salvation and that Jesus Christ is our Savior.

To live life with conviction is to be conformed to the image of Christ.

The Bible teaches us that spiritual conformity to Christlikeness is the goal of our salvation.

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

Full conformity to Christ can come about only by continuing in the way of Christ.

That takes conviction: Paul said it this way in Philippians:

10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,

14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. Phil 3:10-14 (NIV)

In my lifetime there has never been a more challenging time to live with conviction. The attacks on biblical orthodoxy undermine the truths found in God's Word. It can be confusing – what the Bible teaches as righteous is considered intolerance. What the Bible teaches as right is now considered wrong. Columnist Cal Thomas recently wrote, “What defines true and right in 2021 when just about everything that was considered true and right for millennia is now considered outdated.[\[3\]](#)”

So, in a day like we find ourselves living in, we must trust in God's word to guide us into eternal truth.

The Psalmist wrote:

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.

Psalm 119:9 (NIV)

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Psalm 119:11 (NIV)

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalm 119:105 (NIV)

When living in Colorado Springs, one day my wife, Cheryl, called me and said, “I'm lost.” I asked her, “Where are you?” “On Academy,” Cheryl replied. “Are you going north or south?” She explained, “I don't know.” I guided her by saying, “Look out the driver's window and tell me which side the mountain is on? If it is on the right side, you are going south. If it is on the left side, you are going north.”

How do we know how to live with conviction – the Word of God is our rock.

Life is eternal – handle with conviction.

3. LIFE IS REMEMBERED – HANDLE IT WITH COMMITMENT.

1 Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands. 6 Surely, he will never be shaken; a righteous man will be remembered forever. Psalms 112: 1, 6 (NIV)

Our lives will be remembered. Each and every day that we live, we are building memories. What kind of memories am I building? Am I giving myself to the really important things? My faith, my family, my friends -

My parents had 5 children who married and had 14 grandchildren (12 married), 29 great grandchildren. Our family was 67 in number when my father died last September. I recall my last visit with him. He had cancer in every bone in his body. When I was leaving from the visit, Dad struggled to get up, but he wanted to walk with me down the hall. As I drove back to Dallas, memories of a good man, father, and grandfather accompanied me.

C.T. Studd was a British evangelist and missionary in the late 1800's and early 1900's. He worked with Hudson Taylor in China and also served in India and Africa. Of his missionary work he said, "Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell."^[4]

Only one life, yes only one,
Now let me say, "Thy will be done,"
And when at last I'll hear the call,
I know I'll say "twas worth it all."
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last."^[5]

C.T. Studd

Like Studd, I want to be remembered as a man fully committed to the LORD, doing what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God - A man who revered God and shunned evil, striving always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

I want to be remembered as one who understood Life is fragile – handle with care, life is eternal – handle with conviction, and life is remembered – handle with commitment.

No, don't blink.
Don't blink.
Life goes faster than you think.
So don't blink.

Dr. Harold B. Graves, NBC President

[1] C. Jeanne Orjala Serrao, James: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition (Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 2010) 153

[2] Ibid, 154

[3] Foxnews.com June 12, 2021

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Studd

[5] Ibid