



Today is the last sermon in our series entitled “*The Game of Life.*” I hope you have enjoyed the series as much as we, staff, have enjoyed doing it together. The theme has been that life is similar to the board game, *The Game of Life*. How you play and live your life, the things you choose as your priorities and if or how you decide to involve God in your game plan will have a large impact on the outcome of how you spend your one and only life. Jerry just played the New Orleans’ jazz funeral march to set you up for this last sermon of our series.

You see, no matter how much you have enjoyed playing the Game of Life or how long it took you to go around the game board; eventually you have to pick up all the pieces from the game and put them back into the box. That is an interesting way to end this series isn’t it? You end the game by putting the pieces into a box! When that happens I have found that it is almost impossible to get everything back in the box. It is almost like the game ends too soon and there is always more that you wanted to do. We always kid my mom that when her time comes she will say, “*Just 5 more minutes and I will be ready and have everything done.*” The truth is that life is very short, (the older you are the more you realize that,) and in the end we will all have to try and evaluate how well we played the game and if it was worth the time we spent playing it.

Let me show you how some people summed up their life or the life of their loved one on their tombstone: (i) I told you I was sick, (ii) Jonathan Blake “Here lies the body of Jonathan Blake, stepped on the gas instead of the brake”, (iii) Scrabble tombstone, (iv) Greatest Electrician, (v) Mel Blanc “That all folks”, (vi) Merv Griffin “I will not be back right after the Message”, (vii) Barbra Manire “Time expired”, (viii) Santa’s Dead, (ix) Johnny Cochran.

Now, I want you to turn to the last two pages of your bulletin, (where the sermon notes are,) there you will see a picture of a tombstone. What I want you to do is take a couple of moments and think about what you want to see on your tombstone. The fact is, unless Jesus returns soon, each of us will finish our Game of Life and our passing will be marked by a ‘one line phrase.’ What did you write? As a preacher, I want to see a line from Hebrews 11:4 on my tombstone, “*By faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.*” I hope my words and actions keep having an influence after I have passed from this life. But here is the point, unless we live well, we will end up like Lawrence Cook did; what a sad way to sum up a life!



Or like a funeral I officiated of a Hell’s Angel kind of guy who drowned in a drunken stupor in about 10 inches of water in his back yard. I still remember seeing his son stand in front of his dad’s casket at the cemetery and give his remains ‘the bird’. I want to live well and leave a different legacy than that.

But in order to leave a legacy, we need to live a legacy. That is why we wanted to include this final sermon in this series. While most people pretend that they will never have to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, so far 100% of all humans have died. Life is terminal. Here is the question. What will it take to live that kind of life that leaves a legacy which will produce what you want to hear at your memorial

service and be reflected with love on your gravestone? In order do that, we need to know:

I. **How You Measure If You Have Won in the Game of Life?**

When you play *The Game of Life*, there comes a time when each person crosses the finish line and the game stops and everyone begins to count up the money, the properties and the things which have been amassed during the game to see if they are the winner. So how do you know if you have won in the Game of Life?

a. **Read the RULES OF THE GAME**

So let me remind you of 4 RULES OF THE GAME we need to keep in mind as we live our lives:

Rule #1: None of us know how long we have to live. If these penny jars were to represent the number of days different people have left to live; some of us here are running out of pennies, (no matter how old you are; none of us know how long we will live.) As one man has said, *"Life passes so quickly that it seems that no sooner has your pimples cleared up that your hair falls out."* Proverbs 27:1, *"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth."* Some people live like they will never die and will always have a chance to get things right - spend more time with their kids, say those things to that other person they have always wanted to say - the truth is because none of us know how long we will live, we need to live like today may be our last. To do NOW what we have been planning to eventually get to.

Rule #2: At the end of the game, all of us will be evaluated on 2 levels. It is like a friend, who worked at a Casino, said, *"At the end of every evening you see people lining up to cash in their chips and it doesn't take long to find out if they have made money or lost money."* The first evaluation will probably happen while we are still alive; it will be by our family and those we love. As I counsel people or sit with families after a loved one has passed away it doesn't take long until I can tell if they have poured their lives into their families or into themselves. Pain or pride comes to the surface quickly. In counseling, I see the girl who flirts from guy to guy trying to find love because her dad never had the time or the words to let her feel loved. Or the man who neglects his wife and family trying to get ahead because his dad passed on the pattern of a workaholic and robs his children of time just like his dad robbed him of time. Proverbs 13:32, *"A good man leaves and inheritance for his children's children."* Your actions, words and love can become a precious gift that flows through your kids' and even into your grandkids' lives. As you get older, you will often see in the eyes and actions of your children, an evaluation of how well you have played the game.

The second evaluation comes from God. Proverbs 5:21, *"For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord and he examines all his paths."* Hebrews 9:27, *"Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement."* Many of you live in the light of job evaluation times. Know that God says that we, all of us, will someday give an account of how we played the Game of Life. We also need to know that God does not grade on a curve, instead He will judge us by the insights and guidelines that He graciously placed in His Bible. Depending on how we have lived, this can be a scary idea. Or we can look at it as a time when we will sit down with our Heavenly Father and be able say, *"Lord these are the ways I have handled that which you have so generously placed in my hands. I hope my actions have made eternal differences and made you proud."*

Rule #3: Only if you play the game well will those you love want to keep the game pieces you played with. It is fascinating to see what children want as keepsakes from their parents and what ends up in the bargain bin at an estate or garage sale. When dad passed away, I was given Dad's ring and one of his marked up Bibles. I wear the ring because it was on his hands and I have his Bible because it expresses his heart of faith and his life of remarkable service to Jesus. I need to say this, if you want your kids and your friends to share the values you hold, the faith you say is precious and be the kind of people who will live life well; it is only possible if you live, (not just speak,) out those things with your life. If you do that which is precious to you, it will become precious to them.

Rule #4: What becomes valuable to your family may be very different than what people place in your obituary. At my dad's memorial service, people spoke about how dad had fixed and grown 5 congregations and then built 4 different church buildings during his life time. My most precious memory was how we had hiked together and how he had attended my hockey games, standing beside the rink boards with his Russian hat keeping his bald head warm. The greatest impact you will make will concern who you were to them not what you did.

2 Free comments: (i) If you are over 60, you are in the prime time of leaving memories and message which will be remembered. I talk to so many people who think that when their kids leave home their greatest influence over them is finished. Actually, the opposite is true; when you think of it, your grandkids only know you when you are over 60 and for your kids, those last 20 - 30 years of your life are the last and freshest memories you will leave them. So finish well.

(ii) Spend some time with those over 70 and under 7, you might be surprised with what you will learn from them. Due to their years of life experience or to their fresh look at life you will be challenged in how you live your life.

b. Check your Last Will and Testament

Maybe it is because Phil Yntema was here last week, but I attended his Last Will and Testament seminar. Can you imagine if someone put into words what we have learned over these past 9 weeks concerning how to do life in the areas we have touched on and left it in the form of a Last Will and Testament? Maybe it would sound like this:

Dear Family: As I look back at my life, I want you to know a few things I have learned along the way. They are ideas that I have often learned the hard way and so I want to pass my insights on to you so you can sidestep some of the pain I have walked through in learning these things. When it comes to the Game of Life, remember that you need the wisdom of God to guide you. Wisdom is like a Turkish rug, in a similar way to how the ladies read a pattern so they can reproduce that pattern in the rug, you need to know God's word (His Proverbs) so you will know how to reproduce God's wisdom in your life.

When it comes to your Work Life, remember that circumstances do not determine your opportunities because opportunities are shaped not simply by external factors but by internal factors of who we choose to become, despite what life throws at us. Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord." Concerning your inner Private Life, one simple thought – your private life is not private. So remember what you think and what you do is seen by God and will affect those you love, your walk with God and your future, so care well for it. With regard to your Family Life, will you remember that the issue is that there will always be so many different things competing for your time, that is why Deuteronomy 4 talks about writing the names of your children on your hands so that they will always be a high priority in your life. In the end it is your family that really matters. That leads

me to remind you to care for your spouse; remember that your spouse has given you the most precious gift anyone will ever give you – their life and their future. Never take that gift for granted; keep doing what you can do to make your marriage better and better and better. And when it comes to Finances, remember that less is more and your finances are God's not yours; so treat them as such. Finally, remember that under all of this you need place the firm foundation of God. If you build your life, marriage or family on anything but faith in Jesus, when storms strike you will not survive. I have found that is as true in life as it is in eternity. These thoughts will change your life and make you a winner when it comes to the Game of Life. ~ Love Dad ~

Really, if you think about it, this is simply a rewrite of Matthew 5:14 – 30, (story of the Ten Talents,) which was one of the last parables that Jesus told. And he said, like the father in this last Will and Testament, can I leave you with one last important thought that could change how you do life? Remember that your family, your marriage, your finances and your intellect; those 87 years I am going to give you are a gift from me to you. I am placing these things in your life so you will enjoy the, use them, invest your life into them and make a difference with them. If you follow the wisdom I give you then your life will make a difference. Leave a legacy, be a blessing to those you love, give them joy and make me smile. OR you can waste it – misuse it, hurt others with it and be judged for blowing your Game of Life. Please treat it as the gift it is. What do we need to do for that to happen?

II. What Should be in Your Bucket list?

Did you see the movie the *Bucket List*? It was about 2 terminally ill men who made a list of things they wanted to do, (see something majestic, go skydiving, see the Pyramids, get a tattoo,) and therefore I think what they wanted to become before they kicked the bucket. Let me give you two great quotes from the movie:

Carter Chambers: Forty-five years goes by pretty fast.

Edward Cole: Like smoke through a keyhole.

Edward Cole: I envy people who have faith; I just can't get my head around it.

Carter Chambers: Maybe because your head's in the way.

But it struck me as I watched the movie that maybe when it comes to the Game of Life, we need to have a short bucket list as well. Let me give you 3 simple Bucket List ideas that may help us as we play this Game of Life. Two of them come from a survey of 50 seniors over the age of 95 and one I have heard said repeatedly by people who are 95. They said if they had to do it all over again these things would be things they would key to how they would play the Game of Life.

a. They Would Reflect More. (Not I would watch more TV.)

As they looked back they noticed that unless they stopped periodically and reflected on how they were doing, they ended up missing out on REALLY Living. In other words they wished they had been more intentional in how they lived out their lives. Not that they would do different things but that they would do things differently. We need to be willing to stop and ask that hard question, "*Am I living life just floating through it OR am I living life as I want to live it?*"

b. They Would Involve Jesus More in Their Lives.

Irenaeus (an early church leader) said, *"To be spiritual is to be truly alive."*

The whole import of scripture, from the time that God walked with Adam in the cool of the evening, to Moses standing barefoot before the Burning bush, to Jesus saying to Mary, *"It is I,"* or to Thomas hearing, *"Come put your finger in my hand,"* God has been saying, *"Come and experience true life. Life that goes beyond the mundane to something more than that, deeper, fuller laced with the reality of walking with a God who is close enough to touch".* Paul sums up his life by saying, *"I have fought a good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."* (II Timothy 4:7,8) He would say, *"Wow! What a journey it has been as I have walked with my Lord through life, the things I have seen, the things I would never have thought I would have experienced, the difference I have been able to make and I was never alone because Jesus walked with me."* Stop and decided again that you will walk with Jesus in the Game of Life.

c. Determine that you will do more things which will live on after you are gone.

So few people really stop to consider what they are doing with their lives and because of that, so many end up looking back and saying, *"There was so little I did that had real lasting significance."*

Illustration: Gravestone, *"I ploughed the ocean and as I looked back I saw no trace of my passing."* That is very different than what Hebrews 11:4 says, *"Though he is dead he still speaks."* If you plant thoughts, actions and attitudes in people's lives, even when you are gone you will keep making a difference in the lives of those you love, your generation and the next. As we do, the promise is in Proverbs 11:25 which says, *"He who refreshes others will himself also be refreshed."*

My prayer for you is that your life will make a difference, give you great joy and make God smile.

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