

Axioms: To Be Happy We Need Three Things

By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison

1 Timothy 6:17-19

May 29, 2022 (Memorial Day)

TOMORROW is “Memorial Day,” a day set apart to remember those who gave their lives in military service to our country. Memorial Day started three years after The Civil War in 1868. It is estimated that 620,000 soldiers died in the Civil War - more deaths than all the other wars combined that our nation has fought.

TODAY, we honor the members of Asbury who have gone to be with the Lord since we held this service a year ago. As I call their names, consider responding to their loved ones by a call, note or text.

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It all goes back in the box. (Monopoly game pieces and people when they die)

Every exit is also an entrance. (The end of this life is not the end of life.)

Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened. (Dr. Suess)

Heaven is much too serious a place for work. It will be all dance and play there. (C.S. Lewis)

The best of all, God is with us. (John Wesley's dying words)

The first lines in our bulletin/sermon intro: *Jim Stovall is one of the most impressive people I have ever known. This Tulsa native started going blind when he was a high school student. He became completely blind when he was an ORU student. Jim told his father that being blind meant he would never have a normal life. His dad had a classic response: “I never thought being normal was anything worth aspiring to.” Jim nearly collapsed into despair, but the Lord used the great Ray Charles to change Jim's life. He got a new script and refused to live in that cave. Instead, he became a world-famous author, screenwriter, entrepreneur, and motivational speaker. Drive down 81st Street headed east, and you can see Jim Stovall's name on a building on the ORU campus. His generosity is helping future generations. Jim gave an interview in his home, and I wrote down his words, “**We need three things in life to be happy...**” The 3 things we need are (WHITEBOARD): **Something to do, someone to love, and something to look forward to.** Our text addresses this so well.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19 (Pew Bible #1180) *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.*

Something to do. We must find meaning/purpose in life, but Paul told Timothy to tell the rich something NOT to do: Don't store up (earthly) treasure for ourselves. Jesus told a parable (Luke 12:13-21) *Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."* Wealth can make us "haughty" and move our trust from God to our money – which is most uncertain (i.e. the stock market). There is nothing wrong with wealth. (*"I've been rich and I've been poor – rich is better."* Mark Twain) But *"He who dies with the most toys wins"* is NOT a quote from the Bible yet accumulating stuff is the mindset of many. Paul rejects that strategy. He wrote in 6:10, *"the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil."* Instead of loving money, be generous in good deeds and set our hopes on God. Learning to be generous is a secret to finding something meaningful to do with your life.

"Yad Vashem," the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, illustrates what happens if people treat others as non-humans. A Jew, Viktor Frankl, was sent with his family to the Auschwitz concentration camp. He survived; but his wife, sister, and mother all died there (his father just before going). The Nazis stripped him of everything. However, he realized in Auschwitz the Nazis couldn't take one thing from him – he could still choose his attitude, even if he didn't like any of the options. He said, ***"WHEN WE ARE NO LONGER ABLE TO CHANGE A SITUATION, WE ARE CHALLENGED TO CHANGE OURSELVES."*** Even in the midst of suffering in Auschwitz, this Austrian psychiatrist was convinced the secret to life was to find meaning & purpose. His classic book is, ***"Man's Search for Meaning."*** He said everyone needs to take whatever suffering we experience & find something positive about it. If we lack meaning in life, we dumb down. We dull our pain by only pursuing pleasure. Frankl believed we must have something meaningful to do with our lives. Instead of loving money and the pleasures of this world, we are to find something meaningful to do.

Someone to Love. The first two chapters of Genesis has a consistent narrative – all God created was "good." The light, seas, land, and animals were "good." When God created the man, it was "very good." The first "not good" was, *"It is not good for man to be ALONE."*

Loneliness is not healthy, but we don't have to be married to have someone to love. Paul was single. He urged other Jesus followers NOT to marry because it would interfere with their singleness of mind to serve Jesus. He wasn't married but had a huge community of friends in the church who loved him unconditionally. If there is one word that describes personhood in our world today, it is "loneliness." Ironically, with all our technology, we've never been more connected- and so lonely at the same time. We want Asbury to be a place where community happens and be a place where you can make friends.

However, our human community, is not our ultimate source of love. Ultimately, Paul says to **SET YOUR HOPES ON GOD**. Asbury's mission is: "*Helping Others Follow Jesus.*" Jesus' first words to Peter were: "*Follow Me.*" His last words to Peter were: "*Follow Me.*" His first words to His disciples were: "*Follow Me.*" There are only two things about being a Christian: 1) Jesus is the Leader. 2) We are His followers ("Follow the Leader.) Leading is important but following comes first. Jesus didn't really recruit "leaders;" He called "Followers." To follow Jesus doesn't mean we have all the answers. It just means we keep on moving after the One who has chosen us. If we follow Him, we will find something to do, someone to love, and something to look forward to. If you feel you don't have someone to love – follow Jesus. Learn to love Him first and foremost. As He said, "*Seek first the kingdom of God...*" And other things will follow. Including friends.

Something to Look forward to. I retire at age 67 and have something meaningful to do ("Churchcraft" – mentoring pastors, working with ATS, and taking people to Israel). However, something else follows retirement. We've just read the names of 74 members of Asbury. My name will be read at some point, too. So will yours. Paul concludes his letter to Timothy with these words: "*thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is TRULY LIFE.*" Jesus, and only Jesus, is truly life. As He said, "*I am the Resurrection and the life.*" (John 11:25)

If you have those 3 things you can be happy whether you're blind or burned out or broke or anything else and you can be a billionaire and have everything in the world that if you don't have one of those 3, it doesn't work. Most people, if you're not a Believer, you must go find something to do, someone to love, and something to look forward to. If you're a Believer, all you got to do is find one thing: someone to love. That's why Jesus said, "*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you.*" If you follow Christ. You have something to do, someone to love, and something to look forward to.

If you feel alone, like you don't have someone to love – this is your invitation to follow Jesus. If all have never found an identity beyond your possessions, work, friends, and family, but don't have the Resurrection and the Life in your life, then you've missed the greatest love/gift of all. As we receive Communion, make this your prayer: "Lord Jesus, I realize You love me. You created me with my best intentions in mind. I want to know Your love and to love You in return. I confess my need and my unworthiness. I have limitations and breakdowns on multiple levels. Come into my life. I pray, in Jesus' Name. Amen.