



Links Players

God, Golf, and The Good Life Life is Fleeting

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die.... (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2a, ESV)

I was riveted by what I was seeing! I couldn't sit still. No, I wasn't watching the U.S. Open or any other major; I was watching Payne Stewart's jet streak across the sky. It was October 1999.

I was once again riveted to the television soon thereafter. No, it was not a golf tournament I was watching; instead, I was glued to Payne's memorial service in the sanctuary of First Baptist Church-Orlando. The world of golf gathered to pay respects and say "goodbye."

Of all the things I remember, I recall Paul Azinger's eulogy. I remember some humorous moments, Paul's fond memories, and Paul's tears, but what stood out the most was Paul's comment – "life is so fleeting!"

Paul's life circumstances made this comment even more poignant. You likely remember that Paul was diagnosed with cancer in 1993. With a bit of reflection, we understood that Paul spoke like a man who had confronted his mortality, which Solomon describes as "a time to be born and a time to die."

When Paul said, "Life is so fleeting," we recognized Paul was speaking as a man who had encountered Jesus Christ and knew both the grim specter of death and the glorious reality of what follows for the follower of Christ when they walk through that final door.

As we navigate the wisdom of Ecclesiastes, we quickly notice that Solomon is grappling with the inescapable reality of "time," bookended by the boundaries of birth and death. Thirty-eight times, he connects his reflections to the sobering truth that one day, his earthly life will come to an end—"life is a vapor!"

When Solomon pondered the specter of death apart from a faith in Christ, it led to anxiety, regrets, resentment, and despair. When he considered his mortality through the lens of faith in God, he came away with an entirely different outlook.

Yes, our 'mortality' is the great equalizer (see 3:19-20)—both the wise man and the fool die, both animals and humans die, and, yes, both the rich and the poor die alike. Yet, how one relates to their Maker makes all the difference in this world and the world to come.

Reading these Holy Spirit-inspired reflections from the wisest of Israel's kings should not lead to the conclusion that all our pursuits (e.g., wealth, wisdom, pleasure, work, etc.) during our 'brief time on earth' are a waste of time.

Rather, as C.S. Lewis reminds us in *Surprised by Joy*, "[when] I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy...then the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." These experiences are, to borrow from N.T. Wright, "signposts" to another world.

In other words, all that our earthly life offers was never intended to be the 'be all and end all' of existence; instead, they are, by their brief and expiring pleasures, pointing us to that which never fades away—God tugging at our souls that something much greater awaits.

Prayer: Jesus! Teach us how to see life in light of eternity.

READING: Ecclesiastes 2:14-16; 3:19-20; 3:18-20

1. Do you remember where you were when you heard the news of Payne's and Arnie's passing? What thoughts and feelings raced through your heart and mind?

2. These selected verses are just a few that address our mortality. Based on your reading of Ecclesiastes, what insights do we gain about his perspective on the reality of death?

3. Application: In what ways could reconsidering the topic of our mortality from a biblical perspective reshape our approach to life?
