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“CAT’S IN THE CRADLE...”

“And the cat’s in the cradle and the silver spoon, little boy blue and the man in the moon. ‘When you comin’ home dad?’ ‘I don’t know when but we’ll get together then, you know we’ll have a good time then.’” (Harry Chapin) The lyrics from the popular song, “Cats In The Cradle” written and recorded by Harry Chapin are morose to say the least, but ever so insightful. You may well remember the song which has received widespread air-play since its release in late 1974. The song chronicles a man with a child and he is so busy working that, sadly he has no time for his son. But the son is bound to be just like his father, “I’m gonna be like you, Dad You know I’m gonna be like you” is found in the chorus. The son progresses through the life of the father and son, finally getting to the point where the son does indeed become like his father; too busy for others.

For some odd reason society seems to instill the necessity for one to work 50, 60 or more hours a week in order to provide enough income to satisfy the family with the “good things” of life. Week after week, month upon month and yes year by year life pushes on. Before too long the children are grown and have moved on to raise their family. Perhaps over the years the husband has advanced to a lofty position in his company, his wife has decided to resume her career as there now is the “empty nest”. Life should be full, but for some strange reason it still seems empty. Caught up in the proverbial “rat race”.

Does anyone ever really win the “rat race”? Quick answer, NO. We need to step back and do an honest assessment of life to determine exactly what is important in life. “*Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord.*” (Lamentations 3:40) Is it important to toil “endlessly” to earn money or gain a type of cache at work, to provide for family, in exchange for spending time with them? Solomon touched on this subject to some degree in the fourth chapter of Ecclesi-

astes, verses four through eight. Notice verse four, “*And I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor...*” In the parlance of today we would say someone is striving to “keep up with the Jones’”. What a tremendous waste of time and energy. Material possessions are not a good investment if it means the emptiness of precious relationships, specifically; spouse and children.

While we know that we are not to be lazy (see Ecclesiastes 4:5), but there is balance to be found between laziness and workaholic. “*One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after the wind.*” (Ecclesiastes 4:6) What Solomon is setting forth is really quite simple; it is better to have less and enjoy it more.

Thinking back to the song, “Cat’s In The Cradle”, the last verse of the song hits powerfully home. “I’ve long since retired, my son’s moved away. I called him just the other day, I said, ‘I’d like to see you if you don’t mind’. He said ‘I would love to dad, if I could find the time. You see the new jobs a hassle and the kid has the flu, but it’s sure nice talking to you.’ As I hung up the phone it occurred to me that my boy had grown up just like me. My boy was just like me.” Prior to this part of the song, when the son had returned from college, he was preoccupied elsewhere, and promised after being asked when you coming back son, “we’ll get together then dad, we’ll get together then.”

The sacrifice of precious relationships at the so called altar of success, possessions and such like, is quite honestly pathetic. Achievement is fleeting at best, whereas relationships are what makes life pleasant, meaningful and to a degree rewarding. All of which Solomon explains as chapter four of Ecclesiastes unfold in verses seven through twelve. Nobody wins the “rat race”. We can learn to not live to work, but work to live and make time for what is really important. (wbe)

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