

MONDAY MANNA

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RESUME OR EULOGY – WHICH WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

By Jim Mathis

In modern society we are encouraged to work to build our resume. The questions are always: What have we accomplished? What skills do we have? What is our job title? Or, how much money do we earn?

However, in the end, thinking about our eulogy is a better idea. At our funeral, what will our family and friends say about us? They will probably not list our jobs or our degrees. If so, it will only be in passing. They will most likely talk about what it was like to be our friend, or to have us as a loved one. Will they talk about our integrity and honesty? Will somebody mention how we always looked for the good side of people and situations, or how we lit up a room when we came into it?

Is our life characterised by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, and self-control, as the Bible describes in Galatians 5:22-23? Or, are we only a list of accomplishments?

I have never attended a funeral where the pastor read a list of the deceased person's possessions. I was thinking about this because my mother died a few months ago. At her funeral, person after person came forward to comment on her contributions to the community, as well the many close relationships that she had. Some talked about her patience, her loving spirit, and about her always positive attitude. There were no comments or mention of her financial situation, though several people reflected on her career and what a joy it was to have worked with her.

One of the sins of society is that we place undue honour on people because of positions they hold or how much money they possess. Conversely, we fail to respect people with lower incomes or working in lower status jobs. This is exactly the opposite of how God would have us act. Scripture is clear about our need to not be prejudiced or to show favouritism. James 2:5 (New Living Translation) says, *"Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him?"*

Matthew 6:19-21 reminds us to not place our trust in earthly treasures, but to lay up eternal treasure. *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*

Luke 12:15 adds, *"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."* In practical terms, what we own is not who we are. Our money, houses and cars are all external to who we are. "Things" are temporary, just along for the ride, often dragging us down. Our experiences, education, and relationships, most importantly our relationship with God, define who we are. Those things are internal, along with characteristics like integrity, love, joy, and peace.

When we die, we will leave all possessions behind, but the lives we have touched and the differences we have made will live on, both on earth and in heaven.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

Have you ever attended a funeral or memorial service where people spoke at length about the deceased person's money, or jobs, or earthly possessions? What are the things that seem to be mentioned most often?

Why is the content of one's resume typically so different from what is expressed through an eulogy at a memorial service?

Which of the characteristics cited by the Bible – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – do you think people would associate with your life?

How can we avoid becoming preoccupied or consumed with the external trappings of success, and learn instead to cultivate internal qualities and traits that will be remembered long after our lives have come to an end?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more consider the following passages:

Proverbs 20:11, 21:21

Matthew 6:24,33, 7:24-27, 13:44-45

Philippians 4:8-9