

## Torrey 1987 Living on the Dark Side of Hope: Session 3 By Ron Allen

[Speaker 1]

Thank you so much for the speakers, Lord. It's getting towards the end of the week, and we really enjoy them. At least I do, the ones I listen to. I pray that we could pick out some knowledge, pick out some things that could still be applied to our lives, God. I pray that we'd be able to use it weeks to come. That would be stored, that we'd have a hunger for you, that we thirst after you. Even on the last day of the conference, pray that you help Dr. Allen to explain his message clearly and that we'd be able to understand it and have the Holy Spirit in it and anoint it. Thank you again for this day. Amen. Dr. Allen, the Part 3: Living on the dark Side of Hope.

[Ron Allen]

Well, thank you very much. I'm wondering before I begin, if you have questions about some of the things I've said in the first two sessions, or perhaps even in the plenary time, I haven't given any time for questions. And if you have them, I'd be glad to deal with those. Just wait a moment to see. Yes.

The question is, do I raise sheep as well as goats? Actually, Dr. Radmacher raises sheep and I have the goats, and we have an ongoing story about who has the right animal. I think he has Scripture on his side, but he has a number of great sheep stories. You do not have to have animals and wear a beard to teach at Western Seminary. Only if you want tenure, do you need to have a beard and raise animals. Okay.

The other profound question. Yes. The Bible does present a concept of joy in life. In fact, what I'm going to be saying today in this hour we'll be developing that more, but we have to be careful how we state it, because we neither want to talk about some kind of a phony thing, nor do we want to become quite hedonistic.

Now there is a book published by my publisher with a title that sounds very good, "Desiring God." But the subtitle sounds a little scary, and it's called Christian Hedonism, and it's the John Piper book. Some of you may have read that the concept of Christian hedonism sounds like an oxymoron. An oxymoron, those are words that don't go together, like airplane food. Actually, some airplanes give good meals. This is an aside, and this is an unsolicited comment, but Alaska Airlines gives the best meals on the West Coast.

I don't get any money for that, but I get good food. But Christian Hedonism sounds like an oxymoron. And he makes a case that God really desires us to find our pleasure. But we find our pleasure in him, you see. And hence, just as we grieve, not as the world grieves, so we have a pleasure that is provoked by other things in the world has. But as I'm going to say today, this next hour, there's a great deal of pleasure to be found in the life that we have and that's God's gift to us.

So I'm going to hold back on answering that more fully for a moment. Any other questions I didn't get to answer yet? All right. If not, then I'd like you to open to Kohelet again, or Ecclesiastes as we're calling it. Kohelet chapter 3 for the center teaching on this book. This is

debatable, but this is my view of the centerpiece of the book. The book begins with this concept of the cyclical nature of time and life. You saw that in chapter one, our first day. Now the book concludes with a vantage point of age and looking back on the fleeting nature of life.

And it's a call to young people not to waste the life that they have, but to remember God in it.

And because it begins and ends with a concept of time and life, I find that the heart of the book is in chapter three, which is one of the most important texts on balancing life. I really believe in all of Scripture and that's chapter three, verses one through 15. Now it starts with a highly stylized poem, an exquisitely crafted poem, and then it goes into an exposition.

So our text has two parts to it, and then it ends in another poem. So it's an Aba structure that is, versus one to eight. That's poetry versus 9 to 13, that's pros. Versus 14 and 15, again is poetry, and we need the whole of this to make sense of any of it. And the reason for the interchange between poetry and prose is because in different ways and through different genre, this great writer, Solomon, if he indeed is the writer of Kohelet, as I believe him to be, is able to present this so very strongly.

Now this is called the doctrine of time, and you'll recognize this, I hope to everything. There is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. Now those who have advantage of this book as being a non-believer or one who pretends there is no God for effect, is going to have a great difficulty in interpreting this passage because this passage is presented as doctrine. That is, this is true teaching. This passage is one of those passages that Paul surely had in mind when he said to

the young pastor, Timothy, all Scripture is inspired and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, instruction, training and righteousness.

This is that which makes a person full and complete and ready for every good work. And it is the sense that time is God's gift and that there is an appropriateness in time. Now this is not dealing with Western versus Eastern models of time, and it's not really dealing with the clock, but it's dealing with the concept of God's Providence and the way that he works in your life and mine. For everything, there is a time. There's a time for every purpose under heaven. In fact, the word 'purpose' is the word 'pleasure,' 'chefts.'

It's the same word that we've been dealing with in the Psalms. While this is translated sort of pedestrianly purpose, it really means pleasure. There's a time for every pleasure under heaven. God has given us a time. So these are the times of our lives. Now watch the pairings. Verse two. There's a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant, and a time to pluck that which is planted. And we'll find that in each verse there are two pairs of synonymous concepts that is being born and planning our similar ideas and dying and plucking out our similar ideas.

But then within each they're antitheses being born and dying opposites, planting and plucking. Those are opposites. So you have on one level opposites and on the other level, you have synonyms. And this is really an exquisitely developed passage. There's a time to be born and a time to die. This is not Kismet. It is not Karma. It is not fate. It is God's Providence. And there's a great deal of difference in those because according to many eastern religions, the concept of fate is an irrational, non-thinking process.

That's just an inescapable process in life. That's not what this is describing. First we'll see in a moment it's the time of our lives, the time that comes from God. And so there is God's will and God's volition and God's purpose and God's work in these times. So this is not just some sort of a mystique, that's a part of nature, but it is the working of God that is a part of our living. And that's why when I wake up in the morning, I did not this morning say, this is the day that I may die.

It is true. But that's not the way I woke up this morning. I'm assuming I'm going to live, but there will come a day unless the Lord comes. In the meantime, there will come a day which will be the day of my dying. And I'm to understand from this passage that that day is a part of God's Providence, even as my birth date was a day of His Providence. And I have no idea how many days those are. But those days are my days. Now I mentioned briefly about the fact we have a little girl who nearly died of leukemia.

I didn't tell your story. It takes a long time in the telling. I have written a story and I didn't plan to do an ad, but I guess I will. I'm giving this to a friend, and so I'll show it to you. I just have it here, but it's called "Praise: the Response to all of Life." It's in the Multnomah series that has mostly Swindoll titles, I'm really honored to be in that collection, but this is our story. But because of our experience with our little girl who has lived, we've been with numerous other families over the years whose children have the same or similar diseases.

And we've watched some of their children die. Now this has to be told as well. I mentioned in the other session about people praying for us. And why do we want people to pray for us? So they would rejoice with us when God delivered her? If he indeed, he would, we didn't know he would. And then someone asked me, what if God hadn't delivered her? What then is the point of having people pray for you? And that's an important question, too. What if she had died?

Well, then, would all those prayers have been wasted? Well, it seems to me that then you have the dark side of hope. Those who had prayed with us, and if she had not lived, they would join with us in our pain and would share that. We wouldn't bear it alone. But together we could rejoice that God has done His will and that there is a time to be born and there's a time to die. And in her case, that would have been much shorter than we would have expected.

But life was still God's gift, and we would, that time, have prayed that we would have a right perspective about the short life she had as God's gift to us and to her. That is precisely what parents expressed to me when their child Rachel died of the same disease our Rachel survived. It was uncanny that she had the same name. She had the very same diagnosis six months after our girl went through her crisis. This couple from Central Oregon were being treated in the very same room where our daughter had been.

And then she was put in intensive care, and I was with them when she died. You never forget something like that. And here our little girl was alive and their little girl had died. Now what are you to conclude from that? We prayed harder? Well, that's a possibility. But it isn't true because I

was beside them, holding their hands. I heard their praying. They prayed as fervently as I did. Is it because I'm a better Christian than they are? That'd be a real dumb approach, wouldn't it?

Is it because I'm a seminary professor and he's a layman? You see how off we can get? Do you know what that dear mother told me through her tears? She says, "Your Rachel is alive and we share your joy." She says, "Our Rachel is not alive and you share our pain." And then she said these words: "But we know that our Rachel has lived her full life. It's just that her full life was three years instead of 70 or 80. And we thank God for the three years he gave to her because she lived her life to the full."

And that's the perspective of faith. The expectation is, one will live the three score and ten. The expectation is you'll live a long life. But there's no guarantee. But if you take your life as a gift from God, you'll see, there's a time to be born. There's a time to die. And I have as little control outside of mayhem and myself over the day of my dying as I have over the day of my being born. I'm born not just because of an accident that took place in the bed, in the mating of my parents.

I'm born by the sovereign decree of God, and my death will be similar if the return of Jesus does not intervene. In the meantime, there's a time and there's a time just as there's the time for planning. And uprooting early, the spring, I planted a garden. The garden is now spent and I'm about to plow it all under. And there's a time. There's a cycle for that. And it's the way things are now. One year and another year are different years. Some years I planned earlier than others.

Some years I harvest later than others. This happened to be a very late year. We've had unseasonably warm weather in Portland. Even as you've had down here, we've been baking. We haven't been shaking. You've been doing both. But up in Portland, we've had 80 degree days, 90 degree days in October. It's unbelievable. We've had that weather. So we're still harvesting tomatoes and they're red. Dan Radmacher will agree with me that we don't always get red tomatoes in Portland. A lot of times you get a lot of green tomatoes, but we have red ones now.

Another year we'll plant later and we'll harvest earlier. But that'll be the cycle for that year. And that's the way it is with life. You know, there's a cycle and there's an expectation, but you can't always predict the day. Look at the next cluster. Verse three, there's a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to break down and a time to build up killing and breaking down our synonymous ideas. They're similar ideas. Healing and building are also similar. And again, you have the opposites, along with the similarities.

There are times to destroy and there are times to build, times to tear and there are times to heal. Some of these things aren't pleasant things, but they're real things. I don't know what this writer had in mind about a time to kill. He may have been speaking of war. He may have been speaking of butchering, for food. The word is the most general of all the words for kill in the Bible. It's the word 'harag.' And so whatever it means, it's a very general word, that there's a time for death and there's a time for healing.

There's a time for building and there's a time for tearing down. Look at verse four, there's a time for weeping and a time for laughing, time for mourning and a time for dancing. In each of these

verses, we find antithetical and parallel ideas and marvelous interplay. Jesus is known as the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, and we don't usually think of Jesus and laughter, but I'm convinced that Jesus also was a man who laughed, because God is God of joy, and it was because of the death that was set before him and the task that was his, which was so difficult and the enormity of sin that he would become.

It was so overwhelming that we regularly think of Jesus in terms of his tears and his agony, and not so often about his laughter. But even the Book of Hebrews says it was for the joy that was set before him that he endured the cross. And Jesus is one who also knows how to laugh, for he is God, and God is God of laughter. There's a time to mourn. There's a time to dance again. I don't want to meddle with your own personal code here, but dancing was a part of Hebrew culture, expressive of great joy.

There's a time to mourn. I don't think that we in Western culture appreciate the concept of these times sufficient, and I know that Christians don't because many Christian people feel that to mourn is a sign of weakness and perhaps a sign of doubt and disbelief. How many times have you gone to a funeral? Maybe you've not been to many funerals. Young people don't go to too many. But I've been to numerous funerals, and I've been to a number of funerals where the widow or the mother of a child will say to me, I'm so happy today that my husband or my child is with Jesus that I don't even feel like crying. And look at me, I'm not wearing a black dress, it's a pink summer dress.

And I appreciate what they're saying because it is a statement of faith. But I agonize within and what they're doing to themselves because they've misread the New Testament that says 'we do not mourn as others mourn' to mean we don't mourn at all. Not only do we mourn, we must mourn because God has made us to mourn and a mother who will not mourn when her child has died, or a husband who will not mourn when his wife has died is a person who down the line is likely going to have a tremendous crisis in their own life and likely will require counseling, and who knows what manner of care, because they've denied that which God demands he's made it a part of our person.

The response to grief is real. Now, that doesn't mean we mourn like others do. Others mourn who have no hope. They mourn without consolation. We mourn, hoping. And we cry, believing, and how much better it is for a person to express their pain and say, but the one thing that sustains me in this is knowing that my husband, that my wife and my daughter, that my grandmother is in the arms of the Savior.

When I'm in Eastern cultures, I find they, like Jewish people, have a plan for mourning. I was met at the airport in Hong Kong some time ago by a friend of mine, a graduate of our seminary, married to a physician, a very fine physician in Hong Kong. And she had a beautiful flower in her hair, fresh flour. And she's a very beautiful woman anyway. And I commented on how pretty she looked. And I said, and the flower looks so pretty in your hair. And she said, oh, you don't know what that is, do you?

And I said, Well, I guess I don't. And she says, I'm mourning the death of my mother. And at that point I grope awkwardly, as one does, for adequate words to express my surprise and sorrow.

And I said, Well, when did she die? And she said, Well, it was eight months ago, and I must have shown some surprise in my faith. And she said, Let me explain what we do, she said, for the first month we grieve deeply. And then for eleven months we mourn less deeply, and we show our mourning by the flower.

And at the end of the year, then that's it. And then we take the flower off and we return to normal life. That's very similar to what Jewish people do. I have Jewish friends who have when someone dies, they ask me to come and sit, shiver with them. Never heard that sit Shiva, Shiva means a week. And in practicing Jewish families, that is, people who aren't secularized but are practicing their faith. When a family member died, the immediate members of the family and their very closest friends will sit together for a week.

They'll sit Shiva. Sit for a week. Other people will bring them food, but they'll just sit and they'll talk and they'll cry and they'll recount. They'll reminisce and they'll share with each other how much they love that person. But they'll sit for a week most of the day and sometimes on into the night. And the only thing they'll do is sleep at night and use the facilities and barest hygiene. And they'll sit. And then after that week is over. Then they go through a less intense mourning for three more weeks.

And then they go through eleven months of less intense and then only on the anniversary of the death or the anniversary of the service will they allow themselves to feel sad again and the idea

they've worked out their grief because there is a time to mourn. But so is there a time to laugh and what a sadness it is when Christians are portrayed as an unhappy people. I love to laugh, and I believe Christians ought to love to laugh. We have more to laugh about than anyone.

There are others about us who are laughing, and their laughter is gallows humor. They laugh because if they didn't laugh, they'd cry. We may laugh, and we may cry, and they may be genuine expressions of faith in God and our life under his hand. Well, verse five is hard. Verse five is hard because in all the other verses we know that we're dealing with parallel concepts. We're not sure. In verse five it says, there's a time to cast stones and a time to gather stones. There's a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing.

And the question I have in the back of my mind is, what in the world does gathering stones have to do with embracing? Because the second part of the verse is clearly unquestionably sexual embrace. And I believe Biblical morality that this is sexual love within marriage. And today we have to go on and be very specific. That is marriage of a man and a woman. Bible marriage. We have to say that today because there are others who are saying, no, it can be anything, dogs and elephants, whatever. It doesn't matter.

But there's a time to embrace. And there's a time to refrain from embracing. That is that sexual part of us, which is so important, a part of us ought not be all-consuming. And a married couple in the love that they have for each other ought show great joy and delight in that relationship and also ought be able for times and reasons of their own. And Paul even speaks about this refrain. Sometimes it's just not appropriate, and other times it is wondrous. Now, at the beginning, the

casting and gathering stone seems to be an as yet unidentified euphemism for the sexual embrace that is very hard to see anything to do with rocks and marriage unless it's what you throw at each other when things are bad.

So what it seems is, though gathering stones is a euphemism and casting stones is another for the act of the embrace. Moving right along we counted verse six. There's a time to gain and a time to lose, a time to keep and a time to throw away. Here's where my wife and I have difficulties.

Everyone has their different model here. Some people are collectors and savers, and some people are dumpers and few people balance those things. I suspect here's a call for balance. My wife is a saver and a collector.

The good thing about that is she may want to hold on to me along with all the other stuff. The bad thing is she's always wanting to sort things and has a hard time deciding to throw things away. Now we have a daughter who's a tosser. Our daughter is out of the home now she's the grown one. But when she was at home, she was always throwing things out that my wife wanted to keep. And my wife was always keeping things that my daughter wanted to throw away.

And there was always turmoil about that because we had the thrower and the saver. And what this is saying is there ought to be some balance of that. There ought to be a sense that some things we throw and some things we keep and there's a time for doing that. Verse 7. Similar time to tear, a time to sew, a time to keep silence and a time to speak. There's a time to tear things up and there's a time to put them together. There's a time not to say anything and a time when you must say something and take the greatest wisdom that you can muster.

And the wisdom that is a gift from God to be able to know when to do which. But we know there's a time for that. How many times in your own life have you looked back? And you said, if I only hadn't said what I said at the time I said it, or if only I'd said this what I really meant to say. And it's a part of learning wisdom to know when to do which. And it's a lesson we probably never learned well. But we must keep striving toward.

Look at verse 8. There's a time to love and a time to hate. A time of war and a time of peace. Loving is a conscious choice. So is hating. Have you ever wondered about the expression God is the speaker, "Jacob, I have loved, but Esau, I have hated"? That almost sounds vindictive of God, doesn't it? Until you realize that the words love and hate, which are quoted in the New Testament from Hebrew Bible, are to be understood in the Hebrew sense of those words. And the word love there means "to make a positive choice in," and the word hate is "to negative choice." That is God's choice was in Jacob, his choice was not in Esau. And it's not that God hates Esau like you and I might hate something or someone. But it's that he made his choice positively in the one and his choice negative in the other. And there's a time for love and a time for hate. There's a time for war and a time for peace. So these things work together, and they're supposed to be comprehensive.

Not that they list everything, but they list all kinds of things. So that what we have in verses two to eight is involved poetic development of verse one for everything. There's a time for every pleasure under heaven, for all kinds of things. There's a time and those times are the times of our lives. But they're the times of God. Now look at verse nine. Here's where the prose starts to

explain it. The poet goes back to what he said earlier, as he says these words, what is the profit that one gains in all his work? And the word 'profit' is the same word we saw our first day, "yithron." So what's the point? If there's a time for everything, then where do I fit in this? Am I passive or am I active? And if I'm active, is that reactive if there's a time for everything in my life, does that mean I'm not to be an innovator or not to be an agent? What does it mean? Well, verse ten, here's what he says. I have seen the task which God has given to the sons of men to do it.

And what verse 10 says is this: "though the times of your life are the times that God has given to you to use." So it's not as though this is a Kismet sort of thing. It's not as though it's fate. It's not as my Arab friend, Khatr by Dun, who lives in Jerusalem and is an antiquity dealer and is a practicing Muslim. And he says "Inshallah," that is, "if God wills." But he doesn't mean "if God wills" as we mean if God Will, he means "if God wills" in the sense of "if fate allows." "I'll see you tomorrow, Inshallah," and he means by that, "if I'm not struck dead in the meantime."

And if God Will. But His view of the will of God is the view of Muslim faith, and it's sheer fate. It's not the loving, responsive, active will of God that we find in the Bible for what we have here in verse Ten is that God has times for our lives, that these are things that God has given for us to be occupied with. So we are interactive with those times and correspond with God in those times, and we affect those times for good or evil.

So it's not as though there's some master calendar in heaven that I cannot affect. But in fact, there are the times of my lives that I affect very greatly, sometimes for evil. The saddest day in our

seminary life in recent times was when one of our faculty members decided to take into his own hands the time of his dying. It's not an easy thing even to talk about. He's a dear friend of mine. He was sort of a father figure to me. He was a professor of Greek, had taught Greek on the seminary level for over 30 years.

He'd been a pastor for 20 years, and he was past the age of retirement, and he was nearing the age of 70. He was 67 years old and he knew the Bible, and he knew God. But he was going through a very difficult time in his own life, suffering of his wife, who had been an Invalid for 18 years and difficulty in dealing with her separation from him and desperately in need of counseling and yet not admitting his need of that. In fact, in my personal feeling, his own physical presence was his worst enemy because he was a rugged, strong, tall-looking man.

Students called him up so high he was six foot four, weighed about £250, had this granite jaw and this upright posture. He was military in his bearing and precise in his dress and in his speech. And one day after writing lots of notes and letters to lots of people asking people to come and asking my friend and pastor to see that the milk in the refrigerator I was not allowed to spoil and that the radishes in the garden were picked so they wouldn't go to seed.

He went out in his backyard and he trashed the yard with his own brain with a gun against his head. He took the time of his life into his own hands. And that's a sadness that you can't get over. His office was right next door to mine. And though there's another friend in that office today, he'd occupied that office since the building was built. That's his office. And I go by that door.

And there's not a day that goes by. I don't think of my friend and the fact that he took the days of his life into his own hand.

You see, we can affect them for good or for evil. We can affect them for good. We can also affect them for harm. Look at these next words. Verse 11, this is the highest point of this text. He has made all things beautiful in his time, and that's where the Maranatha chorus comes from that we sang yesterday: "In his time. In his time. He does all things beautiful in his time." What a great confession of faith that is, the time belongs to God, and God will use time for good.

Yea for beauty, that he does all things beautiful. But notice this in his time that his time is his and he will work it toward beauty according to his understanding of what beauty is and what time is and what meaning is. That's why the second part of the verse is as important as the first, because the first is affirmation and the second part is interrogation or question where we read, but he has also put eternity in their hearts. The word translated eternity is "Allam." "Allam" is the word meaning forever for eternity, and in this passage is exquisite because it's a time word.

We're talking about time. And the issue is this God will use all things for beauty in his time, but within ourselves, those who know him. He's put a sense of the wonder of eternity that we are not yet understanding, nor can understand. That's why the rest of the verse says these words. No one can find out the work that God does from the beginning to the end. That's why we can translate this word eternity also by the word enigma. We have an enigma about time. We believe that God will do everything beautiful in his time, but we don't know the beginning.

We don't know the ending. That's why within our heart we live in a state of enigma and there's faith. And there's the question. And that means that there are a lot of things that may happen in my life or yours. We may not understand, and that's why the question why Lord is an inappropriate question, because the question why Lord presumes that there is an answer that we can understand. And in fact, while there is an answer in God, it's an answer that may not be understandable to us or given to us in our time.

It may be only in His time. And there are a lot of things in my life that I ask about that I would like to ask the question, Why Lord, but I've determined not to do that. Rather, I want to make use of what I do know and make the most of the time that God is given for. That's what verses twelve and 13 go on to say, I know therefore that there's nothing better than to rejoice and do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all the labor.

It is the gift of God. Now you've heard the expression: "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die" as an expression of Hedonism. Here's the expression "eat, drink and be merry" as the expression of trust in God. And here's the issue: in the most difficult, the most trying time of your life, you can still seize a momentary pleasure and take joy in the fact that you are alive.

Sometimes I say things that crack my kids up and it's deliberate. It's an intention. One time I was in an accident where I really was aching this time from this accident I mentioned on Monday I have some neck pain and I'm assuming it will not continue.

But I remember one time waking up and feeling really terrible. And I said, I feel so bad. Isn't that good? And my boy, who is such a fun boy to be with his twelve year old son, he says, dad, you're

crazy. What do you mean? You feel so bad? Isn't that good? I said, I feel so bad. But the fact I feel bad, isn't it good to know that you can feel anything that's good to feel bad, as against not feeling anything. He said, dad, that's crazy.

I said, no, it's not crazy at all because I woke up today and my pain told me I'm still alive. That's good. And it sounds crazy. But it's true. And you know, there are people who have learned to live with incessant pain and give praise to God in it. I think of one of my great heroines and perhaps yours, Johnny Erickson, who was made of her life of pain, a testimony to the Grace of God. And do you know that there are still uncaring, unthinking, untaught Christians who say if she had faith enough, she wouldn't be in a wheelchair.

She'd be up walking around. And what a lie that is. For I believe that God can heal her or anyone from anything. But it is a lie to say that God must heal anyone at any time at all. We pray for the one. But we learn to live with the other. And in her life right now there's the opportunity to show that a life in constant pain and tremendous discomfort can be lived to the praise of God. And I say that as a son of a father who was a paraplegic for 17 years, and I know as a member of the family what the pain really is, and it is far more than people on the outside would understand it all.

Sharing little pleasures and seizing them in the midst of great distress is the way to make your times right and work. When we go to be with a couple who've just learned that their child has this terrible disease of leukemia, as we show ourselves friendly to them and explain to them that we understand that nobody really knows another person's sorrow except that person Proverbs

says that Proverbs clearly says that only the one experiencing something truly understands it. We understand that. But nonetheless, we've been down that path.

We've walked in those markets. We know that trail somewhat, and we're there to help them. And one of the things we'll do after a while and after the mother's gotten very tired of being 24 hours with a child in the hospital room, and the husband is very tired because the usual pattern is she quits her job and if she works and she stays in the hospital room and he goes and gets extra work because they have extra expenses now, and they're not together anymore. And they're suffering silently.

And, you know, the incidence of divorce among parents with long term terminally ill children is very high. The last study I read was done in 1980, and it says five years after the death of the child, over 80% of those couples divorced. I don't know if that's still valid, but that was the thing given to us. You know what I'll do sometimes Beverly and I will work together and we'll put some money in an envelope, cash, and we will hand it to the couple and we'll tell them that we're going to stay in the room with our child.

My wife is a nurse, and she's very capable, and we'd like them to go out for a very nice dinner and not down to the hospital cafeteria. That's what they've been doing. But we say, go home and change clothes, shower and put on nice clothes and go out to a really nice restaurant. We'll suggest sometimes we've even prepaid the dinner so that they'll use it and go and have a time just for yourselves tonight and after dinner, go home and have some time to yourselves and then come back here.

And if you're concerned about it, call us every couple of hours and we'll tell you how your child is doing. Remember the first time we said that to someone they thought we were crazy. And I read to them these words that even in the worst of times. It is a good thing to be able to eat and drink and enjoy good things as God's gift. And we've had numerous couples tell us after the fact, but held them together in the most trying time, for I know whatever God does will be forever.

Nothing can be added to it, nor taken away from it, for God does what he does, that men should fear before Him that which has already been, that which is has already been, and that which is to be has already been. But God requires an account of what has passed so that the times of our lives are God's times and there will be an accounting for them. But they are good times when they're living. And we've seen some sense of perspective on what it means to live in good and difficult times.

It's my prayer that these words become more thoroughly mine, more genuinely lived in my own life as I share them with others. And then may they be appropriated by these as well, that we will regard our time as your great gift. And we will honor you in the times of our lives that we will bring praise to Jesus and it's in his name. We pray. Amen. Okay. Well, thank you.