

The Gables – Losing Your Life

Introduction

We're all conditioned from a young age to believe that losing is a bad thing:

- We're disappointed when our team loses the game.
- We're disappointed when we lose money in the stock market.
- We're disappointed when we lose an inheritance.
- We're disappointed when we lose an earring or a watch.
- We're disappointed when our favorite candidate loses an election.
- We're disappointed when someone calls us a loser.
- We're disappointed when we lose an old friend.
- We're disappointed when we lose our health.
- We're disappointed when we lose our strength.
- We're disappointed when we lose our ability to go to church
- We're disappointed when we lose time.
- We're disappointed when someone we love loses their faith.

But sometimes, losing is a good thing:

- We're joyful when we lose weight.
- We're joyful when we lose a bad habit.
- We're joyful when we, or someone we love, loses a bad relationship.
- We're especially joyful when we lose our life.

Dialog between Rick & Donna:

Donna: What did you just say?

Rick: We're especially joyful when we lose our life?

Donna: That doesn't make any sense. How can we be joyful when we lose our life?

Rick: Jesus said that if we lose our life, we'll find it.

Donna: What does that mean?

Rick: In Matthew 16:25 Jesus said, "For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."

Donna: I don't get it. What is Jesus saying?

Rick: That if you continue living your life just for yourself – living for pleasure, material gain, fame, vocational success, making money or whatever other idol there is in your life that is more important to you than God – you will die physically, emotionally, and spiritually, and have no joy while you are still here on earth. But if you are willing to cast that old life aside and

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surrender your life to Jesus, He will give you a new life – physically, emotionally, and spiritually – and an everlasting joy as you serve Him and others instead of yourself.

Jesus has exciting things for us to do, things that involve risk and courage, but we must be willing to trust him with our lives.

Donna: What do you mean by trusting Jesus with our lives?

Rick: There's a scene in the movie *Braveheart* that illustrates this concept. Braveheart is a historical drama war film made in 1995 that depicts William Wallace, a 13th century Scottish warrior, leading a rebellion against King Edward 1 of England. In this scene, Wallace is standing on a battlefield with the Scots on one side and the English on the other.

William Wallace: I am William Wallace! And I see a whole army of my countrymen, here in defiance of tyranny. You've come to fight as free men... and free men you are. What will you do with that freedom? Will you fight?

Veteran: Fight? Against that? [Pointing to the English army] No! We will run. And we will live.

William Wallace: Aye, fight and you may die. Run, and you'll live... at least a while. And dying in your beds, many years from now, would you be willin' to trade ALL the days, from this day to that, for one chance, just one chance, to come back here and tell our enemies that they may take our lives, but they'll never take... OUR FREEDOM!

We're only here on earth for a short time. Should we spend our whole lives living for ourselves? Will we arrive at the end of our lives and regret the things we didn't do, or are we willing to go for it now and do the things that God would have us to do? As long as you're still breathing, you can allow God to take over your life each day so he can accomplish great things through you for his glory and for the good of others.

Donna: Well, I don't think Braveheart is in the Bible.

Rick: Actually, the Braveheart concept is in the Bible. In Deuteronomy 31:23, God is speaking to Joshua, preparing him to lead the army of Israel. The LORD said, "Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you."

I think God is with us as we fight our spiritual battles each day too.

Donna: What spiritual battles?

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Rick: As Christians, we battle against the flesh and the devil each day.

Donna: We do?

Rick: Yes. We must die to self. Romans 7:5-6 says, “For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.”

Satan wants to keep us enslaved to our old way of life. He doesn’t want us to be joyful or serve God and others. He wants us to play it safe and not take risks. He doesn’t want us to walk through the doors that God opens for us each day. He wants us to be unfruitful. 2 Corinthians 2:10-11 says we need to forgive each other “in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”

The bottom line is that we must take the focus off ourselves.

Donna: Isn’t there some Bible verse about forfeiting our soul for money?

Rick: Yes. Matthew 16:26 says, “What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”

What good is being a multi-billionaire if you’re in hell ten years from now for the next ten thousand years? None of the things you did for yourself while on earth will matter then. The only things that will matter are the things you did for God and things you did for others; that’s where joy comes from.

Don’t live your life for yourself. Live it for God and for others. And when God opens a door don’t be afraid... walk through it.

Donna: I’m pretty sure there are some other Bible verses about valuing others over ourselves.

Rick: Yes, there are.

- Galatians 6:10 says: “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”
- Philippians 2:3 says, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves...”

Donna: So serving God and others, especially Christians, instead of ourselves, is part of losing our life?

Rick: Yes.

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Donna: And dying to self is part of losing our life too?

Rick: Yes, both are. In some cases, we may even be called upon to lose our physical life.

Donna: Our physical life? Really? Well, probably not in America. That just happens in other countries.

Rick: Usually, but Jesus said we will suffer persecution if we follow him (e.g., Matthew 5:10-12). Christians around the world are imprisoned, tortured, and even killed because of their faith. You never know when it might happen.

I heard a story about some soldiers in another country entering a church and announcing that anyone who did not deny Christ would be taken outside and shot. As the congregation processed in front of the soldiers, one by one, the people began to deny Jesus. When it was a little girl's turn she said, "I love Jesus. I'm not going to deny him." Many after her observed her courage and acknowledged Jesus as well. What would you do in that situation?

Donna: Well, I certainly hope I would not deny Jesus... Did the little girl actually die?

Rick: I believe so.

Donna: Oh... That's so sad.

Rick: Yes, from our perspective, but I'm sure that little girl will receive a great reward in heaven for her faithfulness.

Here's another example from a movie about dying to self. In *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, First Officer Spock of the Starship Enterprise entered a radioactive chamber, without wearing protective clothing, to turn off a malfunctioning device in order to save the ship and its crew.

Kirk: Spock!

Spock: The ship... out of danger?

Kirk: Yes.

Spock: Don't grieve, Admiral. It is logical. The needs of the many outweigh...

Kirk: ...the needs of the few...

Spock: ...Or the one.

Spock then collapsed to the floor and soon died. He gave his life for his friends and the crew.

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In John 15:13 Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.

Donna: And that’s what Jesus did for us.

Rick: Yes. Jesus died to self and sacrificed his life on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

Donna: Didn’t Jesus say he wanted us to live abundantly while we’re here on earth?

Rick: Absolutely. In John 10:10 Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (Other translations use the abundant life.) The natural inclination for a person to have a great life is for them to do things for themselves. The secret to great life filled with joy is to lose our life and do things for God... and for others.