



SONrise

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EMMAUS

NEWSLETTER

... Strengthening the Local Church

Summertime
And the Livin' is Easy

That line from the Gershwin classic seems to belong to an age gone by. Today, summertime is the busiest and most hectic time of the year. We try to pack so much into three short months, that it's a relief when school starts again and we can catch our breath. Not that life slows down that much in September. Today's lifestyles are so fast-paced and so crammed full of "stuff" that it seems there is no time when the "Livin' is Easy." We often spend so much time trying to fit it all in and planning for tomorrow, that we miss the living of today.

I don't think that's the way God intended life to be. Jesus told his disciples not to worry about all the things that keep us from really living life. "Life is so much more important than food [or vacations] and the body much more important than clothes [or a tan]. Look at the birds of the air. They don't harvest and store up grain, but God makes sure they are fed. Look at the flowers of the field. They don't sew clothes and dress up to look good. But I tell you that not even King Solomon with all his wealth had clothes as beautiful as one of these wildflowers. And God loves you so much more than birds and flowers. Don't be so concerned about all these things. God knows what you need. Instead, focus on the things of God and all these other things will be provided" (paraphrase of Luke 12:22-31). Now there's nothing wrong with food and clothes (or vacations and tans), unless we get so focused on them that they push God out.

I probably need to read this article more than most of you (that's why God asked me to write it). I have always tried to pack so much into a day, a week, a summer; that it's gone before I know it and all I'm left with is the exhaustion. But my wife, Gail, has gotten me involved in something that is turning that around. We are following verse 27 literally, "Look at the flowers of the field." We have begun taking wildflower hikes and bike rides

together. Because we stop every 10 minutes to examine and identify a new flower, I've begun to stop focusing on how many miles we're covering or what pace we're keeping, and I just enjoy our time together and the beauty around us. We finish our hike or ride relaxed rather than exhausted, and our spirits are soothed and rejuvenated. I've discovered that what I always considered weeds, are really incredibly beautiful flowers. Even the tiniest, most insignificant flowers are intricate beyond belief. Learning to look beyond the "weeds" to see the beauty of the flowers is a skill that has begun to affect a lot of other areas of my life. When I take the time to really look, I find it amazing how much beauty there is in the world and in people where I only saw "weeds" before.

As I listened to Ella Fitzgerald and Louie Armstrong sing that great song from "Porgy and Bess," I realized that Gershwin had somehow captured what Jesus was talking about: "Summertime and the livin' is easy. Fish are jumpin', and the cotton is high." There is more in this line than just a balance between work and play, there is a sense of excellence and a quality of life that is beyond our ability to create. "Your daddy's rich, and your ma is good lookin' is what Jesus was trying to tell his disciples. Our father has so much more to give us than we could ever get on our own, and "Mother Nature" is more beautiful than any amount of material possessions. "So hush little baby, and don't you cry." Don't worry about these things; let your Daddy take care of them. I thought of a lot of other analogies between the song, the scripture, and living, but I'm trying to follow my own advice and not cram too much in. So just remember that it's Summertime! Spend a little time each day with your rich Daddy, and a little time each day looking for beauty among the weeds. Find a balance between "hoeing cotton and fishin'," and Child, don't you cry - God loves you!

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