

# Adventuring with God

with Jeanne Hedrick

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## Don't Cry For Me

I was listening to Selah's album *Bless the Broken Road* this week, and one of the songs they sang really stood out to me. The lyrics (written by Julie Miller) went like this:

*"When I go, don't cry for me,  
in my Father's arms I'll be.*

*The wounds this world left on my soul will all be healed,  
and I'll be whole.*

*Sun and moon will be replaced  
with the light of Jesus' face,*

*And I will not be ashamed, for my Savior  
knows my name.*

It don't matter where you bury me -- I'll be home and I'll be free.

It don't matter where I lay – all my tears be washed away.

*Gold and silver blind the eye;  
temporary riches lie.*

*Come and eat from Heaven's store;  
come and drink and thirst no more.*

*So weep not for me, my friend,  
when my time below does end.*

*For my life belongs to Him,  
who will raise the dead again.*

*It don't matter where you bury me –  
I'll be home and I'll be free."*

All Christians need to be reminded of this glorious truth, because we tend to get all wrapped up in what we see around us. We fix our attention on the opportunities, problems, and challenges of daily life, and we forget that what is eternal is far more important. When we pass from this life to the next, we are going from a lesser to a *greater* place. We move from merely tasting the heavenly gift to possessing it in full.

When we read the New Testament, we see that the apostles spent a lot of time focusing on God's promises concerning life after death. But Christians today are often singularly focused on this life and how to make it better. Sure, we still believe in a hereafter with Jesus, but that fact is relegated to our file of things that will be attended to *someday*, when needed. For now, we have much to accomplish in the here and now.

After all, we don't want to be considered by our non-Christian friends and relatives as "pie-in-the-sky-by-and-by" fanatics – people who are so heavenly minded they are no earthly good. We want to assure everyone that we are still "with it" – we know the wisdom and ways of the world as well as the next fellow. We may not participate in everything the world does, but we know what they're up to, and we want to be seen as relevant players in the game of life by the movers and shakers of our culture.

But has the church's swing from out-of-touch separation from the world in past generations to being fully-engaged participants in most everything the world has to offer made a big difference for God's kingdom? Have we won more converts to Christ by focusing more on this life than the one to come? I think C.S. Lewis was right when he said: "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this."

Yes, God has put us here to fulfill His purposes. We aren't supposed to merely sit around and wait for Him to call us home, ignoring the needs of others around us. Engaging in the world around us is not the problem; it is the *focus of our hearts* that will determine whether we influence the world's culture or it influences us. If we have set our affections on the things of the earth – spending our energy on preserving our lives as they presently are and enjoying the many pleasures that are available in the flesh – we will not be looking for and welcoming that which is far better: eternal life.

The apostle Paul pointed out *"If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men"* (1 Corinthians 15:19). As His representatives, we are not here to offer lost men and women a *better version* of life on earth – we are here to proclaim a wholly different kind of life available in Christ Jesus. This eternal life begins now, but it is not fulfilled or fully known until we go to be with Him.

Here's our reality check to keep in mind: Everything we see and experience in this life will one day be over, but our relationship with Jesus does not end. In fact, it improves with age! *"Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known"* (1 Corinthians 13:12). Embracing the hope of this will keep us from focusing too much on our present life. We may be "odd man out" right now, and many in our culture may not understand where we are coming from, but this life is just a second of time compared to our life in Christ on the other side.

We have to be careful not to go to the other extreme either. To never think about the hereafter and to look to the world as our only source of happiness and fulfillment is one potential error of judgment for God's people. But there is also the danger of only looking forward to the hereafter as an escape hatch from all we find unpleasant and difficult here and now. Sadly, for some Christians, Jesus' coming is welcomed mostly as a way to bail out of what they feel is a miserable existence. This is not a biblical view! Scripture teaches we can find joy and fulfillment in any stage or circumstance of life. Jesus is not the deliverer from earthly problems but the *sustainer in them*.

For myself, my life has been – and continues to be – a wonderful expression of God's love and grace. Sure, I've had problems and

worries from time to time. There have been some circumstances I found myself in that I would have loved to escape from. But by staying in them, I always found God faithful, and I gained many benefits -- like learning to trust Him more. Trying circumstances have also been instrumental in stripping me of some of my pride, ego, and self-absorption, and I've also gained more compassion for others who are going through a difficult time.

It's not because I hate my life in the world so much that I look forward to my life to come in the next. Here and now is not bad – in fact, there is much to enjoy along the way. It is just *not as good as it's going to be!* It's a comparative thing. Paul knew this. He said he was torn between his two lives, knowing that it was more useful for others that he remain on earth as Christ's representative to serve them. Yet he also knew that, for him, it was "far better" to go and be with Christ (Philippians 1:23-24).

Probably the reason we don't get more excited about the prospect of heaven is that we have no way of really understanding how glorious it will be. First Corinthians 2:9 tells us: *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."* The Holy Spirit gives us glimpses at times of what awaits us. And Scripture parts the curtain to let us peek inside to some extent. But the truth is, in our flesh we can't fully grasp how amazing it will be.

By keeping my focus on Jesus, I find the grace to live in the here and now and I also look forward to something so much better. When He bids me to come and dine with Him in the new heaven and new earth, where righteousness dwells, I won't be looking back longingly at Sodom, as Lot's wife did. I'll be looking ahead to endless joy with the One who died for me. So please ... when I go *don't cry for me!* Remember where I am, and rejoice with me.