

REDLINED • Week 1: Too Much, Too Fast, Too Long

Daily Briefing • Day 1 of 5 • Would You Rather?

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

Sunday we watched a tachometer climb into the red as one nice-to-have after another became a have-to-have. Today we put that trade into plain words and ask which side you would actually pick. You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, You give good gifts, but I have turned some of them into demands that are redlining my life. Show me what I have promoted from nice-to-have to have-to-have, and what it is costing me and the people I love and the people You've called me to serve. Teach me to enjoy what You give without letting it rule my thoughts, my time, my energy, or my wallet. I set my hope on You, not on anything I own, anything I experience or anything I accomplish. I commit myself to You in Jesus' Name. Amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

Would you rather own a boat, or sleep well for the next ten years? Would you rather have the promotion and the letters after your name, or be mentally and emotionally present at dinner with your kids? These are called false dichotomies: two options framed as though they were the only two. Real life is rarely that clean or limited. But the question is still useful, because it forces you to do the mental exercise of defining and ranking what is most important.

Nobody says the ranking out loud. No one decides, "I would rather have a bigger house than a calm one," or "I would rather be respected at work than known at home." What people say is, "I have to have this" when they are thinking about the car, the house, the neighborhood, the trip, the degree, the title, the recognition. The moment Sunday was about is when a nice-to-have gets promoted to a have-to-have, and the demands that come with it start redlining all of life.

Scripture answers the "would-you-rather" question frequently. Hebrew wisdom has a whole form built for it, and it usually weighs something small that comes with peace against something large that comes with a cost:

Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind. (Ecclesiastes 4:6)

Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife. (Proverbs 17:1)

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it. (Proverbs 15:17)

Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it. (Proverbs 15:16)

Notice what these do not say. They never call the fattened ox evil or treat a full house as a sin. A dry morsel (a piece of bread with nothing on it) and a dinner of herbs (a poor family's vegetables) are not being recommended for their own sake. Each proverb only matters when you cannot have both. When the choice is forced, quiet beats strife, love beats hatred, and one handful with peace beats two hands full with toil.

Jesus ranks things the same way, and He does it when a man in a crowd asks Him to settle a family inheritance dispute. He refuses to be the referee and goes after what is underneath the request: "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). He does not say possessions are evil. He says your life does not consist of them. The life that is constantly redlined to gain them is a heartbreaking tragedy.

So here is today's question asked honestly. If you could have less, and have peace in your house, would you take it? If you could accomplish less, and be fully present with the people you love, would you take it? Most people answer yes, but live redlined chasing nice-to-haves that they have promoted into have-to-haves.

READ & MEDITATE

Ecclesiastes 4:4, 6

Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind...⁶ Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.

Luke 12:15

And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Read Ecclesiastes 4:4, 6 and notice what the writer says is driving all that toil and skill. Then read Luke 12:15 and notice what Jesus says a life does not consist of.

REFLECT

Reminder: honest introspection and Scripture-informed self-assessment are far more beneficial than self-delusion and wishful thinking.

Nobody decides out loud to trade peace for possessions. It happens quietly, when a nice-to-have becomes a have-to-have.

Which of these nice-to-haves have become have-to-haves for you? A vehicle, a house or neighborhood, a hobby, a travel schedule, your kids' activities, an income target, a title, someone's approval, something else?

What does that have-to-have demand from you every month in money, time, energy, and focus?

Ecclesiastes 4:4 names the engine under all that toil: envy of a neighbor.

Whose life have you been measuring yours against lately: a sibling, an in-law, a coworker, a friend, someone on a screen?

What has that comparison already cost you?

Fill in the blank from Ecclesiastes 4:6:

"Better is a handful of _____ than two hands full of _____ and a striving after wind." (Ecclesiastes 4:6)

*These fill-in-the-blank questions use the ESV text. Your Bible may use different words for the same idea.

Which of the four contrasts above lands closest to your house right now: quiet vs. strife, love vs. hatred at the table, a little with the fear of the LORD vs. great treasure with trouble, or one handful of quietness vs. two hands full?

The career question is the sharper one, because applause from an audience is easier to measure than presence with your loved ones.

If your spouse or your kids were asked what you have been chasing this year, what would they say?

If you do not know the answer to that question, who will you ask, and when?

Here is today's would-you-rather, asked the honest way.

If having less meant getting your peace and your presence back, would you take the deal? Write the actual trade you would have to make to get it.

Who promoted the thing that's redlining your life into a have-to-have: God, you, or someone else? Do some honest introspective self-assessment before moving on.

PRAYER

Write your prayer or pray out loud. God's ear is not dull. Talk to Him like He is listening and wants to hear from you.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite Matthew 11:28-30 from memory:
