

GREG LAURIE

THE BEST IS YET
TO COME

FAITH FOR TODAY, HOPE FOR THE FUTURE



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O N E



THE BEST IS YET TO COME

IT'S FUNNY HOW OUR VIEWS OF AGING CHANGE AS we grow older.

Take, for instance, this illustration I heard recently:

When you were a kid and someone asked, “So how old are you?” you would say, “I’m five and a half.” And you’d try to hold up five and a half fingers. You’ll probably never hear an adult say, “I’m forty-six and a half.” For some reason, grown-ups just don’t get as excited as kids about those half- or three-quarter-year milestones.

Then when you got a little bit older and started

moving into those teen years, you would say, “I’m *going to be* sixteen.” (You might only be twelve at the time.) Then adulthood finally arrives, and you “*become* twenty-one.” Very official sounding. You become twenty-one, but then you blink your eyes and you find that you’re *turning* thirty. What’s happened here? You become twenty-one, you turn thirty, and then you’re *pushing* forty! You become twenty-one, turn thirty, are pushing forty, and—before you know it—you *reach* fifty. Then you *make it* to sixty. Then you build up so much speed that you *hit* seventy.

After that, it’s a day-to-day thing.

You go from your seventies to your eighties, and then it’s, “I hit Wednesday.” Then as you get even older, “I hit lunch today.” Then you hit the century mark and you clear it. Someone says, “How old are you?” And you say, “I’m 101 and a half!”

There’s no question that we live in a youth-obsessed culture. Everything seems to center around young people and what they have to say and what they think about this or that. And sometimes those of us who are getting a bit on in years feel as though we’re not as relevant as we could be.

It had to happen.

We baby boomers are finally coming of age. The generation that said, “Don’t trust anyone over thirty,” is now stepping, incredulous and amazed, into its golden years. How could it be? Where in the world did the years go?

We try to relive our youth.

We keep telling ourselves we’re still young (at heart).

We turn on the radio, maybe to our favorite oldies station, and we hear the old Leo Sayer number “You Make Me Feel like Dancing.” Only we feel like it should be updated to “You Make Me Feel like Napping.”

When you think about it, there are a number of those old sixties and seventies hits that could be revised a little for the benefit of aging baby boomers. For instance, Abba’s “Dancing Queen” from my generation could become “Denture Queen.”

Remember Herman’s Hermits from the British Invasion of the sixties? Their classic “Mrs. Brown, You’ve Got a Lovely Daughter” could now be “Mrs. Brown, You’ve Got a Lovely Walker.”

The Bee Gees’s “How Can You Mend a Broken

Heart?” could morph into “How Can You Mend a Broken Hip?”

Remember Crystal Gayle’s song “Don’t It Make My Brown Eyes Blue”? Maybe we could retitle it “Don’t It Make My Brown Hair Blue.”

The old Jerry Lee Lewis classic “A Whole Lot of Shakin’ Goin’ On” could become “A Whole Lot of Achin’ Goin’ On.”

And we can’t forget the Beatles. Their famous cut from the once counterculture Sgt. Pepper album “I Get By with a Little Help from My Friends” could be “I Get By with a Little Help from Depends.”

The Who’s great anthem about youth, “[Talkin’ ’bout] My Generation,” could now be “[Talkin’ ’bout] My Medication.” You get the idea.

Believe it or not, there are distinct advantages to being older. Have you ever met anyone over one hundred? I’ve had the chance to sit down with a number of these centenarians, and I appreciate their perspective. One reporter asked a 104-year-old woman, “What’s the best thing about being 104?” The old lady thought about it for a moment and said, “There’s no peer pressure.”



*Most of us don't want to let people
know we're getting older.*

Most of us don't want to let people know we're getting older. But what's the problem with racking up some years? Hopefully you've learned a few things. Maybe you'll find yourself with a little hard-won wisdom to dispense. There's an old French proverb that says, "Forty is the old age of youth, and fifty is the youth of old age." If that's true, I'm definitely a young old person!

AS TIME GOES BY

Life is passing by...for all of us. Billy Graham was once asked what the greatest surprise of his life had been. His answer was, "The brevity of it."

I have to agree with him. I've been preaching for over thirty years now. I started when I was nineteen, and I'm fifty-two today. I remember so clearly when I first began speaking in meetings. Inevitably, someone

would introduce me as a “young man,” because I was usually way younger than everybody else. I never liked being singled out like that; it irritated me a little. Now if someone introduces me as a young man, I say, “Thank you!”

Here’s what it comes down to. If you have placed your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior, if you belong to Him, then you don’t have to dread the passing of years. As Christians, we know the best is yet to come. As you walk day by day with the Lord, living the way He wants you to live, you will acquire experiences and memories, distilled truth that will be a blessing to you and others later in life, because you made the right choices and invested in the right things.

If you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, you need to know that He is with you right now, bringing His limitless power to bear on the details of your



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everyday life. His touch changes everything. And down the road? Well, there's nothing to stress about in our future—neither old age nor death nor the fresh new life that awaits just around the corner.

We can live that way—in a state of excited anticipation—knowing that when you're a believer, God saves the best for last.

In the second chapter of the book of John, Jesus performs a miracle that reminds us of both aspects of this encouraging truth: His power to transform our most impossible situations, and His promise of a future and a hope beyond our dreams and imagination.

THE LIFE OF THE PARTY

The next day Jesus' mother was a guest at a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. The wine supply ran out during the festivities, so Jesus' mother spoke to him about the problem. "They have no more wine," she told him.

“How does that concern you and me?” Jesus asked. “My time has not yet come.”

But his mother told the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Six stone waterpots were standing there; they were used for Jewish ceremonial purposes and held twenty to thirty gallons each. Jesus told the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” When the jars had been filled to the brim, he said, “Dip some out and take it to the master of ceremonies.” So they followed his instructions.

When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. “Usually a host serves the best wine first,” he said. “Then, when everyone is full and doesn’t care, he brings out the less expensive wines. But you have kept the best until now!”

This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was Jesus’ first display of his glory. And his disciples believed in him. (John 2:1–11, NLT)

Did it ever seem just a little strange to you that Jesus would pick a wedding as the place to launch His public ministry? Or that His first miracle would involve supplying refreshments at a wedding reception?

Doesn't it seem a little...random? Couldn't He have picked something just a bit more spectacular? If I had been the Lord's PR rep at the time, I probably would have counseled Him against embarking on His messianic career this way. I would have laid out a more "logical" strategy for Him.

I might have said, "Okay, Lord, as Your PR specialist, here's what I'm thinking. When it comes to miracles, I'd start right out with a big bang and heal a man born blind. Very dramatic. That will get You on the six o'clock news for sure. Or—better yet—cleanse a leper! That always goes over big. A real crowd pleaser. They love that. But then, if You *really* want to



Does it seem strange that Jesus picked a wedding as the place to launch His public ministry?

make a statement, raise someone from the dead. That would ice it; Your career would be off and running.”

Jesus would say, “I was thinking about turning water into wine.”

“What? Why would You even *want* to do a miracle like that? Where’s the drama? Where’s the news value?”

But that’s just what He did. As the story opens in John 2, Jesus was attending a wedding, just kicking back and enjoying the celebration of a man and a woman committing themselves to each other in marriage.

Jesus, Creator of all, was the One who invented marriage. (Sadly, these days we have to add that there is only one marriage our Lord established and blesses—the union of a *man* and a *woman*.) It makes sense that He would join in the festivities and bless this young couple with His presence. A little known carpenter from Nazareth, He still had the cloak of relative anonymity as He feasted and celebrated this joyous occasion.

But water into wine? Why would the Messiah, the Son of God, begin His ministry with such an unusual act?

Let’s think about it for a moment.

IF JESUS COULD DO THIS...

The Lord performed a miracle to bring happiness and joy to those celebrating the union of a man and a woman. And what Jesus did for this young couple at the wedding party in Cana shows that God can intervene in your life at any moment and provide you with exactly what you need. In fact, He may go far, far beyond your request to give you more than you ever thought to ask—or could have ever dreamed.

This wasn't some sleight of hand like dropping purple food dye into those huge thirty-gallon stone water vessels. Jesus created fine wine in an instant. This was wine that by every indication had come from premium grapes, grown on healthy vines, soaking in a long season of warm Middle East sunlight, then crushed in a winepress, stored in special skins or casks, and aged to absolute perfection.

I know there are people out there who consider themselves wine connoisseurs (I don't happen to be one of them). But if you happen to be channel surfing and touch down on the food channel for a few minutes, you might see some guy taking tiny sips out of a wineglass, swirling it around, and exclaiming about

its qualities. He will tell you more than you ever wanted to know about all the complex subtleties of its aroma, its bouquet, its “finish,” and on and on. For some people (sometimes referred to as “wine snobs”), this is an elaborate science.

And Jesus created 180 gallons of superlative wine in the blink of an eye. If He had chosen to do so, of course, He could have turned the whole Sea of Galilee into cabernet. (He once turned the mighty Nile River into blood.) But He limited the miracle to those six stone waterpots at a wedding feast in the little back-water town of Cana.

If Jesus could do this—if He could take generic well water and completely change its molecular structure in the space of a heartbeat, making it into wine so wonderful that it startled and amazed an experienced connoisseur...if Jesus could pull this off—then what situation in your life could possibly be too complex or overwhelming for Him? What challenge in your life could possibly exceed *this* one?

Sometimes we find ourselves in some tangled combination of distressing circumstances, feel like we’re in way over our heads, and try to explain it all

to the Lord, hoping He will somehow understand all of the complicating factors we barely comprehend ourselves.

Not to worry. Jesus grasps your situation in greater depth and detail than you could achieve in a million years of stressing about it. This miracle in the second chapter of John, our Lord's first supernatural act, proves He is the Master of every imaginable situation, right down to the most subtle, seemingly insignificant details. Through this miracle, Jesus showed He had at His immediate disposal unlimited power to do anything He chose to do.

You may not need to have your tap water turned into wine, but understanding and tapping into your Lord's limitless strength and wisdom could be very important...when the doctor calls you into his office, sits you down, and tells you that you have inoperable cancer...or when the boss pulls you aside and says, "I'm sorry, but we have to let you go"...or when that unexpected bill comes...or when your spouse tells you he or she wants out of your marriage...or when your child gets in trouble with the law...or when you're slapped with an unexpected lawsuit.

It's good—very, very good—to know that none of these things catch God by surprise, and nothing limits His ability to intervene in our lives, to absolutely transform the most snarled, knotted, and convoluted situations, and to accomplish things beyond our conception.

Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. (Ephesians 3:20, NLT)

NOW OR NEVER?

Jesus had said, “Fill the waterpots,” and the servants did their part. There is always a part for God to play and a part for us to play.

As the water was distributed, of course, it turned into wine. The man in charge of the feast knew something extraordinary was up after one sip. I can almost see the surprise and wonder light up his face. Where had these kids come up with a vintage like this one? Undoubtedly, this was the best wine he had ever

tasted—or would ever taste again.

And then a look of puzzlement must have washed over his features. He called out to the bridegroom, “Usually a host serves the best wine first.... Then, when everyone is full and doesn’t care, he brings out the less expensive wines. But you have kept the best until now!” (John 2:10, NLT).

God always saves the best for last. That’s His way, that’s His plan.

Not so with Satan. His motto is: *Grab for the best right now, while you can get it. Who knows what’s to come?* The devil likes to bring out all his big guns up front. He offers his most enticing, appealing stuff in the beginning, especially when you are young. It’s amazing how many young men and women—with their whole futures and potential before them—ravage and destroy their lives with drugs, alcohol, and a life of immorality. And yet every new generation of



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young people that comes along acts like they were the ones who discovered this stuff.

The devil is very good at packaging his wares. Madison Avenue has nothing on hell; the evil one can make very bad merchandise look really cool. He slides it in front of you and says, “Hey, you’ve got to do this. You have to try this for yourself. Don’t listen to what your parents are saying.” He knows how to make these ventures off the straight path seem very attractive and appealing. After all, he’s had about six thousand years to practice on men and women and hone his techniques. And at the same time, He can take things of infinite, eternal value and wrap them in old newspaper, making them look really lame.

When Eve was in the garden and saw that forbidden fruit, she was strongly attracted to it. When I think of that scene, I certainly don’t think of the traditional depiction of an “apple.” (Where do people get this apple stuff? It wasn’t an apple growing on that tree.) Personally, I think of a red-gold peach, dead ripe, almost glowing in the sunset, full of juice and ready to fall off the branch right into your hand. Frankly, an apple wouldn’t have attracted me at all. I

can take or leave an apple. Mmm, but a sweet, plump peach? I can see that. It had to look good because the Bible says it was pleasant to the eyes.

The devil will say, “Try this.”

And it looks good at first. It really does. And that first taste—it’s exciting. But then, later...well, it’s a different story.

Right about this moment I’m thinking of a famous doughnut chain. These are folks who make doughnuts that melt in your mouth like manna. You pull into the parking lot early in the morning when you see the “Hot” sign first light up. You want the doughnuts fresh. For me personally, it’s all about the glazed doughnuts. When these celebrated doughnuts are cold, they’re just ordinary mortal confections. But when they’re coming down that conveyor belt, hot from the deep fryer, glistening with glaze...aaah, that’s as close as you’ll get to the bread of angels right there. To take it to the next level, of course, you need some ice-cold milk. I think the most I’ve eaten is five doughnuts in one sitting.

Oh, they’re so great going down. But about ten minutes later, you hate life. You take a major sugar hit,

and your temporary high quickly gives way to a crushing depression. And on top of that, you've got this big glob of greasy dough sitting in your stomach. Then, of course, if you make this a regular habit, your pants won't fit anymore.

Sin can be that way. You say, "Forget tomorrow. Forget this best-is-yet-to-come stuff. I'm going to grab my fun right now." And the first time is fun. The experience looks really good rolling off that conveyor belt. The second time it's still a rush. The third time you begin to feel the effects...and it's not so much fun anymore. An hour later, you're saying, *What was I thinking? Why did I do that? This is horrible.* That's about the time guilt and regret kick in, and you begin to understand the repercussions of what you've done.

Yes, the devil will always offer appealing stuff up front, because he knows how to do it and knows what works. But the price is always, always too expensive. Don't take his bait!

Why? Because time will pass. The years will slip by. Before you know it, you'll have more years behind you than in front of you...and you will find yourself looking back. And those times will be unbelievably

desolate and empty if you have followed the ways of Satan and the flesh.

WHAT HAVE I (REALLY) MISSED?

It's amazing to me that even though I'm in my fifties, I still encounter people I went to high school with here in Southern California. Here and there, maybe at a mall, maybe on the beach, I'll run into people I knew from those years. It only takes a minute or two to see the course their life has taken, and the sadness they now live with every day of their lives.

I gave my life to Christ at seventeen. Did I miss anything? Well, yes, I suppose I did. I missed a lot of parties. I missed a lot of experiences. I missed a lot of things that other kids my age were into. But now, when thirty-plus years have gone by, and I look at what it has done to them...some of them into their fourth, fifth marriages, some of them still addicted, still living the party lifestyle, others just wandering through an empty, futile life, I look at them and say, "Have I really missed anything?"

For me, life has only gotten better. Not necessarily



*As the years go by and the experiences build,
you begin reaping what you have sown.*

easier, or less complicated, or less pressured, or more trouble-free, but *better*. Sweeter. Richer. Deeper. More satisfying.

Every day, every month, every year of walking with Jesus Christ just gets better and better.

You might say, “Greg, that’s a nice, pleasant message to preach at a retirement center, but what’s it got to do with me?” The truth is, it’s an even more important message for younger people. Why? Because you determine the end of your life at the beginning of it. You decide where you’re going to be twenty years from now *today* by what choices you make and what roads you take.

Are you at a crossroads in life right now?

God says, “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19, NIV).

As the years go by and the experiences build, you

begin reaping what you have sown. Those proverbial chickens come home to roost, just as they always will. The Bible says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Galatians 6:7–8).

Here’s the choice. You can either reap the bitter repercussions of living sinfully, or you can enjoy the sweet fruit of a godly life.

Every day, from the time you rise in the morning, you will be either sowing to the flesh or sowing to the Spirit. By that I mean you are either building yourself up spiritually and getting closer to God, or you are neglecting spiritual things and going after whatever draws you in at the moment, living for your own impulses, whims, and desires.

That is a choice each of us must make. There is no “third option.”

If you are a Christian, you know the best is yet to come in life. The best is yet to come in your growth as a person who walks with God and becomes more like Jesus day by day. Yes, we Christians have the same

health problems and aches and pains as we age as anyone else. But we know that there is more to life than just this body. We know that there is life with a capital “L” on the other side, when we enter into God’s presence. Indeed, the best is yet to come.

If you’re not a Christian, the *worst* is yet to come. I don’t care how much fun you may be having at the moment, or what great experiences you’re piling up at this time. The worst is yet to come, because the Bible says there will be a reaping of what you sow. Scripture tells us of a future judgment, where you will be held accountable for how you lived your life and—most important—what you did with Jesus Christ.

The miracle at the wedding in Cana happened because Jesus was *invited*. They invited Him into their home, they invited Him to their wedding, they invited Him to share in their joy, and guess what? He came. He showed up at the party. And because He was there, He changed an embarrassing shortfall into a miracle of provision. He stepped into an impossible situation and transformed it in a way no one could have guessed or predicted.

He’s still in the business of doing that very thing.

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

But He'll never just barge into your life—into your worries and fears and sorrows—uninvited. He waits to be asked. Once you do, once you invite Him to join the party, you have absolutely no idea of the difference He can make in your today.

And tomorrow? Well, I'll just say it again.

The best is yet to come.