

My Life in my Sixties

My assignment is to speak about my experiences so far in my 60's. I am almost 64, not quite half way through my sixties. The major unexpected event of this decade of my life has been the loss of my health. Both my parents and my Dad's parents lived well into their 80's and I simply assumed that I had good genes and it would be much the same for me.

First a little background--

- In 2016, the summer after I turned sixty-two I was diagnosed with ALS. I think most are familiar with it but if you're not, it's a disease that causes the nerves to all the muscles that you have conscious control over, to die. Those muscles include swallowing, speech, and breathing. I'm not positive when it began but it was at least 2012 with an increasing weakness in my left hand. The diagnosis changed everything for me and my family and there's never a time I forget that I have ALS. My first reactions were fear, horror, dread, and grief. It was devastating and with it came many spiritual battles—
- I grieved for the death of the dreams and expectations I'd had for my life. I dreaded and grieved for the likely future that was before me here on earth. At times I still grieve as the losses accumulate and I have to give up another activity I love or my world becomes smaller. A friend shared with me a quote from John Piper: "Occasionally, weep deeply over the life you hoped would be. Grieve the losses. Then wash your face. Trust God. And embrace the life you have." That didn't happen quickly. It has been a slow process and is ongoing for me, but I have found it true. While at times I still grieve and struggle with discouragement and disappointment, at the same time the Lord shows me truth, is upholding me, teaching me, comforting me, encouraging me, and enabling me to live with confident hope in Him. Believe me--this is all of the Lord.
- As the months have passed the Lord has strengthened and helped me in many different ways. I have my ups and downs but what follows are what the Lord has used to bring me safe thus far.
 - I would say first the prayers of my brothers and sisters in Christ--the encouragement and comfort of knowing they are praying. The Lord's work in my life is answer to those prayers. I know I wouldn't be doing as well as I am spiritually without those prayers.
 - Then there are my own prayers—I can bare my soul to the Lord and bring everything to him any time and He will not turn away. He listens and will wisely provide. That is real comfort for me.
 - I use the words 'truth' and 'fact' allot. That is how I think of all I know of God and his Word. The fact that God's word is true has gives me assurance and comfort. God is sovereign, He is holy, just, wise, merciful and good; His character is unchanging—these are all facts. The truth of Romans 8:28 is certain—"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^[a] for those

who are called according to his purpose.” And then the fact that Christ died for my sin, the fact of His resurrection, the fact of my salvation, the fact that the Holy Spirit is my comforter, and the fact that heaven awaits.

- As I read God’s word now my perspective has shifted slightly. What I read has brought the Lord, His word and heaven nearer and more immediate. There is greater certainty, comfort, and hope in his word and my future.
- Matthew 6:34 is a verse I repeat to myself “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” It is true and its truth is a blessing. God has strengthened and enabled me to have a present mind and leave the future in his hands.
- Unexpectedly early on, I have found the greatest encouragement, comfort, and peace in worship. The facts that when we worship we are in God’s presence, near to him, hearing his words, speaking truth to ourselves and to Him, and speaking to him in prayer, point me to eternity with him in heaven and it speaks truth to my soul. Worship turns my eyes and heart to truth and eternity rather than this finite, sinful world, and it brings heaven closer. I need weekly worship!
- Fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ, the encouraging conversations I’ve had, and time spent with friends doing ordinary things have all helped me. I still have life to live!
- I have found that my view of death has changed. I never look at death without heaven and eternity beyond it. God has said that I have to go through this before crossing the Jordan and entering the promised land. My life won’t end. The fact is that it continues for eternity. With this, the dread of what lies before my death has faded.
- As I’ve been brought low by losing the ability to do the work I love here, I realized that my greatest joy here is a pale shadow compared to the joy of heaven. When I have grieved losing those things that give me joy here, I have told myself that there are far far greater joys in heaven.
- I realized early on that I was at a crossroad of how I would live. I did not want the rest of my life here to be filled with bitterness, anger, discouragement or even trying to find a cure. I wanted my family and I to be able to appreciate the days we have. That doesn’t mean I do this all the time but that is my hope and desire.
- I have been greatly helped by reading “The Cross of Christ” by John Stott. Slowly reading it has comforted me and strengthened my understanding, confidence, gratitude and assurance of all that Christ gained for me. With such a Savior and such a great salvation I’m at peace.

- The Lord's provided and cared for me materially as well as spiritually in providing the help of the VA. He has used my three short years in the Army almost thirty-five years ago, to provided me benefits from the VA. I marvel at God's kind gracious providence!
- I can leave my future in the Lord's hands and look to His provision to meet all my needs.

These are all what the Lord has given me to help me live with hope in Him.

So what is the best part of my 60's—the unlooked for blessings from the Lord.

- There was a point early on when it hit me that my faith was at work as I was looking at death. That strengthened and encouraged me. This hardship is where 'the rubber meets the road' and it's wonderful to see my faith—a gift from God—at work.
- And of course, there is Mike's retirement earlier than expected in order to help me. Now we have each day together. We're just beginning to get used to it.
- Another blessing--having three of our adult kids so close. One is in Cincinnati but the other three still live with us which isn't what I expected. It might have been a problem but instead it's a blessing—I have their help, the pleasure of their company, and much conversation.
- I have the great blessing of knowing that all of these gifts from first to last are from the Lord. He has abundantly provided for me and will continue to do so.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 English Standard Version (ESV)

¹⁶So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self^[a] is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.