

## **Week Four - Bucket Lists & YOLO**

### **Assigned Reading: Chapters 4 and 5**

#### **Isaiah 40:6-8**

**6** A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. **7** The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. **8** The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

#### **Psalm 103:8-18**

**8** The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. **9** He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever. **10** He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. **11** For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; **12** as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us. **13** As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him. **14** For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust. **15** As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; **16** for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. **17** But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, **18** to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

#### **Brief Summary:**

In Chapter Four, Kate starts to experience side effects from her clinical treatment. In addition to the physical symptoms, she must also deal with the emotional stress of being evaluated every two months to determine whether she can remain in the program. One of her counselors suggests she create a bucket list. While Kate acknowledges the potential good in this exercise, she believes bucket lists have been transformed into "a new form of experiential capitalism" (57). We create bucket lists to make ourselves feel as though we can do anything and be anyone rather than confront our finitude. Kate challenges the underlying rationale for bucket lists by highlighting scriptural notions of human transience.

In Chapter Five, the theme of "living in the moment" is prominent. On the one hand, Kate posits that "living in the moment can make us careless and materialistic, selfish and prone to wanton acts of never taking a multivitamin" (74). On the other hand, striving to live in the moment may be a valuable mindset to cultivate in our current digital age. Kate clings to the present because her future is so uncertain and bleak. She reflects on how her cancer diagnosis has taught her to live in the moment, which has caused even the mundane aspects of life to have more meaning (84). As Kate struggles to find a balance between living in the moment and hoping for the future, she is transferred from the clinical trial to her doctors at Duke. She no longer has to make weekly trips to Atlanta, but she still has a long way to go in her medical journey.

## Discussion Questions:

1. Kate makes several claims related to bucket lists.
  - a. Do you agree with her that they “disguise a dark question as a challenge: what do you want to do before you die?” (56) Why or why not?
  - b. Kate writes, “Instead of helping us grapple with our finitude, they have approximated infinity. With unlimited time and resources, we can do anything, be anyone” (57). What are your thoughts on this statement?
  - c. Have you ever made a bucket list before? What was that experience like for you?
2. How can living in the moment be a helpful practice? What challenges come with attempting to live in the moment?
3. Read Kate’s reflections on eternity and time on pg. 76, beginning with “I want to believe in the beauty of eternity...”
  - a. What does she say about eternity in relation to God?
  - b. How does her belief that “the divine is behind us, with us, and before us” contrast with her belief that “all [she has] is now”?
  - c. How do Christians live in tension between the future of eternity and the importance of the present?
4. Compare and contrast the two scripture passages.
  - a. What stands out to you from these biblical texts?
  - b. What is similar about these passages? What is different?
  - c. How is human existence described in each text? How is God described in each text?
  - d. What are the benefits of embracing our transient existence? What are the challenges?
5. How do the scriptures and this week’s readings inform our journey through Lent?

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