

We Shall Return the Same Way We Came

Ecclesiastes 4:1-6:12 When Ron, our middle son, was about eight years old, he asked us this question: "When we meet Jesus in the air, will we have on any clothes?" My husband thought for a moment, and then said with an official scholarly voice, "Son, the Bible says naked we come into the world and naked we leave the world." Our son surprised us with his response when he said, "Streakers in the sky." The whole family laughed uncontrollably. The thought expressed, however, is true. We cannot take it with us. As some have said, "I have never seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul."

So many in this life spend years accumulating material things that will not be translated to heaven with us. The Egyptians used to fill their tombs with riches in the hope that those treasures would go with them into the next life.

When my mother died I was made acutely aware of how our earthly possessions can be quickly dispersed or dissolved. When my mother was first widowed we were faced with closing up the house she had lived in for over thirty years. The attic and basement were bulging with things she had saved over the years. My sister and her husband gave most of this away and only kept the essentials she would need in her new apartment. All of her earthly belongings at that time were reduced to fit into a two-bedroom apartment. When she had her stroke and had to live in a nursing home, we had to reduce her belongings to fit into one room because we knew she would never return to her apartment. After her death, I gathered up her things in her room in the nursing home; they all fit into three plastic trash bags.

My favorite definition of heaven is, "Heaven is where there will be no stuff." We should all be challenged by the goal to

accumulate in our lifetime those things that will be translated with us to heaven. What can we take with us? There are only four things we can take with us to heaven: the people we have witnessed to, the Word of God we have hidden in our hearts and sown into others, the prayers we have prayed and all the times we have spoken about the Lord to others. In fact, a book of remembrance is in heaven, and each time we remember the Lord and His mighty works and talk about Him to others, we add to our book of remembrance. These are the treasures we can take from earth to heaven.

Lord, help me to invest more in people than I do in things. I don't need more stuff, and there are so many who need You. Lead me to someone today with whom I can share the greatest treasure of all—Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

READ: Ecclesiastes 4:1-6:12; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:7; Psalm 47:1-9; Proverbs 22:16