
NOTHING BETTER

When everything else is stripped away, five simple gifts remain. Ecclesiastes calls them nothing better.

“He has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.”

ECCLESIASTES 3:11

Life does not come with guarantees. We labor and build, love and lose, hope and hurt, and the world stays mysterious. The harder we try to master it, the more it slips through our hands. Ecclesiastes has a word for

that: *hevel*, the fleeting breath that defines our days, steam off a cup on a cold morning. And God set eternity in us anyway, a hunger for what we can sense but never reach.

Three Longings

Each carries a fear, the longing turned back on itself.

THE INFINITE

Possibility

The longing to reach past what you know, toward the next horizon. The teenager driving with the windows down on a summer night.
Its fear: getting stuck.

ECCLESIASTES 1:8

THE INDELIBLE

Permanence

The longing for what lasts: to build something that outlives you, to be loved in a way that does not end. The old man standing a long time at his wife’s grave.
Its fear: loss, and being forgotten.

ECCLESIASTES 2:16

THE IDEAL

Perfection

The longing to close the gap between what is and what should be. The architect holding her drawing up against the finished building.
Its fear: falling short.

ECCLESIASTES 7:20

Five Gifts

Five times Ecclesiastes stops and says there is nothing better. Five simple, human ways to taste eternity in time: to feast with friends, do some good, enjoy your partner, share your stuff, and opt for joy. Not escapes from reality, but the means by which we enter it more fully.

I Feast with Friends ECC 9:7

We gather not because life is certain but because it is not. Presence matters more than polish, and soup will do. Every feast is a protest against despair.

II Do Some Good ECC 9:10

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might. We work not to secure our worth but to join God in what he is still making, and the joy is in the doing.

III Enjoy Your Partner ECC 9:9

The verb is *enjoy*. Love is not meant to be managed, and you cannot enjoy someone you have stopped seeing. Play keeps wonder alive where responsibility hardens.

IV Share Your Stuff ECC 5:19

Everything you own will one day belong to someone else. That can make you afraid, or it can set you free. Life is better when it circulates. Open the good bottle.

V Opt for Joy ECC 8:15

Joy is not a feeling you wait for. It is a way of moving forward while the fog remains, and it can sit on a couch with grief. Judge it by the decade, not the day.

Feast. Work. Love. Give. Rejoice.

When everything else is gone, the bread is still bread and the table is still set. Eternity gets tasted there.

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WHY SO SERIOUS?

Ten forces that quietly ruin our ability to play.

So why do adults lose the ability to play? Why does lightness feel irresponsible? Why does delight feel unsafe? Here are ten forces that quietly ruin the capacity for it. Name them, and you start to get your life back.

1 Seriousness

There is a seriousness that honors responsibility and a kind that eats your soul. When everything feels weighty, life becomes a problem to solve instead of a gift to receive. That is not maturity. It is fear dressed up as wisdom.

2 Discontentment

Discontentment stares at what is missing; play sees what is present. If tomorrow always matters more than today, you never enter the moment you were actually given. Not the ideal one. This one.

3 Resentment

You cannot play while you are still keeping debts. You cannot laugh with someone you secretly want to punish. Play needs room in the heart, and forgiveness is what clears it.

4 Time

We wake up behind and measure our worth by output. The problem is not time scarcity; it is time slavery. Play takes the courage to waste an hour in the right way.

5 Religion

Pleasure feels suspicious, rest feels lazy, delight feels unserious, so we shrink our lives in the name of holiness. Sin is the vandalism of joy, not its source. A faith that cannot play is not deep. It is wounded.

6 Family

Some grew up where play was rare and affection thin. Others came from chaos, where play was constant but hollow. Both teach the same lesson: joy is not safe. God is a better Father. He teaches us to enjoy, not just endure.

7 Alone

Play needs people. Not crowds. People. Shared glances, shared jokes, shared presence. Alone, you overthink and lose your sense of humor. Play grows where trust grows, even a little.

8 Languishing

Not a meltdown. Just not really here. Work is fine, home is fine, you are fine, and nothing lands. Joy needs a pulse, and it comes back through the small gifts: a meal, a task done well, one act of generosity.

9 Atrophy

Play is a muscle. Unused, it weakens, and you go rigid and quick to take things personally. Start small. A real laugh. A pointless game. An unproductive hour with someone you love.

10 Control

The belief that if you plan better and hold tighter, life will finally cooperate. Control is the quiet religion of our age, and the death of play. You cannot enter a moment you require certainty about.

Nos. 1 to 4 after Kevin Gushiken, A Theology of Play.

Play begins where control ends.

Not in despair, but in trust. May your hands stay open, your heart stay soft, and your step stay light.

A RULE OF LIFE FOR THE FIVE GIFTS

Written to be adopted as it stands and then adapted. A rule that is never adapted was never yours.

Keep it small. One practice per gift is enough to begin. A rule you can keep on your worst week is worth more than a rule you admire on your best one.

EACH DAY, BEFORE THE FIVE

You cannot receive what you cannot see. Two minutes, morning or evening. Four questions, one per lens.

What is in my hands today, and have I actually looked at it?	What is my body telling me that I have been overriding?	Who is in front of me that I have been treating as scenery?	What am I carrying that I have not named?
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	DAILY	WEEKLY	SEASONAL	YOURS
1 Feast with Friends <i>Meaning is shared at the table.</i>	One meal at a table, not a desk, not a screen. Ten minutes counts. The phone stays in another room.	A standing table. Pick a night and hold it. Keep the menu beneath your ambitions.	Host one feast at scale. Host, do not attend.	_____
2 Do Some Good <i>Burn your calories for good.</i>	One task done all the way, with the carpenter's second at the end. Then set the work down.	One piece of work for someone who cannot repay it.	The accounting. Is the work a portion or a proof?	_____
3 Enjoy Your Partner <i>Stay faithful and keep building.</i>	Tell me one thing about today I would not have known. And the touch that asks for nothing.	One evening with no screen and no agenda.	Build something together that will still be there next year.	_____
4 Share Your Stuff <i>Use what you have for others' good.</i>	Open the good bottle. Use the guest towels. One thing out of saving and into use.	Give one thing you were afraid to give.	Circulate. What has not moved in a year is being hoarded, whatever you call it.	_____
5 Opt for Joy <i>Set your course toward joy.</i>	Take one hinge the joyful way, on purpose. Notice one good thing before you sleep.	The walk. The call to the friend you have been avoiding.	Read the wake. Do not judge the direction by the day; judge it by the season.	_____

EACH WEEK

Say the five words and ask which gift went missing. Not which one you did badly. Which one did not happen. Then reach for that one, and only that one, in the week ahead.

WHEN IT BREAKS

It will. Find the one gift still within reach and keep time with that one until the others come back. This is not the rule failing. This is what it was written for.

Feast. Work. Love. Give. Rejoice.

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