

You Are Here

“You only live once.”

October 1, 2017

Go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 5:8-16. We'll get there shortly.

We've been looking at the things that our culture indoctrinates in us...things that are being hardwired in us from a very early age by a thousand different voices, like “follow your heart”, “eliminate negative people”, and “one day you will find the one.”

Today we're going to look at our last cultural saying, and the only one that has an acronym: YOLO – you only live once. I'm well aware it's not the most popular phrase anymore but the mentality has soaked deep regardless of the phrase.

YOLO was actually created by Jeff Archer as a marketing strategy to sell paddle boards by encouraging people “to get out and enjoy life and see all the great things life has to offer”. Then the saying was popularized by Drake, and it kind of morphed into this cultural phenomenon.

At its root there is this meaning that we only have one life, so we should make the most of it. Don't waste your life. If you like cheesy quotes, you may be familiar with this description: “Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.”

Some examples:

- Chocolate chips in your yogurt for breakfast – YOLO.
- Dessert before dinner – YOLO.
- Backpack across Europe for a year - YOLO.
- All night binger – YOLO.
- Girl got drunk, streaked across the field at a football game, and got arrested. – YOLO.

Here is a quote by David Quinn that helps give context to the popularity of YOLO.

David Quinn, “What's Wrong with YOLO?”

The rise of the YOLO philosophy is reflective of a youth culture that highly values new experiences. The experiences themselves do not need to have an aim or a goal in order for them to be worth trying out. YOLO fits perfectly in our culture because it's all about having an experience without thinking about consequences.

In my research, I obviously looked up YOLO in Urban dictionary and it defines YOLO as, “carpe diem for stupid people.”

YOLO is easy to mock, but you know, we all kind of buy into it. YOLO echoes our own desire that says there must be more to life. It is easy to gravitate to the thinking of YOLO because life is hard and boring: the majority of life is made up of the ordinary and the routine. Real relationships take time, energy, priority, and effort. Working a job is tiresome, difficult, stressful, etc, and requires effort, commitment, and endurance. YOLO wants more than routine, more than the ordinary.

YOLO was not around when I was in high school – I'm too old for that – but I lived it. I was scared of missing out and always wanted to have fun and have an exciting life. My philosophy was to live life to tell good stories. Guys...I even had a clogging routine...

But YOLO connects on a deeper level than just freedom to do stupid, risky things. It connects down to our sense of purpose and meaning:

- Why are we here?
- What drives our behavior?
- What is our internal motive?

YOLO: You only live once. Modern day carpe diem, “seize the day.” It is a philosophy to awaken the apathetic. It is meant to help people to embrace the life before them rather than live on auto pilot.

So, what does the Bible have to say about this belief?

Ephesians 5:8-17

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

We’ve talked in this series about how there are three basic categories for how we respond to cultural beliefs: those categories are accept, reject, and redeem. There are certain things we accept because they reflect God’s truth, certain things that we outright reject, and certain things we take and redeem by adapting to what God says. I actually think those categories serve us well for responding to YOLO, so we’re going to break it down into what parts we accept, what parts we need to reject, and what parts can we redeem.

1.) Accept: Accept the Call - You only get one life, so you should make the most of it.

Ephesians 5:14b-17

“Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

Paul starts with “Wake up, sleeper” ... and continues with “be careful then, how you live...not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity.”

The Bible affirms this idea that we aren’t supposed to sleep walk our way through life. Wake up! Be wise about life, make the most of every opportunity. Don’t waste your life. Live life with intentionality.

Psychology Today has an article on YOLO and they compare the positive effect of YOLO to the effect of a post traumatic experience.

Research on “post-traumatic growth” (started by Ronnie-Janoff Bulman of The University of Massachusetts) has explored how terminal illness diagnoses and near- fatal experiences influence people. After a period of initial shock, many people, perhaps even most, experience profound shifts in terms of how they spend their time, their appreciation of life, and their general sense of happiness. Many of these individuals report that they feel like they never fully lived until they were diagnosed with a terminal illness. They also report devoting more time to what they most truly enjoy, and not worrying nearly as much about much of what had previously stressed them.

Reminiscent of the infamous “Live Like You Were Dying” by the country artist Tim McGraw.

I went skydiving
I went Rocky Mountain climbing
I went 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fumanchu
And I loved deeper
And I spoke sweeter
And I gave forgiveness I'd been denying"
And he said
"Someday I hope you get the chance
To live like you were dying
Like tomorrow was a gift
And you've got eternity
To think about
What you'd do with it
What could you do with it
What did I do with it?
What would I do with it?

The reality of death gives you perspective. Helps you wake-up. It helps you figure out what is important, what matters. As one pastor often says, we are just one buzz in our pockets away from our life being turned completely upside down.

I remember one of those phone calls about Zoe, and later dealing with Zoe’s diagnosis and treatment. Trivial vs what matters.

The Bible would affirm the positive effect of YOLO. Wake-up, life matters. Life is precious and every breath counts. What are you doing with the gift that God has given you. Are you being wise with your life? Psalm 90 frames it this way.

Psalm 90:12

Teach us to number our days, that we may present to you a heart of wisdom.

So, the Bible would affirm the call to wake up, but there is most definitely issues with YOLO. Issues that must be outright rejected and/or redeemed. So, let’s start with the major problems of YOLO.

It has two contrasting problems: Two ways YOLO breaks down:

1. If this is the only life you live and that’s it, then - **nothing matters at all.**

- It’s all random chaos impulses and urges. We’re just animals. We’re all gonna burn up in the sun someday and nothing we’ve done will matter at all. Yolo. Womp womp.
- Kinda the more depressive side of YOLO.
 1. Why care, why try - life devoid of meaning. Marked by apathy. Sad and depressing.
 2. Survival of the fittest - life devoid of empathy. Do whatever you want, whenever you want, however you want. No ethical foundation. Mean and cruel.

2. If this is the only life you live and that’s it, then - **everything matters too much.**

- Experience is king.
- You better have the best sex ever and the best steak every time you can. Because this is it! This is all there is. So, nothing else matters.
- When “carpe diem” meets consumeristic Americans.

- Example:
 - A friend of mine, He was never satisfied, moved cities, changed jobs, left his wife to travel and experience the world. Restless, wanderlust. Always seeking the best experience.
 - Wanderlust.
 - Bucket lists.
 - Fantasy life, escaping from the realities of living an ordinary life. Rat race, routine, annoyances, stressors, etc.
 - Personal - Tahitian vacations (hut in the ocean).

The problem is clear, this philosophy on life doesn't work. It doesn't actually give you the good life. One of the main reasons that YOLO doesn't work is because it is built off of a false premise. A premise we must reject. YOLO says "You only live ONCE."

2.) **Reject:** Reject the Premise - We actually live twice, and that changes everything.

The sense of urgency found in YOLO is correct. But the premise often leading us to go enthusiastically in the wrong direction. If we only live once, we should maximize our time for ourselves. YOLO promotes consumption and maximizing everything for personal benefit.

- If you only live once, you better not deny any desire you have, no matter what God says about it.
- If you only live once, you should make sure you have the best sex with whoever you want whenever you want it.
- If you only live once, you should eat the best steak money can buy at every meal.
- If you only live once, you should always get what you want, no matter how it affects those around you.
- If you only live once, you better orient your entire life around accomplishing your bucket list. Spend all of your money and time chasing experiences that you want, possessions you want.

Paul writes to the Romans,

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

The glory that is to be revealed in the next life. The best this world has to offer doesn't compare to the glory of what is to come. This life we are living right now is temporary, but not final. There is more to come.

This is the primary place where Christianity departs from YOLO: the fact that we know life does not end at death.

Hebrews 9 says that it is appointed to man once to die, then we face judgment and are either separated from God or we are covered by the righteousness of Jesus and invited into the new heavens and the new earth forever.

- One way or the other our lives are eternal, and that totally reframes how we view our time on this Earth.
- We now live in light of a future reality rather than being caught up in the present. What is to come impacts how we live and move today.
- 10,000 years from now, the toils, the troubles, and the trivial of today will not matter.
- Eternal life gives us focus, it gives us purpose and meaning. We are working towards something more and better than simply consuming the most.

- All of life has meaning and purpose. We are leveraging our lives for the mission of God and expanding the kingdom of God.
- Living in light of eternity. This life we live now is merely a warm-up for the life to come.

By accepting the call but rejecting the premise we are able to redeem the outcome. YOLO makes us too focused on self but the gospel frees us up to take our focus off ourselves.

3.) Redeem: Redeem the Outcome - As a Christian, your life is not about you. Your life is meant to serve God and others, not yourself.

Look back at our text starting in vs 8.

Ephesians 5:8-10

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.

- Darkness and light a big theme in the Bible. God is described as Light: pure, holy, untainted, there is no darkness in him at all. Darkness refers to sin, wickedness, deceitfulness, and hiding.
- So, Paul is continuing a theme he carries throughout the book Ephesians. As Christians, we have a new identity. The old is gone and the new is here. In chapter 2 he uses the terms you were dead and now you are alive. In chapter 4, Paul used the terms old self versus the new self. Here he says you were darkness, now you are light. A stark dramatic change has taken place (a night and day difference).
- Who we are - New Identity, changes what we do - gives us New Desires.
- Browers - from pew sitters to missionaries.
 - At the age of retirement, but we get to send them out as missionaries
 - Met with Adam to thank Midtown for readying them for this transition.
 - Came around Midtown as empty nesters.
 - Felt pretty uncomfortable with demographics and the style. Music was too loud.
 - Stayed at Midtown because it made them uncomfortable and they knew this is exactly what they needed.
 - They knew they were drawn to comfort and if they went somewhere too comfortable, they would lapse into mere pew sitters, only taking up space.
 - Instead they became LifeGroup Leaders, Residents, and now Missionaries.
- New root, new fruit.
- Deep, internal, heart level change. Desires are different. Move from what is pleasing to you to what is pleasing to God.
- These are not slight difference, or changes in degrees or minor variations. It's a deep rooted change. Either you are light or you are darkness. Either you are alive or you are dead, either you are in Christ or you are not, either Jesus is your Savior or he is not.
- Our new identity leads to a reorientation of how we do life.
- Move from what pleases me to what pleases the Lord.

Our new identity redeems YOLO because our life is no longer about us. Part of waking up is understanding our identity is in Christ and that changes who we are, our truest identity which ultimately drives our behaviors, thoughts and actions.

Let's push it just a little further. Here's why this is so important to point out - because this life is going to disappoint you. Some of you more than others. Some of us will experience a greater amount of disappointment in this life based on what we expected and what we hoped for, but all of us will experience it to some degree.

One of our pastors was meeting with a guy and somehow he wound up telling him a story about a breakdown he had a few years ago.

It was his 30th birthday, and he was hanging a towel rack in their bathroom. His wife and two kids were in the house, and it was taking him a lot longer than he thought was necessary or appropriate to hang a simple towel rack. Eventually it became clear to him that he just wasn't going to be able to get the towel rack secured to the wall. I'm not sure exactly why, but he couldn't get it on right.

So, all of a sudden this wave of frustration just bubbles over in him, and he jerks the towel rack and screws out of the wall. Then, in a fit of rage he proceeds to punch several more holes in the wall. After he stepped back, he fell over in the bathtub and started weeping uncontrollably. His wife came running in and she was like, "Babe?!? What is wrong??" And he said, through his sobbing, "I don't know..." He ended up staying in the bathroom and crying for almost an hour.

He said, "It took me years to understand why I had that breakdown and what all was going on in my heart. First, I was really sad because here I was turning 30, which feels like a really big milestone, and it felt like nobody cared, and here I am hanging a towel rack in my bathroom, on my 30th birthday. Secondly, I was frustrated because as much as I like my life, this is not what I thought my life would be like when I turned 30. I had all these dreams and plans, and very few of them happened. Lastly, I was furious at myself, because I can't even hang a simple towel rack, and I was angry that I didn't have a dad who could teach me to do things like this."

That hits you deep, right, we have all felt it. How did the culmination of my whole life get me here. Story resonates deeply in all of us. Is this it? Is this all I get? Is this really who I have become. The good news of the gospel is that you live twice. This life is not all you get, and the pressure you feel is not coming from God.

Because when you feel that pressure--that voice telling you that this is it, this is all you get--you get to say, "No it's not." This is just the beginning of a life that will last forever. You see our view of eternity and our security in our identity actually does just the opposite. We are called "to make the most of every opportunity," but the pressure off. Gospel, good news leads to freedom.

The pressure to experience all the best of life is off because in eternity all the brokenness of this earthly world will be made new. There is nothing here on Earth that will match the grandeur of heaven. The most beautiful, the most flavorful, the most exhilarating here only pales in comparison to what Eternity with Jesus.

For parents it is easy to have a YOLO mindset for our kids. Pressure to give them the best experiences, opportunities, etc. Pressure to protect, to guide, to make their life the best. Our identity can easily get wrapped up in our parenting. Pressure is off. Give them Jesus.

And the pressure to perform is off because Jesus performed for us. Now we are freed up to love and serve people well.

There's also this push in college. God is calling you to go change the world. To be radical. My life feels ordinary.

We are freed up to live the life God has called us to live. Freed up to live in the mundane and ordinary. We often say today is ordinary but not insignificant. If there is no eternity and identity in Christ then ordinary IS insignificant, and therefore ordinary is intolerable, but because there is eternity and identity in Jesus, then everything has potential to be significant, when done in faith and obedience, whether seemingly radical, or, for the most part, not.

The goal is to be faithful. Not everyone needs to move to Africa to dig a well with an orphan strapped to their back. God is changing the world. He is sovereign and in total control. We just need to play our part. Live out our God given life: wherever God places us, using whatever gifts that God has given to us, in whatever circumstance he has orchestrated for us.

If you are in Christ, you live twice. YOLO is ultimately a lie, and that second life is gonna make this one feel really small. This life is not all you get.

Tim Keller sums up this idea perfectly:

Tim Keller

If you can't dance and you long to dance, in the resurrection you'll dance perfectly. If you're lonely, in the resurrection you will have perfect love. If you're empty, in the resurrection you will be fully satisfied. Ordinary life is what's going to be redeemed. There is nothing better than ordinary life, except that it's always going away and falling apart. Ordinary life is food and work and chairs by the fire and hugs and dancing and mountains – this world. God loves it so much that he gave his only Son so we – and the rest of this ordinary world – could be redeemed and made perfect. And that's what is in store for us...

So, live in the light of the resurrection and renewal of this world, and of yourself, in a glorious, never-ending, joyful dance of grace.”

I love that quote more than I can explain, because it puts words to the longing we all feel. The ordinary life that God has created for us and that we all want to maximize--what he calls “food and work and chairs by the fire and hugs and dancing and mountains”--is going to last forever. And it's going to be way better than it is even now, and it won't end in disappointment, and it won't go away or fall apart. Your wildest bucket list on Earth does not compare to this in any way.

If you are in Christ, you will live twice, and that second life will so overshadow disappointments in this life that you won't remember them. Knowing this allows us to completely reframe the way we see our earthly lives. We can give them away freely to God and others. We can deal with disappointments. We don't have to maximize selfish pleasure, because all the pleasure you could ever dream up awaits us. It changes everything.

And if you are not in Christ, you are invited to be a part of this second life through the life and death of Jesus. All of this is open to you, so call on Him to forgive you and save you.