**CONTRASTS**

***#1 – The Easy Life vs The Hard Life***

*Contrast* is a comparison between two opposite things in order to show a stark difference. It is a good idea when making an important decision to first examine the opposite action before committing to something. Let me show you what I mean by looking at the first contrast we will consider this week. The Easy Life vs. The Hard Life

I imagine a number of you looking at this contrast would assume that by “The Easy Life” I am referring to a life of leisure in which you “eat, drink and be merry,” and by “The Hard Life” I am talking about the strict disciplined life of a Christian. In point of fact, it is just the opposite. I believe that my life as a disciple of Christ is far, far easier than the worldly man’s life. My life is way better than the life Hugh Hefner lived. In fact, I wish very much that I could interview him now to see what he thinks of his playboy lifestyle. But I can’t. He died in 2017 at the age of 91. He awaits God’s judgment in Hades.

Hugh Hefner was the founder and publisher of *Playboy* magazine, which helped launch the sexual revolution in post-war America in the 1950’s and 60’s. He sought to show men what a great choice it was to be sophisticated, to be suave, to be debonair. Wine, women and song. Eat, drink and be merry. Live it up. Party hardy. If it feels good, do it. Or, to quote the world of Judges: “*Do what is right in your own eyes*” (Judg. 21:25).

 All these clichés were the focus of Hefner’s lifestyle that he promoted in the magazine which made him a multi-millionaire. He was the icon, the very image, of what it means to be a man of the world, or as he liked to think of himself – “a man of distinction.” Even though he was born into a family of devout Methodists, he gave up the moral restraint of Christianity to be “free” to live for all this world has to offer. A famous beer commercial often seen in the 1960’s perfectly described Hefner’s philosophy: “You only go around once in life, so grab for all the gusto you can get!”

Does this sound like the easy life to you? Satan would have you break off the shackles of Biblical morality and live a lascivious lifestyle so you can be free, free, FREE!

NOT!

The word *lascivious* is found among the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19. Just look at its cousins that lead up to it and you will not have to see a technical definition to know it can’t be good. “*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are – Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness…”* That’s the old KJV. Look at it in these newer translations: “promiscuity” (CSB), “lewdness” (NKJV), “debauchery” (NIV), “lustful pleasures” (NLT), “sensuality” (ESV, NASB), “licentiousness” (RSV), and “wrong use of the senses” (BBE).

If ever a word described the prodigal son, that is it. And it perfectly described the life of Hugh Hefner, the icon of “the good life.” Just as Jesus told of the young man who “*journeyed to a far country and wasted his possessions with prodigal living*” (Lk. 15:13), he soon discovered what Solomon had tried, and then summarized, this way: “*the way of the transgressor is* ***hard***” (Prov 13:15).

The playboy life, the prodigal life, is in fact *HARD*. Why? As the old preachers used to put it: “Sin always takes you further than you want to go; leaves you there longer than you want to stay; and costs more than you want to pay.” Mr. Hefner’s life consisted of three divorces and a boastful declaration that he had fornication with over 1,000 women. If he could speak today he would painfully tell you what another playboy (“the rich man”) did say from Hades: “*Lest they also come to this place of torment … tell them to repent*!” (Lk. 16:28-30). Too late. Indeed, the way of the transgressor is hard!

The Easy Life. That’s the Christian’s life. Yes, we have been transgressors too (Rom. 3:23). We have felt the burden of Satan’s heavy yoke. We have learned, but not too late: *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”* (Prov. 14:12). So we exchanged Satan’s yoke for Christ’s. “*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me … and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light*” (Matt. 11:29-30). Ahhh, that’s so much better!

The Christian life is in stark contrast to the playboy life. Satan, the father of lies (Jn. 8:44), will try to persuade you what Hugh Hefner wrote about, and what the first heavy-metal band *Steppenwolf* sang about in their first hit song *Born To Be Wild*:

“Get your motor runnin’ – head out on the highway – lookin’ for adventure – and whatever comes our way – Yeah darlin’ go make it happen – take the world in a love embrace – fire all of your guns at once and explode into space – Like a true nature’s child – we were born, born to be wild – we climb so high, I never wanna die – Born to be wild – Born to be wild.”

Doesn’t that make you want to jump on a Harley and go live the wild, crazy, care-free life? It was even the theme song in the biker movie *Easy Rider*. Or it sounds a lot like Lampwick persuading the wooden puppet Pinocchio to leave the boring life of school and rules behind and go with him to the wonderful world of Pleasure Island. The naïve puppet began singing, “That’s the life for me!” Sadly, he soon discovered, like the prodigal, that’s not the life for him. He slowly began turning into a donkey. Fortunately the Blue Fairy came to his rescue and saved the day. That was in Disney’s world. Hugh Hefner. The Rich Man. The prodigal Son. They did not escape Pleasure Island alive.

Where are they now? Yea, you know. Their spirit speaks from the tomb and from Hades. They now know it was all a big lie! It was not the easy life, but the hard. Now they await the judgment of God: “*Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matt. 25:41).

Do you see now why contrasts are important?

Until tomorrow… You were not born to be wild, but to free…in Christ Jesus. Now that’s the easy life.

I love you.

Rick