

Virtual Christian Magazine

Hope And Encouragement For The Real World

"Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?"—Romans 7:1

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Can Science Give Us Eternal Life?

By Larry Walker

Man has made great strides in technology and medicine, raising the hope that human immortality may be just around the corner. How have these advances come about, and what do they mean for you?



FROM OUR EARLIEST HISTORY, mortal man has sought in vain for immortality. Spanish explorer Ponce de León is famous for his futile search for the fountain of youth. Most other names are lost in history. The searchers had one thing in common: They all failed.

Medical science is on a path that some feel will succeed in ending human mortality by reversing—or at least drastically slowing—the aging process.

Can science extend our life span into hundreds, or maybe even thousands, of years? Some think it's only a matter of time. A recent spate of books and magazine articles claims that this and other remarkable prospects are possible for the near future.

Progress in the battle against aging

Over the last century advances in medical science have extended life expectancy far beyond the proverbial threescore and ten. Life expectancies in the United States in 1900 were only 48.3 years for men and 51.1 for women. By the mid-1950s they had increased to 66.0 for men and 71.7 for women. By 1996 the figures had risen to 75.7 and 82.7.

The U.S. population includes more than 50,000 people who have lived past 100 years of age, and the number of people who reach that milestone doubles every 10 years. People over the age of 85 constitute the fastest-growing segment of the population. Similar figures exist in other developed nations.



Now, for the first time, prognosticators proclaim that an end to the aging process may soon be within reach. “The Coming Triumph Over Aging” is the title of the first chapter of a 1998 book, *Cheating Death*, by Marvin Cetron and Owen Davies.

In the preface to his book *Immortality: How Science Is Extending Your Life Span—and Changing the World*, also written in 1998, author Ben Bova predicts: “...Human immortality is no longer a fantasy or a dream but may be achievable within this generation.” The book boldly concludes: “The first immortals are already living among us. You might be one of them.”

What is the basis for such hopeful predictions? Are such previously unthinkable life spans on the horizon? If so, what challenges will it pose for future generations? Does the Bible offer insight on this topic?

Progress in biological science

The ever-increasing length of human life can largely be credited to advances in the health sciences. Fundamental advances in medicine and sanitation have all but eliminated smallpox and other diseases that wiped out thousands of lives in years past. (However, in the face of this good news, degenerative diseases such as cancer and heart disease continue to exact a heavy toll, in spite of the sophisticated equipment and vast array of medical procedures available.)

Science has made astounding achievements in developing prostheses and transplants as a means of replacing diseased organs and other damaged body parts. The first successful heart transplant dates to 1967. Doctors can replace many other organs, sometimes more than one at a time. The main limitation seems to be lack of organ donors, but the controversial cloning process promises to come to the rescue by developing healthy replacement tissue in the laboratory.

Can science extend our life span into hundreds, or maybe even thousands, of years?

One is reminded of a line from the old TV series, *The Six Million Dollar Man*: “We can rebuild him; we have the technology.” Yesterday’s fanciful Six Million Dollar Man and the Bionic Woman may be fictional prototypes of future real people.

Understanding aging

As awesome as this technology may seem, transplant surgery deals merely with the effects of accidents, disease and aging. Scientists are gaining information on how aging and diseases occur, with the hope of learning how to reverse them.

Researchers have learned much about processes that occur in cells to bring on aging. Two theories have emerged—*entropic* (wearing out) and *telomeric* (death by design).

Aging and reproduction seem to be universally connected throughout most forms of life, whether they be microscopic one-celled organisms or human beings. Life and vitality appear to be designed to peak at the time of procreation and decline thereafter.

It appears that a self-limiting program is built into our genes. Like computer viruses, substances within our bodies attack and destroy cells to bring on aging and eventual death. Scientists try to locate, understand and turn off the aging switches built into living organisms.

Experiments involving melanin, antioxidants, free radicals and the growth hormone somatrophin have yielded interesting results in laboratory tests. Lives of test animals have significantly increased. The prospects for human life are yet to be determined, as are risks and side effects.



In 1986 a team of scientists embarked on the most extensive scientific research project ever undertaken. The Human Genome Project, which sought to map the genes of the human body and their functions, was completed in 2003. Genes are the master blueprints of our cells. They contain codes that regulate all of life's functions. The human genome is the scientific term for the composite genetic material of the human body. Approximately 30,000 genes were analyzed and described to complete this encyclopedic effort.

Prospects and possibilities

When the project is complete, the next step will be to determine how to use the resulting knowledge to manipulate body processes for practical benefits. Potential benefits are impressive:

- Early detection (by genetic predisposition) and possible elimination of disease.
- Slowing or eliminating aging. Ben Bova predicts, "Aging will evaporate like a bad dream" (*Immortality*, page 123).
- Restoration of youthful functions (a scientific fountain of youth).
- Extension of life span and perhaps even physical immortality.

Of course it will take time for any of these benefits to become available. So, in the meantime, these mind-stretching possibilities have spawned the practice of cryonics—the freezing of dead bodies with liquid nitrogen in hopes of future restoration to life and health, perhaps even immortality, via medical and scientific methods such as those mentioned above.

Problems of the postmortal era

However, even with the most optimistic outcome of current and future developments, the prospect of physical immortality, or even greatly extended life spans, poses a host of challenges and problems. They include:

- *Medical limitations.* At this point the best medical science can hope for is to slow the process of aging or prevent death by disease and old age; death by injury would still loom over humanity.

- Knowing about genes does not confer the ability to manipulate them any more than drawing a blueprint guarantees how or if a house will be built. Genes take orders from elsewhere; they don't initiate them. Scientists must still analyze genetic interaction with a host of environmental factors. Until researchers learn more about root causes of disease, there may be a need for periodic adjustments, which could be very costly.
- Tampering with the delicate intricacies of cellular interaction could produce a medical Frankenstein's monster of uncontrolled cell growth—in a word, cancer.
- *Economic considerations.* The financial cost of extending life could limit its benefits to the wealthy. On the other hand, if treatment becomes readily available, many other economic challenges will arise. Longer life spans would result in people needing to work indefinitely. Retirement would have to be postponed or even eliminated. Insurance, pension plans and retirement income programs would have to be revamped, reduced or discontinued.

Tampering with the delicate intricacies of cellular interaction could produce a medical Frankenstein's monster of uncontrolled cell growth—in a word, cancer.

The ability to read the genetic code of an employee or potential employee could result in layoffs and refusals to hire as well as insurance denials and higher premium costs.

A massive transformation of the medical industry also threatens as conventional medical treatment becomes obsolete.

- *Population problems.* As life spans increase, which they most surely will, overpopulation will exact a greater toll on dwindling natural resources. Birth-control measures will become ever more critical. If man were to achieve immortality, how long would it take to reach a saturation point beyond which life could not continue?
- *Social, cultural, ethical and moral considerations.* A host of social challenges would need to be dealt with, such as discrimination against the poor, elderly and diseased unable to afford life extension. And, on the other hand, discrimination no doubt would be directed against those who for philosophical, ethical or religious reasons choose not to extend their lives by scientific means.
- *Religious and philosophical issues.* If science were able to offer physical immortality, what religious and philosophical challenges would such an offer pose? The meaning of life would change. The limitations of physical life provide boundaries and parameters that define life as we know it. As King Solomon wrote almost 3,000 years ago: "To everything there is a season, ...a time to be born, and a time to die" (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2).

What if life goes on indefinitely? What will future immortals do with all that time? Golfing for eternity, even for those who could afford it, would soon grow stale and boring. Meaning and purpose in life would become a vital necessity for happiness.

The prospect of physical immortality poses a major challenge to religion. Marvin Cetron asks, "Will religion still have something to offer people whose salvation is as near as the local pharmacy?" (*Cheating Death*, page 15).

The age of enlightenment led many to look to science, discounting the need for God. The specter of immortality could result in a quantum leap into the arms of medical science. Would immortality from the realm of science deal a deathblow to religion?

Biblical perspective on immortality

Will God allow scientists to manipulate the genetic code to presume to offer eternal life in the flesh? Computer programmers construct databases with grids that allow flexibility but prevent fundamental changes. Has God written genetic codes that cannot be changed? Or is there no limit to what He will allow man to accomplish?

Before attempting to answer this question, let's back up and put the matter into a spiritual perspective. Any attempt to gain eternal life apart from the plan of God is doomed to fail.

Man's quest for eternal life began long before Ponce de León. The potential for immortality dates back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God offered eternal life through the tree of life (Genesis 3:22). Death would be the penalty for partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

*Will God allow
scientists to
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Satan's first lie to mankind was that man would not die but would gain knowledge by taking of the forbidden tree (Genesis 3:1-5). He managed to convince Eve. Adam went along with his wife, and the course of history was set. Ever since, man has sought eternal life by means of the tree of knowledge, reaping a mixture of good and evil results. The latest advances in scientific knowledge are no exception.

Can man avoid death forever?

Because of sin, death is inevitable for all mankind (Romans 5:12; Hebrews 9:27). God has designed the human body to conform to the limits of mortality. The body begins its demise after peaking during the reproductive years. Genetic researchers observe this planned obsolescence at the cellular level as they continue their determined research into ways to alter the genetic code.

Will God allow man to reverse the aging process and live forever? It's possible man could make great strides toward that end. Note that after the incident at the tower of Babel—a human attempt to thwart God's plan and punishment for sin—God's response was, "Now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them" (Genesis 11:6).

Does this include learning how to turn off the death switch at work in our genes? If so, eternal life in the flesh (or even a greatly enhanced life span) will be fraught with problems. In the end, man still cannot escape death in the plan of God. Regardless of the longevity of human life, Jesus warns us that God "is able to destroy body and soul" (Matthew 10:28).

Conditions at the time of the end of this age are destined to be like those at the time of Noah (Matthew 24:37-39). Other than the handful of lives preserved on the ark, all flesh was destroyed in the Flood. Peter speaks of the time when fire will sweep over the earth to burn "both the earth and the works that are in it" (2 Peter 3:10-12). So regardless of how long medical science might be able to extend human life, the time will come when nothing physical will remain.

God's plan for eternal life

The good news is that God plans to destroy death and once again offer immortality to mankind. However, it won't be through scientific advances, but through a resurrection from the grave. The entire 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians is devoted to this awesome topic.

Immortality

*without meaning
and purpose would
be a curse.*

Our physical existence is only temporary. The ultimate destiny of mankind is eternal life in the family of God—by *His* design, not man's. He reveals that our limited physical bodies will be instantaneously transformed from mortal flesh to immortal spirit (1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 33-54; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:1-3). No transplants, artificial parts, drugs or therapies are required!

Revelation 21:4 assures us that death, disease, even pain and sorrow will evaporate like a bad dream (to borrow the words of a previous quote). God's version of eternal life will be freely given and available to all who follow Him (John 4:9-10, 14; Revelation 21:6; 22:17).

There will be no need for a medical industry or insurance. Life will be meaningful and busy. We will work without tiring—or retiring (John 5:17). There will be no need for income. Social security will be replaced by spiritual security, compliments of Almighty God.

All social, cultural, ethical, moral and spiritual problems will be eliminated (Revelation 21:27; 22:14-15). Population problems and overcrowding will not be an issue in the New Heavens and New Earth. God's plan more than meets the challenge to religion. God has incomparably more to offer than the local pharmacy could ever hope to provide.

Eternal life is more than a chronological matter. Immortality without meaning and purpose would be a curse. The Bible's offer of eternal life includes an intimate relationship with the great "I Am," the Author and Designer of life (John 17:3).

Looking into the future

Regrettably, we live in the dark ages spiritually (John 1:5; 9:4). Although scientific and technological knowledge abounds, mankind utterly lacks spiritual truth (2 Timothy 3:7). This condition is destined to change dramatically. The greatest age of enlightenment is yet to be ushered in, at the return of Jesus Christ.

God's Word tells us "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). Life on earth will take on exciting new meaning as mankind learns to live according to and enjoy the blessings of God's perfect law of liberty (Isaiah 2:1-4; James 1:25). All will come to know God's plan for immortality—eternal life in His glorious kingdom.

In the meantime, science will continue to find ways to expand the quantity and quality of human life. Time will tell how much science can improve health and longevity. But all that ultimately will be paled into insignificance by the plan of God.

Can scientists give us hundreds or possibly even thousands of years of life? They certainly will try. But, even if mankind achieves remarkable breakthroughs, physical immortality from the hand of man will include all the problems and pain of our present life—and more of them spread over

more years. The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:19 tells us that hope limited to this physical life indeed would be a pitiable existence. Any scientific development is a cheap substitute compared to eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

Recommended reading

You can learn much more about God's plan for eternal life and the future of humanity—a future far more exciting and inspiring than that predicted by scientists' ambitions. To discover the truth of what God has in store, be sure to request the free booklets [What Is Your Destiny?](#), [What Happens After Death?](#), [The Gospel of the Kingdom](#) and [The Road to Eternal Life](#).

The theme of immortality is woven throughout seven annual observances revealed in the Bible, celebrations that offer a glimpse of God's great plan as “a shadow of things to come” (Colossians 2:16-17). Be sure to request our booklet [God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind](#) to help you glean the precious nuggets of truth embedded in these days.

A Kinder, Gentler Hell?

By David Treybig

As opinions about hell have changed over the years, so have the teachings of many churches. But what does the Bible say?



SYNCRETISM—the combination of differing beliefs and practices—has long been a hallmark of mainstream Christianity. Centuries ago church leaders set aside biblically assigned days of worship in favor of Sunday, Christmas and Easter. Similarly, popular tradition long ago replaced the biblical teaching about hell.

Beliefs about hell are changing again. A recent poll revealed a dramatic shift in opinion among Americans regarding concepts of hell. True to historical form, major religious organizations are adjusting their teachings accordingly. The recent beliefs and teachings concerning the fate of sinners could be called a “kinder, gentler” hell.

According to *U.S. News & World Report*, in 1997 the majority belief among U.S. citizens was that “hell is a real place where people suffer eternal fiery torments.” Just a few years later 53 percent believed “hell is an anguished state of existence eternally separated from God” (“Hell Hath No Fury,” Jeffrey Sheler, Jan. 31, 2000, p. 47).



This shift in thinking can be attributed to several factors.

“Lampooned by modern intellectuals and increasingly sidelined by preachers preferring to dwell on more uplifting themes, the threat of post-mortem punishment of the impenitent in an eternal lake of fire all but disappeared from the religious mainstream by the 1960s. Theological discourse on the subject at the nation’s divinity schools almost evaporated. And while polls showed that the majority of Americans professed to believe in hell’s existence, almost no one thought he would go there” (ibid.).

The reasoning behind the shift often paints punishment as a childish fear tactic that is no longer valid or needed by mature adults. Others reason that a good God couldn’t possibly punish people forever, as that would be against His very nature. “‘Once we discovered we could create hell on Earth,’ says John Dominic Crossan, professor emeritus at DePaul University in Chicago, ‘it became silly to talk about it in a literal sense’” (ibid., p. 50).

Authenticating this modern interpretation for Roman Catholics, Pope John Paul II stated that “rather than a place, hell indicates the state of those who freely and definitely separate themselves from God.” In so doing he described hell as something figuratively portrayed in the Bible as a “pool of fire” or a “second death” (ibid., p. 45).

The recent beliefs and teachings concerning the fate of sinners could be called a “kinder, gentler” hell.

Catholic funeral masses have changed to reflect this view. White priestly garments have replaced black ones, and prayers such as *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath), which describe the torture of the wicked, have been set aside in favor of ones dealing with hope and the resurrection.

In concert with this socially driven change, “the doctrine commission of the Church of England recently recommended a hell of ‘final and irrevocable choosing of that which is opposed to God’ instead of medieval fire and torment. And the newest Presbyterian catechism hardly mentions the subject at all... Even among evangelicals, hell as a subject from the pulpit is less ubiquitous than before” (*USA Today*, “Churches Give Hell a Makeover,” Gerald Zelizer, Feb. 21, 2000, p. 15A).

The modern religious consumer

In an effort to explain recent changes in teachings about hell, Gerald Zelizer, rabbi of a Conservative congregation serving Jewish residents of Metuchen and Edison, New Jersey, offers three reasons he believes hell is being refashioned. First is the religious consumer’s view that he needs positive things, including love, hope, peace and marriage enrichment, more than being saved from hell. Second is the American psyche, which thinks people are entitled to be happy and successful. Third is ambiguity within Christianity over what Matthew meant when he said that evildoers would be “cast into a furnace of fire.”



In an age of consumer-driven markets, churches are not only striving to meet the individual where he stands emotionally and intellectually but are adjusting doctrines to attract and retain people. Theologians and parishioners regularly adjust doctrinal positions to fit their changing perspectives. Jesus Christ's first-century condemnation of substituting "the commandments of men" for the teachings of God (Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7) has gone unheeded.

Yet strangely, some theologians paint their revisions as honorable, carefully thought-out methods of taking the gospel to contemporary culture. Thomas Reese, editor of the Jesuit journal *America*, reasons that today's gentler hell, based on relationships and psychological experiences such as loneliness, wouldn't have made sense to earlier generations.

U.S. News & World Report's religion writer Jeffrey Sheler notes that this most recent change in the view of hell is similar to other changes in Christian teaching. But not everyone agrees with such humanly devised changes of biblical teachings.

The history of change

Evangelical Protestants and conservative Catholics (who comprise much of the 34 percent of Americans who hold to the traditional view that hell is a literal place of eternal punishment) do not accept the kinder, gentler hell.

Yet ironically, many of those resistant to the recent change are unaware that their "traditional" beliefs are nothing more than revisions of the true biblical teaching. The major difference lies in the fact that their revisions were made many centuries ago.

Surprising as it may sound, the idea of hell as a literal place where evildoers are punished for eternity did not arise until centuries after Jesus' life on earth and subsequent crucifixion. As Rabbi Zelizer explained: "In the Hebrew Bible, there is no mention of hell at all, but only a deep ravine of rocky earth outside the Old City of Jerusalem, where the Israelites burned garbage and emptied sewage, and Sheol, a non-descript underworld into which both the good and the bad descended after death."

So where did the idea of hell as a place of eternal punishment come from?

Theologians and parishioners regularly adjust doctrinal positions to fit their changing perspectives. So where did the idea of hell as a place of eternal punishment come from?

In Mark 9:43-48 Jesus spoke of hell as a place where "the fire is not quenched." Did He mean evildoers would be punished forever? Or did He mean no one would quench the fire, that it would not go out until the wicked were consumed? This question has left many confused, as have disagreements among third- and fourth-century theologians over whether the punishment would be sensory or only symbolic of separation from God.

Origen, another early church theologian, offered this theory: Hell is remedial in nature, a place where sinners could be rehabilitated. The Council of Constantinople in 543 rejected Origen's view. From that time forward, people were divided between two perspectives, the majority believing in a never-ending punishment of the wicked (who would necessarily be immortal), the minority believing in a one-time annihilation of the wicked (who by definition would be mortals, capable of dying and being destroyed).



Little changed until the 14th century when Dante presented a fictional description of hell in his work *The Divine Comedy*. Using vivid imagery of the horrors associated with a multileveled subterranean chamber, Dante galvanized popular opinion about sensory punishment.

However, the doctrinal evolution did not end there.

“Two hundred years later, leaders of the Protestant Reformation rejected the terrifying depictions of hell in art and literature,” wrote Jeffrey Sheler. “While Martin Luther and John Calvin regarded hell as a real place, they believed its fiery torments were figurative. Hell’s worst agonies, they said, were the terror and utter despair of spending eternity cut off from God.”

Given the options, what should one believe? Is there no definitive, biblically based answer?

Yes, there is. An often-overlooked passage sheds a brilliant light on the entire debate.

The Bible's explanation

Although many have noted Christ's references to punishment for evildoers in Mark 9:43-48 and Revelation 20:15, few have made the connection between this subject and Malachi 4. Written 400 years before the birth of Christ, Malachi's book has been assumed by many to be simply a historical record of the time. Yet its last two chapters (3 and 4) focus on Jesus second coming.

Malachi 4:1-3 explains what will happen to the wicked: “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘that will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,’ says the LORD of hosts.”

The wicked will not burn forever.

As their punishment, says Malachi, evildoers will be *burned up*. This is not a case of divinely administered eternal torture but of a mercifully quick capital punishment—the annihilation and eternal elimination of the wicked. The wicked will not burn forever. Indeed, they will be *reduced to ashes*.

This is the “everlasting punishment”—a death after which there is no hope of a resurrection—Jesus speaks of in Matthew 25:46. This punishment is eternal in the sense that it has eternal consequences: No one will return to life once punished in this manner. The punishing is instantaneous, but its effect is eternal.

The idea that one can work his way out of this punishment is also a mistaken concept.

Understanding annihilationism

The understanding that the wicked will be destroyed is called annihilationism.

Addressing this concept, Sheler reports: “A small but growing number of conservative theologians are promoting a third position: that the end of the wicked is destruction, not eternal suffering. Evangelical scholars such as Clark H. Pinnock, theology professor at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario; John R.W. Stott, founder of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity; and Philip E. Hughes, a noted Anglican clergyman and author, contend that those who ultimately reject God will simply be put out of existence in the ‘consuming fire’ of hell,” Sheler wrote.

These theologians correctly point out, as Sheler writes, that “the traditional belief in unending torment is based more on pagan philosophy than on a correct understanding of Scripture. They base their belief on New Testament passages that warn of ‘eternal destruction’ (2 Thessalonians 1:9) and ‘the second death’ (Revelation 20:14) for those who reject God, and on the Hebrew prophet Ezekiel’s admonition that ‘the soul that sins shall die’ (Ezekiel 18:4).

“They also raise ethical arguments. ‘How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness’ as to inflict ‘everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may have been?’ asks Pinnock in the *Criswell Theological Review*. A God who would do such a thing, Pinnock argues, is ‘more nearly like Satan than like God.’”

If you would like a more thorough explanation of what happens after death, request our free booklets [*What Happens After Death?*](#) and [*Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?*](#)

Choosing Your Future

By Robert Berendt

Some people believe in “kismet,” or fate. Their death or “time to die” is preset, events were “meant to be,” and they are not in control of their own futures. Truly we do not have total control over very many things—but we do play a huge part in our own futures.



OUR HIGH SCHOOL CLOSED as our town closed and my family could not afford to keep me in school, so I began unloading boxcars at 16 years of age. I worked hard and slowly promotions came, but finally at age 23 I realized at this rate I would be at the bottom end of the wage scale for the rest of my life. I was living a limited life with a limited future. I “took the bull by the horns” and made some tough decisions. I completed my education and went on to university although it was difficult. The experience was good for me—though hard on the family—but today I see my life has been so much richer and fuller because I was not content to just let things happen. My family benefited in ways I would never have dreamed of and thus I felt extra blessed. God did give us a mind with which to think and the ability to make choices. We need to take matters into our own hands and control that which we can.

We do have the ability—given by our Creator—to make decisions and choices affecting our own futures. Our decisions and thus our futures are not predetermined. We can change our futures because we make choices having a meaningful impact. Not all people are in a position to do much. Poverty, health problems, events such as war and so on, play an important part in either limiting or broadening our opportunities. But, as we accept and live through these life events, we still possess some control in the decisions we make.



Choose life

God made this concept clear when He set “life and death” before Israel and encouraged them to “choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:15-20). This concept can be applied to situations we see every day among our young people. High school students make choices such as taking drugs and often slip into a horrible lifestyle, which ends in an early grave. Young lives are wasted and parents frantically try to help—as they wonder what they did wrong. Of course, many students continue to make wise and correct choices, even if they are difficult.

Today I see my life has been so much richer and fuller because I was not content to just let things happen.

King David altered the history of Israel and of his own family by his bad decision regarding Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Samuel 12:7-12). God said David had a choice; he could have made a different decision. It is fortunate for mankind God can adjust His works or plan—regardless of our decisions. He can slow events down as He did at Babel (Genesis 11:6). He can wipe out an attacking army (2 Kings 19:35). He can and does bless individual efforts. *As a matter of fact, God loves to bless those who make good choices.*

Since creation humans have been given the right to participate in their eternal futures. Decisions we make in this life have much to do with our future as God’s children. God bestows talents and waits for our decisions and actions, which produce results. He gave Solomon much wisdom (1 Kings 3:12) but Solomon was not forced (by God) to use it and indeed lost the kingdom because he did not act wisely (1 Kings 11:11). If a person is given five talents and doubles that through hard work and good choices, God will give that person a great reward and a bonus as well (Matthew 25:20-21). In 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, Paul writes of how people build out of gold, silver and so on. All are a result of decisions and choices. They will be tested to see if they endure. *Our choices will affect our futures.*

The Bible gives us much encouragement to use our minds to look ahead and make our futures secure. Politicians are told to look ahead before they start a war—to see if they have the resources to be successful (Luke 14:28-32). The book of Proverbs admonishes us to learn from the ant (Proverbs 6:6; 30:25). We need to realize that the productive years come and go quickly. At old age, a person is to have saved enough for a comfortable life and enough to give an inheritance to his grandchildren (Proverbs 13:22). We are told that a little sleep, a little folding of the hands (which translates into idleness), and poverty will catch us (Proverbs 24:33-34). I have heard people who have experienced poverty blame everything and everyone else except themselves. Never taking responsibility for one's life and actions produces a person who will not accept responsibility even in later life when he reaps what he has sown—the result of decisions made. To be lazy, for example, is a choice and has a natural consequence.



Certainly, some people have exceedingly few choices. A person dying of starvation or disease has almost no choices left. Orphaned children are very helpless. The Bible does tell us pure and undefiled religion before God is to concern oneself with the affliction of widows and orphans (James 1:27). Clearly, there are people who do need a hand up. It is those who have refused hands a thousand times, or who have blindly refused to act to improve their lot in life we find it hard to

help. The Bible also says if a person refuses to work (assuming the person is healthy and able to work) they should not eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12). Here we see we should not just feed such a person. It is interesting to note when we do provide help on a constant basis, people often become dependent on that help and lose the ability to help themselves. It is not always easy to distinguish a genuine need for help from an attempt to lean on the naivete or kindness of others.

It is interesting to note when we do provide help on a constant basis, people often become dependent on that help and lose the ability to help themselves.

God tells us He is only content with those who worship Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30). This means a determined, well-thought-out effort that wells up from within the person. It is never too late to change our habits—we only need the will and perseverance to change, and the knowledge of how to change. Change is demanded if anyone is to receive the gifts God has to offer (Revelation 21:7). Eternal life is given to those who strive to enter (Hebrews 4:1, 6, 11). Humans are told to run with wisdom (1 Corinthians 9:24). God says to “study to show ourselves approved” (2 Timothy 2:15), and James wrote that faith without works is dead (James 2:20). All of these points involve choices we make.

A man once said we should work as though everything depends on our own effort and pray as though everything depends on God. This is good advice. Life can be cruel—we either take control of whatever we can—or we become like a chip of wood riding the waves, driven by wind and tide to a destination we have not chosen. God says: “Choose life.” *Choosing life is still your choice—now all you need to do is make it.*

Recommended reading

For more reading on your future, ask for our free booklets [What Is Your Destiny?](#) and [The Road to Eternal Life](#).

What Should I Do When Others Sin?

By Meredith A. Keeney

Someone is doing wrong and you feel like you should do something to correct the situation, but what? Is it our place to do anything at all?



TODAY AS I WAS WALKING through the pasture behind my barn, I was trying to come up with an answer to a problem I've been debating for a long time: How I am supposed to act when someone else sins? I know that the Bible says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," but that always ended up sounding like you're saying, "If you let other people get away with stuff, God will let you get away with stuff." I found that particular verse didn't click with me as the entire answer, especially since God also tells us to discern wrong and right. I know I'm not supposed to be ambivalent about wrong and right, but I know I'm also not supposed to condemn others for their actions. Well, then, what am I supposed to do when others sin?

As I was walking, I suddenly got a flash of when I was little and the oldest of three children, and my dad saying, "Don't worry about your brother and sister, you just worry about Meredith." I remember that when my siblings did things I thought were wrong, I was burning inside for them to "get theirs." I would promptly report their transgressions to my parents and then sit back like Jonah and wait for the fire of parental discipline to rain down as I thought it should. Like Jonah, I was frequently disappointed by the result. If my view of justice didn't match my parents' view of justice, I would argue the point and generally end up in trouble myself. "Don't you worry about your brother and sister, you just worry about Meredith." It was infuriating.



I remember that when my siblings did things I thought were wrong, I was burning inside for them to "get theirs."

I am now grown, wed and the mother of three, and I hear myself saying the same things to my kids. For some reason, while I can see my parents' view of why they meted out justice the way they did, I still get that burning inside when I see people doing things that are wrong and not getting the comeuppance that I think they deserve. I guess I never made the connection between the way I was supposed to act toward my brother and sister and the way I am supposed to act towards other adults. It is easy to hear and say "children of God" and "brothers and sisters in Christ," but it is a whole other thing to internalize it.

If my relationship with my blood siblings is supposed to be a template for my relationships with my spiritual siblings, then what ought I have done as a child? Well, Mom and Dad didn't want me to be wishy-washy about what was right and wrong. If my sister snuck into something or committed some other act of mayhem, I was supposed to recognize that it was wrong and not join in. I was even justified in telling Mom and Dad about it (though this step is rather pointless as an adult, as there aren't many things I could tattle to God about that He isn't already aware of). Something else I could, or perhaps should have done would have been to gently remind my errant sibling of the rule and entreat reconsideration of her actions. For some reason that never occurred to me when I was 10.



In the end though, it was not my business how, or even if, my brother or sister was punished, because as a child I did not have the wisdom to mete out proper punishment. My version of justice was more akin to vengeance. I couldn't see the big picture and how each incident fit into our training and raising. Perhaps even though I am an adult now, I am still not mature enough to mete out proper punishment to my "brothers and sisters." Something tells me that when I am 90 I still won't have that maturity and, thusly, that right. I can see the big picture in child raising, but the big picture of training a soul to take its place in God's plan is beyond the scope of any mortal mind.

Perhaps I am supposed to deal with others' sins by encouraging them to a wiser course (this hasn't gotten any easier than when I was 10). Then, if they choose to go their own way, content myself in the knowledge that God will deal with it. He may not do it the way I think He ought, but that is because, like my parents, He disciplines not exact payment, but to teach a better way. If I argue the point or try to take matters into my own hands, I remember what a spanking from my Dad felt like; I don't think I want to get one from God!

Perhaps I am still not mature enough to mete out proper punishment to my "brothers and sisters."

I found the whole train of thought to be rather humbling. It's easy to feel superior to those younger or less religiously informed. But it knocks you back down to size when you realize that in the end we're all still kids and will continue to be, no matter how old we get. Perhaps that is what Christ meant when He told us to be like the little children. I am responsible to act in accordance with the degree of instruction I've been given, be it little or great. In the end, however, I shouldn't worry about my brothers and sisters—worrying about Meredith is a job in and of itself.

For more on how you can change your life, order our free booklet [Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion](#).

What Is the Gospel Jesus Christ Taught?

By Scott Ashley

If we are to understand the whole point of Jesus' teachings, message and mission, we need to be sure we understand the gospel—the good news—that He taught.



WHAT IS THE MESSAGE Jesus Christ brought and taught?

It seems like a simple enough question, but most people don't give it much thought. They know Jesus preached a "gospel"—an old English word meaning "good news" or "good message"—but what was that message?

This is where things get a little murky for some people. Many think that the gospel *of* Christ is a gospel *about* Christ. In doing so they focus on the *messenger* rather than the *message*. They miss the point that when the Bible speaks of the "gospel of Christ," it is referring to *the message He proclaimed*, not simply a message *about* Him.

Is the distinction that important? Absolutely. If we fail to understand His central message, we will fail to grasp the whole point of His teachings, the reason for His coming and why He promises to come again to earth. We will also fail to comprehend dozens of vital prophecies throughout the Bible. Jesus Christ's message ties all of these things together in a central theme that is truly *good news* that has great implications not only for your future, but that of the entire earth!

So what was Jesus' message? Let's go through some of His statements to be sure we understand this important truth.

The gospel of the Kingdom of God

We find Christ's message summarized in Mark 1:14-15: "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching *the gospel of the kingdom of God*, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel'" (emphasis added throughout).

Jesus' message, then, centered on the gospel—the good news—of the *Kingdom of God*. He also taught that people must *repent* and *believe* that message.

Other verses confirm that the Kingdom of God was at the heart of Christ's message. Matthew 4:23 tells us that “Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, [and] preaching *the gospel of the kingdom...*” Several chapters later he adds, “Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, [and] *preaching the gospel of the kingdom...*” (Matthew 9:35).



After Jesus was crucified and resurrected He appeared to His disciples, “being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to *the kingdom of God*” (Acts 1:3). Luke 4:43 records Jesus saying, “I must preach *the kingdom of God* to the other cities also, *because for this purpose I have been sent.*”

Confusion about the Kingdom of God

It's clear from the Scriptures that Jesus' teaching focused on the Kingdom of God. As Luke recorded, Christ said that He had been sent to proclaim this specific message.

There should be little doubt about what Jesus taught. Regrettably, that isn't the case. People have differing ideas of what the Kingdom of God is. Some believe it is all of Christianity. Some view it as the sum total of all that is good and right in the world. Others think that the church is the Kingdom of God.

Regarding the latter, notice how *The Catholic Encyclopedia* explains this common perception: “...The ‘kingdom’ means not so much a goal to be attained or a place... It is rather a tone of mind... At one time the ‘kingdom’ means the sway of grace in men’s hearts... As men realized that this kingdom stood for a certain tone of mind, and saw that this peculiar spirit was enshrined in the Church, they began to speak of the Church as ‘the kingdom of God’... The kingdom of God means, then, the ruling of God in our hearts; it means those principles which separate us off from the kingdom of the world and the devil; it means the benign sway of grace; it means the Church...” (1908 edition, “Kingdom of God”).

This is where things get a little murky for some people. Many think that the gospel of Christ is a gospel about Christ.

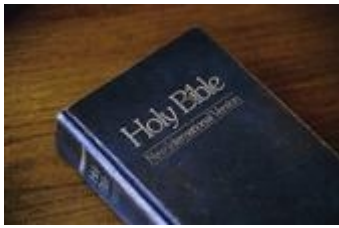
Continuation of earlier messages

Did Christ intend for us to be so confused about the central theme of His teaching?

Christ's teaching about the Kingdom of God becomes clear when we understand that Jesus was *continuing* the message God had revealed centuries earlier through the prophets of Israel. These men were inspired to write of a coming world-ruling government—a physical, literal kingdom—in which the Messiah would administer God's laws and way of life to bring peace and prosperity to all humanity.

The prophet Daniel, for example, saw a vision in which the Messiah receives this kingdom: “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of

heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. *Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.* His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14; see also Daniel 2:44).



Isaiah also wrote of this coming Messiah and kingdom: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. *Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end,* upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever...” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Luke records that Jesus didn’t hesitate to apply a prophecy of Isaiah of the Messiah and Kingdom of God to Himself. “[Jesus] was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.’

“...And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing’” (Luke 4:17-21; quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2).

The plain meaning

Jesus was plainly affirming the messages of the earlier prophets of the coming Kingdom of God. Did Christ’s followers understand that His teaching about the Kingdom of God concerned a literal, world-ruling kingdom? Indeed they did.

Notice this promise He gave to His disciples: “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28; see also Luke 22:28-30).

After Jesus had been resurrected from the dead, the disciples had a burning question for Him: “Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority’” (Acts 1:6-7).

Did Christ intend for us to be so confused about the central theme of His teaching?

They plainly understood that a part of Jesus’ mission involved a restoration of a physical kingdom, with Christ as ruler and the disciples reigning under Him. Jesus told them, however, that the timing of the establishing of that kingdom is known only to God the Father (Matthew 24:36).

In Revelation 11:15 we read that this kingdom will be established at the seventh prophetic trumpet: “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’”

The Kingdom of God and you

What does this kingdom have to do with you and me? A great deal in every way.

On a purely physical level, Jesus Christ will return at a pivotal time in human history—when humanity teeters on the brink of annihilation. In His remarkable prophecy in Matthew 24, He tells us that He will intervene in a period of world crisis, “a time of great distress, such as there has never been before since the beginning of the world, and will never be again.” Conditions will be so grave that “if that time of troubles were not cut short, no living thing could survive . . .” (verses 21-22, Revised English Bible).

What does this Kingdom have to do with you and me?

Reading the rest of His prophecy (and parallel accounts in Luke 21 and Mark 13) is remarkably like reading today’s headlines. Yet most people will be unaware of the seriousness of the times in which they live.

Jesus had much more to say, too, about the Kingdom of God. In the first passage we read, Mark 1:14-15, a vital part of Christ’s message was “*Repent, and believe in the gospel.*”

Two millennia later, those words continue to have deep meaning. While the good news of Christ’s coming world-ruling kingdom is truly good—in that humanity will at last see a world of peace, happiness and purpose and an end to war, violence, starvation, disease and every other form of suffering—there’s more to the story.

To enter that kingdom, we must be transformed from physical and mortal to spiritual and immortal. As Paul explains: “...Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).



Jesus says of those who are transformed in this way: “Then the righteous *will shine forth as the sun* in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43). Jesus Christ, glorified and immortal, now shines as the sun at full strength (Revelation 1:16). If we are willing to repent and believe, as He commands, He extends to us the opportunity to be glorified as He is (1 John 3:2).

Those given eternal life will live and reign with Christ in that kingdom (Revelation 20:4, 6). They will be “kings and priests to our God... reign[ing] on the earth” to teach and bring others into this eternal kingdom (Revelation 5:10). Jesus promises us, “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit

with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Revelation 3:21).

As the prophet Daniel had written centuries earlier: “Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him” (Daniel 7:27).

This is the wonderful news of a future of awesome power and purpose revealed in the gospel of the Kingdom of God Jesus Christ taught. Would you like to share in that future? The choice is up to you!

Recommended reading

This article has only briefly surveyed the central theme of Jesus Christ’s teaching. To learn more, please request your free copies of the booklets [The Gospel of the Kingdom](#) and [What Is Your Destiny?](#) You’ll discover a great deal more about the astounding future God has in store for you!

Wise Advice for Wise Decisions

By Larry Greider

How good are your decision-making skills? Have you ever wondered “what if I had...”—especially when you didn’t get the outcome you had expected?



WE ALL FACE MANY DECISIONS every day. Some turn out well; others not so well. What can we do to make better decisions?

Perhaps you never realized the Bible is a book about making wise decisions. Not only that, it’s filled with examples of good and bad decisions and their outcomes. It shows that when you make good decisions based on right principles, you will have good results. If you make poor decisions based on

Perhaps you never realized the Bible is a book about making wise decisions.

emotion, anger, lust and selfishness, you should expect poor results.

The Bible reveals a principle that applies in many areas of life: “you reap whatever you sow” (Galatians 6:7, New Revised Standard Version). Sometimes this direct correlation isn’t so obvious, but as we live our lives, the “fruit,” or result, of our decisions becomes clearer.

Look at the Bible as a textbook on decision making. If you want to make right choices in your life, you can save yourself a lot of trouble if you take a closer look at the examples recorded there for us.

The first child makes a bad decision

The first child, Cain, born to the first parents mentioned in the Bible, made some poor decisions that led to a painful and unhappy life. Cain became the first murderer—he killed his own brother—and was marked and banished from his home. How did Cain’s life turn out so tragically?

Cain’s offering wasn’t pleasing to God because his works were evils (1 John 3:12). He reveled in a wrong attitude and lacked respect for his Creator. “So the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? *And if you do not do well*, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it” (Genesis 4:6-7, emphasis added throughout).

God told Cain that if he chose well he would be blessed. Cain’s offering wasn’t pleasing to God because it showed a lack of proper respect.

This insightful short story gives us a key to making right decisions. Learning to put God first orients us away from the egocentric self-love that ultimately leads to unhappiness and frustration. We all must learn to rule over those selfish desires common to us all. Cain’s bad attitude and jealousy led to disastrous consequences—the murder of his innocent brother Abel, and Cain’s banishment.

“And He [God] said, ‘What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.’ And Cain said to the LORD, ‘My punishment is greater than I can bear!’”(verses 10-13).



Cain chose poorly and reaped a way of life that brought curses and misery.

A king makes a foolish blunder

Another illustration of choices and their far-reaching implications is found in the life of the first king of Israel, Saul.

Saul was confronted with a serious dilemma when the warring Philistines threatened the nation of Israel. Saul felt pressured to act. The responsibility of leadership weighed heavily on his shoulders. What should he do?

We all must learn to rule over those selfish desires common to us all.

He knew he should consult with the prophet Samuel. But when Samuel the prophet did not arrive after seven days, when Saul expected him, Saul made a rash decision. He decided to present an offering to God himself, something he wasn't entitled to do. Only priests were entitled to make such offerings.

When Samuel did arrive shortly afterward, he was shocked and asked Saul, "What have you done?" Saul replied, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the LORD.' Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering."

Samuel responded to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue... because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you" (1 Samuel 13:8-14).

Saul forfeited his kingship, suffered depression, turned to a medium for help, attempted murder and in the end took his own life. His poor decisions cost him dearly.

Are these examples relevant? Perhaps they seem remote and out of context in today's modern world. However, we should keep in mind that the *principles* are still very relevant for us today.

Remember that there is a purpose for our existence. God created us with awesome potential to one day be a part of His family. Learning to make wise decisions based on God's instructions is one of the primary lessons all mankind needs to learn.

God tells us to "lean not on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5) and "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12). How, then, can we learn to make right and wise decisions?

Keys to making right decisions

- **Seek wisdom.** Making right choices is really a matter of seeking wisdom. "Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom," wrote King Solomon (Proverbs 4:7). We're constantly bombarded with options and opportunities. However, core values and standards do not and have not changed. Learning to show respect for God and His creation—which includes all of humanity—is fundamental to a successful life. Read the wisdom of the book of Proverbs and make it your daily quest to get understanding and knowledge and apply it to decision making.
- **Obey God.** After a very blessed and comfortable life that enabled Solomon to experiment with all types of comforts and stimulating projects, he summarized what he had learned.

Having friends to encourage and inspire you can be a wonderful aid in helping you to make right choices in life.

Solomon's conclusion, based on a lifetime of experimentation, was this: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all"(Ecclesiastes 12:13). Jesus Christ taught His disciples a similar lesson: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

Both Jesus Christ and Solomon knew that all the physical things that seem the most important to us now really aren't all that important in the long run. In the end, obeying and pleasing God are what really matters. That's the only way we'll be able to live a truly rewarding and productive life. We should keep this in mind in all our decisions.

- **Develop healthy relationships.** The Bible is all about relationships. God wants us to be in His family. He wants us to learn to work together and get along with one another in peace, harmony, respect and love. Some of the greatest mysteries of life are discovered in learning to work together. It takes patience, respect and hard work to build and keep a friendship.

Having friends to encourage and inspire you can be a wonderful aid in helping you to make right choices in life. Often, by talking to a close friend or to someone you respect, you come to see a clearer path for yourself. At the same time, there are also relationships that can be harmful. "Evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33). Being around the wrong people will inevitably affect your judgment and lead to bad decisions.

- **Structure and discipline your life.** Athletes realize that to accomplish great feats they need to practice and train. Some who desire to compete in the Olympic games or play professional sports dedicate their lives to a rigid training schedule. The apostle Paul used this regimen as an analogy of how a Christian should strive to live a godly life. He said, "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27).



In a world in which it is easy to get addicted to games, food, alcohol, work or you name it, it makes sense to take a look at how we manage our time and our lives. Making right choices involves setting goals and having a plan of action, then carrying them out.

- **Seek meaningful work.** "In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty," wrote Solomon (Proverbs 14:23). God gave us a mind that is capable of amazing discovery and is stimulated by problem solving and building. Doing something profitable can help you find meaning in life and make the days go by quickly. You may have heard of some people in the midst of challenging projects that lose track of time and may even forget to eat and sleep.

Remember that God gave man six days to work and one day to rest, indicating His intention that we should be productive.

Remember that God gave man six days to work and one day to rest, indicating His intention that we should be productive. Making right choices becomes more relevant when we are seeking *productive* goals.

- **Take care of your health.** When you are sick and depressed, it is very difficult to get excited about much of anything. Staying healthy involves watching your diet, exercising and keeping a positive mental outlook. You'll operate much better when your body and mind are healthy.

Paul tells us, "...Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit... *therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). God gave each of us an awesome, intricate gift in the form of our body—and He expects us to take care of it.

- **Daily contact with God.** If you grasp the reason why you exist, then it might be obvious that God has made you in His image for a purpose. He wants us to develop a relationship with Him. This understanding helps us find reason and purpose for our lives.

Decisions we make on a daily basis, when stemming from a desire to obtain our human potential, will make life less stressful and more rewarding. Paul tells us that when we maintain this right perspective, "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).



Cause and effect

Centuries ago God inspired Moses to present the real choices that we face in life.

Moses had the congregation assemble to hear and understand that their choice in obeying God and His commandments would lead to life. On the other hand, choosing not to obey would lead to death. "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore *choose life*, that both you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

May you choose wisely!

Recommended reading

If you would like to know more about making the right choices then please ask for your free copies of [*The Road to Eternal Life*](#) and [*Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*](#).

Letters to the Editor

[“Everyone Will Have a Fair Chance!”](#)



I don't know who wrote this article, but it soothed my soul. This basic belief of the resurrections, I cannot abandon. I am confused about many things, but this is one thing I honestly believe. I am exploring my past teachings and asking God to lead me in my journey to know what is true.

Thank you so much.

— Florence (West) Smithhart

Some feedback messages are edited for space and/or clarity