

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF LIFE

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Text: John 10:10

Everyday when Jeb was growing up, his mother would come into his room and wake him at 5:30, saying "Jeb, it's going to be a great day."

But that wasn't what the boy wanted to hear at that time of the morning. It was his job every day to go outside first thing and get coal to start the fire and heat the house. And he hated it. One day when she came in and said, "It's going to be a great day," Jeb snapped, "No, Mom, it's going to be a lousy day. I'm tired. The house is cold. And I don't want to get up and get the coal. It's a crummy day!"

"Sweetheart," she replied, "I didn't know you felt that way. Why don't you just go back to bed and get some more sleep?"

Jeb thought he had hit pay dirt. "Why didn't I think of this before?" he asked himself.

He woke up about two hours later. The house was warm, and he could smell breakfast cooking. He rolled out of bed, put on his clothes, and went out to the kitchen table. "Boy, am I hungry," he said. "I'm all rested up. Breakfast is already cooked. This is great."

"Sweetheart," his mother said, "you don't get any food today. Remember how you said it was going to be a terrible day? As your mother, I'm going to do my best to make it a terrible day for you. You go back to your bedroom and stay there all day. You're not allowed to come out, and you don't get anything to eat. I'll see you tomorrow morning at 5:30."

Jeb walked dejectedly back to his room and got into bed. And he was able to go back to sleep for about an hour. But there was only so much sleeping a person could do. He spent the day moping around his room, getting hungrier and hungrier. And when it finally got dark, he went back to bed again and tried to sleep.

He woke up hours before daylight, and he put on his clothes. He was sitting on the edge of the bed when his mother opened the door to his room at 5:30. Before she could say a word, Jeb jumped up and said, "Mom, it's going to be a great day!"

What was true for Jeb is also true for you. You can change your attitude. You may not be able to change other things about yourself, but you can definitely make your attitude more positive. (Maxwell, 55-6)

Contained in our text is one of the most dynamic truths of scripture. This truth concerns the source as well as the assurance of abundant life through Jesus Christ. Notice what Jesus said, *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”* (NIV)

For too long the church has focused on what Satan, “the thief,” has come to do. But notice what Jesus said that He had come to do. “I have come that they (the sheep of His pasture—us) may have life, and have it to the full (or abundantly).” With this in mind, to the Christian, it really is of little consequence what Satan has come to do Jesus has nullified Satan’s works.

Knowing this, it’s amazing to me how many Christian people continue to live much as the world does—no difference in outlook, no difference in faith, no difference in attitude and no difference actions. It amazes me because Jesus said that He had come that we “might have life and have it more abundantly *(or to the full)*.”

What has gone wrong? What’s the problem? Jesus has made a way for us to have a better life hasn’t He? He hasn’t forsaken us has He? Of course He hasn’t. *The problem many times is with our attitude and with our choices.* That’s right. *If He has done the work, all that is left for us is to choose to believe that life can be as good as he said it could be.*

Wouldn’t you agree with Job that the *choices* that we make in life will most often determine the quality of life that we enjoy. I want to talk about three (3) *choices*, that we as Christians can make, that will affect our quality of life.

I. WE MUST CHOOSE TO LIVE.

A. Decide that you will get the most out of living.

There’s one thing that we all have in common; we are going to live until we die. So let’s get all the living in that is possible. There is nothing to be gained by sitting back and letting life happen to us.

A fortune-teller looked into her crystal ball and told the young woman, “you’ll be poor and unhappy until your about 45.”

The young woman inquired eagerly, “Then what will happen?” The fortune-teller replied, “By then you’ll be used to it.” (Crim, 159)

How many are living the way they are simply because they’ve gotten used to it? Jesus said, “I’ve come that you might have life and that more abundantly.” He didn’t say, “I’ve come that you might have help tolerating your present circumstances.”

B. Every thing in life is not evil.

Pleasure isn’t evil unless it’s perverted.

Wealth and success is not wrong if gained the right way.

There are many places and activities *that will not* corrupt the soul.

Contrary to the opinion of some we can have fun and please God too.

II. WE MUST CHOOSE TO LAUGH.

A. It’s God’s will that you be happy—but you must choose it.

Job said in Job 8:20-21, "Surely God does not reject a blameless man or strengthen the hands of evildoers. He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy."

But for those who just can’t seem to see the necessity or reality of happiness in Christ Leonard Sweet came up with the *Ten Commandments for an Unhappy Life*. They are as follows:

1. Thou shalt wear a grim expression at all times, and thou shalt hold thy body in a stiff and rigid posture, and exercise thy muscles as little as possible.
2. Thou shalt never get too close to anybody.
3. Thou shalt stuff and store thy feelings in thy gut.
4. Thou shalt put aside play, and shalt inflict upon others that which was once inflicted upon thyself.
5. Thou shalt remain logical and analytical whenever possible.

6. Thou shalt go to as many “all-you-can-eat” buffets as thou canst.
7. Thou shalt not party.
8. Thou shalt not take a vacation.
9. Thou shalt expect the worst in all situations, blame and shame everyone around thyself for everything, and dwell on the feebleness, faults, and fears of others.
10. Thou shalt be in control at all times, no matter what.

(Rowell, 176)

Sure there is a time for weeping but there is also a time for laughing. In fact, Ecclesiastes 3:4 says, “a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance....”

There’s plenty of time for sadness and unhappiness. Don’t be determined to be unhappy, choose joy.

B. God can send healing to a crushed spirit through laughter.

Proverbs 17:22 says, “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Mort Crim writes, “As a journalist I’ve frequently watched anger disarmed a quip. I’ve seen stalled labor negotiations nudged back on track because someone broke the tension with a joke.

What’s good for society in general can be terrific for individuals in particular because if anger kills, laughter heals.

If there were a fountain of youth, I suspect that it would spring from the deep, refreshing wells of humor, which may add years to our lives.

Certainly they add life to our years.” (Crim, 102)

III. WE MUST CHOOSE TO LOVE.

A. Loving others helps make life worthwhile.

In *One Inch from the Fence*, Wes Seeliger writes:

I have spent long hours in the intensive care waiting room... watching with anguished people...listening to urgent questions: Will my husband make it? Will my child walk again? How do you live without your companion of thirty years?

The intensive care waiting room is different from any other place in the world. And the people who wait are different. They can't do enough for each other. No one is rude. The distinctions of race and class melt away. A person is a father first, a black man second. The garbage man loves his wife as much as the university professor loves his, and everyone understands this. Each person pulls for everyone else.

In the intensive care waiting room, the world changes. Vanity and pretense vanish. The universe is focused on the doctor's next report. If only it will show improvement. Everyone knows that loving someone else is what life is all about.

Could we learn to love like that if we realized that every day of life is a day in the waiting room?

-Hugh Duncan (Rowell, 141)

B. Loving others is what Jesus is all about.

Bruce Thielemann tells the story of a church elder who showed what it means to follow Jesus.

A terrible ice storm had hit Pittsburgh, making travel almost impossible. At the height of the storm, a church family called their pastor about an emergency. Their little boy had leukemia and he had taken a turn for the worst. The hospital said to bring the boy in, but they could not send an ambulance, and the family did not own a car.

The pastor's car was in the shop, so he called a church elder. The elder immediately got in his car and began the treacherous journey. The brakes in his car were nearly useless. It was so slick that he could not stop for stop signs or stop lights. He had three minor accidents on the way to the family's house.

When he reached their home, the parents brought out the little boy wrapped in a blanket. His mother got in the front seat and held her son, and the father got in the back. Ever so slowly they drove to the hospital. Says Thielemann:

They came to the bottom of a hill and as they managed to skid

to a stop, he tried to decide whether he should try to make the grade on the other side, or whether he should go to the right and down the valley to the hospital. And as he was thinking about this, he chanced to look to the right and he saw the face of the little boy. The youngster's face was flushed, and his eyes wide with fever and with fear. To comfort the child, he reached over and tousled his hair. Then it was that the little boy said to him, "**Mister, are you Jesus?**" Do you know in that moment he could have said yes. For him to live was Jesus Christ.

People who piddle around with life never know moments like that.

Loving as Jesus loved requires courage. (Larson, 142)

CONCLUSION

We can experience abundant life—life to the full—in Jesus Christ; but we will have to do more than turn over a new leaf. We must make the right *choices*. We must be truly changed in our hearts by accepting the work that Jesus Christ has *already* done.

John Powell writes, “If I think of you as a friend and collaborator, my emotions on meeting you will be warm and positive. If I see you as an enemy and competitor, my emotions will be just the opposite. You will remember the little verse:

Two men looked out from prison bars.

One saw mud, one saw stars.

In the pursuit of the fullness of human life, everything depends on this frame of reference, this habitual outlook, this basic vision that I have of myself, others, life, the world and God. What we see is what we get.

Consequently, if you or I are to change, to grow into persons who are more fully human and more fully alive, we shall certainly have to become aware of our vision and patiently work at redressing its imbalances and eliminating its distortions. All real and permanent growth must begin here. A shy person can be coaxed into assuming an air of confidence, but it will only be a mask—one mask replacing another. There can be no real change, no real growth in any of us until and unless our basic perception of reality, or vision, is changed.” (Hewett, 415)

Remember no matter what the “thief” has come to do, Jesus has come to give you life abundantly. The choice to receive it is yours today. What will you do?

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