



Your Next Best Move

What Is "Your Best Life"?

Now that I am much older and in what some would call the twilight years, I find life is much like trying to catch a river trout with my bare hands. Just as a key moment arrives, something I have anticipated for a long while, it slips through my fingertips before I have had a chance to really experience it. Birthdays, graduations of my children, holidays, key conversations all seem to be gone without me being ready for them to be gone. I can't say I looked forward to Father's Day, but it was wonderful and yet it's gone with a finality I'm not quite sure I'm ready to accept. My son and I went to a movie recently where time travel was a key component to it. The protagonist wanted desperately to figure out a way to prevent one of the most horrific moments in his life from occurring and hoped that time travel could eliminate the tragedy. I realize now that reworking history is not the key to having a great life, it is making the most of the time you have now. It is not just living in the moment; it is making sure each moment is the best one possible.

Let's recap the most important statement arguably found in the field of psychology. **If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.** (1 John 1: 7 CSB) The key concept in Christian psychology is the goal of life is to walk in the light. Many would argue, especially those who don't recognize the Bible as God's word and the perfect textbook on life, that the object of counseling and therapy is to become well adjusted, happy or develop healthy relationships. Those are of course worthy objectives, but they are not the primary purpose in life. Counselors and therapists without Christ are unable to help those looking for answers find the true source of joy and peace and satisfaction in life and so they will never really solve the true issues they face. Sin is the crushing blow to the human personality and the most destructive force in the world. Today we will look at what John insists is the most important decision you can make, **"If we walk in the light..."** The goal of Christian psychology, and what ought to be of all psychology, is to help one another walk in the light.

Keep in mind that the call is for us to walk in the light as He Himself (Christ) is in the light. Let's consider first what it means for Christ to walk in the light. In John 5: 19-21 is a most profound explanation by Jesus Himself of the type of life He had chosen. **Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.** (John 5: 19-21 NIV) To use John's phrase, Jesus being in the light meant Him paying attention to the Father to such a careful degree that He only did what aligned with what the Father was doing. If it was not something matching the Father and His actions, Jesus stayed clear of it. Jesus did not spend His day in haphazard activities; He stayed in step with the Father. For you to stay in the light, you must keep your mind attentive to whatever God shows you or reminds you to do or avoid. As this becomes your habit, it becomes easier to do.

This sounds awfully mystical, but it is actually practical. Perhaps you are familiar with John D. Rockefeller who was the wealthiest man ever. He was raised in poverty. His father abandoned the family, and his mother was left to raise the children. Consequently John D. had to go to work when he was a young child to support his mother. His first wage was \$1.50 for a week's work. He took the money to his mother and as she held it in her lap, she explained to him that she would be happy if he gave a tenth of it to the Lord. Rockefeller did and he said that from that day forward he gave a tithe to God of every dollar the Lord gave him. A mother who needed every cent she could get to keep her family alive stayed aligned with God and found happiness in a life that many would deem miserable and unfair.

When the Apostle Paul became Christian and was born again, he aligned his life with that of God. Rather than viewing his circumstances through the lens of those who did not know God, he kept his eyes on Jesus, watching to see what Christ was doing with him and through him. One time he cast a demon out of a slave girl who was used by her owners to make money as a fortune teller. The change this brought in the girl resulting in her no longer being able to tell fortunes so infuriated the owners that they convinced the people of the town that Paul and Silas by bringing their new religion would destroy the commerce they had in place based on idol worship. They stirred up a crowd and the mob dragged Paul and Silas to the courthouse. The owners of the slave girl along with the crowd accused Paul and Silas of promoting customs that were not legal for Romans to practice. The magistrates ordered Paul and Silas to be stripped, severely flogged and thrown in jail with their legs secured in stocks. What a dreadful and terrifying circumstance. It was certainly unfair, even illegal. Yet how did Paul and Silas respond to their horrid treatment? **About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.** (Acts 16: 25 NIV) Not a hint of self-pity, depression, or bitterness in them, just a deep devotion to God and confidence that despite what they faced, all was somehow well.

Psychological health outside of Christianity is merely you getting along on your own with perhaps advice from a therapist, medication or an institutional facility managing your "progress". Psychological health with Christ as Savior means it is you and the Holy Spirit living in you working at your perfection. You have God within you to not only show you the way but also to make the way possible for you. We understand quite well why those without Christ might never become emotionally or psychologically healthy. Sin and its effect crushes the life out of them. But what about those who have the Holy Spirit living within them? How do they become depressed, bitter, addicted to drugs or sociopathic? It is because they have stopped walking in the light! They close up the relationship they have with Christ and go their own way. I know of someone who is Christian but has spent his adulthood engaged in pornography. Now he is completely broken psychologically and falls for scammers who claim to be in love with him and ask him for money to keep their relationship alive. Anyone can see these people are not who they claim to be and are manipulating him for his income. He, however, is completely befuddled and trapped in a fantasy. Sin and an unwillingness to let Christ shape his decision-making has warped his mind.

How is it possible for Christian people to wreck their marriages, slide into worry, anxiety, or depression? It is when the Holy Spirit is ignored, and the Scripture minimized in importance to them that they start to lose their way. But once you turn to God living within you and take seriously everything you find in Scripture regarding how to live your life, you will find peace and joy coming back to you and God's help in every problem you face. The perfect picture of how God makes you right when you give your all to the Holy Spirit within you to guide and manage your ways is the beautiful moment of chaos the disciples encountered on the Sea of Galilee. The disciples were rowing across the lake when a great storm came upon them. Far from shore, Jesus came near walking on the water but the sight of Him was terrifying. The disciples thought He was a ghost. **But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.** (John 6: 20-21 NIV) The Gospel of Mark describes the same incident and says that as soon as Jesus got into the boat the wind became calm.

Many are more afraid of letting Jesus take over their lives than they are of the chaos and hardship that is wrecking them. They would rather go it on their own than walk in the light and be directed by the Holy Spirit and Scripture. They prefer the storm to the calm Jesus brings to them. The psalmist states, **The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."** (Psalm 53: 1a NIV) More foolish than that is the one who lives as if there is no God. Walk in the light and let Christ direct you whether you face a storm or a bright sunny day. Life is so much better when Jesus guides you and is your Lord. Say this prayer to God. "Lord, direct my life. Take charge and help me be faithful to you every day."