



Joy in Life

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A MODEL FOR OUR DAILY LIFE

Positive decisions power life forward ... negative decisions throw it in reverse.

One evening we decided to go out to dinner; however, not being able to decide on what we felt like eating, we compromised and went to an all-you-can-eat buffet-style restaurant. It's cool: you pay when you go in and start at a long bar filled with a variety of salads, side dishes, condiments, fruits, and vegetables. You go down the aisle and put whatever you enjoy on your plate, and what you don't enjoy, you leave behind.

When you get through the salad bar, you come to another section, filled with soups, pizzas, potatoes, pastas, breads, and so on. Here again, you take what you enjoy and leave the rest behind. Next is my personal favorite, the dessert bar. It's full of various ice creams, cakes, and puddings, along with plenty of toppings and syrups.

We had a wonderful time choosing the foods that satisfied us and had no problem leaving that which was less desirable behind. That buffet should be a model for our daily lives. We should start every morning with our eyes wide-open, looking at today as one giant all-you-can-eat buffet-style restaurant. We should select the good things that are available and leave the rest behind.

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and the cursing; therefore choose life that both you and your decedents may live. (Deut. 30:19)

STEP TEN: IT'S UP TO YOU TO CHANGE.

GOD LOVES YOU ... PERIOD!

We can never experience all of the many blessings God has to give until we understand how undeserving we are, and how good, gracious, and loving God is. He loves us no matter what! In the parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11–24, *NIV*), Jesus gives us a glimpse of how forgiving God is and just how much He loves us.

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

Sometimes when we read these stories, it’s good to consider not only the things that are said but also the things that are not said. Notice the father did not say, “You stink and need to take a shower, clean up and get your act together, and then I’ll hug you and take you back.” The father knew that in his condition and situation that it would be impossible for his son to do that.

The moral of the story is that no matter how far you have drifted and strayed and regardless of how long you have been gone, no matter what your current condition is, you can always turn back toward the Father. Only He can clean you up and restore your life. Only He can give back everything you lost and then some. We are all powerless and weak and have all made our fair share of mistakes, but if we turn to God, He is willing and able to remedy every part of your life.

Well, you say, “This is just a story; how do you know it’s true?” I know because I was just like that son. I squandered most of my life on wrong living and wasted all of the many blessings God had prepared and given to me so freely.

I hurt a lot of people and lost everything I had, and then one day I said, “I’m tired of being in need, lacking everything and having nothing.” I was starving, sick, lonesome, and of no value to anyone, not even myself. So I got up and turned back toward the Father, and He ran to receive me and welcome me home with open arms. That was many years ago, and I have never gone without since.

I don’t know. Maybe you don’t need this message, but just in case anyone out there needs help or love and acceptance, just get up ... turn to the Father ... and start walking in the right direction. Watch and see if you don’t see Him running down the road to receive and welcome you home.

STEP TEN: IT’S UP TO YOU TO CHANGE.

Your Guide to Genuine Joy & True Happiness is a process that requires faith in God and sincere effort on your part. Get to know God better because what He wants above anything else is intimacy with you. You are His prized possession. Our job is to let you know how much God loves you. *We would really appreciate your comments and prayer requests.*

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