

Randy Alcorn

ARE YOU  
LIVING  
THE  
GOOD  
LIFE?



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*Are You Living the Good Life?*

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INTRODUCTION

# YOUR INVITATION TO THE GOOD LIFE

*Give away your life; you'll find life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity.* LUKE 6:38, MSG

CHANCES ARE, you were drawn to this booklet because you want “the good life.” Perhaps your life hasn’t lived up to your expectations and hopes. And even if you’re not quite sure how to define the good life, you know you’d like to experience it. After all, who wants to live “the bad life”?

Google “the good life” and you’ll find advice from both secular and religious sources on how to achieve a life worth living. We’re told, “Make lots of money, spend it on yourself, and you’ll be happy. *Then* you’ll be living the good life!”

That’s a lie. Despite a long history of personal



experiences and studies indicating money doesn't—indeed, cannot—buy the good life, countless people make choices as if it does. Yes, we all need food, clothes, and shelter. But once our basic needs are met, money often stops helping us and starts hurting us.

In 2007, actor Owen Wilson slashed his wrists in an unsuccessful suicide attempt. *People* magazine's cover story about the “funny man who had it all” implied that his material abundance gave him every reason to live. Public shock over his actions unveiled the widespread belief that things like money, fame, cars, sex, a second home—the whole celebrity package—really do buy happiness. After all, wasn't Owen Wilson living the good life?<sup>1</sup>

In a subsequent issue of *People*, one letter to the editor insightfully asked, “If a red-hot career, traveling the globe, a Malibu mansion and million-dollar paychecks didn't prevent Owen's ‘demons’ from rearing their ugly heads before the August incident, why would they do the trick now?”<sup>2</sup>

The irony is inescapable: most of Owen Wilson's fans would have, in a heartbeat, exchanged their mundane, commonplace lives for that of their idol.

But the trade would have given them the life Wilson desperately wanted out of.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus told us that parting with money to help others actually brings us more joy than holding on to it for ourselves. Counterintuitive as it may seem, our greatest good, and the happiness that accompanies it, is found in giving, not receiving.

In other words, generosity *is* the good life.

Deep down, we all know we can spend every last cent on ourselves and still end up miserable. In fact, that lifestyle *guarantees* we end up miserable! What Jesus calls us to do is far more radical and satisfying: love others by giving away our money and time. That sounds like loss, not gain, right? Yet in God's economy, that's exactly how we expand and enhance our own lives.

I'm not suggesting that giving always comes easily or without sacrifice. I *am* saying that in God's providence, the payoff for living a generous life far outweighs—and outlasts—the sacrifice.

Jesus told his disciples that when they gave money away, their hearts would follow the treasures they were storing in Heaven (Matthew 6:19-21).

He also said that at the Resurrection, God would reward them for helping the needy (Luke 14:14).

The Bible shows that anything we put in God's hands is an investment in eternity. That doesn't just mean that our giving will bring us good someday in Heaven. It will also bring us good here and now—*while* it does good for others. That's why the good life is inseparable from generosity.

Sound too good to be true? Well, keep reading! Because, as you're about to discover, the truth about living the good life is far better than you could ever imagine. And because of Jesus, it's absolutely possible for you—regardless of your income—to experience it.

# WHERE DOES THE GOOD LIFE BEGIN?

*If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, “Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”* JOHN 7:37-38

TO UNDERSTAND WHAT constitutes the good life, we need to grasp where life comes from and where it’s going.

God is the eternal source of life. He gave human beings “the breath of life” (Genesis 2:7), and he designed the first people to experience communion with himself, the living God. In the presence of Eden’s tree of life (Genesis 2:9), he walked with Adam and Eve as they enjoyed a life-giving and delightful relationship that ended when they sinned

(Genesis 3:8). God warned them that if they ate of the fruit of one particular tree, this beautiful life would tragically end in death (Genesis 2:17).

They disobeyed. And while Adam and Eve's physical death came gradually, the end of their life-giving spiritual relationship with God was immediate.

Ever since, people have existed in a state of spiritual death: dying bodies, decaying relationships, and failed dreams. Death is the new normal. But that's not the end of the story. The Good News tells us Jesus' sacrifice conquered sin and death on our behalf.

God created the world through Jesus, bringing life and light to his creation (John 1:1-5). Jesus rose from the grave, ensuring the ultimate death of sin and the defeat of death itself. His resurrection gives us life (Romans 4:25). In fact, his resurrection is the basis for God moving us from death to life (1 Corinthians 15:17).

Jesus calls himself *life* in these four passages:

- the bread of life (John 6:48)
- the light of life (John 8:12)

- the resurrection and the life (John 11:25)
- the way, and the truth, and the life  
(John 14:6)

Jesus also said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” (John 5:24).

John tells readers his Gospel was written “that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31, NIV). Jesus said to the Father, “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3, NIV).

Jesus is not just a signpost or a compass to life; he *is* life. He’s not merely a map leading to water or an X that marks the spot where treasure is buried. Rather, he *is* the wellspring. He *is* the treasure.

The first step to finding life is clear: we need to place our lives in Jesus’ hands. That’s where eternal life—the ultimate good life—begins.