

Choose Life!

More than 3,000 years ago, Moses urged the children of Israel to “choose life.” He said to them, “I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life—if you and your offspring would live” (Deut. 30:19, NJPS).

But why would anyone choose death? Why would anyone choose to be cursed rather than blessed?

The answer is that God’s ways lead to life and blessing, but many people would rather die than follow Him.

They view God’s ways as restrictive. Oppressive. Antiquated. Harmful.

In reality, God’s ways lead to human thriving. To liberty. To freedom. To fullness.

As Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10, MEV).

To be sure, God’s ways require discipline. And obedience. And denial of the flesh.

But fleshly habits bring bondage. Discipline sets us free.

Indulging our earthly desires brings dullness and addiction. Obedience lifts us into a higher realm, far above our animal appetites.

God is a God of life, and in Him is life beyond description. That’s why Jesus could say, “I am the resurrection and the life. ... I am the bread of life. ... Whoever follows Me ... shall have the light of life” (John 11:25, 6:35, 8:12). And that’s why John called Him “the Word of life” (1 John 1:1).

Tragically, in recent decades, America has increasingly chosen

a path of death, from abortion to violent video games, and from euthanasia to TV shows glorifying vampires and zombies. How can we turn the tide?

Here are some practical suggestions.

First, go about your normal daily activities, watching and reading and listening to what you normally watch and read and listen to, but this time take note of how much death is involved. How many images of the dead and dying? How many corpses? How much graphic violence? How much death are you seeing (by choice, not by necessity) over the course of a week?

Second, if you realize that you're being influenced by a culture of death, then take a 30-day break from all forms of death-related media entertainment, be it video games or favorite TV shows or gratuitously violent novels.

Third, immerse yourself in words of life. I would encourage you to read several chapters from Proverbs and the Gospel of John each day, noticing the constant emphasis on life. As the voice of wisdom says in Proverbs 8, "For whoever finds me finds life and will obtain favor of the Lord; but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all who hate me love death" (Prov. 8:35-36).

Fourth, when you spend time in prayer, ask God to flood your heart with His life and to give you the perspective of life, to see the world as He would have you see it.

Fifth, after 30 days, ask the Lord how He would have you live. You might be surprised to see how your perspectives have changed. In the words of Paul, "Finally, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

If you'd like to take this even further, then consider three more steps.

First, get involved in the pro-life movement and work against abortion on demand in our nation. If Mother Teresa and others are right, this strikes at a major root of our culture of death, and by joining together as pro-life Christians, we can see the nation impacted.

Second, we can affirm the dignity of every human life by reaching out to the elderly, who are some of the most forgotten and neglected people in our society.

Third, get involved with another group that society discards, the poor and the hurting. Many churches have ministries to the poor and the needy, and every city has feeding programs and the like, and for the most part, they are greatly understaffed.

We celebrate life when we bring meaning and hope into the lives of the hurting, and we reaffirm that they too are created in the image of God, therefore of inestimable value and worth. It is something near and dear to the Lord's heart.

The good news is that, across our nation, Americans are choosing life. In fact, already in March, a *New York Times* headline declared, "Georgia Is Latest State to Pass Fetal Heartbeat Bill as Part of Growing Trend." The article noted that, "The governors in Mississippi and Kentucky signed fetal heartbeat measures into law in recent weeks, and other states—including Florida, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee and Texas—are expected to approve similar measures this year."

May our nation choose life, that we and our offspring might live!

(Some of the material in this article was excerpted and adapted from my book Saving a Sick America: A Prescription for Moral and Cultural Transformation.)

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