

The Four Keys to Discovering the “Good Life”

By Jim Burns, Ph.D.

Recently, I had the privilege of speaking with Chuck Colson, who has written a new book, [The Good Life: Seeking Purpose, Meaning and Truth in Your Life](#). We spoke about the paradoxes involved in living the “good life.” They are paradoxes because so often, the pursuit of money, sex and power are the American ideal of “the good life.” Others believe “living the good life” means living for ourselves. Yet, none of these ways of living ultimately satisfies. Following, you’ll find Colson’s “Four Keys for Discovering the Good Life.”

1. Out of Suffering and Defeat Often Comes Victory. The good life is often forged in the crucible of some difficult situation or circumstance, rather than in fortune or fame. The important thing is not what happens to us in life; what matters is how we *respond* to what happens to us. Adversity is a given in life. It will either destroy you or make you. Your response determines all of the difference. How many times have we heard a story that started out with something tragic – but God chose to do a great work out of the tragedy. This is an important lesson our kids need to learn before they reach adulthood.

2. We Have to Lose Our Lives to Save Them. That’s Jesus talking now (see Matthew 16:25)! The tighter we try to hold on to who we think we are, the faster our lives and opportunities start slipping away. Losing our lives means getting ourselves out of the way. Then, we can discover a new identity with others – and a new understanding of who we really are. So, let God be God in your life and you’ll experience abundant joy. Galatians 2:20 reads, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and give himself for me.” Dying to self so that we might truly live is another important lesson to teach teens and pre-teens.

3. Freedom Lies Not in Conforming to the World’s Expectations – It Lies in Following the Calling on Our Lives. Each of us is called to some work, and our ultimate joy and fulfillment – and freedom – come by our obedience to that mission. God has shaped us uniquely and intentionally, and we blossom to become all God created us to be when we are obedient to God’s calling on our lives. Still, this concept can be tricky to work through because sometimes we’ll think we hear God calling us to do something – but it turns out to be our own selfish desires. Examine your giftedness and your passions. Listen carefully for the “still, small voice” of the Holy Spirit. You’ll hear it soon enough!

4. We Have to Understand the Evil in Ourselves Before We Can Truly Embrace the “Good Life.” Until we understand our propensity to do wrong, we never achieve the ability to do the right thing. We’re talking morals and values here. It’s tough because our culture seems to have rejected any objective concept of right and wrong. But, this is the pivot point of our faith. In this self-centered, sin and sex-saturated society of ours, while it might seem impossible for our kids to “get it,” I encourage you to stay the course!

(Adapted from the book, The Good Life: Seeking Purpose, Meaning and Truth in Your Life by Chuck Colson and Harold Fickett)

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