

Choose life

Losing to live

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Tonight we're going to be talking about choose life. Choose life. Losing to live is about living. It's about living. But what you have to understand is that we have a choice. We have a choice. We have something to do with whether we live or whether we don't live. In Deuteronomy 30:19 the Bible says this, "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life," underline those two words, "choose life that both you and your descendants may live."

Now, the children of Israel are at a very defining point here. They've come out of bondage. They were in bondage before and they were in slavery before but God miraculously took them out of that bondage. God took them out of that slavery and right now they're on the very edge of the Promised Land. They are on the very edge of the Promise Land. You know, our life is kind of like that, isn't it? We go through life and God gets us out of bondage and gets us out of slavery particularly when it comes to food and things like that and we're right on the edge of the Promised Land. We're right on the edge of the good stuff that God wants to give to us. They are literally looking right over there, there is the Promised Land. I mean, right over there is the Promised Land. God says to them, "Okay, you've got a decision to make. You've got a decision to make," and he says, "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendents," you and your family, generations to come, "may live." We need to choose life. God has a wonderful future for us. I mean, the Promised Land is right over there, okay? But to do that, to experience that, we've got to make the right choices today. To get to that Promised Land that God wants to give us, we've got to make the right choices today.

So what are some of the things we need to choose to do if we're going to choose life? Number one: we've got to choose to quit procrastinating. To quit procrastinating. One of our biggest struggles in a healthy lifestyle is procrastination and we're always thinking, "Well, I'm going to do that later on. I'm going to get through the holidays here." There are tons of people out there right now and I'm telling you, they're going to live it up here in the next few weeks and I've heard different numbers but, you know, like the average person between Thanksgiving and New Year's will gain like eight pounds or whatever and they are going to live it up but they are fully expecting, "Okay, in January I'm going

to do something about it. I'm going to do something about it." I mean, there are lots of people today on Sunday they just gorge themselves because they are going to get started tomorrow. The manana plan. "I'm going to get started tomorrow." Do you know what? Now is when we need to start.

The Bible says in Proverbs 27:1, "Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth." You don't know how long you have on this earth. You can't keep procrastinating thinking you've got time. Thinking you've got time. There are diseases inside of us right now that are just on the verge of taking us over. We don't know how long we have before those diseases start to kick in and so we've got to decide to quit procrastinating. Again, if you were here on the first night, I told you all, this is my favorite competition. I love the fall competition. I love it and one of the biggest reasons I love it is, I know you all are serious about what we're doing because there is nothing in the culture that's helping us. We don't have any New Year's resolutions going on. We don't have, I call it summer slimming. You know, spring early summer, they want to lose some pounds so they're not wobbling all over the place in their shorts or bathing suits or whatever so they try to slim down for the summer or whatever. You don't have any of that, okay? There is nothing in the culture. You can cover up your fat. You can do all kinds of stuff during this time. I mean, there's nothing out there to help you. You came because it was in here. It was in your heart. It was in your heart. When I got started, I started right at this time of year. I started and I said, "Do you know what? I've been putting this off. I've got to do it. I've got to do it." So quit your procrastinating.

Number two: invest in yourself. Invest in yourself. One of the biggest problems we have for being healthy is not taking time for ourselves. Not taking time for ourselves. We're always investing in others. We're always helping others. But Jesus said and these are the words of Jesus, Mark 6:31, "And He said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.' For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat." Here Jesus is talking about these people who were busy, busy, busy and we're busy, busy, busy and yet he told them, "You know what? You've got to invest in yourself. You've got to invest in yourself." And he told them, "Listen, come apart." I often think if you don't come apart, you will come apart, you know? If you don't come apart and start taking time to eat properly, to move your body, to take the time to do what it takes to be healthy, you are going to come apart. Your body is literally going to come apart.

A person, listen, who's always available isn't worth much when they are available and this is particularly true of a lot of times of pastors, they are this way. They announce, "I am always available." Can I tell you something? I'm not always available, okay? I'm not always available. Did you know that? Don't look at me that way. And here's how people are, "That's right, Pastor, you need to do this." But the problem is that a lot of times the problem is when they can't get access. That's the problem. They think it's fine unless it's them or whatever. But do you know what? If I'm always available, I'm not worth anything to you when I'm available. If I'm always available. If I'm really always available to the hundreds and even few thousand people that want access to me or whatever, do

you think I'm going to be worth anything to you? Do you really think I'm going to be worth anything? The answer is no. The answer is no.

There was this lady that called the church and she asked for the pastor and the secretary said, "Well, the pastor is not available today. Today is his Sabbath. Today is his day off and he's not available." Well, the next Sunday, that lady came up to the pastor and confronted him, got right up into his face and said, "Listen, I called you. I needed you and they said you were off." She said to the pastor, "Listen, Satan doesn't take a day off," and the pastor said, "You are exactly right. If I don't take a day off, I'm going to be just like Satan. I'm going to be just like Satan."

Do you know what? You're going to be just like Satan who comes to kill, steal and destroy your life if you don't take care of yourself. You're a busy person. You've got lots of things in your life: you're a dad, you're a mom, you're a grandparent, you're this, you're that. I mean, all the hats we wear in life. I'm a child of God. I'm a husband to Debbie Reynolds. I'm a dad to Crystal, Sarah and Jeremiah Reynolds and their three spouses. I'm grandpop to Olivia. I'm pastor of this church. I'm anti-fat. America's anti-fat pastor. I'm author. I'm the son of Alfred and Betsy Reynolds. I'm the brother of Don Reynolds. I mean, I wear a lot of hats just like you do, okay? We have to understand, we're all going to be busy, busy, busy.

So here's the deal: schedule your healthy habits. Schedule your healthy habits. You're going to have to schedule your healthy habits. You're going to have to, for example, exercise. You've got to schedule it. It has got to be a priority. You've got to treat it like a priority. You can't just say, "Well, it's just exercising." No, it's, listen, exercise is a form of worship because you are hardwired to move and when we move, it's an act of worship toward Almighty God. We need to keep that time sacred. We need to keep that time a priority in our lives.

Number three: develop a lifestyle plan. If you're going to choose life, you've got to choose to develop a lifestyle plan. John 10:10 says, "The thief," that's the enemy, that's Satan, "does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." God wants us to have a lifestyle plan that honors him and Jesus is pro-life. Jesus is all about life. The enemy is about stealing. The enemy is about killing. The enemy is about destroying. But Jesus said, "I have come, I have come, so that you can have life." He wants us to have a lifestyle plan that gives us that latter part, an abundant life. An abundant life.

Now, when you think about this program, you've got to be thinking lifestyle plan and here's the litmus test for a lifestyle plan. You say, "How do I know I have a lifestyle plan?" And here is the answer: is this something I could do the rest of my life? Whatever you're working on right now for eating, whatever you're working on now for exercising, water, down the list, you need to ask yourself: is this what I'm doing, is this something I could do the rest of my life? And if the answer is no, then guess what? You don't have a lifestyle plan, you have a diet plan or whatever.

I'll never forget this lady really sticks in my mind. One time I was leading a group and people were going around telling what they were doing and she announces to our group, it was a level I group, that, "I'm doing the soup plan." I'll never forget this lady as long as I live. Now, my initial reaction was to charge at her and rebuke her but I'm really a nice guy so I didn't do that. So I said, "Okay, that's cool. We're just getting started here." But about three weeks into things, she's telling us, "I'm doing the soup plan," and so I finally just pulled her aside and I said, "Listen, are you going to eat soup the rest of your life?" She said, "No." I said, "Do you know what? Why don't we get with the program here, okay? That's not a lifestyle plan. That's not a lifestyle plan."

Now, what's the difference between a lifestyle plan and a diet plan? Here are four different contrasts. Number one: a lifestyle plan is long-term. It's long-term. You're planning to do this the rest of your life. It's a long term plan. A diet plan is short-term. It's where you say, "Okay, I'm going to do this for X, Y, Z period of time fully intending to go back to my old bad habits or whatever, but I'm on a diet. I'm on a diet. So I'm going to follow these short-term plan."

A lifestyle plan is custom made for you. It's custom made for you. It's your lifestyle plan. Your plan and my plan are different plans. There shouldn't be a single one of us in here that has the same plan. Every one of us ought to be able to announce, "Do you know what? Here's what I like to do for exercise. I like to do X, Y, Z." Great, because there are hundreds and hundreds of ways to exercise. "Here's what I like to do for protein. Here's what I like to do for healthy fats. Here's what I like to do for carbs." Those three things on your plate: carbohydrates, proteins, healthy fats. There are different ways to get those types of nourishment into your body. The diet plan is one-size-fits-all. "Here it is. X, Y, Z. Eat this for breakfast. Eat this for lunch. Eat this for dinner. Here are your snacks. Just follow this. Right down the line and it's our plan. It's our plan that we want you to do. It's one-size-fits-all." You know what? That doesn't work, does it?

A lifestyle plan is living food. It's living food. It's a eating the stuff that God made. A typical diet plan a lot of times is pills, powders and potions. Not potatoes, by the way. I didn't see that until just now. It's potions. It could be potatoes. They come out every day, don't they? "We found this thing down in the jungles of Brazil and nobody ever knew about it," and thank God this guy has a white shirt on with a stethoscope around his neck and he is Dr. So-and-so and, "Boy, we're so glad we found this thing out." My goodness. And we're fools. They abuse us. They take advantage of us and we keep going for that stuff. That's not a lifestyle plan. That's not a lifestyle plan.

A fourth thing is: you enjoy it. You don't just enjoy it, you love it. I love my life today. I don't want to go back to that old life. I love it. You know, I don't feel like I'm sacrificing anything. I don't feel like I'm giving up anything. I mean, I like what I do. I love what I do. I enjoy it. I enjoy it, it's my Bod4God lifestyle plan. A diet plan, you endure it. You endure it. You think, "Man, I'm going to do this. I don't like this. In fact, I hate this but I'm going to do it for 12 weeks because I want to lose 10 pounds or whatever and I'm going to knock off those pounds and I'm going to just go through this and I'm going to do whatever it takes to make it happen." And I'm not saying that you don't lose weight on

those plans. I mean, you probably can. I'm not saying that you can't, the problem is you can't keep to it because it's not your plan and so you just regain it.

So you want to develop a lifestyle plan. I want you to pause. Here we are in this competition. We're moving along here about halfway or so, I'm not sure exactly where we're at, about halfway. I want you to ask yourself right now: is what you are doing, is it a long-term plan? Are you focused on the long-term? Number two: is it one that's custom-made for you? Is it custom-made for you? Number three: is it living food? Is it the stuff God made, that he provided for us? Number four: and you might not be at this point of enjoying it. I'm not going to tell you when you start out, I'll go through the phases. When you first start out, it's a sacrifice. When I first started trying to eat something healthy, I thought I was the greatest Christian in America. I used to think, "Man, you are some kind of Christian. You are willing to give that up for God. Man, pat yourself on the back. You're like a martyr for Jesus or whatever." Then I got into the second phase which, "This isn't too bad. It's really not that bad." Then the third phase was, "I kind of like this." And now, today, if I put junk in my body, my body rejects it. My body doesn't thank me. My body says, "What's this grease here? I don't even know what all that grease is. This sugar you put in here, what in the world is going on?" and my body doesn't want it. My body makes me nauseous because it's not used to it. It's not used to it. I went through those phases: sacrifice phase, not too bad phase, I like it phase, to today, if I don't exercise, I just feel horrible.

I do not like the routine of exercise. I just want to announce this publicly. America's anti-fat pastor does not like the routine of exercise. Now, some of you have gotten to that point and congratulations but you don't have to get to that point. Listen, but I'm addicted to the results of exercise. The results. Man oh man. It's the benefit of it, the way it makes you feel. It's awesome. It's awesome.

Or is your plan a short-term plan? You're thinking, "Man, I'm going to win this competition. I'm going to do this. I'm going to do that. I'm going to eat my soup for 12 weeks. I'm going to be up on that stage. I'm going to be the winner." If you are the winner that way, you are a loser. Not in the losing love sense but a real loser. You didn't win anything. I'd much rather you lose two pounds in this competition and have gotten started on a lifestyle plan than do something crazy that's not a lifestyle plan and you lose 30 pounds. I would much rather you do that. Much rather you'd do that.

One-size-fits-all. Is what you are doing right now, "It's their plan and they gave it to me." Then is it pills, powders or maybe some potatoes? Then, are you enduring it? Are you holding on until the end? These are things to think about, amen?

Number four: we're going to go over it a little bit. I apologize. If you've got to leave, go ahead and leave. Hopefully about five of you all will stay through the end. About 10 more minutes, okay? Number four: focus on small steps to life. Focus on small steps to life. If you're going to choose life, you've got to choose small steps for life. Small steps to life are incremental changes you make in your life. Incremental changes that you make in your life. Not an extreme makeover. Zechariah 4:10 talks about not despising the day of

small things. Don't despise these little small things thinking they are not important. They are important and so you want to focus on these incremental changes, not the extreme makeover. We're not about extreme makeovers. We're about helping people with small steps to life. The most important thing you do in your group is to share with one another your small steps to life. There is absolutely nothing more important that goes on in any group than you telling one another and supporting one another in small steps to life because that is going to change your life.

Focus on small steps in three areas. 1. Eating. 2. Exercising. 3. Water. And so you've got to start out. What are you going to do for eating? I can remember when I first started out. One of the things I did was I loved KFC, killing families consistently. I loved that place and you could feed a family pretty cheaply with KFC. They'd have these deals going on, they'd have these coupons or whatever. I liked that. I liked that KFC, that original recipe deal going on. I can remember one of the first things I did was I pulled off some of the skin and I just put it in the napkin and I said, "I'm not going to eat that." I didn't pull off all of the skin. No, don't think I pulled it all off. I just pulled some of it off and at that point in time, you're the greatest Christian in all the world came up, okay? Do you know what? That's what I did. If I had a piece of greasy Colonel's chicken tonight, I would be nauseous. My body wouldn't know what to do with that. It wouldn't know how to process that. But you know what? I kept pulling it off, pulling it off, pulling it off and finally I got to a point where I would take a nap and I would force out the grease and I did that. I went through all kinds of things. But I kept doing it. I just kept doing it.

Exercise. Some of you heard me talk about going to the gym. I went to the gym. Who walked into the gym? This college football player. I walk in there and they said, "Sir, before you can use these machines, you've got to come over here and get this orientation." I'm thinking, "Dude, do you know who you're talking to? You're talking to a college football player. I know all about these machines. Let me teach you a few things about these machines." "Nope, sorry." I didn't say all that, I was just thinking all that. He said, "Okay, let's get on the treadmill and we'll see how you can do on this treadmill. Let's do some cardio." I said, "No problem." I got up there, how long, five minutes and that was it. He said, "Okay, we're done with this." Because he wanted to do some weights. I said, "I'm done for the day. Thank you very much." I'm not exaggerating one bit. And I left but I came back. I came back. And I came back. And I came back. And I came back. And I came back. And it got longer and longer and longer and longer. These are small steps to life.

Water. I couldn't stand water. I started out and I tried that Propel. Back in that time there were very few of these flavored waters and I know they probably have chemicals and stuff in them or whatever, but that was a small step in life for me. That was a big deal. I used to think, "Who in the world would want to pay money for water?" This was on my mind. If I'm going to pay two dollars or whatever, I'm going to get a Coke or whatever. I mean, this is how I started. I know some of you are so much better than me but this is the way I thought. Like, who in the world is going to spend money on water? That's just dumb. If you're going to spend money, get a Mountain Dew or something or whatever. This is the way I started. Pitiful. Pitiful. But I did it. I did it.

Small steps to life will take you a long way. They will. You've just got to keep taking them. Small steps to life will reset your taste buds. This is the big advantage. You've got 10,000 taste buds. God loves you to love food. He gave you 10,000 taste buds. He is all for you enjoying your food and from those taste buds, we develop cravings and the way we develop cravings is by repetition. By repetition. The reason I ate ice cream every night was that I grew up in a home 6000 Edgewood Avenue, Lynchburg, VA, 24502 where every night we had ice cream. December 15, 1979, got married, started my home with my wife and that's what we did. We kept eating that ice cream and it became a trigger. 10 o'clock or whatever, time for ice cream. I can't tell you the last time I had ice cream. I'm not against it. You can have a little ice cream every once in a while, I'm not saying there's anything wrong about that. I just don't care about it. I don't desire it. I don't want it. Okay, my taste buds don't leap forward or whatever.

It happens through small steps to life. Then the last thing, improve your health to expand your impact. Improve your health to expand your impact. You know, life is meant to make a difference and God gives us life to make a difference. In Philippians 1, I can really identify with this passage and maybe you can too. Paul says, "I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better, nevertheless, to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. Being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith." Boy, this is one great passage. Paul is talking about the conflict that was going on inside of him. He says, "I'm hard pressed between two." You know, I want to go to heaven because heaven is far better, isn't it? It is, in case you didn't know. Heaven is far better. It's a far better place than this earth, you know. He says, "I know that if I remain in the flesh, it's more needful for you. It's more needful for you." That passage talks about choose life so that you can live and so that your descendents can live. You've got to think about that, okay? You've got to think about that. And he says, "Being confident of this because I'm confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith." Improve your health to expand your impact. Sick people do not make much of an impact on the world. Now, I know your testimony can be good where you're dealing with suffering. I'm not limiting that, don't get me wrong, okay? But when you're sick and tired you really can't make much of an impact.

I speak at a lot of these men's conferences, Get Off the Couch, and they'll get up and they'll announce all these things. They have us come up, the seminar speakers and, "Come to this one and learn how to be a great husband. Come to this one and learn how to be a great dad. Come to this one and learn how to be a great grandfather." They've got all these, "Come to this one and learn how to have a great career." I just tell them, "Guys, most of you can't even do this stuff because you're so unhealthy. You can learn how to be a good husband but if you don't have any energy, you're not going to be much of a husband." I mean, sick people just don't make much of an impact on the world and dead people make no impact on the world, right? So make it your goal to live a long time and impact others.

You want to impact others. I think about Dr. Elmer Towns and some of you know him and here's a picture of Dr. Towns. It showed a picture of me before. That was me before. Look at that guy. He is so sick and tired right there. Man, he is a disease filled man. He's got high blood pressure. He's got high cholesterol. He's got diabetes. Man, that guy is headed in a bad direction. He really is. He really is. And God got a hold of my life and just showed me, "Do you know what? You're not going to make an impact that way." I want to be like here is a picture of Dr. Towns who spoke at our church. Here, I think he's 83. I can't remember exactly. He's praying over my grand-daughter, Olivia. We took him out for a very special lunch and Olivia's dad, George said, "Dr. Towns, would you lay hands on Olivia and pray for her?" You know, he's 80 something years old. He's not some and I'm not against, I understand I might have to go to a nursing home. I don't know. You all come and see me if I do, please. I'm just saying, this dude is out changing the world. Do you know what he's been doing? What he did last summer? He's writing a book, "The Ten Most Influential Churches in the World." Do you know what he's been doing? He's flying all over the world talking to these churches and pastors. 80 something years old. He's not even thinking about retiring. That's the life I want to live.

Then, impact your family. Exodus 10:2 says, listen to this, "And that you may tell in the hearing of your son and your son's son the mighty things I have done in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them, that you may know that I am the Lord." God says, "Fathers, tell your sons. Grandfathers, grandmothers, tell your son's sons." Think about that. Think about that. God tells us, "Will you ever be able to tell your son's sons the great things God has done? Will you ever have that opportunity?" Deuteronomy 4:9, "Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren." You see, we have an obligation to the future generations. Do you understand that? I mean, God is commanding us to influence our future generations. We're never going to be able to do that.

Here I am with Olivia and that's my first grandchild. That's who was on my mind in 2006-2007. I wanted to have this time with her. Do you understand that? And do you know what? God gave it to me and when she was born, I was able to hold that little girl in my arms and say, "Olivia, welcome to this world. Grandpa is disease-free, baby. Your grandpa doesn't have high blood pressure. Your grandpa doesn't have high cholesterol. Your grandpa doesn't have diabetes." Do you know what that meant to me? Because that's what it was all about for me. That's what it was all about for me. To be able to have her on my shoulders and you saw me and you saw the picture on Facebook and the Fall Festival with all these kids dressed up. I mean, Olivia is the best. You know she is. Just admit it, okay? I mean, that ladybug there. Look at that. Look at that. Do you see that? No bowl of ice creams were there. You understand? I couldn't care less about stinkin' ice cream. I care about that little ladybug right there. You understand? I don't care about those stupid three cheeseburgers. I don't care about them. I care about her. I care about her.

What else do I have up there? Here's Korea. By the way, I have three white kids, three black in-laws. Isn't that awesome? Let's see if you can do that. The white kid that grew up

prejudiced in southern Virginia and ends up with three black in-laws. Isn't God hilarious? It gives me the most diverse church in America to pastor. He is such a cool God. He is such a cool God.

There is my baby. My grandson is in that stomach right there. I want to teach my son, that's my son. Oh well, my son's son is in that womb right there. He's going to come out in February. That's my son's son. It says, "Teach your son's son." That's my son's son right there in that womb right there. Do you understand that?

What else do I have up here? Here's my baby Crystal, my oldest. She's going to have a baby girl at the end of December, early January. Another girl. Isn't God cool to give us girls? Amen? Man, I want to impact them. In some ways, I'd like to be a full-time grandfather. I'm serious. I'm not going to do it but I certainly have thought about it. Wouldn't it be cool to just be a full-time grandfather? Because that's what it's all about, you know. Thank the Lord. Amen.

And that short term pleasure is not worth long term pain. It's not worth it. It's just not worth it. The long term pain of not being healthy for those grandchildren is not worth it to me and I want to be around as long as I can be around.

Alright, I know I've kept you over and I apologize but here's the deal. I want us to bow our heads and I want us to close our eyes. Tonight I want to challenge you to choose life. If you've never been with us, I've never done this since we started this program. I've never, ever, ever one time switched the order about halfway through and brought you in here like this. This is brand-new, okay? I just felt the Lord telling me to do it so I did it. But what it's all about is us saying, okay, we're getting ready to go into this darkness, we're getting ready to go into these holidays and do you know what? We're going to choose life. Man, I want to see this competition be the best ever. The best ever. I want us to finish strong. I want us to finish strong. So tonight I want to ask you right now just to come to the Lord and just commit your life to him, just commit your life to choosing life, okay?

Let's stand together. Let's all stand together. Right now I want you to pray and I want you to pray for the person to your right and I want you to pray for the person to your left right now. Just pray for them. Just ask the Lord to help them and encourage them and some people here tonight, you're discouraged and we don't want you to be discouraged. We love you. We want to pray for you. Now, I want you to think about that person behind you and right in front of you. Just lift them up to the Lord tonight and let's just pray for them. Pray for them. Then I want you to pray for yourself tonight. I want you to pray for yourself. I want you to choose life. I want you to choose life. Let's all choose life and let's think about what we heard tonight and let's apply it to our lives.

Father, we love you and we thank you so much for the word of God. Lord, these people are right on the edge of the Promised Land but if they were going to go into that Promised Land, they had to choose life. Lord, we want to go into the Promised Land. We want to go into the Promised Land of health. We want to go into the Promised Land of

honoring you with our bodies. God, we are on the edge and, Lord, we want to go in and we want to stay in the Promised Land and so, God, just help us to make the choices that will allow that to happen. Help us to choose life. God, just thank you for this incredible competition. God, just thank you for each one of these men and woman who have stepped up during this time of the year to join together. I pray, Lord, that you would do great and mighty things through us, God, and we just thank you and praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you for coming.