

LIFE
1 Peter 5:1-7

Games People Play Message Series
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The “*Game Of Life*” was originally created in 1860 by Milton Bradley as “*The Checkered Game of Life*.” The modern “*Game Of Life*” was introduced 100 years later in 1960 and has been republished many other times through the years.

The modern game consists of a track on which players travel in little plastic cars by spinning a wheel. The game simulates a person's travels through life from college to retirement; with jobs; marriage; possible children; income; insurance policies; stocks & investments; promissory notes; challenges along the way. It is a really fun game.

Jesus Christ of course lived the most full and significant life that has ever been lived. In fact his was the most significant life that will ever be lived. Therefore how do you live the kind of abundant and rewarding life that God wants for you?

The Apostle Peter in his first letter distills in a few short verses much of what he learned from being a disciple of Jesus as to how to live a full and amazing life. He explains that these are some things he learned and experienced about how true significance can happen in you too.

Jesus prayed to his Father at the end of his life in John 17, “*Having finished the work that you gave me to do, I brought you glory on the earth.*” On the cross with his last dying breath Jesus was able to say “*It is finished;*” it is complete.

Wouldn't you like to say that when your life is at the end? To be able to say with real conviction, “*I finished what God wanted me to do; it is complete.*” Peter shows us some ways you and I can learn about this from Jesus. In fact Peter saw how Jesus set his goals; how he lived significantly in his relationships with others; how he managed his time.

Therefore according to Peter if you want to improve your quality of life; if you want to improve your impact on life start serving. Matthew 23:11 says, “*If you want to be great, be a servant.*” Pretty simple isn't it? The best and greatest impact that any person can have in this life is positively impacting the life of another person.

This fits whatever situation our lives are in. Moms/Dads, if you want to be great be a servant to your kids. Bosses/managers, if you want to be great be a servant. Young adults/youth, do you want to make a positive difference in this world be a servant. Being a servant is where true life and significance is really found.

In the first part of the New Testament book of 1 Peter (Chapters 2 & 3) Peter talks to some people who were servants in the church of that day; he gives them some advice about serving.

He essentially says to them that when they are trying to influence other people that this is what works; this is what does not work.

First, choose desire over duty. Peter wrote that these church leaders should serve not because they must; rather because they want to serve for God's sake. Duty never impacts other people; desire does. Four words that will never change the world, "*Do I have to?*"

Can you imagine astronaut Neil Armstrong getting ready to step on the moon and he calls back to Mission Control, "*Do I have to?*" It would have never happened. Desire is what makes the difference in life. The ability to say, "*I really want to do this.*" "Do I have to" can be a very dangerous way of thinking.

Some of you of course may be feeling trapped by all the "*have to's*" in your world. You may feel that most of your life is a duty; you have to do this and you have to do that. You have to be a great mom/dad; a good worker/citizen. Yet the "*shoulds*" are wearing you down.

Therefore how do you change these "*shoulds*" in your existence into "*wants?*" How do you change these multiple duties into desires? One way is you can ask God to give you a servant heart. You can ask God to give you the energy to want to love your kids (wife/husband; friends) again. You can ask God to change and mold your heart to that of a servant.

Peter says secondly to choose giving over getting. 1 Peter 5:2b says, "*Don't be greedy for gain, but be eager to serve.*" As John Kennedy said many years ago, "*Ask not what your country can do for you (what I can get), ask what you can do for your country (what I can give?).*"

Are you more naturally interested in getting (receiving) or giving? Giving however has a power that we sometimes don't recognize. It is true that getting often seems like the answer. Peter however reminds us that you don't ever make a lasting impact by what you get or make; rather by whatever you give away and share with others.

Then is having money the problem? No. You can also use money to serve and give to others. The real problem then is greed; that unquenchable desire to get more and more stuff. Greed always prevents you from being satisfied with the things you have; you're always reaching for more. Also make sure you don't confuse the use of giving money with trying to get your own way; then it's no longer a gift.

Peter says to be eager to serve. Be chomping at the bit to make a positive difference for the needs of others. Giving through serving is what true life is to be all about.

The third way to impact others is to choose to be an example over being in control. In other words don't be a ruler ordering people around; rather be a good example to them. You never make a lasting impact on another person by simply telling them what to do. You make far more of a lasting impact by showing (demonstrating) exactly how to do it.

Would you agree that the world certainly doesn't want/need more people to tell them what they should do? Rather it needs more people to show/demonstrate exactly how to do it. The measure

of your influence is not how many people are under you in some organizational chart; the measure of influence is how many people are following your steps/example.

Suppose you had a meeting at your company and everybody knows that things have been tight lately. The boss makes an impassioned speech about the need for everyone to cut back; to sacrifice. It's a tremendous speech. At the end the boss even says, *"I'm so committed to helping you that I'm going to even give you my home phone number—call me anytime."*

"However just don't call me in the next 20 days. I'm having my office remodeled and our top management team are all going skiing at Vale, Colorado." What would you remember from his speech; his words or his example? A person's example is what has the real power.

The word *"example"* is a word that originally came from the idea of a dye/stamp. It's something you would use to make an impression; something to match the original. Do you want to leave a mark on this world; do you want to be a great dad/mom? Be a great example. Do you want to be a great boss/business partner? Be a great example. Do you want to be a great Christian? Be a great example.

Another major way to improve your impact on life is to stay humble. Peter also learned this from Jesus. Jesus said to his disciples in Matthew 23:12, *"But those who think themselves great shall be disappointed and humbled; but those who humble themselves shall be exalted."* This verse tells us that one of the keys to a significant and wonderful life is humility.

Lots of times unfortunately we confuse what humility really is. Jesus is not saying that humility is denying one's personal desire to do great things. Jesus taught us instead to translate your desire for greatness into actions of humility. Let humility manage your ambitions. Jesus taught that his own greatness was found in depending upon God; that's where true life is really found.

The final major way to improve your impact according to 1 Peter is to stop worrying; worriers don't make much impact in this world. A major reason is because they're so busy fighting imaginary dragons that they don't have much time to fight the real ones. Another reason is because worry tends to make you focus on yourself.

Worry is like a weight in our lives. As one who tends to worry a lot I know this problem first hand. Yet God never meant for you to handle the weight of worry in your life all by yourself. It will eventually destroy us physically; emotionally; spiritually; rationally. That's why Peter says in verse 7, *"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."*

Then why should you do that?--because he cares for you. The single most important way you can get rid of your worries is to know that God cares about your cares. God knows what you're going through and he cares; he understands. Once you know that truth you can begin to work on getting rid of your worries.

Then how do I stop worrying? By praying about everything; tell God your needs. *"God, I'm worried about being laid off. God I worry about my kids; I want to be a good parent. Help me, God, to face the future with hope instead of fear."* Then say, *"Thank you, God, for listening."*

Peter clearly lays out in these verses how you can live true life in all its abundance. May each one of us be able to say at the end of our lives, “*God, I have finished those things in life you called and gifted me to do.*” May God grant each of us a blessed, wonderful, joy-filled and significant life.