

Introduction

You didn't ask to be born. You can't get out of dying. What you do in between you do have some say over. Why not choose to live? Why not get a life?

Who wouldn't want to live? Apparently, a lot of people! What they are settling for is a pale imitation of real living. They squander away their shot at life and wind up looking back across their years with a sigh of "if only": "If only I could do it all over again" or "If only this or that hadn't happened" or "If only I had had a few breaks along the way"—or some similar excuse for why their lives didn't turn out to be the life they wanted.

Many people simply postpone living. It's not that they don't want a life. They just keep putting it off. They are going to get around to it someday. "Once the kids are grown" or "Once we get through this situation" or "Once we finish . . . whatever"—or any number of indeterminate futures seem to take precedence over living. The trouble with this attitude is that it ignores a fundamental truth:

the way you are living today is how you are living life. None of us get today back. We can choose to defer living until some circumstances are met, but that means every day until then is another lost day of life.

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There are those who hand their lives over to other people. They do this in a number of ways. For most this comes in the form of allowing other people to decide our lives for us—our parents, our spouse, our kids, our friends, our boss, and even our enemies. We try to live up to or live down their expectations.

Another form of life avoidance is to blame other people for the life we have. Our parents messed us up. Our company cheated us out of a promotion. Our spouse ruined our self-esteem. This approach reflects a failure to take responsibility for one's own life. While many of us have significant setbacks dealt to us by other people, we ultimately have to decide if we are going to cede to these people and those circumstances the final word on our lives.

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Some people refuse to live because they have fears. Death is certain. Living requires risk. Still others fritter away their lives through distractions that seem always to keep them from focusing in on the main thing; living. It is possible to fill up a life with all kinds of activities that in the end just wear us out but leave us with nothing close to anything that resembles a life.

Some people simply give up on life. For any number of reasons they decide not to live. They may signal their decision in obvious ways through emotional or even physical withdrawal. Or they may put up a front of normal activity on the outside, while slowly dying on the inside. The lights go out but they don't expire, cursed to exist without living.

This book is all about you because when it comes to getting a life it really is all about you.

Do any of these descriptions fit you?

Do you often wonder, *Where am I missing it?* as you reflect on your life. Do you keep hoping that life will somehow happen to you? Are you haunted by a nagging doubt or a burning fear: *Is this all there is?*

Then it's time for you to get a life!

This book is an invitation for you to take a look at *you*, for you to have some honest conversations with *you*, for you to take time for *you* to make sure *you* get a life while you are hanging around on this planet. This book is all about *you* because when it comes to getting a life it really *is* all about you. It's about whether or not you are going to do the hard work that's involved. It's about taking responsibility for the hardest thing you'll ever do: really live.

The issue is not that we don't have the chance to live. Fact is, we have more choices of how to live our lives than any humans before us. Yet we seem unprepared to deal with these options. The result is unintentional living. Evidence of this sad waste of life is all around us—lives without direction

or a center. People not only living lives of quiet desperation but loud emptiness. People feeling overwhelmed or frazzled, just doing the best they can, busy but not vibrant—lives filled full of stuff but not full-filled. People leaving the table of life unsatisfied, still not sure what would have “hit the spot” since they don’t know what the spot is.

The secret to living life is to live it. But that’s the hard part. Because real living requires intentionality. An intentional life is a journey guided by asking and answering the right questions. Five questions help us frame the discussion of our lives.

1. Why am I here?
2. What is really important to me?
3. What is my scorecard?
4. What am I good at?
5. What do I need to learn?

This book is designed to help you pursue these questions. While you may need more time in answering these questions than simply reading through these pages, at least you will know what to focus on in the days ahead that will set you free to really live.

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You might as well know (you’ll figure it out anyway) that I come from a faith perspective that greatly influences my take on all this. I believe that when you talk about life, you’re talking about the most precious thing there is—you! That’s why I say this is all about you. And I didn’t decide this. God did. My faith tradition

(I am a Jesus follower) holds the fascinating belief that God intends for you and me to enjoy abundant life. That's what Jesus said he came to bring to humankind. Further, the Bible declares that God made you. You are his dream. The ancient Hebrew Scriptures say that God created human beings in his image. That means that when God wants to take a look in the mirror, he takes a look at you. He is looking for his reflection in you. You are not God, but you have been uniquely crafted to be like him in many ways. Including the power to choose life.

If you choose to get a life, get ready to ask yourself some hard questions.

So—you have a decision. You can keep hoping somehow to stumble into what you are looking for. Or you can decide to go for it! If you choose to get a life, get ready to ask yourself some hard questions. Real living comes at a price. But you will never meet a person who really is living that feels the price is too great.

What do you say? What have you got to lose? Or find? Except your life!