

## THE GOOD LIFE IS A CHOICE

T. K. Berntsen

What's the definition of the so-called 'good life'? Is it a life of abundance, in health, wealth, and relationships? Is it a life dedicated to servitude and compassion for others? Is it a life of pursuing spiritual clarity and enlightenment? There are probably as many answers to the question as there are people in the world, however, I believe all the answers we could get from posing this question would all involve one commonality: happiness, whether it be happiness originating from feeling healthy and having meaningful relationships, or happiness originating from feeling fulfilled in helping and making a difference in as many lives as possible.

But, do you realise that happiness is a matter of choice? We can indeed choose to be happy. Or we can choose not to be happy, or even choose to be miserable. As confronting as these words may be, I am convinced that this ability to choose our level of happiness is a God-given gift which we should exercise with great conscientiousness. We truly honor God by using His gift, the gift of choice, in a positive way by choosing to be happy rather than unhappy. God wants us to choose to enjoy and appreciate His creation, and He wants us to experience happiness. When confronted with a challenge or barrier in life, we can choose to see it as a sign that the world is against us and we should be angry or sad, or, we can choose to see it as a sign that God loves us so much that He presents us with an opportunity for growth. When we choose the second option over the first, we will indeed be happy as we feel loved by our God. It is all a choice we make regarding the point of view we adopt in interpreting what is going on around us.

Now, given that I propose that happiness is a choice we can make, and that the 'good life' involves happiness, then it could be argued that the 'good life' is a matter of choice. We face many challenges in life, but we choose how to respond to those challenges. And the collective sum of the choices we make, is what creates the 'good life'. Yes, losing your job does pose quite the challenge, but maybe it is an opportunity for you to learn some new skills or go study in a new field, and thus get a better job that you will enjoy more than the previous one. After all, you did complain over all those long hours you had to work in this job, giving you less time to spend with your family and loved ones. Yes, having your car stolen makes it more challenging to move around and do certain things, but maybe walking to the shops or post office for a few days can do some good to your health. Didn't you just complain about those extra pounds you've put on lately? And lastly a couple of examples from my own life: Yes, having my computer die on me did deprive me of the opportunity and pleasure of writing these little articles for a short while, but it did also free up some time to sit down and pray and reflect over my relationship with God. Yes, hurting my knee did indeed really hurt and it did limit my mobility and slow me down, however, it also taught me to be patient (pardon the pun) and to discover the kindness of the

people around me who were willing to help me this time of recovery. Both incidents provided me with an opportunity to grow as a person, and to appreciate some of the finer details of life that had slipped past my attention previously.

So what are my concluding remarks? Life can be hard. Life can be tough. Likewise, life can be good. The bottom line is simply that life is what you make out of it. Instead of focusing on what is tough, focus on what is good. Maybe it is time to be grateful for the things that God has granted you in your life, rather than being upset over the things you don't have and want Him to grant you. Life is just a matter of the point of view we adopt in response to our circumstances. The 'good life' is just a choice. A God-given choice I dare to suggest.