



The Values-Driven Life: Accelerated Growth for the Christian Soul

Marc Carrier and Todd Shaw

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“Don't let the catchy title or pretty cover deceive you: this is no sugar-coated warm-and-fuzzy piece—but a convicting, scripture-packed resource, conversationally written to challenge you to grow, grow, and grow some more into the image of Jesus Christ.”

-- Steve Nelson: Pastor of Rio Community Church, author of [Premeditated Parenting](#), and father of 8 children

*The following is excerpted from the chapter entitled, "The Value of Faithfulness" from **The Values-Driven Life**. by Marc Carrier and Todd Shaw. Copyright © 2008 by Marc Carrier and Todd Shaw. www.valuesdrivenlife.com*

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The Rewards of Faithful Living

Do you struggle against sin and wonder if you will ever "get it"? If you do, don't worry—it's human nature to feel that way. The good news is, the precepts that God gives you are not designed to burden you, but rather, to free you from the repercussions of disobedience and open the way for God's great blessings:

...[T]his is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (1 John 5:3-4, NASB)

On the other hand, for the maximum blessing, you *do* need to strive for maximum faithfulness to God's precepts. Obedience to the whole of Scripture is in *your* best interest! Grace may appear to afford freedom from certain aspects of the law, but this "freedom" can actually inhibit God's blessings, if you use it as a license to ignore God's teachings or do things that your conscience forbids.

The Range of Blessings for Obedience

Let's just list a whole bunch of the promises for the faithful found in Scripture. It's a pretty impressive line-up, and should definitely motivate you to pour on the fertilizer in the area of faithfulness!

"Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them. Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers.

He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you.

You shall be blessed above all peoples; there will be no male or female barren among you or among your cattle.

The LORD will remove from you all sickness; and He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will lay them on all who hate you." (Deuteronomy 7:11-15, NASB)

"If you want to live securely in the land, follow my decrees and obey my regulations. Then the land will yield large crops, and you will eat your fill and live securely in it." (Leviticus 25:18-19, NLT)

But if you are careful to obey him, following all my instructions, then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and I will oppose those who oppose you... You must serve only the LORD your God. If you

do, I will bless you with food and water, and I will protect you from illness. There will be no miscarriages or infertility in your land, and I will give you long, full lives. (Exodus 23:22, 25-26, NLT)

Take the time also to read the blessings promised in Deuteronomy 5:32-33, Leviticus 26:3-12, Exodus 15:26, and Genesis 26:2-5. In these verses, and numerous others, God makes many promises to those who obey His precepts. They include: bounty, prosperity, safety, health, long life, many children (yes, that's a blessing!), and success in battle.

You may argue, *All of these verses come from the Old Testament. They don't apply to me under the new covenant in Christ.* Well, here's one that comes straight from the mouth of Jesus Himself: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:28). Take heed of these promises and seek the best that God has to offer through faithfulness.

Faithfulness to God's Word

Luke 11:28 not only extends the promise of reward for obedience, but it emphasizes that the Word of God is to be your ultimate authority and the standard by which you strive to live your life.

God has revealed His character, His will, and His values to humanity in the whole of Scripture. The Bible is your guidebook for life here and now, and it reveals your hope for eternity. Because the secrets to successful living lay within the covers of the Bible, why don't we just stop here and say, "study and live out the whole of Scripture and be blessed," eliminating the need for this book altogether? Just kidding! The Bible is a big book, and not necessarily written by subject in a way that makes its precepts easy to apply in everyday life.

The Values-Driven Life is our attempt to help you put God's Word into practice in your day-to-day life and experience the fulfillment that comes from faithfulness. What we strive to do, quite simply, is to take the whole of Scripture and present it in meaningful and easily understood parts, to fertilize your faith and maximize your fruitfulness for God's Kingdom.

This big-picture perspective on what God wants from you in your faith can only be helpful, since reading the whole of God's Word and applying its teachings can otherwise be a time-consuming and painstaking process. But, how important it is! Try this Scripture on for size:

[W]e can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did. (1 John 2:3-6, NLT)

These can be very convicting words. God's standards are certainly high, and the ramifications of disobedience are significant—regardless of how new you are to the faith or how much you might struggle to grow. But remember, you are not left alone in your effort—and your efforts earn the reward of greater closeness with God:

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." (John 14:15-21, NASB)

The great thing is, as difficult as it may be to live by all of God's wonderful and righteous precepts, Jesus says here that He does not leave you to do it in your own strength. The Holy Spirit resides within you—and it is His very presence and power in you that allows you to faithfully live out God's Word. Love *and* obedience are faithfulness to God. Not one or the other, but both. You should be faithful to obey God's Word, because of your love for Him.

*The following is excerpted from the chapter entitled, "The Value of Righteousness" from **The Values-Driven Life**. by Marc Carrier and Todd Shaw. Copyright © 2008 by Marc Carrier and Todd Shaw. www.valuesdrivenlife.com*

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The Blessings of Walking in Righteousness

Prosperity—The Bible teaches that the righteous will be provided for. The daily necessities of those who walk in righteousness will never be lacking: "The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry but he thwarts the craving of the wicked" (Proverbs 10:3). Granted, there is often a fine line between *desire* and *need*, particularly in the United States where our comparative wealth and high standard of living have skewed our perceptions about basic necessities. However, Jesus said that you shouldn't concern yourself with pursuing, at a minimum, clothing and food. Instead, He urges you to "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness," and promises that "all these things [food, drink, and clothing] will be given to you as well" (read Matthew 6:19-34).

Of course, God *can* go beyond just necessities! "Misfortune pursues the sinner, but prosperity is the reward of the righteous" (Proverbs 13:21). God can take what you earn and prosper you with it.

When the righteous prosper, a virtual "domino effect" can touch those who surround the blessed: "When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices; when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy. Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed" (Proverbs 11:10-11). If you are blessed by the Lord with prosperity, you should strive to influence others' lives with your bounty. Proverbs 22:1 says, "A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold" (Proverbs 22:1). Value a good name and the esteem of God and others—not just prosperity for yourself.

Favor—God blesses those whose walk is upright. His favor, honor, and goodness surround those who choose to live by righteousness and truth. Many verses address the blessings that God lavishes on those who walk in righteousness:

"For surely, O LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield." (Psalm 5:12)

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless." (Psalm 84:11)

"Blessed are they who maintain justice, who constantly do what is right." (Psalm 106:3)

"I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve." (Jeremiah 17:10)

By your actions and the attitude of the heart you will be rewarded. Eternal rewards, yes—but also temporal: "The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous" (Proverbs 3:33). Not just you, but your entire household will be blessed through your righteousness.

Protection—The Lord can bring blessing by protecting the life, walk, and household of the righteous. Job was a servant of God, a righteous man who was blessed. Satan challenged God that Job’s righteousness was merely a response to God’s goodness, saying that if God would bring trouble to Job, he would be quick to turn from his good deeds and pious life. Satan said, “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.” (Job 1:10). There is certainly a special protection that is given to those whose desire is to walk in obedience to God’s Word.

God did, ultimately, allow harm to befall Job, and he was greatly tested in his faith. So living out God’s will to the best of your abilities does not mean that you will avoid challenges and hard times. However, you *can* be assured that God will keep you from utter peril and destruction, and he will work all things for your good and for your growth. He will preserve you and lift you back up from the difficulties that you face. God will not abandon the righteous that honor Him. Here are just a few of those promises from Scripture:

“When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever.” (Proverbs 10:25)

“Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.” (Psalm 55:22)

“If the LORD delights in a man’s way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand” (Psalm 37:23-24).

“The path of the righteous is level; O upright One, you make the way of the righteous smooth.” (Isaiah 26:7)

The number of verses that speak of God’s protection of the righteous are just staggering! If the above list isn’t enough of an assurance of the benefits of doing right, you can see also Psalm 1:6, Psalm 37:16-17, Psalm 41:12, Proverbs 11:3-6, Proverbs 12:12 and 21, Proverbs 10:9, Proverbs 10:29-30, and Proverbs 11:8-9.

These promises are very—well, *promising*! However, don’t forget that living by God’s Word is not the antidote for experiencing pain and difficulty in life. Never forget that because of your allegiance to God, you are eternally pitted against His defeated foe—your accuser, Satan. It was he who was instrumental in the testing of Job. On the other hand, living righteously *does* come with the assurance that you have a Deliverer from distress: “A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all” (Psalm 34:19).

Attention—As you walk in righteousness, God watches over you: “The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry” (Psalm 34:15). The obvious point here is that God hears and responds to the prayers of the righteous. The subtler point is, quite simply, that God keeps a watchful eye on His righteous ones. This means that He is looking out for you! He knows your needs before you do. He knows your struggles and is attentive to your trials. This means so much more than “just” answering your prayers—it means that God is aware of your needs and is concerned about them, even *before* you go to Him in prayer! Isn’t it comforting to know that God is *that* personally involved in your life? As you walk in righteousness, His eyes are on you *so that* He can respond to your prayers. And as James 5:16b reminds us, “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

Proverbs 10:24 gives further proof that, as you walk in God’s righteousness, He will be attentive to your desires and fulfill them: “What the wicked dreads will overtake him; what the righteous desire will be granted.” The Bible also teaches that the prayers of the righteous are pleasing to Him. He actually *enjoys* hearing and answering your prayers as you walk in His ways:

“The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him” (Proverbs 15:8).

These many passages show that if you do your part, He will be faithful to do His part. God watches, hears, is pleased to hear from *you*, and responds to your prayers. He is attentive to your needs and desires. What an amazing blessing for you as you strive to grow in righteousness!

Blessed children—Believe it or not, the blessings of righteousness that are lavished upon you will also overflow upon your entire family. Proverbs 20:7 says, “The righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him.”

Biblically speaking, children are held responsible for their own sin and are not cursed (in a spiritual sense) by the sins of their parents (see Ezekiel 18:1-32). However, casual observation of societal trends reveals that parents do, indeed, pass along either a good life (“blessings”) or challenges (“curses”) to their children. Parents who bear children out of wedlock are more likely to have children who do the same; parents who abuse drugs or alcohol are more likely to have children who have substance abuse problems; parents who practice *any* habitual sin are more likely to have children who practice the same sinful lifestyle.

So, while the curses of death and spiritual separation from God *have been removed* through Christ, the ramifications of sinful lifestyles *are* indeed put in the laps of your children—they suffer the ill effects of your failures in righteousness. If you do *not* walk in righteousness, your children are likely to follow your example, thus bringing curses, rather than blessing, upon them.

If you have children, hopefully you will be compelled to examine your lifestyle. Are you living in ways that please and honor God? If you are, you can trust that your children will experience the benefits of your efforts. On the other hand, this is a good opportunity for you to repent (turn away from) any sinful lifestyles or behaviors that you have identified. Commit to walking in righteousness for your own sake *and* for the sake of your children—and grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and so on. Your entire household can rise or fall on your commitment to live right for God (see Proverbs 14:11, Proverbs 12:7 and Psalm 37:25-26). Share with your children the true righteousness that only comes from faith in Christ—and pass on the earthly blessings that follow from living a righteous life.

Joy—What’s your life’s goal? Do you envision yourself being miserable, whatever you do? Of course not! We all have an almost inherent desire for the abundant joy that God promises in His Word. Yet *joy* also is a consequence of living righteously, just as hopelessness is a repercussion of living in sin. Proverbs 10:28 says it all: “The prospect of the righteous is joy, but the hopes of the wicked come to nothing.” Which will *you* choose?

Peace—Peace, freedom from fear, and security are gifts for the righteous. The righteous man is steadfast in his being and will not be shaken. The wicked may gain wealth and fame, but will never possess peace, for this is reserved for the righteous by the hand of God alone:

Light arises in the darkness for the upright; He is gracious and compassionate and righteous. It is well with the man who is gracious and lends; He will maintain his cause in judgment. For he will never be shaken; The righteous will be remembered forever. He will not fear evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. His heart is upheld, he will not fear, Until he looks with satisfaction on his adversaries. He has given freely to the poor, His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be exalted in honor. (Psalm 112:4-9, NASB, see also Proverbs 10:9 and Romans 2:9-10)

Obviously, the blessings for the righteous are many: prosperity, favor, protection, attention, blessed children, joy, and peace. Now you’re probably wondering, just what *are* these “acts of righteousness” that are important to God? Seems a good time now to jump into that topic—remembering, of course, that we pursue righteousness not for justification, but to honor God by the way we live our lives.

Righteousness in Action

The psalmist David, wondered just *who* was worthy to dwell in the sanctuary of God and approach His holy hill. The answer? “He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous” (Psalm 15:2a). He then goes on to describe the characteristics of such a person:

Such people speak the truth from their hearts and do not tell lies about others. They do no wrong to their neighbors and do not gossip. They do not respect hateful people but honor those who honor the LORD. They keep their promises to their neighbors, even when it hurts. They do not charge interest on money they lend and do not take money to hurt innocent people. Whoever does all these things will never be destroyed. (Psalm 15:2b-5, NCV)

This one short passage paints a clear picture of what God considers to be a “righteous” man. This should be your standard of excellence and your personal goal. Here are some additional passages that summarize how God wants His righteous followers to look:

The LORD has told you, human, what is good; he has told you what he wants from you: to do what is right to other people, love being kind to others, and live humbly, obeying your God. (Micah 6:8, NCV)

“This is what the LORD All-Powerful says: ‘Do what is right and true. Be kind and merciful to each other. Don’t hurt widows and orphans, foreigners or the poor; don’t even think of doing evil to somebody else.’ (Zechariah 7:9-10, NCV)

You are given righteousness through Christ and are called to live righteously before God and man: being just (or fair); keeping your word; refusing bribes; lending freely; speaking well of others; caring for widows, orphans, and foreigners; showing kindness and love; and generally living an upright and honorable life.

Doing Good

Did you wipe the sweat off your brow after reading through that list, even just imagining the effort of “doing” it? The range of behaviors encompassed by the terms “righteousness” and “doing good” is amazingly broad. The comforting thing is, these righteous acts are comparatively easy to identify and perform if you are listening to the Lord, staying true to His Word, and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you in those works that He has prepared in advance for you.

Romans 12:17-18, and 21 (NCV) show that your walk in righteousness isn’t just for “goodness’ sake,” though. Your good deeds are actually a means of confronting and defeating evil:

If someone does wrong to you, do not pay him back by doing wrong to him. Try to do what everyone thinks is right. Do your best to live in peace with everyone...Do not let evil defeat you, but defeat evil by doing good. (Romans 12:17-18, 21, NCV)

At the same time, you’re also charged with paying special attention to the Body of Christ. Do good as a means of ministering to your fellow servants of the Lord:

We must not become tired of doing good. We will receive our harvest of eternal life at the right time if we do not give up. When we have the opportunity to help anyone, we should do it. But we should give special attention to those who are in the family of believers. (Galatians 6:9-10, NCV)

Sounds simple enough, doesn’t it? And if the blessings of righteousness aren’t enough to convince you of the importance of growing in this area, James 4:17 says that if you aren’t faithful

in these “good deeds,” your failure is actually a *sin*: “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.” Ouch!