

Life
Series: The Games People Play
John 10:10; 14:6
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The Games People Play

From the cradle to the grave, games are a part of our lives. This series will use various board games as a metaphor or subject for discussions of biblical truths covering a wide range of practical matters.

Merry Christmas!

Well, actually Happy Easter. It just looks and feels like Christmas outside!

The Game of Life

Do you like the board game Life? As a kid what struck me most unusual about the game was the spinning wheel. One set of instructions said to put butter on the bottom to make it spin better!

What is the object of the game of life? To retire with the most money. That's how real life is, too, right?

Life is filled with many decisions—some simple and complex—that determine the lives that we live. This past week I attended a presentation at the U-M Ross School of Business for those interested in pursuing an MBA. I spent two hours trying to evaluate the pros and cons of embarking on another master's degree. Such a decision is one of countless ones we make that help determine our future and destiny.

We do not control everything, however, no matter how hard we may try. We cannot control the weather, the drunk driver, the cancer cells, the global economy, or another person (I dare you to try!).

The new version of the game of Life replaces paper money with a computerized credit card and the spinning wheel with a random screen-based numeric display.

In the journey of life, we choose some paths and others are decided for us.

Who Do You Follow?

You can hardly go five minutes absorbing media without being confronted with the names Clinton, Obama and McCain. At Frontline, we are very diverse in our political views, choosing to be passionately neutral with regard to parties and candidates. Nevertheless, we will all have an opportunity this November to choose the person we want to follow.

We each have an even more important choice to make. It is arguably the most important decision you will ever make: your God. Although there are followers of Buddha, Muhammad, and others, most people tend to follow the person they see in the mirror. Even the most devoutly religious are often driven by their own desires.

You can only follow one master. It's like I told my son's basketball team that I was coaching, you can play for us or the other team, but you can't do both! Jesus said you can't serve God and money (Matthew 6:24). You can't serve two masters. You choose to follow the world or Jesus. It's your way or His way.

Regardless of where you are at in your spiritual journey, I want to invite you to follow Jesus Christ.

Life

Life is more than a board game. It is reality. This is what Jesus said about Himself:

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. [John 14:6](#)

Notice what He does not say: I am a way or a truth or a life. He did not present Himself as one of several possible options. He clearly stated that if you want to know God the Father, you must go through Him.

This is possibly the most offensive verse in the Bible. It's also one of the most exciting. Jesus says He *is* life! If you want to live a vibrant, exciting life, follow Jesus!

An Apology

Before I continue, I have an apology to make. Christians have not always been good at following Jesus. We have been boring, judgmental, and unloving. Many times Christians fail to act like Christ. We have been, as someone said, so heavenly-minded that we're no earthly good! That does not diminish the truth, reality and message of Jesus. It just means that we need plenty of grace—unmerited favor—as we seek to follow Jesus.

Jesus is love

Talk is cheap. Jesus proved His love for you and me. The reason it is called *Good Friday* is not because Jesus enjoyed becoming butchered on a cross, but because His death was good for us.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”
John 3:16-17

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. 1John 3:16a

Whether you know it or not, Jesus died for you. He gave everything that He had to show you that you are special and valuable. You were created in the image of God, and even though you and I fail every day, Jesus offers forgiveness. Jesus offers grace.

Grace

What is grace? It is unmerited favor.

Many believe that if they're good enough, they can please God. We can't! His standard is perfection. One strike and you're out!

But Jesus offers grace. He says to us, “I am perfect. Let me stand in your place and take your punishment.” All we have to do is say yes.

Grace truly is amazing.

David Berkowitz, better known as Son of Sam, New York's City most famous serial killer, became a Christian. He said, “It took a while to accept that God loved me and forgave me. It wasn't instantaneous. It took a while to burn the whispers of doubt. I was always trying to show people I was a Christian, making an effort to seem sincere. I thought forgiveness was a feeling.”

Someone purchased your soul that has been held ransom.

Nothing you can ever do can make God love you more.
Nothing you can ever do can make God love you less.

Nobody has ever loved you like Jesus.

Jesus is life

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10

Jesus came to earth to give us life. Listen to Eugene Peterson's translation of this verse:

A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of. John 10:10 (The Message)

Jesus did not come to make your life miserable. He came to bring you hope, peace, and joy. He can see better than we can see. His wisdom trumps ours. His power and strength that He offers far exceed anything we could ever wield on our own. Jesus told Martha

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; John 11:25

Jesus is alive

Many of the early Christians were martyrs. The resurrection was a non-negotiable for them.

With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. Acts 4:33

If Jesus did *not* come back to life, Christianity would be dead—literally. The essence of the Christian faith is that we serve a God who is alive. Any person you choose to follow—including yourself—will eventually die.

By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. 1Corinthians 6:14

That is hope!

Symbols

The universal symbol of Christianity is the cross. The Catholic crucifix portrays Jesus on the cross as a reminder of His death. The empty cross is a reminder of His sacrifice. Both are odd symbols. Imagine someone wearing an electric chair on their necklace or a firing squad pin! The cross was a method of execution.

Although it might look odd, the best symbol of Christianity is the empty tomb.

Two years ago I was in Jerusalem and I saw what may have been the tomb of Jesus. He wasn't there! My natural reaction was to dance!

For two thousand years nobody can find the remains of Jesus—because they aren't in a tomb!

Note: the bottom of these message notes contain some suggested resources for learning more about the historical and archaeological aspects of the resurrection including articles that can be found at www.leaderu.com.

What does the empty tomb mean to you? It means that all things are possible. Life is possible. Joy is possible. Hope is possible. Freedom from sin and death is possible. Forgiveness is possible.

No matter who you are, where you are, or what you've done, the love of Jesus is real. You are loved and accepted. Jesus gave His life for you as a gift and invites you to simply receive it. No gift is yours until you accept it. Jesus said

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. Revelation 3:20

He is wooing those of you who have said "not now, or not this time." He is waiting for you. He is the Lover of your soul, a Prince that defied death to bring us eternal life so that the pain we do know would be taken and the tears we cry wiped away.

Jesus is life. Will you follow Him?

I urge you to choose Jesus. Choose life!

*Christ is Risen: The world below lies desolate
Christ is Risen: The spirits of evil are fallen
Christ is Risen: The angels of God are rejoicing
Christ is Risen: The tombs of the dead are empty
Christ is Risen indeed from the dead, the first of the sleepers,
Glory and power are His forever and ever*

- St. Hippolytus (AD 190-236)

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

- Scot McKnight

For Further Reading

The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel, Zondervan, 2007.

The Case for the Real Jesus by Lee Strobel, Zondervan, 1998.

The Answer is the Resurrection

Steve Cable Probe Research Associate Steve Cable examines the hope of the resurrection, and how to communicate this wonderful truth to others.

The Resurrection: Fact or Fiction? **Pat Zukeran** What is the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead? How does one confront the argument of skeptics with regard to this matter? This article considers these issues in a very accessible format.

The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus **William Lane Craig** The author considers the theological arguments that advocate a non-physical resurrection of Jesus.

Cruci-fiction and Resuscitation: The Greatest Hoax in the History of Humanity? **Russ Wise** A campus newspaper runs an advertisement claiming that the resurrection is an elaborate hoax. This author gives a comprehensive response to that ad.

The Historicity of the Empty Tomb of Jesus **William Lane Craig** Is the resurrection story an embarrassment to Christians? The author considers the historical legitimacy of this event with a scholarly approach.

Evidence for the Resurrection **Josh McDowell** For centuries many of the world's distinguished philosophers have assaulted Christianity as being irrational, superstitious and absurd. Many have chosen simply to ignore the central issue of the resurrection. Others have tried to explain it away through various theories. But the historical evidence just can't be discounted.

Contemporary Scholarship and the Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ **William Lane Craig** During the last century liberal theology had no use for the historical resurrection of Jesus. Liberal theologians retained the presupposition against the possibility of miracles.

But Christ Has Been Raised, You Are Not Still In Your Sins **John Piper** In this Easter Sermon, John Piper describes what it means to be "in Christ" instead of "in your sins".

Did Jesus Rise From Death?: The Evidence for Easter **Mark Driscoll** In this article the author Mark Driscoll, pastor of Mars Hill Church of Seattle, outlines the Biblical and circumstantial evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. (pdf format)

Credits and Stuff

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