

# The Values-Driven **HEART**

**JOEY BONIFACIO**



**CHURCH STRENGTHENING MINISTRY**

# **The Values-Driven Heart: Weighing In On What Really Matters**

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# Dedication

This book is dedicated  
to the men and women of Victory,  
the church the Lord has blessed me to be part of  
for nearly 30 years.

It is through this church  
that I discovered many of the values in this book.



# Introduction

I was probably five years old when the feeling of envy first hit me.

It was Christmas time. My seven-year-old brother had opened his gift and it captured my imagination. It was the robot of my dreams. Attached to it was a red wire with a box that served as its remote control. The box had two buttons that moved the robot forward and backward. The very idea that this gift could be controlled to move and walk in certain ways was more than enough to make my five-year-old heart beat a little faster. I could visualize myself with that robot, battling our enemies, whoever they may be—but especially our next-door neighbors, who bullied us on occasion.

On the other hand, I received a toy police car with blinking red lights and a siren. It paled in comparison to that walking robot

and its mechanical grunts that captured my wide-eyed fascination. In my eyes, I received a mere child's toy, while he got a cutting-edge, scientific marvel—a walking, grunting robot!

I laugh now at that memory and my childish response. Those toys have long disappeared, but it's interesting how “robot envy” can still exist.

## **New “Robot,” Same Envy**

Now that I'm older, I realize that people naturally outgrow childhood interests. But “heart issues” such as envy—that feeling of discontent and resentment that is aroused by what others have—are harder to get rid of.

Through the years, I have sometimes found myself comparing my so-called “robots” of accomplishment with that of others. As a young entrepreneur running my company, my life was a frenzy of chasing after “robots”



that I never really needed: this time not the toy version, but more about power, success, and possessions.

The Bible says, “*Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life*” (Prov. 4:23 NLT).

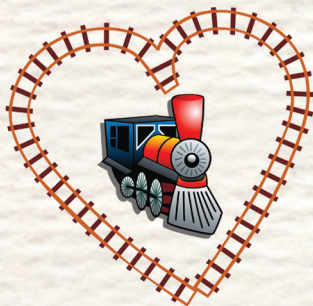
As I grew older and became a follower of Christ, He began to overhaul my heart and started digging out and showing me what was valuable and what was not.

This book, *The Values-Driven Heart*, is about my journey of learning life’s truest values. It comes from a compilation of blog posts from my site, [joeybonifacio.com](http://joeybonifacio.com), that I’d like to share with you.

I can’t say that envy has completely been eliminated from my life, but these lessons have guided me well to keep it well under control. I write this book with the hope and prayer that it will inspire you, too.



# Chapter 1



# Twenty-Four Boxcars of **VALUES**

**N**ext to the Bible, Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* stands as the best-selling Christian book of all time.

Clearly, it resonated with a lot of people—and rightfully so. Rick's point was crisp and clear: if we are to gain traction in life, it boils down to living life with a purpose.

There is, however, another impetus that drives the way we live our lives: values. Values are that which we treasure. Jesus Himself points out that it is **our values—our treasures—which ultimately direct our hearts.**

## Jesus on Values

“... *Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” (Mt. 6:21).

Jesus points out that we are wired on the inside based on values. We knowingly or unknowingly reveal what we value in our day-to-day decisions.

Let me give you a few simple examples: kids have a hard time waking up in the morning for school, but wake up ahead of their parents for the premiere of *Star Wars*. A woman scrimps on the cost of dishwashing liquid, but splurges on her favorite brand of lipstick. A man remembers the schedules of his favorite sporting events but forgets his own wedding anniversary.

Values are the reason why we have the time and energy for certain things and not for others. In short, 100% of the decisions we make,

knowingly or unknowingly, are always based on what we value.

## **Time and Treasure**

But this is more than just a trivial discussion on values, for Jesus explains its importance when He said:

*“Do not lay up for yourselves **treasures** on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves **treasures** in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your **treasure** is, there your heart will be also” (Mt. 6:19-21).*

He stresses the point on values by highlighting the word *treasure* three times in three successive verses, explaining the importance of time and treasure on earth at present and in heaven in eternity.

There are only 24 hours in a day and 365 days in a year; no one gets more or less. In this, we are all equal.

## **Twenty-Four Boxcars**

I once heard a man describe time like a train with 24 boxcars connected to it. Each boxcar represents an hour of the day. Every hour, we are given an opportunity to put certain things into the boxcar that stands before us. After an hour passes, the train moves along and another new, empty boxcar stands in front of us, waiting to be filled.

We have all heard this from the time management gurus. Regardless of who we are, there is no stopping the train. It will just keep on moving with every boxcar changing by the hour, whether it gets loaded with something or with nothing at all.

## Storing Right

What we load into those boxcars will determine what we will find in the future as the train moves ahead of us. If we stored love for our family and friends, healthy practices, money and investments into those boxcars, that's what we can expect in the future here on earth. If we stored the things of God in the present, we can expect to enjoy them both now and even in the afterlife.

Conversely, if we did not put anything into those boxcars, then there will be nothing for us to find in the future. What's worse is if we put the things that can harm us in the future then that's all we can expect. Keep in mind that someday the boxcars will stop coming here on earth as we enter the realms of eternity.

This is the importance of values. When we fill our boxcars with that which is most valuable, we can expect a future filled with the most



valuable things in life. The big question is, which things are most valuable?

*The Values-Driven Heart* was written to help you find that which is most valuable, so you can lay for yourself the right treasures that will meet you, not just in the near future, but in eternity.

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

The purpose of this exercise is to show you what you value intuitively. This information will be helpful as we go through the chapters of this book.

**Go through your last few weeks' daily schedule and assess how your daily time was spent. Where did most of your energy and attention go to? Urgent tasks? Where did it go to the least?**

**Based on my schedule for the past two weeks, most of my focus and attention was spent on:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

# Chapter 2



## The Way to Weigh **VALUES**

**V**alues are simply *the things we hold to be important*, while **core values** are *what we embrace as most important*. Just as I said previously, the things we value are what we spend most of our time and energies on.

This is why it is important to learn how to measure and weigh the different values presented to us. In the same way traders in the past weighed their goods to know the fair value of an exchange, we need to learn how to weigh things properly to know what's truly valuable.

## An Internal Weighing Scale

In order to store the right values into our daily boxcars, it is essential to have a way to weigh what is valuable and what is not; what is a waste of time and what is not. This eliminates burning our time uselessly on things that have little or no value.

So, how do we determine what is valuable and what is not? The Bible tells us that we have an internal weighing scale that we often use in life: **our hearts.**

We knowingly or unknowingly pursue the things that our hearts are drawn to because these are what we value or love. When Jesus spoke about the two highest values on earth, God and money, He uses the language of the heart—“hate,” “love,” “devoted,” “despise,” and “serve.”

*“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be*

*devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Mt. 6:24).*

Jesus was showing us that when it comes to choosing values, what influences people are not just our minds and intellect, but our hearts.

But our hearts have a problem.

## **The Problem**

The Bible tells us that “*The heart is deceitful above all things*” (Jer. 17:9a).

Why do some children value video games over homework? Why do husbands spend hours watching a man with a stick put a ball into a hole in the ground instead of spending time with their wives? Why do we eat six times a day but exercise only once a month? Why do we value money over God? The simple answer is that our weighing scales are faulty.

This poses a serious predicament for us. If our hearts determine our values, then we are in big trouble.

So what do we do?

## The Master Calibrator

We have to recalibrate our hearts, similar to how weighing scales need to be checked and readjusted. To recalibrate means to *readjust our hearts to be able to accurately discern the correct standards of what is valuable*. We do this with our hearts by willingly coming to God and asking Him to be the One to set the standards of our values.

God is the Master Calibrator. Only He is able to correct our standards of values. This He does by setting our hearts to the best and truest of standards: His Word.

In the following chapters, we will look at the words of Jesus in Matthew 6. His words are the proven weights that will allow our hearts to be recalibrated to know what is truly valuable.



## PERSONAL APPLICATION

**What is your current season in life?** (Ex. single and studying, married with young children, single with a career, living with parents, etc.)

---

**Based on your present season in life, identify and rank your top five values.** (Possible values are: my relationship with God; my relationship with my spouse/parents/children/other; my health; my work; my ministry; advocacies, etc.)

**In order of importance, I believe God wants me to value the following areas in this season:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

*So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom (Ps. 90:12).*



# Chapter 3



## The Heart-Eye CONNECTION

**J**esus said, “*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*”

*The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!” (Mt. 6:21-23).*

The Greek word for eyes is *ophthalmos*, which literally and figuratively means “vision.” So when Jesus speaks of the importance of healthy eyes, He is referring to having the right vision. Here, Jesus puts forward the idea that our values (our treasures) affect how we see life:

What we value in our hearts will influence our vision. (healthy heart)

Likewise, our vision will also influence our values. (healthy eyes)

In the previous chapter, I explained why our hearts need to be calibrated to the right standards of values. Because as Jesus said, what our hearts treasure will determine whether we will see “light” or “darkness.”

The writer of the Proverbs further affirms this truth, saying, “*My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways*” (Prov. 23:26).

Truly, what is in our heart is connected to what we see. “Healthy eyes” provide us with a clear vision.

## **The Visible—Now Invisible!**

A story that captures this truth was when I gave my wife, Marie, a shih tzu four years ago.

For a long time, my dog-loving wife had to live without one because I never liked dogs. They smell, bark, shed, and poop, so having one just did not make sense. Then as we were about to enter the “realm of empty nesters” after more than 25 years of marriage, I decided to get her one.

The funny thing was that I ended up falling in love with the furry little guy! Apart from having the name Vito which reminds me of the lead character in the movie, *The Godfather*, our dog was gentle, kind, and very easy to train. Most of all, he was lovable and clean!

Vito made his way into my heart, so much so that every night just before I slept, I would pick him up and lay him in between Marie and me. Unbelievable! The old Joey would have never done that!

Then it hit me. I had begun to see things in a new way—that pet store in Dubai that I had passed for many years, the pet resort just

outside of Sydney, the pet hotel in Yokohama, dog vitamins, toothpaste, cushions, and even pet schools in my city! These were people, places, and things that have been there all along, yet remained invisible because they had no value in my heart.

## **The Invisible—Now Visible!**

When the values of my heart changed, what was invisible became visible. All of a sudden, the furry creature named Vito became valuable to me.

Think about those things that are so visible yet so invisible to us because we don't give them the right value they deserve:

Sunrises, sunsets, and all of creation  
declaring the glory and wonders of God;

Priceless moments with our spouse and  
children;

Opportune times with our teenagers, which we label as “interruptions”;

Your two-year-old handing you a book to read to him;

Healthy life choices to give you more energy and fun;

Seemingly small opportunities to save and invest;

Little breaks in our day to relax and enjoy life’s simple pleasures;

Our grandparents’ words of wisdom that increase our knowledge and understanding of the world;

Our Bible gathers dust, while we religiously check our Instagram daily.



Again, we know that filling our “boxcars” with valuable things will reap positive and significant results for our future but we still often fall for the wrong things. Why do we keep doing this? And if our hearts determine our values, and those values affect the way we see and approach life, what should we value?

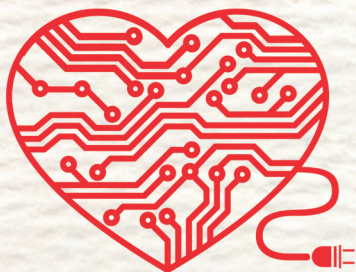
## PERSONAL APPLICATION

This week, purposely carve out time in your weekly planner to be devoted to your top five values. [Ex. “I value my time with my children, so on Tuesday at dinnertime (6 to 8 PM), I will be with my children to talk about summer activities we can do as a family.”] Write some of your concrete action plans for each of your top five values on the spaces below:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

*... the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;... (Ps. 19:8).*

# Chapter 4



## Hardwired for **VALUES**

**T**he 2009 sci-fi film entitled *Hardwired* follows a man named Luke Gibson (played by Cuba Gooding Jr.), a victim of a car crash who recovers with the help of a computer chip implanted in his brain by the multinational Hexx corporation. As he recovers, Luke starts to realize something strange happening to him: wherever he went, he would start to see and value only Hexx products. He then sets out to uncover and stop the plans of the sinister corporation. But as he digs deeper into the investigation, he realizes that he isn't the only one Hexx was hardwiring that way. Sounds fictional?

The idea of us being “hardwired” is not as far-fetched as it seems. Everywhere we look, we are bombarded and persuaded by social media to value and accept certain lifestyles, products, and beliefs that look popular but are possibly morally wrong. These offers may appear to carry a lot of value, but are actually meaningless in the long run.

But as I mentioned in the previous chapter, it is ultimately our hearts (not our brains) that determine what we value in life: “*Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life*” (Prov. 4:23 NASB). Yes. Jesus warns us in Matthew 6, “*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” One hundred per cent of the decisions we make knowingly or unknowingly are influenced by what we value. We are hardwired on the inside for values.

## From Heavy to Lighter Weights

After Jesus explained the connection between values and vision, He proceeded to train His disciples to determine what was truly valuable. His next words were: *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money”* (Mt. 6:24).

Here, Jesus teaches His disciples that between God and money, one is more valuable and “weightier” than the other. Another important thing to note is that Jesus was not saying that money had no value; His point was that God is infinitely more valuable so His opinion counts more. How does one apply this in life? It could mean, for example, that instead of picking a job simply because it pays more, God could be reminding you to consult Him first and not make the \$ signs be your go signal.

After this, Jesus continues by asking a question: “*Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?*” (Mt. 6:25b). In simple terms, He was asking His disciples, “Can you tell the difference? Can you see what is of heavier value? Can you see that your life is so much more precious than the food you eat, and the condition of your body much more precious than the clothes you just got into debt for?”

Can you see that one is more valuable than the other?

## **The Six Universal Values**

Here’s what Jesus just did: He revealed the six universal values that have always affected mankind:

God	life	body
money	food	clothes

I've always been fascinated that in my more than 20 years of receiving prayer requests from the members of my congregation, the prayers and concerns of people often fall into these six categories.

**God:** relationship with God

(i.e. prayers for salvation; wisdom in decision-making, more revelation, breakthrough, intercession, spiritual struggles, etc.)

**Money:** need for provision

(i.e. prayers for financial needs, jobs, mortgage, rent, tuition, salaries, bills, business ventures, debts, etc.)

**Life:** relationship issues

(i.e. prayers about how to build relationships or solve relational challenges, whether with a spouse, child, parent, work, projects, etc.)

**Food:** need for satisfaction and fulfillment

(i.e. prayers pertaining to finding fulfillment, satisfaction, success, enjoyment, comfort, etc.)



**Body:** health and safety concerns  
(i.e. prayers pertaining to healing, better health, safety and security, etc.)

**Clothes:** desire or need for possessions  
(i.e. prayers for a new car, house, computer, etc.)

Now, all six values are valid. There's nothing wrong with prioritizing any of these values. But what we need to know is that values have a hierarchy. Some are more valuable than others, and it is only when we understand and live by the right hierarchy of values that we can achieve a changed life.

So what is the best way to order these six priorities?

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

“If I only had more money, my problems will be over.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

---

---

List down a pressing concern or a current need you have:

---

---

How can you let God have precedence over this need?

---

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*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God (Phil. 4:6).*

*Casting all your anxieties on him,  
because he cares for you (1 Pet. 5:7).*

# Chapter 5



## The Hierarchy of **VALUES**

**F**or the longest time, gold has been the standard for valuing currency. Based on this standard, the pound sterling (otherwise known as the British pound) has become the oldest and one of the highest valued currencies in the world today. This is why the British pound currently stands as the basis for the value of other currencies, such as the euro, the US dollar, and the Japanese yen.

This reality brings us two important points:

1. **Values are always based on a standard.**
2. **Values have a hierarchy.** Certain things are of higher value than others.

## Questions Jesus Asks

In the previous chapter, we saw how Jesus revealed the six universal values of mankind in Matthew 6:

*“No one can serve two masters for either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve **God** and **money**” (v. 24).*

*“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not **life** more than **food**, and the **body** more than **clothing**?” (v. 25).*

If you take notice of the verse above, Jesus poses us with questions—not hard questions. In fact, He’s already hinting what the right answers are. All we need to do is to answer His main question: “Which one is more important to me?” Which one will I choose to have a higher priority in my life? Because according

to Jesus, God is more valuable than money, life more valuable than food, and our bodies more valuable than clothes.

This is Jesus' hierarchy of values:

1. God – God is more valuable than life.
2. Life – Life, or that which has breath (i.e. relationships)
3. Body – Our health, safety and security
4. Money – Our finances and its instruments
5. Food – What we enjoy; the things that comfort and fulfill us
6. Clothes – Clothes have value, but are the least important.

No doubt, food and clothes can be more valuable than money especially if there is a scarcity of supply. However, given the context of the Roman era in Jesus' time and our present-day reality, money trumps food and clothes in terms of value as it affords us the ability to buy both when we have enough supply of it. In other words, in a world where all three—money, food, and clothes—have

become “commodities” (common things of value), money is more valuable than food or clothes.

Perhaps the most ironic thing about this is, deep within us, we *already know* what the hierarchy of values is—and yet our lives reflect otherwise. We see this “tension” play out in people’s lives: A man knows that what he’s doing is morally wrong and a sin in God’s eyes, yet because the monetary gain is so big, he justifies doing it. A mother’s relationship (life) with her children suffers because she spends so much time worrying about money, provision, and food instead of spending time with her family.

## **True Values Rise to the Top**

Interestingly, whether or not we agree with Jesus’ hierarchy of values, we find that the higher values have a way of naturally surfacing to the top.

Those of us who are old enough remember exactly where we were the moment we heard of the US terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Shocked and puzzled, we asked, “Who would do such a thing?” Angry at the perpetrators, we watched the news, perplexed and confused at what has happened to our world.

In January of the following year, I visited New York and made my way to Ground Zero. My friends who brought me there told me of their own experiences as the drama unfolded. Their stories revealed to me that everyone’s values shifted dramatically that day. They described a city in shock, chaos, and confusion.

In the weeks that followed 9/11, stock trading slowed down as people pondered, “Where was God?”

The Food Network, sitcoms, and David Letterman all gave way to 24-hour news updates as frenzied viewers searched for bodies.



Relationships and the safety of their loved ones became more precious.

The New York Stock Exchange did not open and remained closed up to September 17, the longest shutdown in history since 1933. In effect, the markets for stocks, bonds, and money took a backseat for several days.

Shopping slumped; it was clear to everybody that fashion was the least of their priorities.

When a crisis hits, what is truly valuable surfaces to the top. Everything else becomes background noise.

We can spend days arguing about Maslow's and Freud's ideas of what is most valuable on earth. But Jesus' wise words reveal that when push comes to shove, God, life, and body are what people really care for; while economics, enjoyment, and the latest trends drop down to the bottom rung.

Now, I know what you're thinking: Are these values always in this particular order?

My answer is yes and no.

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. On a scale of 1 to 6 (1 being the top preoccupation of your mind), which of the values ranked in the chapter preoccupy your mind the most?
2. What can you do this week to make time for:

God: \_\_\_\_\_

Life: \_\_\_\_\_

Body: \_\_\_\_\_



# Chapter 6



## How Values **OVERLAP**

*For you formed my inward parts;  
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and  
wonderfully made.*

*Wonderful are your works;  
my soul knows it very well.*

Psalm 139:13-14

The way God created you is wonderful. You are wonderful and exceedingly complex!

For example: You are one person. But you are really more complicated and more precious than you think. You are a spirit (soul) in a body;

yet both body and soul are equally, intricately created.

Your soul is a composite of your mind, will, and emotions. Your mind is a meld of your memory, intellect, and imagination. Meanwhile, your body is a marvelous and harmonious overlap—of respiratory, digestive, and circulatory systems. You may have a single blood type, yet your blood is composed of red cells, white cells, and platelets.

Nature itself is also a series of overlaps. We see ecosystems overlapping with one another to form a complimentary and balanced whole.

The principle that applies to our souls, bodies, and nature is also true of the things we value. They naturally overlap. And as each value overlaps with the other, they create even greater values together.

# Overlapping Values

In the previous chapter, we saw Jesus' list of values. The list also revealed a hierarchy of values, where the top three values are:

## 1. **God**

Definitely the Highest Value; the One who is infinitely most valuable. Isn't it interesting that God Himself is an overlap of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

## 2. **Life** (from the Greek word *psuche*, meaning, that which has breath)

Our relationships are valuable. When your house is on fire, your first concerns are lives—both yours and the ones you love. They take preeminence over any material possession.

## 3. **Body** (from the Greek word *soma*, referring to our physique)

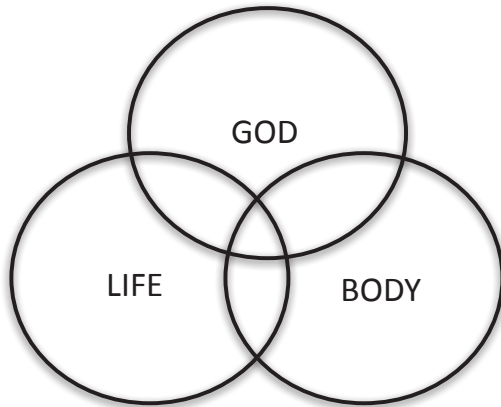
Our physical health, safety, and well-being are all valuable. Our body does not have any



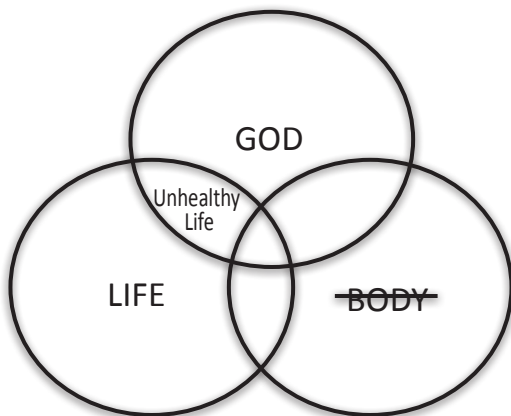
spare parts lying around. When choosing between our health or money, food, and clothes, it is obvious which one has the greater value.

**How these three values overlap and interact:**

Although God is of the highest value, His value interacts and works alongside the values of life and body. By that I mean that our relationship with God directly affects and translates into better connections with our key relationships. Our relationship with God directly affects our health in that we become better stewards of our health as we learn His ways. He is after all the One who designed and created all of life.



Here's what happens when one is missing from the equation:

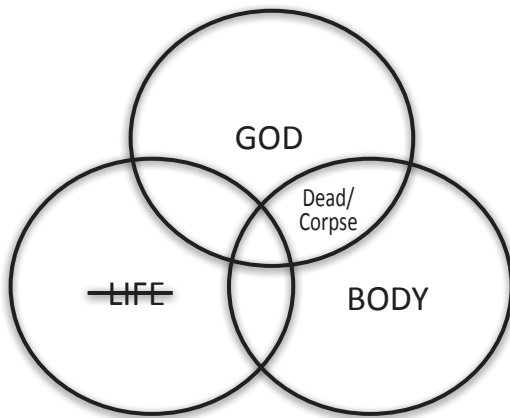


**God + Life - Body = Unhealthy Life**

A life without a body means you're a ghost!

If we have God and relationships but neglect or abuse our body's health, our relationship with God and others will inevitably suffer. How can we go to church and build community with others when our health is in jeopardy? It's hard to read our Bibles or be a blessing to

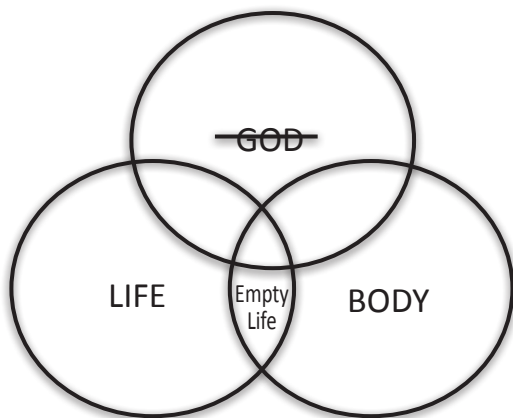
others when we are sick. And this extends to our human relationships. One can argue that we can keep on loving God and others despite an illness but both relationships would be more productive if we had the best of health. Not to mention that when we are ill, we become a liability to those whom we are called to serve.



**God + Body - Life = Dead/Corpse**

If we have a body but don't have life, then we are dead. Our body without life is a wineskin

without wine, a light bulb with no electricity. It is form without power. What's the point in being godly and healthy with no one to share God and life with? If all we want is to be with God, then the best place to be in is heaven. If we have all the health in the world with no one to share life with then we're better off being in heaven with God. The absence of relationships in our lives makes for a material world devoid of life and love—that's boring and dead.



**Life + Body - God = Empty Life**

We may busy ourselves with earthly relationships and building the buffest body, but without God, we are living a meaningless, empty life.

And if we live a life without God, we are unblest. Cursed. Lost and left to fend for ourselves. The truth is that it is God who upholds our life for He is Life.

## **The Other Overlaps**

**Money.** These are the currencies and instruments we use to exchange values. Jesus never said money is not valuable, but He did point out that there are things that are of greater worth that better deserve our allegiance.

**Food.** That which we imbibe or “eat daily” to fill us up. Keep in mind that God’s first command had to do with food. It involved both the freedom to consume it and the ability to restrain oneself from one of the trees (Gen.

2:16-17). Moreover, these trees were made not just to be good for food but they were pleasing to the eye as well (Gen. 2:9).

While we tend to look at food as a means for survival or just a commodity, God's view of food meant a whole lot more. Just think of the variety of trees He made and the wide range of colors, flavors, textures, shapes, and sizes of their fruits. Then think of the pleasure and fulfillment they bring. Food is not merely about sustenance; it represents the things we enjoy, crave, things that comfort and fulfill us. Others that qualify here would be that which we enjoy consuming: drinks, entertainment, travel, and the gamut of things that we enjoy and fulfill us. Yes, they have value, but they are only fifth in the hierarchy.

**Clothes.** These are material possessions—something we cannot do without. Can you imagine a world without clothes? That would certainly be a big problem. What about a world with no tables, chairs, plates, chopsticks, paper,

pens, or stoves? Our lives will not work as well without these. And though these things may be the lowest in the rung of values, they are valuable nonetheless.

Like the first set of values, money, food, and clothes also overlap. Jesus never said that these three were not valuable; on the contrary, He said He had every intention to add all these things to us as well. In Matthew 6:33, Jesus said, “*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*” His concern was really that we should know which of these were most valuable in His Kingdom and therefore be prioritized.

Because if we get these priorities right, the Bible assures us that all these things will work together for our good and for the very purpose of their creation (Rom. 8:28). The result of this is a life of overlapping yet coordinated values, founded on God and translated into the other aspects of one’s life.

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

Note down three insights you gained from this chapter.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Chapter 7



## Why Values Are **TRICKY**

**I**sn't it interesting how the things that we value and feel are "musts" in December (buy the Christmas tree, decorate the home, shop and wrap gifts until you drop) lose their importance come January? And how a thoroughly content, wonderful, single person would suddenly feel less valuable from all the hype and pressure he or she sees in romantic ads in the weeks leading to Valentine's Day? Why are long-stemmed roses so expensive on February 14 and back to normal prices on February 15?

Aside from values having a hierarchy and that they overlap, there's a third aspect about values

that we need to understand: they also shift depending on the time and season. Certain values are *seasonal and temporary*, while others are *enduring, and will always be valuable*.

## **Valuable Today, Gone Tomorrow**

Back in the '80s, it was considered cool to have a pager or a beeper attached to your waist. We bought cassette tapes and listened to music on speakers that seemed as big as the room! Kodak was THE camera brand, colored film was bought in little tubes, and you crossed your fingers hoping that your wedding pictures would come out alright when you finally see them *a month after your wedding!*

Remembering these things makes me wonder what the young people of today would do in a world like the '80s; because what used to be so valuable and desirable then seems laughable now. Just take a look at your old photos and the outfits you wore then. (Was that really me

wearing a scarf around my neck with striped bell-bottom pants?!)

The reason it's so important to know the right hierarchy of values is so that we can avoid spending all our life and energy chasing after the things of temporary value (i.e. money, food, clothes), thinking these will fulfill us, while sadly neglecting the enduring values (God, life, body).

This mistake can happen to anyone. Even Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, was lured to compromise his relationship with God (enduring value) for his insatiable pursuit of wealth, women, and satisfaction (temporary values). It was only in his old age that he realized the gravity of his mistake, declaring,

*Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun (Ecc. 2:11).*

And at the very end of his life, Solomon's final words in Ecclesiastes as an older and now wiser man were:

*The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil (Ecc. 12:13-14).*

## **Value God**

Before we can even begin to understand the importance of each of the six values, we must first establish that valuing God comes before anyone or anything. This helps us avoid being tricked into following the wrong set of values.

I have seen this happen several times in my life. My wrong priorities, stress, and fears were often because I had mixed up my values by worrying over the temporary ones and neglecting those that were more important.

We must always put God first. This means that we are to place Him above our needs and wants. It's not about the words we say but the way we live that reveals God's position in our lives. Consequently, establishing our values on God first sets the tone and standard for all the other values in every season of our lives.

So, is this an excuse to neglect all the other things? Most certainly not! For God has been so faithful to remind us,

*“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all” (Mt. 6:31-32).*

And what is the correct way to test out the values present in your life?

The answer can be found in the succeeding verse:

*“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Mt. 6:33).*

Put God first, align your heart with His will, and then your other values will naturally fall into place.

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Write down three concerns you have this week.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Identify if these concerns are eternal or temporary in nature.

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3. How do the verses in the previous pages and the discussion on eternal values and temporal values help you have God's perspective?

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# Chapter 8



## The Value of "FREEDOM"

“**F**reedom! Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!”  
so sang the raspy voice of folk  
singer Richie Havens. This was the  
battle cry of the Woodstock generation.

Depending on your age, you might think that the Woodstock I'm referring to is Snoopy's yellow bird friend from the *Peanuts* comics strip. But the Woodstock I'm talking about is the Woodstock Festival of 1969, where almost half a million young people gathered in an open field in Catskills, New York for three days of nonstop music.

Woodstock was one “hell” of an unwashed party. Drugs, liquor, and sex ruled those days as everyone felt “liberated” by the music. From this came slogans like “Freedom”; “Peace”; “Make love, not war.” It was an era when teenagers played vinyl records, thinking they were too cool for school. Richie Haven’s *Freedom* became the defining song of the American youth, and Woodstock was the nexus for a countercultural hippie generation.

Fast forward to many years later. When you listen to the song *Freedom* today, you’d think that freedom was the last thing that Haven was singing about! At a certain point in the song, he sounded more like he was describing freedom as the behavior of an undisciplined, abandoned, and unparented child! But it wasn’t just the word “freedom” that lost its biblical meaning after Woodstock; other words such as “love” and “peace” have also gradually lost theirs.

## A Loss for Words

When words like “freedom,” “peace,” and “love” stray from their original meaning, they become vague and subjective. These words lose their power in the sense that *anyone* can now define them according to their tastes, opinions, and, worst of all, feelings. In this, they become less valuable.

Unfortunately, this can also mean that we may miss out on the wisdom and clarity brought by the truth found in their original meaning. For example, the world says, “Freedom is doing anything you want. If it feels good, do it.” But God says, “*Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God*” (1 Pet. 2:16). The Bible says that the true meaning of freedom isn’t being free to sin; freedom is actually Christ liberating you from the chains of sin—so you can do what is right!

## Changing Values

Just like what happened to “freedom,” “peace,” and “love,” the word “value” has also deviated from its true meaning. “Value” now becomes what anyone wants it to be.

Take the case of Sue Rodriguez. She was a woman who was diagnosed with a terminal illness and wished to end her life when she pleased. Her case reached the Canadian Supreme Court when she asked for a physician-aided suicide. Her argument was, “Why on earth would anyone want to impose their own value system on me? I’ve got mine and they’ve got theirs.”

Truly, the way the world looks at values and how the Bible defines it are two different things:

The world values greed for “more,” while Jesus sees the widow’s two-cent offering as valuable.

The world mocks faithfulness, while God sees it as something of great worth.

Worldly laws legalize abortion, while God calls every child in a mother’s womb “wonderfully made.”

Given these two opposing views, the question is: Will you be willing to gamble by basing your life on someone’s—anyone’s—definition of what is valuable?

## **The Final Say**

Values are always based on a standard. That one standard determines the worth of all the other values attached to it. Without a benchmark for what is valuable, all our valuation becomes mere guesswork.

The standard that I am referring to here is the supreme value of God. He alone is the benchmark. Knowing God as the highest value allows all other values to find their true worth.

In the next chapter, we'll start talking about each of the six universal values. We begin with the value that a lot of billboards, magazines, and women put a premium on: clothes.

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

Compare the following statements with the verses below and list your observations:

*“If it feels good, do it.”*

*“It’s my body. No one has the right to tell me how to live my life.”*

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

(1 Cor. 10:31)

*Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.*

(1 Cor. 6:18)

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# Chapter 9



## The Value of **THINGS**

**O**ne evening, Marie chanced upon *YouTube* videos of a British TV show featuring two types of people: extreme hoarders and extreme cleaners.

On one end, you would have “a collector of stuff” gone wild, her house bursting at the seams with boxes and boxes of collected clocks, toys, shoes, clothes still with labels attached, piles and piles of household items, so much so that there was hardly any space in the house to walk through. Even the bed had a huge mound of things and dirt that’s accumulated there for years!

Then there's the "compulsive cleaner of stuff," whose favorite scent was the fragrance of bleach wafting through her home (I think she used three jugs a day). One episode had one lady actually licking her toilet seat just to prove her bathroom was cleaner than a plate! Another was so fixated on his Christmas decor, he washed and disinfected several times each and every Christmas ornament on his tree.

In Matthew 6, Jesus posed the question to His disciples, "*Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?*" It's easy to see that our bodies are more important than clothes and things.

And yet when we get out into the real world, we see that while "things" rank the lowest in the six-values hierarchy (1. God 2. Life 3. Body 4. Money 5. Food 6. Clothes/Things), people attach a disproportionate value to it.

Even our garages seem to be a silent witness to this. Originally designed just to hold cars,

garages now have become storage rooms for more possessions.

I recall a time I came home from a trip, eager to show my wife my latest bargain: it was a pair of canoe paddles. I think it was 70% off.

Now remember, I live in Manila, a city which hardly has any lakes or bodies of water in it to safely paddle in. The beach would be around a two-hour drive away. But there was a huge pool in Metro East and I was excited by the thought of my wife and me spending our date time, working out, getting fit, and paddling together on a kayak in that giant meandering pool! If I bought these, we wouldn't have to wait in line or settle for their old paddles with the heads that kept coming off; now we had our very own new ones.

Off we went on a Monday (our free day). As we settled in our kayaks inside the pool, I realized that the paddles I had bought were way, way too long to paddle with! Instead of hitting the

water, we kept hitting the sides of the pool! So much for my 70% off “bargain” that ended up as a mistake.

Even as I write about values, I’m also learning along the way.

What does the Bible say about things? Here’s God’s perspective on possessions:

**1. He knows what you need. He is your Provider.**

*And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).*

*“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Mt. 6:31-33).*

**2. Own your things. Don't let the desire for things own you.**

*And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Lk. 12:15).*

*But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content (1 Tim. 6:6-8).*

**3. Practice gratitude. Steward with care.**

Thankfulness makes people better stewards. A child that is grateful will take care of his toys more than one who feels entitled. A daily attitude of gratitude pleases the Lord and opens our eyes to the blessings God gives us each day.

#### **4. Practice generosity. Release with love.**

*But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? (1 Jn. 3:17)*

Apart from the practice of owning things, God also wants us to experience the joy of giving generously! The freedom to give is a beautiful, faith-building experience that blesses both giver and receiver.

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. What did you learn from this chapter, and how can you apply it this week?

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2. Which of the four points mentioned above is God reminding you about today?

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# Chapter 10



## The Value of **FOOD**

Charles Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist*, first published as a serial between 1837 and 1839, was one of the earliest novels that contained a social slant addressing the issues of the day: particularly society's way of turning a blind eye to child labor and the use of children for criminal activities. Its 1960 musical adaptation in London's West End, *Oliver*, soon found itself on the silver screen as a much-celebrated, award-winning movie. After all, who can forget songs by Lionel Bart with their memorable melodies and catchy lyrics like, "*Food, glorious food!*"?

Years later, the song *Food, Glorious Food* has seen several versions of it in popular media to reflect the passions of the day. Whether out of need or simply a craving, haven't we all sung a version of that song when fantasizing about food?

## **God and Food**

God created our food. He loved us so much that He did not just stop at its functional benefit. He created food with aesthetics, incorporating different flavors, colors, smells, and textures in each ingredient. Lastly, He created food for our enjoyment (Gen. 1:29; Isa. 1:19).

I've always found it interesting how food companies work so hard to attractively package their products to entice buyers. If you've ever wondered where they got the idea, look to God. Consider God's packaging designs: The banana with its bright yellow, lateral peeling wrapper. The grass green coconut, which acts

like a disposable vacuum-sealed container to encase a refreshing liquid full of electrolytes. Both are environmentally friendly, and 100% biodegradable. And what about the egg with its pure white casing that houses and keeps the vulnerable protein fresh and free from bacteria!

Nuts, pomegranates, watermelons, string beans, corncoobs—I'm sure you can think of more because indeed, food has its fair share of glory. God loves food and values them, but definitely not to the degree that we sometimes do.

## **Food Overload**

It's understandable when hungry orphans who have not had a decent meal to eat in days exclaim words such as "Food, glorious food!" But the reality is that these words could very well have come from the mouths of everyday citizens today, who have placed a disproportionate value on food.

There is no questioning the value of food. We need it not just to survive, but to also enjoy a quality of life. These days, however, our values have become so skewed to the place where too much weight has been put on food.

If an extraterrestrial (ET) came to earth to observe what mankind's main passions were, it wouldn't take long for the ET to conclude that food is indeed one of man's greatest passions—if not addiction. Nearly half of the advertisements the ET would have seen on TV would be about food, and if the ET happened to land on the Food Channel, it would have seen food 24/7. Not to mention all those food posts the ET would find in different channels of social media.

## **Food versus Life**

In helping us understand the true value of food, here are three key thoughts to remember:

1. In Matthew 6, Jesus posed the question, “*Is not life more than food?*” What He means by this is, “Do you know that life is more valuable than food?” The answer is obvious, but the real life application is not.

As mentioned previously, life refers to our relationships. **Our relationships are definitely far more important than food.** While we can enjoy food, we must never enjoy it at the expense of God, our relationships, or even our health.

2. First Corinthians 6:12-13 says,

*“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.*

Paul is saying that **while food is to be enjoyed, it does not mean everything you consume is good for you.** Controlling what you eat and having restraint is beneficial, lest you be dominated by your impulses and urges. It may be true that our bodies are temporary, but it does not justify stuffing it with just anything. Finally, he likens food to sex: it brings satisfaction, fulfillment, and comfort, but there is a moral and an immoral way of consuming it.

3. **Some things will always be more valuable than food, one of which is to do God's will.** Jesus Himself said, "*My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work*" (Jn. 4:34).

*Bon appétit!*

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

How does 1 Corinthians 6:12 guide us in our consumption of food or enjoyment?

*You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is good for you. And even though “I am allowed to do anything,” I must not become a slave to anything. (NLT)*

*“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything.*

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# Chapter 11



## The Value of **MONEY**

**S**teven Levitt and Stephen Dubner, authors of *Freakonomics* and *SuperFreakonomics*, wrote that people respond to incentives. They validated their point in their two best-selling books by citing how this truth applied to schoolteachers, realtors, crack dealers, mothers, sumo wrestlers, salesmen, and even members of the Ku Klux Klan.

People love incentives. Incentives, according to these authors, are not necessarily monetary. In fact, some incentives can come from the most unpredictable of sources. But despite all this, money remains to be one of the most powerful incentives there is. Even Levitt and Dubner

admitted that the writing of their first book took root “when several publishers began to offer significant sums of money.”

## **The Answer to Everything**

It was King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, who penned the words in Ecclesiastes 10:19, “*Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and **money answers everything.***” Yup, you read that right: Solomon wrote that money answers everything. Another version of the Bible says, “*Money is the answer to everything*” (NASB).

Before moving forward, there is a principle that one needs to know when reading the Bible. It goes something like this: Never reason from the part to the whole. Rather, always reason from the whole to the part. We cannot lift one verse from Scripture and base our beliefs solely on that verse without taking into account the other verses that seem to say the contrary.

Applying this, Solomon did say that money answers everything. But this truth is partial, and needs to be read vis-à-vis the entirety of the Bible's take on money. Money is indeed valuable. It is the most universally accepted means for exchanging goods and services. Hence, Solomon was correct in pointing this out. Money is the answer to everything; just as bread brings laughter and wine, merriment. But in all of these cases, the sense of fulfillment is only temporary.

## **God and Money**

Going back to Matthew 6:24, Jesus said, *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”*

It is noteworthy to point out that Jesus never attributed anything to have powers coming close to God's. He only references money as

a competitor, and rightfully so, for money is indeed powerful. Think about politicians and leaders who have compromised their values because of money or why people forego their valued principles because of the lure of money.

Here's a good question to ask yourself when you are not sure if money has become more valuable to you than God: If you had more money right now, would you be—

- happier,
- more secure,
- more fulfilled?

Before you answer too quickly, consider the question well. Another way of asking the question is: Do you think you would have less problems today if you had more money? It's a tough question to answer; but with a little honesty, you can find out if you are trusting money more than God.

## Three Truths about Money

1. **Money is neutral.** *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs”* (1 Tim. 6:10). Money, contrary to popular belief, is not inherently evil. It is a tool that allows us to exchange goods and services. The love of money, however, is the root of all kinds of evil. How?
2. **Money is powerful.** Money affords more than just goods and services—money begets power. No wonder people fall in love with it so easily. And while falling in love is just the start, the “all kinds of evils” bit comes into play when we become eager for money. The word “eager” in Greek means to covet or unlawfully desire. When we have made money the primary driving force of our lives, we have, in that sense, made it our god.

- 3. Money has the capacity to divert our destiny.** The result is that we wander from the faith and carry with us many griefs. Through the years, I have seen individuals and families suffer and grieve because they have made money the primary reason for living.

To be clear, Jesus never said that money is not valuable. His point was it is not as valuable as God. In fact, He makes a final point further down in Matthew 6:33, that if we seek God first, He will add all the other values to us, including money.

The effect is the opposite for those who love God most: all kinds of evil will fall to our sides, we stay on course in achieving God's destiny for us, and there we will find God's blessing, favor, and joy.

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. If you had more money right now, would you be—
- happier,
  - more secure,
  - more fulfilled?

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Do you think you would have less problems today if you had more money?

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2. How does this verse in Matthew 6 apply to you today?

*“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or*



*‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (vv. 31-33).*

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# Chapter 12



## The Value of **LIFE**

**N**ot many people know that the word *life* is mentioned in the Bible using three different words: *bios*, *zoe*, and *psuche*. Each word translates to the English word “life,” but they also have their own meanings.

## **Bios**

*Bios* is where we get the word “biology.” This refers to our biological or physical life. Most people live in this realm. Here are a few verses where we find the word *bios* in Scripture:

*“And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature”*  
(Lk. 8:14).

*For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but from the world*  
(1 Jn. 2:16).

These two verses reflect the nature of *bios* being the kind of life that constantly gets entangled with pleasure and other things that this world has to offer. This is also what Paul was referring to in 2 Timothy 2:4 when he wrote about soldiers getting entangled in civilian pursuits.

## **Zoe**

*Zoe* means “life in God.” To be more direct about it, *zoe* is life as God intended it to be.

This very definition connotes that life is born of the Spirit of God.

Jesus used the word *zoe* when He said, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*” (Jn. 3:16). We find the word mentioned by Jesus again chapters later: “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly*” (Jn. 10:10).

Jesus is speaking here of a full life borne out of having exceeding abundance from God. This is the life that God has intended for us—a life that flourishes and does not perish; a life beyond measure. Such is the life we have received because Jesus came and saved us from our sins.

# Psuche

Lastly, *psuche* refers to that which has breath or life, and this word will be the focus of this chapter. Some resources refer to *psuche* as the soul. In the last section of Matthew 6, Jesus said, “*Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?*” (v. 25).

Jesus, in speaking to His disciples, said that *psuche* is more important than what we eat or drink. Whether ours or others, the soul is more valuable than all other values. At the end of the day, a soul is a relationship—as in the soul of your spouse, child, friend, associate, etc. When our house is on fire, we do not reach for money or food, but reach for life instead—our family and friends.

To recap all we’ve discussed so far: Jesus made the point that (1) God is more valuable than

money, (2) our bodies are more important than clothes and things, and now He makes the point that (3) our relationships (that which has breath) are more important than food—that which comforts, fulfills, and is enjoyed by us.

## **Not Worth the Trade**

As a pastor, I have counseled men (and occasionally women) who have squandered their relationships for things of lesser value. Sad to say, but some people really do think that they can trade a life for what food represents: comfort, fulfillment, and enjoyment.

To follow their example is to be foolish, for those who really understand life know that true comfort, enjoyment, and fulfillment are found in our relationships. No food, object, or activity can comfort or fulfill us in the way that a human relationship can, and nothing can be as enjoyable as time spent building meaningful relationships. To put it simply, our



relationships are what breathe life into our everyday experiences.

Let me put this together: our *bios* (physical life) is best lived in *zoe* (life as God intended it to be) because in *zoe*, we value *psuche* (relationships).

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. List 2 to 3 people who have made a positive godly impact on your life. What do you appreciate about them?

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Take time to pray and thank God for them. If you can, send them a text message or call, saying, “I was thinking of you and I thank God for the positive impact you’ve had on my life.”

2. Who is one person you can encourage this week?

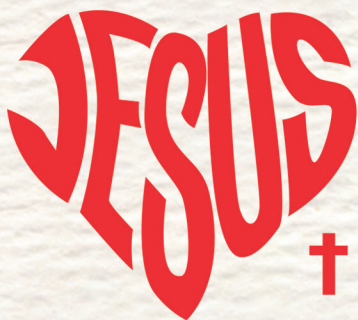
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*But encourage one another day after day...*

(Heb. 3:13a NASB)

# Chapter 13



## The Infinite Value of GOD

**L**ower values are determined by higher values. The values of certain currencies are determined by those that have a higher worth. For instance, the Australian dollar's value is determined against the more valuable British pound.

This premise is true for all the other values we have seen in Matthew 6. The ability to appreciate the lower values of life, health, money, enjoyment, and things is determined by the highest value that Jesus mentioned—God, the One who is infinitely the most valuable.

What many people do not realize is that the gospel is a message on values. God, who is most valuable, so valued us that He gave us Jesus who is most valuable to Him. The more we realize and understand how valuable God is, the more valuable we become.

The question is: Why is God infinitely more valuable than our relationships, health, finances, enjoyment, and things? Here are three reasons why.

## **To Infinity and Beyond**

The value of an object increases depending on its life span. Take the case of diamonds: they are more valuable than other stones because they are the hardest known material on the planet, scoring 10 on the Mohs scale of mineral hardness. That said, diamonds have a longer shelf life than most precious stones and therefore are of greater value. As the saying goes, “Diamonds are forever.”

But no matter how enduring diamonds may be, when compared to God, they are fleeting at best. They can be stolen or lost at any given moment (wash your hands and down the drain they go!).

God, on the other hand, is eternal. Think about Psalm 90:

*Lord, you have been our dwelling place  
in all generations.*

*Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God  
(vv. 1-2).*

God did not just make the diamonds that “last forever,” He was there long before the mountains that contained those diamonds came to existence.

## One of a Kind

An object's value depends on its rarity. Whether they are rare coins, stamps, comic books, or cars, the rarer the object is, the more valuable it becomes. But when something is one of a kind, it goes beyond rare: it falls into a class of its own.

This would be the equivalent of one of those outrageously priced paintings done by the “masters” and auctioned at Sotheby's. Why would anyone pay such a price? Because rare is valuable, but one of a kind is priceless.

God is infinitely most valuable because there is no one like Him. He is above and beyond anything we know and can comprehend; He is the ultimate definition of being one of a kind.

*There is none like you among the gods, O Lord,  
nor are there any works like yours (Ps. 86:8).*

## One-Stop Shop of Values

Lastly, God is infinitely most valuable because in Him, we find fullness of life. Whether that's our *bios*, *zoe*, or *psuche*, they all come together in Him for our good. He is the One who gives us our relationships, health, enjoyment, food, and things. He is Life.

Deuteronomy 28:11-12a says,

*And the LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, within the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. The LORD will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands.*

In God, all other values are provided to us. He promises us abundant prosperity in life starting with the fruit of our womb, our children. And it does not stop there: our material provisions,



our properties, the seasons of our life, and even the work of our hands will be blessed and yield high returns as we continue to value God first.

No wonder He is infinitely more valuable than anything in our lives.

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Based on what you just read, why is God infinitely more valuable than our relationships, health, finances, or work? List down the three reasons why.

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2. Are there other “gods” that have taken the place of Jesus in your life?

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3. What is a practical way to put God first in your day?

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# Chapter 14



## Chopsticks, Sushi, and Electronic Toilets

**Y**ou may be wondering what makes values so important that it has taken us an entire book to discuss the topic. Well, what it comes down to is its influence on culture. Values are the single most important ingredient that shapes culture.

Culture is what people do without thinking. When we see certain practices in our homes, offices, churches, communities, and nation, these represent our culture.

## Chopsticks, Sushi, and Electronic Toilets

A good example of this truth is when we go to different countries. In Japan, for example, people use fresh chopsticks as utensils for every meal of every day. It's just part of their culture, part of who they are. This implies that a huge amount of trees get chopped up and turned into utensils year in, year out.

Eating with chopsticks is a practice the Japanese do without thinking. What has produced this culture is the long-standing Japanese value on cleanliness. There are no cleaner people in the world than the Japanese, and it is because they value this.

We see cleanliness also translate in their daily routines. Whether it is bathing in an *onsen*, preparing food, or keeping a minimalist zen home, cleanliness is a value that affects everything they do. They practice this without thinking. It is so ingrained in their culture that the Japanese are responsible for inventing the

remote-controlled faucet, and the high-tech toilet that allows you to clean yourself without touching dirt or any part of your body.

## **iPhones and Multiple Values**

Another case in point: the iPhone, a gadget that has existed for just a little over eight years. In less than a decade, the iPhone has not only emerged as one of the widest-selling gadgets of all time, it is now an integral part of everyday culture—the thing we use without thinking. It has also become the basis of copycats who have turned the smartphone into a cultural phenomenon and is changing the way we live.

Moreover, the smartphone has crossed massive cultural barriers by being used all over the world and by people of different ages. How did it do that? Why is there no stopping the phenomenon? In a word, it was the values behind the smartphone.

The smartphone gives us the ability to call our family and friends (and that's a high value!). We can now use our smartphones to transact with our bankers, get the news, check the time worldwide, go to the library (Google), send an e-mail, shop, book a flight, do work, watch videos, listen to music, take pictures, and so much more. It is because of the values surrounding the smartphone that we find this cultural phenomenon growing at breakneck speed, with no signs of letting up.

## **Christians, Values, and Impacting Culture**

Herein lies the reason why values are an important discussion: values are the raw materials for culture. Good values produce good culture; bad values produce the opposite. Whichever way it goes, values shape the things people do without thinking: culture.

As Christians, the more we understand what is truly valuable and realize its impact on people, the more we can influence culture.

As we come closer to the end of this book, keep in mind what Jesus said: “...*Where your treasure (values) is, there your heart will be also*” (Mt. 6:21). At the end of the day, our values drive our hearts and the culture around us.



## **PERSONAL APPLICATION**

- 1. As you were growing up, what did your parents value as important to them? How did those values influence you for good or bad?**

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- 2. Based on your current lifestyle, who or what is the biggest “influencer” in your life today? How has reading the Word of God or listening to godly messages impacted your life?**

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- 3. More than a smartphone or any electronic invention, you as a Christian have the power to impact people’s lives and change society.**

**What habits of yours draw people to God?  
What habits do not?**

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*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

(Rom. 12:2)

# Chapter 15



## **Hamburgers and Winning the Culture Wars**

**M**cDonald's has over 36,000 stores in 119 countries. If you divide 36,000 by 365 days in a year, the result is almost 99. It is as if McDonald's was building a store a day (365 days), and has been doing so for the last 99 years! Now that's a lot of stores. But the real significance of these numbers is that this fast-food chain serves 68 million customers every day.

Starbucks is no different. In less than 50 years since its debut, it now has over 22,000 branches in 65 countries. It is interesting to note that it even houses 1,800 branches in China and over

140 in Turkey—nations that are not particularly big fans of the United States.

## **From Beijing to Istanbul**

My family visited Beijing in 1996. The McDonald's there was, at that time, the largest in the world. The place was seriously packed and had snaking, long lines.

During a trip to Istanbul, our friends brought Marie and me to a Starbucks branch by the Bosphorus strait. It links the Black Sea with the sea of Marmara, and bridges together the continents of Europe and Asia. The Starbucks branch there was five stories high and so crowded with customers that we had to leave.

How did both these companies transcend cultures? How did McDonald's persuade dimsum and noodle aficionados to love their burgers and fries?

Why would the Turkish, who are known for their excellent coffee, try out the Starbucks version of the brew? The quick and simple answer is that these brands provide their customers with a perceived value.

Value is powerful. As we have discussed previously, it is the single most important ingredient to creating and affecting culture.

### **Disciples of Christ and Values**

Similar to McDonald's and Starbucks, the disciples of Christ have created values evident in both ancient society and recent history. Here are a few values to cite:

**Kindness.** During the Crimean War, Florence Nightingale became an icon of Victorian culture as “the lady with a lamp.” The picture was of this woman who checked on wounded soldiers late at night. Her acts of kindness laid the foundation to what we now call professional nurses. Nightingale believed that her acts of kindness were a response to a call from God,

and she made a significant impact on culture centuries after.

**Generosity.** Henry Dunant was born to devout Christian parents. His businessman father actively helped orphans and parolees, while his mother cared for the sick and the poor. Both parents served as living examples and inspirations to Henry, that would one day lead him to founding what we now know as the International Red Cross.

**Creativity.** Cyrus McCormick, who grew up with a strong Christian ethic, took over his father's version of the mechanical reaper. This innovation would eliminate the backbreaking work of manually harvesting wheat, and increase food production by leaps and bounds. McCormick believed that building the reaper in order to feed the world was a mission God had given him. It was this belief that led to his devotion and eventual success in inventing the reaper that would forever change agriculture.

**Wisdom.** In the late 1760s, the Presbyterian synods in New York and Philadelphia were deeply concerned by the deaths of their missionaries and its effects on their families. Because of this, they put up the “Relief of Poor and Distressed Widows and Children of Presbyterian Ministers”—the entity that would lay the foundation for the modern life insurance policy.

**Society.** Christian homes that represented family love and concern so impacted society by the love exhibited in their marriages and care for their children. They became the backbone of a society that encouraged education and care for the young.

Through the centuries, the disciples of Jesus Christ have been at the forefront of cultural impact. Their religious beliefs transcended mere “religion” but impacted the arts and architecture, business and finance, health and safety, family and education, and spirituality and belief.



How did they win the culture wars? They let their beliefs produce such tangible values and practices, affecting societies and cultures centuries long after them.

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Think of a person who made a positive impact on your life. Did that person influence or shape, in any way, the values you hold dear today?

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2. If a close friend or family member were to describe you to a stranger, what would they say are your top three values in life?

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3. Does your current lifestyle match your values in life? Why or why not?

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*“You are the light of the world.  
A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”*

(Mt. 5:14)

*Live as people who are free,  
not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil,  
but living as servants of God.*

(1 Pet. 2:16)



# Chapter 16



# How to Win the Culture Wars

**I**n the previous chapter, we discussed the important role values play in shaping culture. Values are the single most important ingredient that shapes culture. The better our understanding of values is, the more skillful we become at shaping and influencing culture.

Jesus said, “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations*” (Mt. 28:19a). After many years, I am convinced that what Jesus meant by this statement was for us to influence cultures in a way that every person will come to know Him. But it all starts by understanding values, and

this is where we find our problem in fulfilling our commission as Christians.

You see, our lack of depth in understanding values is the reason why Christianity often finds itself losing in the “culture wars”—whether in the form of losing its influence in university campuses, losing its voice in the most controversial topics of our time, or losing airtime in social or even regular media.

It seems as if the devil has taken Jesus’ strategy seriously, while His disciples remain clueless on how to win the war—or worse, unaware that there is a war to begin with.

## **Why Are We Losing?**

There is no doubt that Jesus, His message, and the life He brings is the best “product” anyone can offer. The big question is: Why aren’t people lining up for Jesus?

The common answer Christians give is that there is an enemy who blinds people. While this is true, another reason why people don't buy into the gospel is because we package it in a way that is of little or no value to people.

Let me explain. Imagine going to church. As you enter the building, you notice that the lobby is dimly lit, the floors are dirty, the people don't seem to be happy, and the toilets smell bad. You then think to yourself, "This can't get any worse."

Just then, your eyes catch the announcement board and it informs you that the service begins at 9:00 AM. When you check the time, however, it is already 9:10 AM and there is no sign of the service starting. So you sit and wait.

The service finally begins, and minutes after the loud, out-of-tune singing finally ends, the preacher comes on stage. By this time, you try to fight the urge to sleep from his monotonous, nasal voice and lengthy scriptural jargon, using



words so far in the past, they don't make sense to you.

With setups like these, it is no wonder why outsiders see little value in the gospel.

So, how do we win the culture wars?

- 1. Value stewardship.** The first thing to do is to check your values quotient. If you don't see what's wrong with the situation above, then you probably don't understand values, and will not be very effective in influencing culture. Because culture is about values. One key Christian value is stewardship. A dimly lit, dirty lobby has a lower value than an illuminated, clean one. That's the reason why there are more people in movie theatres than in churches. This does not mean you need an expensive building; it just means that you need to put more light bulbs and to maintain a standard for cleanliness. Be a good steward.

When we don't start on time, we reduce the value of our service. Without saying so, we have announced our lack of discipline and respect for our guests—a sad statement that says we don't value them and their time. Think about what moviegoers would say and do if a movie was scheduled at a certain time, and 15 minutes later there was no sign of it starting.

2. **Value a spirit of excellence.** The second thing is to check your excellence quotient. We may be in challenging situations, but we can desire a spirit of excellence and be inspired by the words of Daniel 6:3:

*Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.*

This he did while being a captive in a foreign nation—a challenging situation.

So instead of settling for mediocrity, we should be aware that we are ambassadors of Christ and we can live our lives with excellence and a disciplined life that honors God. In that, there is value.

- 3. Value time and seasons.** Finally, let us remember that winning the war against a sinful culture is won over time and seasons. Stay faithful in obeying the Lord and aspire to be Christlike in your behavior with others, and little by little you will win people to Christ, and influence your culture for good.

More than just winning the culture war through values, the summary of all the above is that we as ambassadors of Christ should desire to honor Him in all that we do in the place where God has called us to. A good starting point of that is to be a good steward who values excellence and who does so over time and seasons. This posture will create value in the communities we live in and over time will transform the culture around us.

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

Someone once said, “We may be the only Bible that some people may read.”

1. Is my stewardship of my time, talent, and resources a positive example to those around me?

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2. Write down three practical steps you can take this week to be a better steward of your time, talent, and resources.

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3. List three common excuses that people make for not reading or listening to God's Word. How can I overcome these excuses in my own life?

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4. Pray for God to give you an excellent spirit like Daniel.

*Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him (Daniel 6:3a).*





# Summarizing The Values-Driven HEART

**O**ur journey through this book has been about the values of the heart and its impact on culture. To summarize:

- 1. Values drive the hearts of people.** They are what fill up our so-called “boxcars” while we are here on earth. They make us see what others can’t, and vice versa. We are wired for values.
- 2. The hierarchy of our values is the basis of all our priorities and decisions.** Jesus revealed that mankind has been affected by six values, namely: God, money, life, health, food, and things. Though values overlap at times, the one value that will never change is God’s position at the top of the hierarchy.

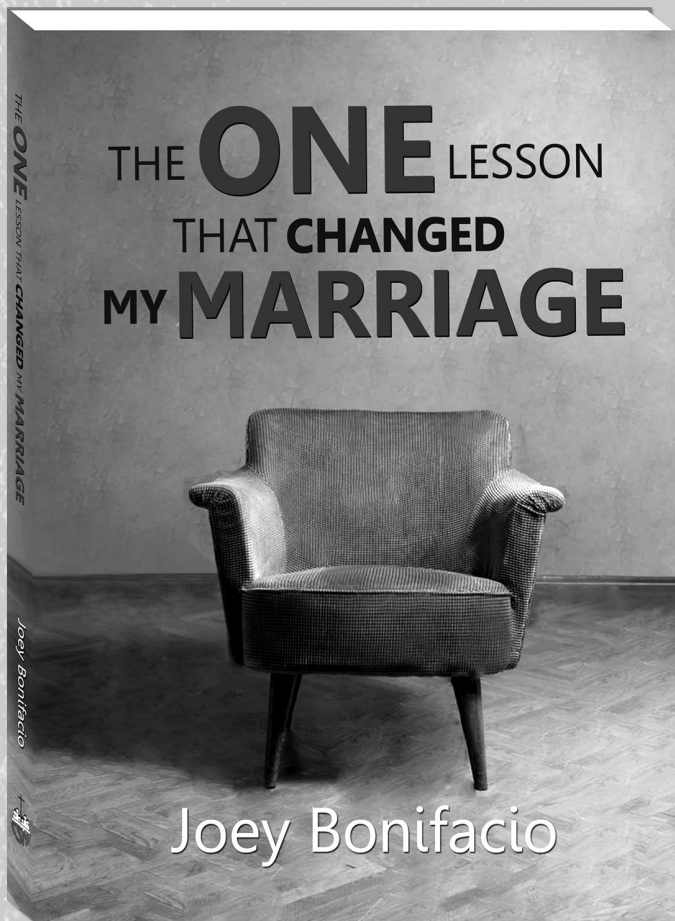


**3. Values are the raw materials for creating “what people do without thinking” or, in short, culture.** The right set of values can reign and positively affect culture if we, the disciples of Christ, put a premium on stewardship, excellence, and the time and seasons. Values should also be able to produce tangible practices in order to change the culture around us. This is how we can win the culture wars in the years to come.

At the core of this book are the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 6:21, *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

It is my prayer that we learn to focus on what is truly valuable. For when we value what God values, we will inevitably increase our life’s value for all of eternity. More importantly, when our lives exude the values of God, we honor Him. Ultimately, that is the goal and story of the life of a disciple.

**Unpack the essentials of a successful marriage,**  
and see how these play out in the daily dynamics of married life.

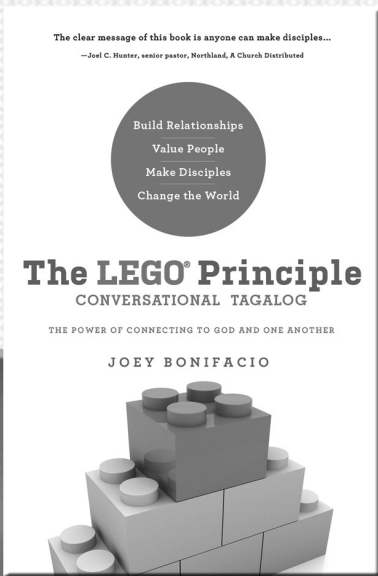
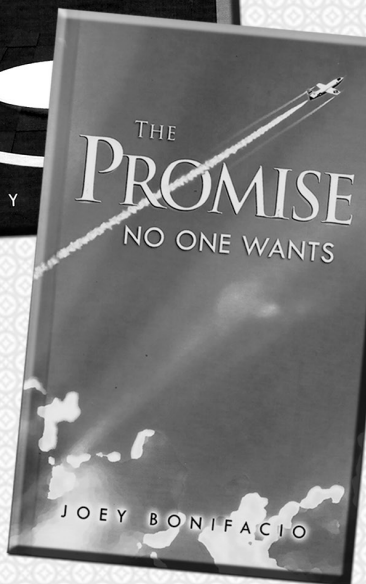
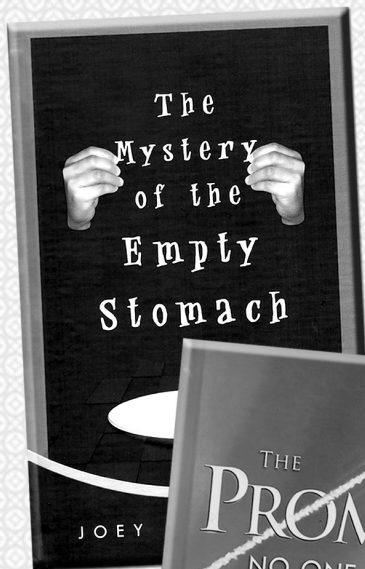


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