

## THE WISEST DECISION ANYONE CAN MAKE

My father used to tell of a discussion he had with a law school student about the younger man's future plans... *Tell me about your plans after law school.* "I hope to get a job with a good firm and start making some money." That sounds fine. And then what? "Well, at some point, I want to get married." *I hope you do. And then what?* "I want to get a nice house and start a family." *Of course, and then?* "I want to raise my kids in good schools and be making enough money to slow down and take vacations with my wife and children." *And then?* Well, I guess I'd like to see my kids get married and start their own families." *Good goals. What then?* Well, I hope I'll be healthy enough to enjoy my later years, travel some, make the most of retirement, and pass along my money to my children." *And then?* The young man paused. "I guess, eventually...I'll die." *And then what?*

The compelling thing about this story is that it follows the basic American Dream. Maybe you've long since graduated from college, married happily, and you're well into your career. Maybe you're already blessed with grandchildren and a good retirement account.

**But in the relentless march of time, every one of us will face the final... "And then what?"**

**What's your answer?**

The most common answers go something like this: "Well, I hope I'll go to heaven...I'm workin' on it." "I'm tryin' to make it up there." Or, "I'm just prayin' the 'Man Upstairs' will let me in." Most at least hope to go to heaven when they die.

Wouldn't it be wise to take steps now so that, when you

come to the end of your dream, *you know what comes next?* The wisest decision you can make—ever—is to *seal* your eternal destiny with God, through His Son, Jesus Christ. The alternative is to count on doing it all yourself.

One thing about the American Dream: the fulfillment-and-peace clause is a guaranteed letdown. The most impressive businesses can implode overnight. Children turn up with minds of their own and can break your heart. Dream houses can burn to charcoal. Family members suffer cancer and waste to nothing before your eyes.

British novelist Jack Higgins is one of the most successful authors on earth; his thrillers have sold more than 240 million copies in 55 languages! When asked what he knew now that he wished he had known earlier in life, he replied, “I wish I had known when you get to the top, there is nothing there.”

### **What about gaining peace?**

So, how does a person gain peace here, now? Can there be any certainty about God or where we go after death? First, be aware of this: I’m not talking about joining a church, getting baptized or confirmed, obeying the Ten Commandments, or even living a good life. What I’m talking about is a personal relationship with the God who made you and loves you unconditionally..

Most people familiar with the Bible know this verse: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). The Source of your life in the first place loves you so much that he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die for you. In giving his life on the cross Jesus took the punishment *we* deserved for *our* sins (sins are anything that falls short of God’s perfect standard). Why would God take such extreme measures? Because of the seriousness of sin. It has caused “a separation” between us and God (Isaiah 59:2) because our “heart is deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17:9). So “the wages of sin,” God says, “is [eternal] death” (Romans 6:23)—separation from Him forever.

The amazing thing is that “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned....Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life” (John 3:17-18,36). What can condemned sinners do to turn things around? Simply accept God’s offer of eternal life to those who believe that Jesus died for them and rose again from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Anyone who believes in Him can secure eternal life.

What could be wiser than making this eternal choice sooner rather than later? I’m so glad that I can *know* that I am going to heaven when I die—and you can too. The Bible makes it clear that we cannot earn our way to heaven, for eternal life is not a reward for anything *we* have done or tried to do—it is a *free gift*. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). As with any gift, we must accept it in order for it to be ours.

If you haven’t made this decision, you can make it today. The act of choosing God is as close as a heartfelt prayer offered to Him. You can say something like this:

Dear God, I know I have sinned and cannot save myself. I acknowledge my need of you in my life, for right now and for eternity. I do believe that Jesus died for me then rose again so that I can be forgiven of my sins. Thank you for hearing my prayer and for giving me the wonderful gift of eternal life. Amen.

If you prayed that and meant it, you just made the wisest decision you could ever make. Congratulations! Every person you know, other Christians included, may let you down, but God says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

— Mark DeMoss

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