

*A Choice for Life*  
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Student Edition

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# Introduction: *Life or Death?—The Fundamental Decision*

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference*

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

“The Road Not Taken”

*“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*

The Lord Jesus Christ

(Matthew 7:13-14)

*“There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways. Thou shalt not murder children by abortion nor kill them when born.”<sup>1</sup>*

*Didache* - a first-century

Christian catechism

Decisions . . . decisions!

one

Choices. We make them every day. Paper or plastic? Mayo or mustard? Caffeinated or decaf? Care for fries with that? When will you do your homework? Will you call her? Want a mint? Will you cheat on the test? Pretzels or peanuts? Press 1 to repeat these options, or press 2 to end this call. In the face of innumerable daily decisions, it's hard to

find your bearings. It's easy to become confused. It's difficult to know what makes particular decisions more or less important than others, and what relationship individual decisions have to each other.



## Is there a need for an ultimate priority?

In the 1991 film *City Slickers*, Billy Crystal plays “Mitch,” a successful, but unhappy, urban professional. He and his friends spend a few weeks on a dude ranch in an effort to break out of their routine and re-order their confused life. Conversing with “Curly,” a rugged cowboy played by Jack Palance, Mitch learns “the secret of life”:

Curly: *You know what the secret of life is?*

Mitch: *No, what?*

Curly: *[holding up one finger] This.*

Mitch: *Your finger?*

Curly: *One thing. Just one thing. You stick to that and everything else don't mean [nothing]. . . .*

Mitch: *That's great, but what's the one thing?*

Curly: *That's what you've got to figure out.*<sup>2</sup>

Curly echoed a claim made by philosophers in ancient and medieval times: You cannot have orderly priorities without recognizing some single priority as ultimate—as the *summum bonum*, or “greatest good.” When one priority is ultimate, other priorities fall into order in relation to the ultimate priority. When one priority is ultimate, decisions are made with reference to it. If your *summum bonum* is to be a great basketball player, for example, then decisions about eating and sleeping and exercising are made with that goal in view.

## Are some ultimate priorities better than others? **three**

A glance at *The Guinness Book of World Records* suggests that many people have odd priorities—breaking the record for eating the most hot dogs in a single sitting, for example. Does it really matter what your ultimate priority is? In *City Slickers*, Curly died without revealing what he thought the ultimate priority should be. Mitch concluded that each person is free to choose for himself, and that one ultimate priority is as good as the next.

Mitch was wrong! A person's *summum bonum*, or ultimate priority, determines their subsequent conduct in life—and some ways of living are clearly better than others! Otherwise, the decision of whether to live more like Adolf Hitler than Mother Teresa is only a matter of preference, like the choice to purchase either a red toothbrush or a green one.

## Jesus Christ: The right ultimate priority! **four**

Hitler felt free to choose his own ultimate priority and, in fact, regarded himself as the *summum bonum*. He called himself *Der Fuhrer*, “the Leader,” and required German soldiers to take an oath of loyalty, not to Germany, but to him personally. On his orders, those soldiers killed millions of innocent victims.

On the other hand, Mother Teresa recognized a different *summum bonum*, Jesus Christ. In imitation of Christ, she gave her life to minister to the destitute and dying in Calcutta, India. Clearly, Mother Teresa's choice was infinitely superior to Hitler's. Jesus Himself declared that the person who has chosen Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, as his or her

*summum bonum*, or highest priority, “has chosen” the “one thing . . . needed” (Luke 10:42).

**five**

## A choice for Christ is a choice for life!

The Bible teaches that Jesus should be the center of your life because life is found only in Him. Only Jesus can rightly declare, “I am . . . the Life” (John 14:6). Morally, a decision is right if it is a submission to His lordship, His absolute authority. A decision is wrong if it is a failure to submit to Him. Since life is found only in Him, a decision against Him is a rejection of life, and thus a decision for death. As the Scripture declares, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

**six**

## When are choices a life and death matter?

Moral decisions are ultimately matters of life and death because they are ultimately decisions about whether or not to turn toward Christ, who is life. God declares through Moses . . .

*I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days.*

*(Deuteronomy 30:19-20)*

Some moral decisions seem relatively inconsequential, but this is only a result of our spiritual blindness. For example, the words we say do not seem like a matter of life or death, yet the Bible declares, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:21). Thus, Scripture teaches that in my relationship with you, I am either building you up or tearing you down. I am treating you as the creation of God that you are, and bearing witness to you that you are loved by the God who alone can give you life, or I am treating you disrespectfully, and so I am guilty of endorsing your spiritual death. As C. S. Lewis explained, in all of our interactions with people, we are implicitly urging them toward either Heaven or hell.

It is a serious thing to . . . remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature [in Heaven] which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption [in hell] such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.<sup>3</sup>

Lewis continued by explaining that, because of their value as creations of God, our love toward people must be “a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner—no mere tolerance or indulgence which [only] parodies love.” In other words, we ought to hate death-producing sin, but love sin’s victims, who are sinners themselves.



## What is the purpose of this book?

It is in the spirit of promoting life-preserving choices, and standing against decisions that lead to death, that this book is written. It both exposes abortion as an immoral, death-producing sin, *and* highlights the complete forgiveness for sin and the life that is ever-available through Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 1 John 1:9). Specifically, Chapter 1 gauges the prevalence of abortion and describes methods of abortion. Chapter 2 presents arguments that abortion is immoral. Chapter 3 answers the question: If abortion is immoral, why is it legal? In conclusion, Chapter 4 explains the dramatic difference that results from following Christ, from making Him your *summum bonum*, your ultimate priority.

The only right choice—morally, legally and spiritually—is a choice for life. Christ’s transforming grace makes such a choice possible. After studying this book, you will be well equipped to lovingly present these truths to others. Most likely you will have opportunities in conversation to encourage others to also make a choice for life. To help you prepare for those encounters, the text that follows is written as a conversation. Let the conversation begin!