

# A Baker's Dozen of Lessons of Life

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*Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

God brought us into this world because He wanted to express through our uniqueness. I think He created us as a part of Him that would otherwise just go unrepresented in life. We are here so that Spirit can move through us into Creation.

And we have a part to play; we have to allow this movement. If we are to align with Christ we must learn the lessons that open us to that movement, that expression. Since we have a body, as we have been learning, we tend to block that flow of Spirit.

So there are lessons that we each will learn along our life's journey. We each have our own personal lessons, unique to us, and there are general lessons that are common to us all. Here are some lessons I am still learning. Several, I know, are common lessons, but some may be more unique to me than to you. I encourage you to take these thoughts and think about your own lessons.

1. Love is the answer - Love is why we are here. It is the force for good in this sometimes random and harsh world. Share it freely. Express it daily. Kindness as love, matters; small expressions of kindness have an enormous positive impact on other people. It doesn't take much to be kind. Love is doing what is right for others. Christ encourages us to practice it every day, in every situation, until it's our natural way of being.

2. Relationships are key - At the end of the day, what matters most are the people in our lives. Put them first every single day, before work, before the computer, and before our hobbies. Treat them like they are everything to us, because they are.

Friendships need care. One of the top five regrets of the dying is that they let their friendships fade away. Friendships need time and attention. Nurture them like a prized garden. The payoff is so worth it.

3. Our kids aren't us - We are the vessel to bring our children into the world and their caretakers until they can care for themselves, but they really belong to God. We can teach them, love them, and support them, but we can't change them. They are unique individuals who must live their own lives. Let them.

4. Things gather dust - Time and money spent accumulating material things will one day irritate us. We must clean, maintain, and move stuff. The less stuff we have, the freer we are. Purchase mindfully. Simple is better; a life full of material objects, complications, obligations, and an overwhelming schedule gather spiritual dust, which we call stress and pressure. A simpler life in all regards gives us more space for joy and engagement.

5. Fun is underrated - How much of our day is fun? Really, fun? Life is short; we should enjoy it. Don't make things serious that don't have to be. Create more fun in life. We don't need to worry about what other people think of our fun. Just enjoy it.

*Proverbs 17:22 A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.*

Life lessons can come to us from almost anywhere. Here is a song that teaches some life lessons, and is fun. [Sing: Things You Don't say to Your Wife]

6. We choose – all of it; it is our choice. Our reactions, our decisions, our direction, our words; our diet, our degree of exercise. We choose it all, and that's a good thing. Because if we don't like what we are experiencing, we can make another choice. Do we need more abundance of anything? We can choose to give more money and we will attract more money. Do we want more love in our life; we can choose to give more love away, and more love will flow to us.

We may not choose a particular situation or occurrence, but at the very least, we choose how we respond to a circumstance or person. In the words of American painter, writer, and naturalist, Walter Anderson: Bad things do happen; how I respond to them defines my character and the quality of my life. I can choose to sit in perpetual sadness, immobilized by the gravity of my loss, or I can choose to rise from the pain and treasure the most precious gift I have - life itself.

7. Experiences first - The pleasure and positive memories afforded by great experiences far outweigh material things. If you're trying to decide between the new sofa or the family trip, take the trip every time. We need to experience life in order to learn the lessons; and the more life we experience, the more lessons we accumulate.

8. Fear, Anger, worry, envy, greed, aren't worth it - Most of the things we fear never happen. Or if they do happen, they are rarely

as bad as we fear they will be. For most of us, fear is the worst thing that will happen to us. Reality isn't as painful. The feel-good release of anger lasts a few minutes. The repercussions last far longer. Regret, stress, and unhappiness are the byproducts of anger, greed, and envy. We can learn healthier ways to communicate our feelings, so when a counterproductive emotion arises, we can step away until it dissipates.

9. Being Real is being Alive - Being real, open, humble and vulnerable builds bridges and invites people in, which allows them to relate to us on a much deeper and more intimate level. Vulnerability, practiced with safe and loving people, can heal emotional pain and strengthen relationships. Posturing, in contrast, builds walls. Creating a persona to impress others or shield our self from pain diminishes intimacy and authenticity. People generally see through this, and it pushes them away. Being disingenuous is repulsive.

10. We can handle it - Whatever we think we can't handle, we actually can. With God in our hearts we have more strength, more resilience, and more inner wisdom than we give our self credit for. We'll get through it and survive.

11. Do the work - If we want something in life, we must do the work to get it. There are rarely shortcuts. J.R.R. Tolkien said, "Short cuts make long delays." It is the work that affords us the most sense of accomplishment. The work we put in changes us; the struggle transforms us; the lessons flow from our effort.

Action beats angst - Action is the cure for worry, procrastination, indecision, anxiety, and frustration. If we would stop thinking,

worrying, pondering, perseverating and get into action, we would create momentum that leads to something valuable or, at the least, heals our turmoil.

And we must work to not fall victim to excuses for not doing the things that need to be done. It's never too late; we don't need to have all the answers before we get started; we do have enough skills to get going. All the other resources will be developed along the way. Great things are in store if we are just willing to take the steps.

12. Release - Don't become too attached to outcomes or beliefs. Remain open to all possibilities and ideas. We will be surprised how much more there is to life when we don't cling to our life experience and stop comparing.

We can release our attachment to the past. Eckart Tolle says, "The past has no power over the present moment." We can heal many wounds when we don't allow the pain of our past (or present) to linger and cause us suffering. We can release the tendency to pretend it doesn't matter when it does.

We can surrender to the fact that failure is good. We try so hard to avoid failure, but failure is the real evidence that we've tried. If we avoid failure, we avoid taking action. Learn from it and move on. The way to handle mistakes is to admit to them, accept them, learn from them, and forget them. Expect and accept that failure is part of the experience that we need at that time.

We can let go of our fondness for doing it all ourselves, and we can seek support from a professional trained to help us heal and renew our mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

13. Realize our Life is now - We keeping waiting for that amazing thing to happen in the future that will be the key to our happiness. But this is it. Right now. Life continues to be a series of 'right nows'. So if we can learn to love right now, we'll have an amazing life.

Life lessons come from our life experiences, as God wills it; God's will for us is good, acceptable, and perfect. As Eckhart Tolle says, "Some changes look negative on the surface but you will soon realize that space is being created in your life for something new to emerge."

So my prayer is that we can dedicate ourselves to God more fully, and face our lessons knowing that whatever they are they are here for our growth and transformation. New lessons, new growth, new awareness and openness to God, and new ways for Christ to express through our life so that God can be seen from a new perspective, and touch others in a new, more meaningful and powerful way.

Let us pray...