

In search of...

Truth & Right

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It Is Better

When we use the word "better," we are making a comparison between one thing and another; in many instances, this is not important. However, there are times we find this exact phrase being used in God's Word, so there are things that are not subjective or up for debate. So what does the Lord tell us is better, and what is it better than?

For one, it says in Psalm 118:8, "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man." Not to sound cynical or pessimistic, but any of us should realize the truth of those words. Man is NOT perfect—even when we are trying very hard to be—so even at our best, we can let others down. On top of that, take into consideration those who are not trying to do what is right; it is very easy to get ahead in this life by being deceitful and self-centered. Think that you can place all your trust in man? Think again; you

cannot even trust yourself! "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8) God is always true, and God is always faithful, and we need to be taking refuge in Him. If we do, we will not be disappointed. When it comes to faith, why do you believe what you believe? Because of what some man told you? Or because you read it for yourself from the holy, inspired Word of God? While we in our lives must ever strive to be better and be trustworthy, the Lord will always be better, no question.

There is far more that we can learn from the Bible about what is better for us. "A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth." (Eccl. 7:1) "Precious ointment" may lose some of its impact on us, due to cultural changes, but understand that this verse is saying that this valuable

medicine, which was used not only to heal but also was prized for its good smell (a clear status symbol), is not as important as having a good reputation. In other words, it does not matter how much you can accumulate or what your possessions are viewed as culturally, if you are not known for being a good person. How we behave and treat others will do more for us than what this world considers success. Cultures may change, but morals do not. We can be known as someone who lives according to the Bible, exhibiting love, honesty, self-control, and peace; or we can be known as someone who is impatient, rude, irrational, and greedy. Know also that our name & influence will live on even after we die. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!'" (Rev. 14:13)

Of all the things we might think of that would be better, suffering probably is not what comes to mind. Yet, in 1 Pet. 3:17 we read, "For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil." Now this verse is not saying that it is good to suffer in general (we all know that); but it speaks to the cause & circumstances of what we might suffer. In this life we will go through hardships and pain, sometimes due to time & chance,

sometimes because of the foolish (and outright sinful) decisions that we make, and sometimes we experience hardships even though we are being faithful to the Lord. Remember that Jesus suffered persecution. In Matt. 13, He was rejected as Nazareth and looked down upon because of His family and, ultimately, was put to death on the cross. But Jesus was doing God's will.

Similar to what we earlier read from Ecclesiastes, Prov. 15:17 tells us, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it." We need to be reminded that it is better to have less with good company and hospitality than to have much. At the end of the day, what means more to you? To have a gourmet meal with all the trimmings, or to have laughter and comfort? The story goes that a poor widow invited the preacher to eat in her home. She served him only bread and water and said, "If you are a Christian, this is good enough for you; if not, it is too good for you." It is easy to be distracted by what society tells us is important, but we cannot lose sight of what God tells us is better. All the material goods in the world mean nothing if we do not have love.

The last passage I want to bring up has the most important message for us to consider. Look at Matt. 18:8-9. "And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than

with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire." What this passage gets down to is this: which is more important to you, the temporal or the eternal? We can know with confidence that eternal things are better; "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37) So many indulge every little whim their "hand" or "foot" has but do not consider the eternal fires of Hell.

As we think about the gospel, it is really not that difficult to follow after Christ. His commands are simple and under the new law we have many liberties. Yet we must be ready to give up anything in order to gain Christ. No matter if it is some form of entertainment we like, or an indulgence of the flesh, it is not worth missing out on what the Lord has to offer. Jesus said that anyone who would come after Him must "deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matt.16:24)

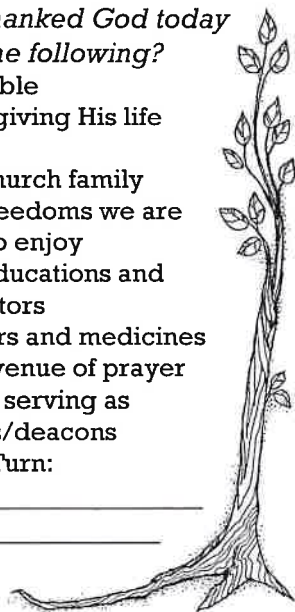
Most of the time, "better" is subjective; but not when it comes to God and His Word. He knows what is best for us. Do you want what is better, or are you settling for less? Seek Him first! Value a good name, love, doing what is right, and most of all, God.

Jarred Currence

**DEAR GOD,
I WANNA TAKE A
MINUTE, NOT TO ASK
FOR ANYTHING FROM
YOU, BUT SIMPLY TO
SAY THANK YOU,
FOR ALL I HAVE.**

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- The freedoms we are able to enjoy
- Our educations and educators
- Doctors and medicines
- The avenue of prayer
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



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Monthly Challenges

DIRECTIONS: *Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.*

1) ENCOURAGE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

1 Thess. 5:11 *"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."*

A vital work that Christians are to be engaged in is strengthening each other. This month, our challenge will be to take the initiative and do something to build up someone in our congregation. Some of the ways we can all be encouragers are:

- a) read the prayer list in the bulletin and visit someone
- b) if you can't visit, give them a phone call
- c) or send them a card to brighten their day
- d) take time before and after services to get to know the brethren
- e) say something positive about their work in the church
- f) tell others about a Bible verse or passage that encourages you
- g) offer hospitality and help if you can, and do so with love

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Romans 6:1-11

1 "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? **2** By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? **3** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. **6** We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. **7** For one who has died has been set free from sin. **8** Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. **9** We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. **10** For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. **11** So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."