

# **THE STRATEGY OF PROSPERITY**

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“The grass is always greener on the other side!”

Why would the Shepherd not take His sheep to  
the greenest-looking grass?  
*There's a snake in the grass!*





These two lies are the “default” in every person from the time we are born!

1. “I know what is best for me.”
2. “If I get what I want, I will be happy and content.”

A photograph of a white alpaca standing behind a blue wire fence in a grassy field. In the foreground, a woven basket contains a snake. A speech bubble points from the basket to the alpaca.

“You won’t die!”

How much stuff do you have?

How did you get it?

(Birthday Gifts? Christmas presents? Purchases?)

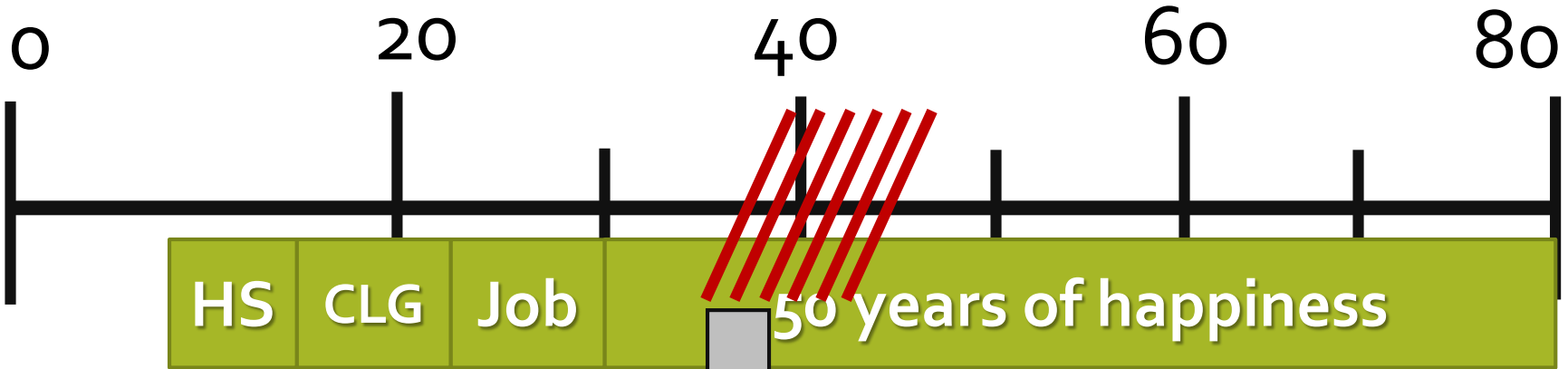
What we were taught:

- Get good grades in high school so that \_\_\_\_\_.
- Get good grades in college so that \_\_\_\_\_.
- Get a good job so that \_\_\_\_\_.
- Make good money so that \_\_\_\_\_.

# Timeline of Happiness

Birth

Death



Major Life Evaluation

By continually medicating spiritual emptiness and emotional pain with more stuff and increased busy-ness, we enter an ever-elusive cycle that weighs us down with anxiety and exhausts us with activity without satisfying our deep craving for *contentment and peace*.

What is the alternative?  
What is the job of sheep?  
**To follow the Shepherd.**

**"The Lord is my Shepherd...I shall  
*not want.*"**

Abraham FOLLOWED God. He was called by God to leave the settled life in Ur and **live the rest of his days in a tent**—dependent on what God would provide.





4 Kings fight against 5 Kings and take Lot and all his possessions as part of the captives.

Abraham takes 318 men from his servants and goes after the 4 kings.  
He defeats them in a surprise attack and brings back EVERYTHING.

Two people go out to meet Abraham:

King of Salem-  
Melchizedek (Priest of God Most High)

King of Sodom

**The possessions were a DANGER to Abraham's purpose.**

**ABRAHAM KEPT HIS FOCUS.**

**"I owe God a debt for His great mercy to me."** TITHE

Giving a tithe is not a generous thing to do; to NOT give a tithe is to take what rightfully belongs to God. It's stealing. Tithing is a very practical way that keeps perspective on Who God is, what He has given me, and that I am not to let my heart love stuff because that is not what my life is about.

Genesis 14:14-24

Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."

**(Abraham) gave him a tenth of all.**

The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give the people to me **and take the goods for yourself.**"

Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abram rich.'

"I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share."

*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update. (1995).*



What is the job of sheep?

**To follow the Shepherd.**

“The Lord is my Shepherd...I shall ***not want.***”

Achan was INVOLVED in God’s purposes. He had **lived in a tent in the wilderness for 40 years**—dependent on what God would provide. He had seen God take care of them in amazing ways.



God put EVERYTHING from Jericho under a ban. Everything was devoted to God. No one was to touch the plunder for themselves. Jericho was a “firstfruits” of all the rest of the cities.

The Israelites are defeated in their next battle and 36 men are killed.

Joshua calls everyone by lot.

Achan is chosen.

**The possessions were a DANGER to Achan’s purpose.  
ACHAN LOST HIS FOCUS!**

**“I am not to covet what God has not given me.”**

Why did he think that “stuff” was valuable? Who taught him that?

Joshua 7:1, 16-23

But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban, for Achan...took some of the things under the ban, therefore the anger of the Lord burned against the sons of Israel.

...So Joshua arose early in the morning and brought Israel near by tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. He brought the family of Judah near, and he took the family of the Zerahites; and he brought the family of the Zerahites near man by man, and Zabdi was taken. He brought his household near man by man; and Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, was taken.

Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I implore you, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me."

Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: **When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath."**

*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update. (1995).*

Money masquerades as a neutral agent, when in actuality it is consistently mentioned in Scripture as one of the Top 3 most dangerous influences on *our spiritual well-being.*



“There’s nothing wrong with money, it’s what a person does with it that matters.”

Two things wrong with that statement.

1. It’s a rebuttal to an unspoken argument.
2. It presents money as a Neutral agent in Theory.

Having LOTS OF  
money/possessions is one of  
the most hazardous materials  
to one's spiritual well-being and  
very few people remain  
unscathed by its effects.



Simplicity=



Following Jesus  
and staying  
focused on my  
purpose in His  
Kingdom.

“Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” Matt. 6:33

For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into **temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction.** I Tim. 6:7-9

These two systems are not the same.  
They are incompatible with each other.

1. "I know what is best for me."
2. "If I get what I want, I will be happy and content."





The danger for the sheep comes in trying to follow the Shepherd AND get other things.



So the question to answer is:  
“How do I stay focused?”



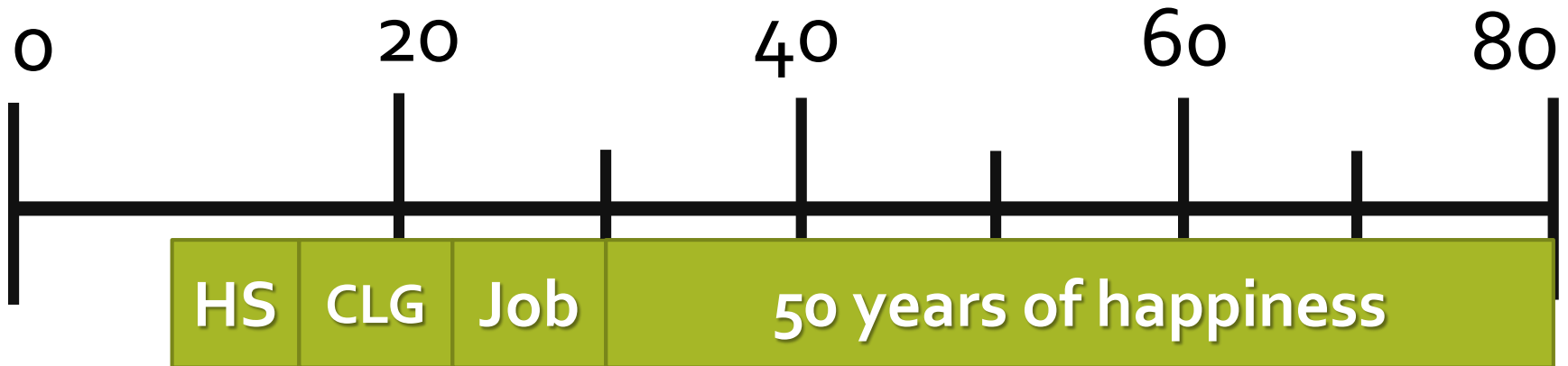
# Defining our Limits:

We have limited TIME.



Birth

Death

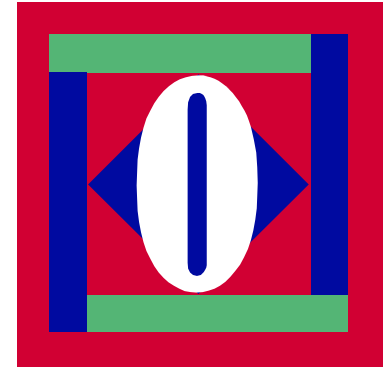


~~Do as MUCH as you can!~~

~~"Bucket List"~~

# Defining our Limits:

We end up with NOTHING.



~~“Eat, drink, and be merry.~~

~~Tomorrow we die!”~~

# Defining our Limits:



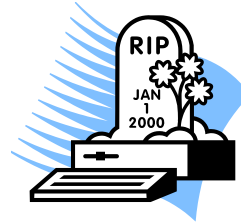
We will give an ACCOUNT for the time and possessions we had.

So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Rom.14:12

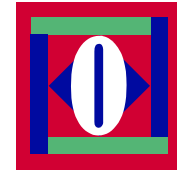


# Defining our Limits:

We have limited TIME.



We end up with NOTHING.



We will give an ACCOUNT for the time and possessions we had.



So how does this help us stay focused  
on **1 thing?**

In order to follow Jesus,  
I must be **DEPENDENT**.

Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or  
'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for  
clothing?' For (people without God) eagerly seek  
all these things; for **your heavenly Father knows**  
that you need all these things.

Matthew 6:31-32

In order to follow Jesus,  
I must be OBEDIENT.

*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **But store up** for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Matthew 6:19-21

In order to follow Jesus,  
I must be CONTENT.

*I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.*

Philippians 4:11-12

It isn't about the Amount—it is about being *free* to use *any* amount for one thing.

# Evaluate Level of Contentment

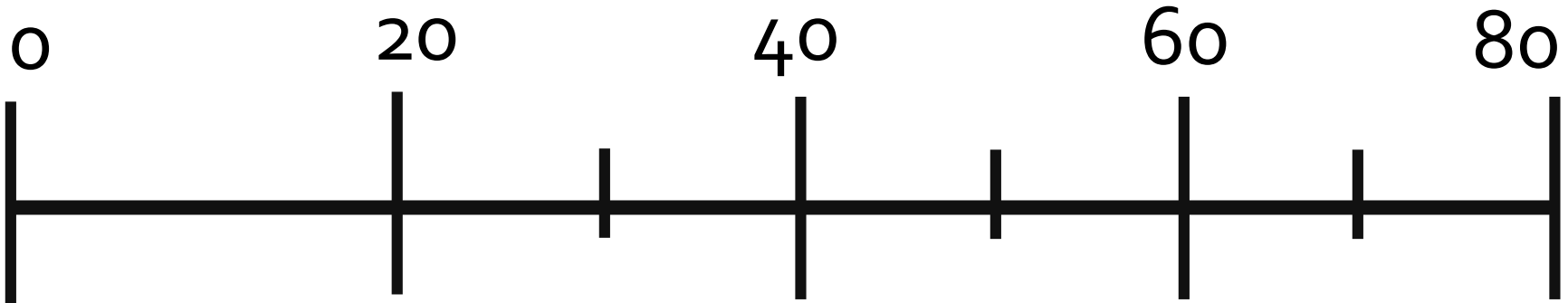
- Do I consider myself generous because I tithe?
- What is on my wish list that I want to have more money for?
- Do I find myself buying things I hadn't thought to buy, just because they are on sale?
- Do I spend an inordinate amount of time trying to "save money"?
- What catalogs or stores cultivate an "I want" in me, and how can I counter that?
- Do I have a limit on how much is "enough" for a hobby or project? (books, instruments, supplies, clothes)

So teach us to number our days so  
that we may present to You *a  
heart of wisdom.*

Psalm 90:12

Birth

Death





**“Don’t eat the grass on the other side!  
It’s poisonous to the soul!”**

A photograph of a white alpaca standing behind a blue wire fence in a grassy field. The alpaca is looking down at a snake that is coiled on the ground in the foreground. A speech bubble is positioned above the snake, containing the text "You won't die!".

**“You  
won’t  
die!”**