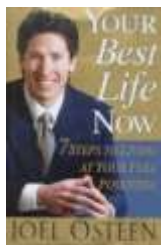


# Your Best Life . . . Later

By Daryl Wingerd



In his best-selling book, *Your Best Life Now*, TV preacher and mega-church pastor, Joel Osteen, writes: “God wants this to be the best time of your life” (p. 5). According to Osteen, God wants everybody to have financial success, physical health, and social comfort, *in this life*. Hence, the title of his book, *Your Best Life Now*.

## When would you like your treasure—now or later?

As an example of the earthly focus of Osteen’s book, consider his instruction regarding the pursuit of money: “God wants to increase you financially” (p. 5). “Even if you come from an extremely successful family, God still wants you to go further” (p. 9). “Think big. Think increase. Think abundance. Think more than enough” (p. 11).

God certainly does often bless His people financially. But the Bible never allows for Christians to *set their hearts* on money—to “develop an image” of abundance, as Osteen puts it (p. 5). Jesus told us *not* to focus our hearts on money (Matt. 6:19), but rather to “store up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . . for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (v. 20 NASB). Lasting treasure will be yours *later* if you don’t make temporary treasure your focus *now* (cf. Matt. 16:24; 1 John 2:15).

Paul reaffirmed Jesus’ teaching when he wrote to the Colossians, saying, “Set your mind on the things above, not on things that are on earth” (Col. 3:2). And Christians are warned in Hebrews 13:5, “Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have.” This warning is affirmed when Paul tells us that “the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). There is simply no way to align what Joel Osteen says about seeking after money with the plain and consistent teaching of the Bible (cf. Mark 10:25; Luke 12:15; 1 Tim. 6:8-10; 1 John 2:15-16; etc.).

## Isn’t everybody supposed to be healthy?

Joel Osteen claims that God wants everyone to have physical health *in this life*. In his view, it is a lack of faith or personal resolve that causes many to remain physically limited or chronically ill. He actually says, “If you’re serious about being well, if you really want to be made physically and emotionally whole, you must get up and get moving with your life. No more lying around feeling sorry for yourself” (p. 149). Such a statement is insulting to those with serious illnesses or physical limitations. And it leads me once again to compare Osteen’s teaching with Scripture.

If God wanted every Christian to be perfectly healthy, why was the Apostle Paul denied physical healing (2 Cor. 12:7-9)? Did he lack faith or personal resolve? Why did Paul leave Trophimus in the city of Miletus, sick (2 Tim. 4:20)? Was Trophimus “lying around feeling sorry for himself”? And if physical health and wholeness always depended on faith or personal resolve, why did Jesus often single people out of a crowd and heal them even though they never asked for healing or gave any

expression of faith (e.g. Mark 3:1-5; Luke 13:10-13; John 5:2-9; 9:1-7)? The man in John 9, for example, had been blind his entire life. Why? Was it because he had sinned or because he lacked faith? No, but rather because God had ordained his blindness and subsequent healing as a means of bringing glory to Himself (John 9:1-3). The fact is, God makes some mute, some deaf, and some blind (cf. Ex. 4:11), just as He makes others whole and healthy in this life. God can, and often does heal physically, but physical healing is not something that we control by our will, nor is it the ultimate good. “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself” (Phil. 3:20-21).

## Shouldn’t your life be easier?

Joel Osteen says that in this life, Christians can expect favorable treatment from the people of the world. On page 38 he says: “God wants to make your life easier. . . . He wants you to receive preferential treatment.” Really? Should we expect our lives as Christians to be *easier*? What about Paul’s sobering words to Timothy: “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12)? And didn’t Jesus promise that the Christian life would be narrow and difficult? (cf. Matt. 7:14 NKJV)? In Acts 14:22 the disciples said to one another, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God” (NKJV).

I need to clarify what I am *not* saying. I am not saying that the normal Christian life is necessarily one of *constant* persecution, deprivation, or physical pain. But the consistent teaching of the New Testament is that the Christian is to look for his best life *later*, not now. He may *enjoy* God’s temporal blessing, but he should never learn to *depend* on temporal blessings for happiness. Life itself is a great blessing from God. But every life, and *especially* the Christian life, comes with difficulty. Instead of craving wealth, comfort, and easy living, believers should expect, accept, and even rejoice in hardships and trials when they come (cf. James 1:2-3). The presence of poverty, pain, or persecution does not indicate that a person is not exercising enough faith or that he is not being blessed by God. In fact, God’s greatest blessings often come in ways that cause us to love this life *less*, and to hope increasingly in that which is promised *later*.

Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?

But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

(Rom. 8:24-25)

(For a more comprehensive review of *Your Best Life Now*, go to [www.ccwonline.org](http://www.ccwonline.org))