

Count the Cost

Do you struggle with saying “No”?

Or after you build up the courage to say “No”, are you immediately burdened with the sick feeling of guilt? “Yes” and “Yes” for yours truly, and I bet you can relate

In his 2004 book, *Margin*, Richard Swenson M.D. states, “**To be able to say no without guilt is to be freed from one of the biggest monsters in our overburdened lives.** If we decline, not out of self-serving laziness but for God-honoring balance and health, this level of control will not only protect our emotional margin (and time) but will actually increase it.”

As I reflect on how this applies to my life, I was reminded of a message I wrote last year on this topic. And because I need the reminder, I thought you might appreciate a refresher as well. As a wise man once said, “People need to be reminded more than they need to be instructed.”

The question: **Is the intentional life really worth it?** Should we really choose to create positive habits and disciplines in our life? Or better yet, do we really have a choice? Let me explain...

In his book *It Takes What It Takes*, the late Trevor Moawad suggests that “choice” is really an illusion. He specifically states, “**The fact of the matter is, if you want to be good, you really don’t have a lot of choices, because it takes what it takes.** You have to do what you have to do to be successful. So you have to make choices and decisions to have discipline and focus on the process of what you need to do to accomplish your goals.”

For example, if you want to get in shape and you have the option of either eating an apple or grabbing a Snickers bar, do you really have a choice? From that perspective, it seems obvious one does not have much choice. Have you ever considered how little choice we have in life if we desire to be all God’s called us to be? I’ll admit, I had not prior to reading Trevor’s book.

What I have thought a lot about are the decisions I make daily as I strive to fulfill God’s purpose for my life by living intentionally.

- Waking up early
- Reading my devotional, meditating, and spending quiet time with God
- Working out
- Eating healthy
- Engaging the kids
- Completing my daily *Success Log* each evening

None of these seem like an option when benchmarked against God’s purpose for my life. But as Dr. Swanson points out, the decisions get harder when they impact others and involve saying “No”.

Take for example the many times I have been asked to attend a social event for work or pleasure. While these events were good opportunities to make connections, build relationships, etc., I have repeatedly turned down the invites to instead focus on what I believed to be more important. The reality for me was that if I wanted to be a great husband/father and great at my career, other good uses of time might have to be sacrificed.

But again, I’ll admit, this is easier said than done. Deciding between two good uses of time (time with friends vs. time with my family) is frankly, quite hard. We are not talking about the Apple vs. the Snickers. We are talking about time with one person instead of another. My problem, and maybe yours...I struggle with letting others down by saying “No”. Therefore, I must remind myself that there is also a ‘cost’ to “Yes”.

I once heard it said that **"You can say yes to anything but not everything."** Said another way, every time you say "Yes" to one thing, you, at the same time, are saying "No" to something else. **There are no neutral decisions with your time.**

For me, this is what living life intentionally is all about. If the greatest teacher of all-time, Jesus, taught us to first count the 'cost' (Luke 14: 25-33), maybe we should do the same. Choice or no choice, first count the cost.

As I strive to be my best in this aspect of life, I encourage you to do the same. We don't get time back. Therefore, don't give it freely away without first counting the 'cost'.

INTENTIONAL LIVING CALL TO ACTION: Before you say "Yes" to the next request for your time, count the 'cost'.