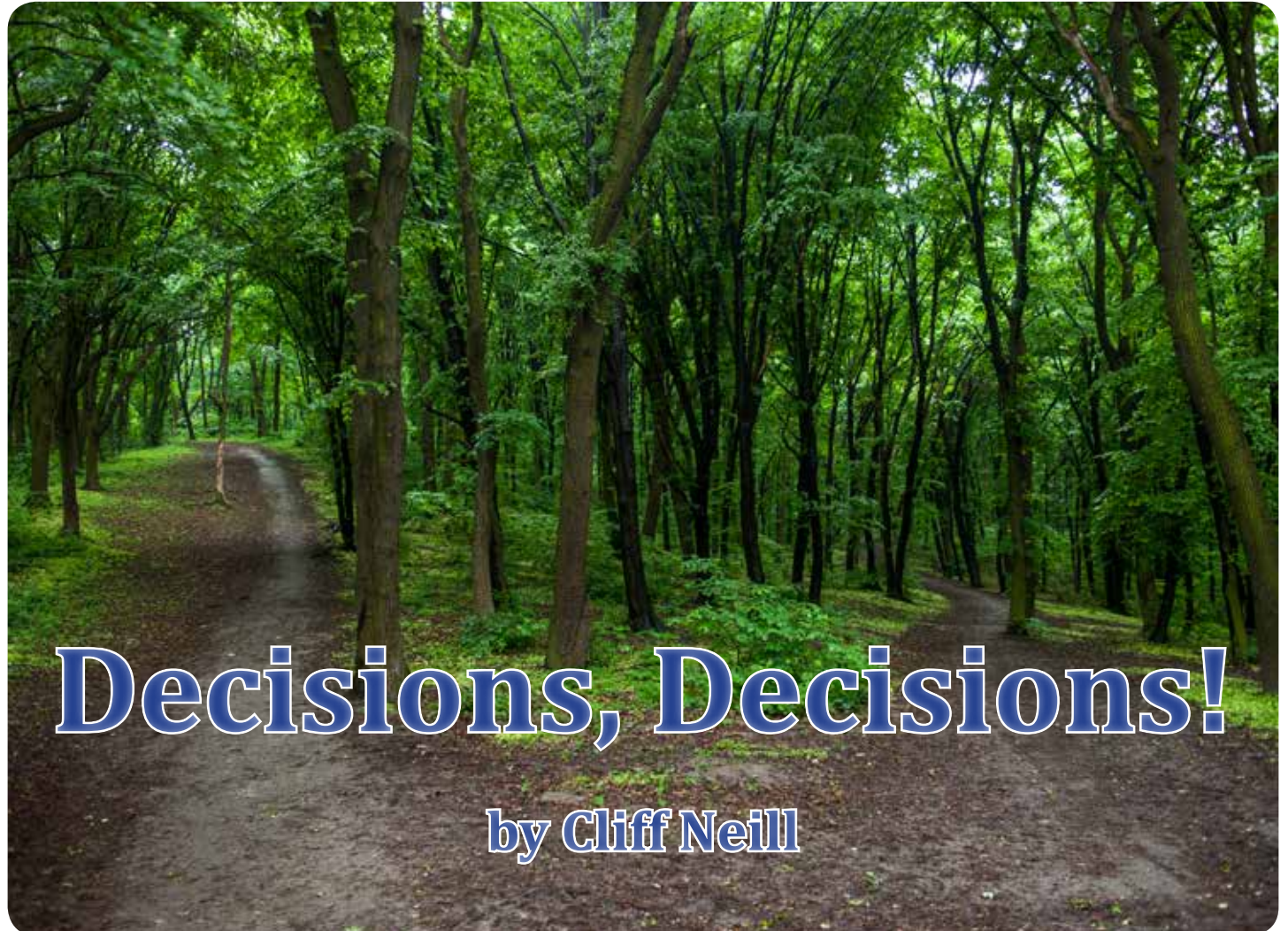


Because

...for anyone who's ever asked, 'why?'

September 2016

www.because.uk.com



Decisions, Decisions!

by Cliff Neill

As we journey through life there are times when we all encounter a crossroads; a time when some decision needs to be made that will probably be instrumental in shaping the rest of our lives and so is not to be taken lightly; especially if we are young enough to have most of our lives ahead of us.

There are many methods that people have used in the past to find their way around the stress of making a decision for themselves. You've probably heard them all – let's draw straws, or flip a coin, read our horoscope, weigh up the pros and cons or seek wise council from older and more mature friends or close family members.

In 1914 Edward Thomas and Robert Frost, two poets who had met in Gloucestershire and had become firm friends, were sitting on an orchard stile near Little Iddens close to Frost's home when word

arrived that Britain had declared war on Germany. Edward was British but his friend Robert came from New Hampshire in the US. On that fateful day they discussed just what this war would do to their families.

Robert Frost opted to return to the United States and, as a result of this decision, Edward decided to join him with his family. They planned to live side by side in America working, teaching, and farming. And so Robert returned to the safety of his home state thousands of miles from France and the violent war with all of its death and destruction.

Unfortunately, the decision for Edward wasn't so easy and he lingered on in England; his decision was whether to enlist and join the conflict or to go with his friend, as planned, to the safety of America. During this period of time Robert Frost wrote this

poem and sent it to Edward:

The Road Not Taken.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same.

Both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.¹

This poem has been interpreted many ways over the years: is it about indecision, regret, joy, the delight that comes from going the way few others have chosen? Perhaps it's about all of these emotions, depending on our state of mind as we read it – what do you think? I also wonder just how Edward reacted to it – we'll never know. And, also, I guess we will never know why he chose France, war and death instead of peace and life in New Hampshire. Was he embarrassed not to, or was it the posters of Lord Kitchener pointing a finger with the caption; "Your country needs you!" Or, perhaps, he saw it as a chance to make a difference.

Whatever the reasons, and even though their friendship meant a great deal to both of them, Edward Thomas choose to go to war. Sadly, he was



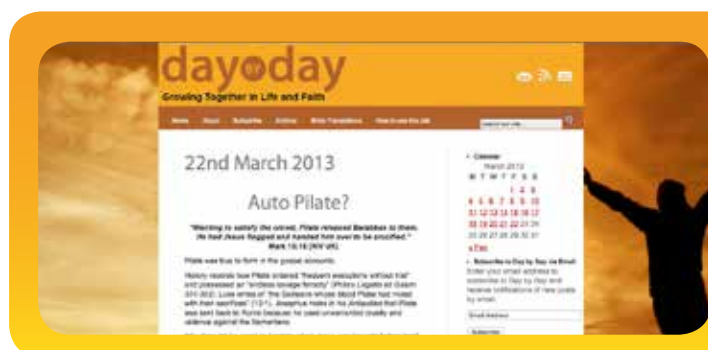
killed in the first battle of Arras, Easter 1917. He had survived a little over two months in France!

When faced with decisions, there may be more than two options. It could be there are several paths we could take. A book that can help us is the Bible. It has some things to say about making decisions and urges us to be wise, to seek counsel from others who are more mature and perhaps know quite a bit about the particular choice that we need to make. Maybe they had taken that same path themselves years before and know all about that journey's pitfalls and perhaps its blessings.

The writer of Proverbs puts it this way – "Without counsel purposes are disappointed; but in the multitude of counsellors they are established" (Proverbs 15:22 KJV). Why seek counsel? Because the decisions we need to make during life's long journey are vitally important for us and our families, and, hopefully, they will lead us onwards to life and peace.

So let's all choose wisely.

¹ <http://poemhunter.com/poem/the-road-not-taken/>



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Like Father, Like Son!

by Richard Fowler

If you're a man, you need to read this article! But first...

How did you become who you are today?

You are a unique blend of personality, talent and your very own idiosyncrasies that leaves your mates wondering why you pour the milk into your tea cup before the water! But at the end of the day, whatever your short comings, no one does it quite like you!

But have you ever stopped to consider what (or who even...) made you into the person you are today?

Well, in the search of how you become your very own cocktail of characteristics, researchers have uncovered some interesting origins. You men may never look at yourselves the same again...you see, quite a lot rests on your shoulders...well, actually, not quite on your shoulders, but rather, in another part of your anatomy.

Yet, it is sometimes curious to see how men can be represented. What do I mean?

Now I'm not one of these gender defending chauvinistic activists who feels it's his human mission to establish the alpha male as cognitively competent in all areas of life. But I would like to point out something you may have already noticed. You too may have witnessed the

increasingly subtle sub-human-like level of intelligence that is attributed to most men in television adverts relating to products of a domestic nature. In fact, after watching adverts promoting well known products, you may be forgiven for thinking men are only interested in food, sex and sleep. If these adverts were a reflection of the reality, the downward evolution of the male, it would appear, is in full swing...or should I say descent! But in the search of what makes us who we are, nothing could be further from the truth. Because you men who are reading this have an influence that you may never have appreciated before.

And scientists are discovering that it is possibly an influence that is pre-programmed before you even father a child. This discovery is hinting at how our children become, in part, who they are. And it all starts in the sperm!

What am I talking about...well, epigenetics! Epi-what! I hear you say. Don't be put off by the big word, it's simpler than you think.

Epigenetics are the chemical tags attached onto your DNA. These tags can actually switch genes on or off. The gene activity is therefore changed, due to some genes being turned on and off. Because of this, growth and development in the embryo can be changed. The interesting thing is that environment and experience,

such as smoking and diet, can influence which genes are tagged or not.

A recent New Scientist article reported on these findings: epigenetic information attached to frog sperm affected the expression of genes, and thus, how the embryo developed. But more fascinatingly, a controversial study suggested that even the fear of a particular smell can be passed down epigenetically. “Researchers gave male mice electric shocks every time they were exposed to a sweet fragrance, until eventually the smell alone was enough to make them shudder. Subsequent pups feared the same smell, even though they hadn’t received any shock – and so did the next generation of pups.” (New Scientist, May 2016).

Although more research needs to be conducted, what is the implication? That a father’s experience might affect their offspring’s characteristics!

But for you fathers out there, your influence does not stop at your sperm. It is not so much the presence of epigenetic tags on your sperm that makes the biggest difference, but rather, your everyday presence in real life!

Did you know that 1 million children in the UK are growing up without their father? And America I hear you ask? 24 million is your answer. And this ‘man desert’ is having a profound effect on the next generation. In almost every negative social issue that is crippling our society, having no father around predicts negative outcomes for the child, including worse emotional and behavioural problems, crime, alcohol and substance abuse, educational outcomes, teenage pregnancy and sexual activity.

Simply put, children with fathers actively involved in their lives have much better socio-economic outcomes in almost every way than those children who do not have fathers active in their lives. In fact, children are much more likely to follow the faith of their father even if their mother is not practising the same faith. When it comes to Christianity, two thirds to three-quarters of children will follow their father’s faith regardless of their mother’s belief.

Of course, if you don’t have a father in your life that does not mean that you have to be defined by that. But we men need to know our influence and the responsibility that comes with it.

Although this article is intended for fathers and would-be fathers, let’s not in any way ignore the impact of

mothers in genetics and the caring development of children. Perhaps that’s another article for another time. I am also well aware of step-parents, who have no genetic investment in children in their care, and who are sterling examples of mothers and fathers.

Nevertheless, fathers, you have an awesome influence! Don’t forget it!

Because of this, here are three small changes that all parents can make, thus creating a nurturing environment for the next generation:

- 1. Spend time:** your presence is the best present you can give your child, not money. Halve the money you spend on them and double the time. Go to the gym, go for a walk, watch a movie together...spend time with them.
- 2. Encourage:** you are building more than just their self-esteem, you are building someone who may one day be a leader of a family, business or a nation. Tell them ‘well done’ for something they have achieved...they only want to make you proud.
- 3. It is never too late:** you may not have been there for your children, but it’s never too late. Make the connection, it may be the missing ingredient in your son’s or daughter’s life. Call them, visit them, don’t leave it any longer.

Now, there is one biological law that seems to define creation: we produce after our own kind; like produces like. This biological rule of thumb has now an even greater genetic authenticity through the emerging evidence about epigenetics and its influence. Maybe God is showing us what He intended all along: to create humanity in His own likeness and image. That God is wanting us to be a ‘chip off the old block’ – a replication of Himself in the image of his Son, Jesus Christ – His nature, His mind and His love in us. To be the best fathers we can be...just like Him.

Fathers, wake up to your worth!

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The Spark of Life

by Joseph Tkach

The beginning of life has always amazed me.

The fact that God designed life to start from something as small as an egg cell (ovum), united in the womb with an even smaller sperm cell (spermatozoon), is remarkable to say the least. At the moment of that union, known as *conception*, cells begin to multiply and a human life begins to take shape. Based on recent research, some scientists now refer to the moment of conception as *the spark of life*.

The term *spark of life* has been used over the years to convey several meanings. In the book, *Spark of Life: Electricity in the Human Body*, Frances Ashcroft notes how electricity drives all that we think, feel and do by moving through the ion channels in the membranes of the cells in our body. Because of this phenomenon, doctors are able to use an EKG to measure the electrical activity of our heart. This phenomenon explains how we discern a particular substance (like a chili pepper) as being hot. It also explains how a blood-sucking vampire bat detects the body heat of its prey (like the heat coming from your big toe as it protrudes outside the protective mosquito netting!).

Conception: the spark of life

Recent research concerning the spark of life comports with what Christians have believed for centuries *life begins at conception*. Formal teaching of this belief goes back at least as far as the fourth-century writings of Basil the Great (one of the first and best theologians of the Trinity).

Though it is common to refer metaphorically to the “fireworks” that accompany conception, researchers at Northwestern University in Chicago recently have shown that another kind of fireworks occurs when the egg and sperm unite, forming a zygote. As shown in the artist’s illustration above, and as documented in an amazing video at <http://youtu.be/u-ZpXOOsYQI>, at the moment of conception a flash of light occurs as a zap of energy is released around the newly fertilized egg. Though scientists had seen this phenomenon in other animals, the Northwestern researchers were the first to see it in humans. The flash occurs when the sperm cell enters the egg, triggering an increase in calcium, which

then releases zinc from the egg. As the zinc shoots out, it binds to small molecules that emit fluorescence. In a press release, one of the researchers shared her excitement in this discovery: “To see the zinc radiate out in a burst from each human egg was breathtaking.”

Light and life

I love this discovery because it serves as yet another parable in nature pointing to God, the unseen Source of the “light” and “life” of the world. From antiquity there has been a recognition that there is a relationship in the natural world between light and life. This association was used by the biblical writers to point to the deeper and unseen reality of the gracious relationship between God and his creation. The nature and quality of this relationship was fully and finally revealed in the



incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ, beginning with his conception in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit as she received and freely submitted to the invisible Word spoken to her by the angel of God. You will recall Mary’s response: “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38 KJV).

The apostle John wrote this about Jesus: “In him was life; and that life was the light of all mankind” (John 1:4). In John’s Gospel, “light” is used 16 times to describe the work of Christ. Jesus is not merely a light, or another light among many. Rather, he is the only Light and the true Light (John 1:9). In claiming to be the Light of the World, Jesus was clearly declaring himself to be the Messiah. Since one of the names of

the expected Messiah was *light* (Isaiah 60:19-22), there could be no question about his self-identification.

Knowing who Jesus is should, perhaps, make the discovery of the phenomenon of the flashing spark of light at conception a bit less surprising. Jesus is the life-giver and it is as though he gives an approving wink at each moment of conception. And since Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith, he will finish what he starts in each of us as we return a loving response to him, growing up in him and receiving from him a share in God's own kind of life, that is, eternal life.

The theme of light goes all through the Scriptures and is even used to describe God's throne in the book of Revelation:

After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard

speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. (Revelation 4:1-5)

Yes, life does begin with fireworks. But God apparently has more fireworks in store for us as we celebrate life in the Trinity for all eternity.

I look forward to seeing the fireworks display!

Rubik's Cube

by Keith Hartick

Do you remember the Rubik's Cube craze of many years ago? They are still around today but no longer the "must have" they once were. Some people could do them in a matter of minutes but I always seemed to struggle to get all the colours in the right place. No matter how I twisted and turned some of the colours always ended up in the wrong place.

Usually I had to get one of my children to sort out the mess I made and get all the different colours in the right place on each of the six faces of the cube.

Do you sometimes feel like that about life? No matter how hard you try something always seems to be in the wrong place for you, maybe physically, emotionally or spiritually! Perhaps since the Brexit vote you feel your world has shifted whichever way you voted, that something is out of place.

Christians also suffer from the ups and downs of life, from the feeling that sometimes the colours are in the wrong place, but they have some special knowledge

and promises that reassure them that it does not matter. Why, because they are promised that God, in the person of Jesus Christ, has already guaranteed that all the colours on their life's Rubik Cube will be put in the right place for them. Christians can relax knowing that in or out of the EU, under a government of any political persuasion, in whatever physical, emotional or spiritual situation they find themselves in, God is in charge of their lives and futures.



Would you like to have that confidence and reassurance?

Whatever your current situation, however mixed up the colours of your life are, why not pray for help and guidance. Don't feel you have to come to church to pray for help. Pray about your problems, ask God to show you he exists, that He is real. If then,

at some point in the future, you feel the need to come to church that's great, you will be welcome. But God's love is unconditional, so put it to the test, see if the colours of your life can be put into the right place for you. With God, nothing is impossible.

Champion of the World

by Barry Robinson



It's been fascinating to watch athletes competing in the Rio Olympics to be the world champion in their respective fields.

Recently I went to see the rock band Queen (plus Adam Lambert) live at the O2 arena; a performance which the Evening Standard called an 'all-guns-blazing rock machine'. It's not everyone's cup of tea, I know, but it warmed the cockles of this old rocker's heart. The evening concluded with one of the group's biggest rock anthems: 'We are the Champions' and was a fitting end to a spectacular show.

Way back in 1986, Noel Richards, a Christian worship leader, saw a TV programme with Queen playing live at Wembley Stadium. As they were singing 'We are the Champions' he thought to himself how incredible it was to see 70,000 people singing along with Freddie Mercury, their hands raised in adoration.

So began a dream: of one day seeing Wembley Stadium and similar venues filled with Christians who declare that there is only one champion of the world, and his name is Jesus.

In 1994 Richards along with his wife wrote the song 'Champion', the opening verse and chorus of which is:

*The world is looking for a hero
We know the greatest one of all
The mighty ruler of the nations
King of kings and Lord of lords
Who took the nature of a servant*

*And gave his life to save us all
We will raise a shout
We will shout it out
He is the champion
Of the world*

Then in 1997 Richards organised and performed at the 'Champion of the World' event at Wembley Stadium with an attendance of almost 45,000, making it the biggest contemporary Christian music event ever staged in that venue.

He has since played in front of 66,000 at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff; to 60,000 at Flushing Meadows in New York; and also at the Olympic Stadium in Berlin, and at sell-out venues in San Francisco and Hungary. His stated goal when organising the Wembley event was "to proclaim Jesus Christ as the true champion of the world, in the place where the 'gods of sport and music' had been worshipped."

The idea that Jesus is our champion is a Biblical one. The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us Jesus is the one who came to this earth as our champion in order to defeat sin, Satan and death on our behalf, thereby initiating and bringing to completion our salvation. Through his victory on our behalf, the Champion of the World has blazed the trail for us and has secured our eternal salvation.

Therefore, let's keep "**our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith**" (Hebrews 12:2 NLT)

Speaking of Life:



Out on the Edge

The other day I saw an interview with the lead guitarist for U2 – the Edge. He was at his studio doing some guitar tests. While he was tuning up, he talked about the difference between a “showboating” guitarist who tries to steal the spotlight from everyone else and a guy who’s just trying to be part of the team. He said he likes to approach his role in the band by taking the latter approach, trying to find places where he can serve best. That got me thinking...

As a culture we can sometimes reward dynamic leaders who enjoy being the center of attention. I know from experience that these types of “lead guitarists” can be difficult to share the stage with. They have a tendency to hold the spotlight squarely on themselves. But that’s not how it’s supposed to be. As Christians, we’re called to have a servant’s heart. See what Paul put it when writing to the church in Philippi –

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:3-7).

Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus would embody Paul’s advice, serving his disciples. On more than one occasion, Christ made an extra effort to direct the attention away from him and instead placed it on his heavenly Father or the Holy Spirit. In preaching, he told his audience that he was seeking to bring worshippers to the Father and that his Father loves and desired a relationship with them. Even in teaching his disciples to pray, he turned the spotlight on our heavenly Father,

revealing to them that the very source and substance of his life was to complete his Father’s will and not his own. He was certain of his role and identity as Son of God, and that’s why he could serve those around him with joy.

If we can follow his cue and seek to receive from the Father through him, and then turn to serve one another

with humility and love, we’ll really begin making some great music together!

I’m Joseph Tkach, Speaking of LIFE.

Speaking of Life is now on TV! It is used by UCB (United Christian Broadcasters) in between longer programmes and is aired on UCB on Thursdays and Fridays between 7.15 - 7.30 am and between 1.45 and 2.00pm, on Saturdays between 6.45 and 7.00 am., and on Sundays between 1.45 and 2.00 pm. These timings may vary.

Photo: wikicommons



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