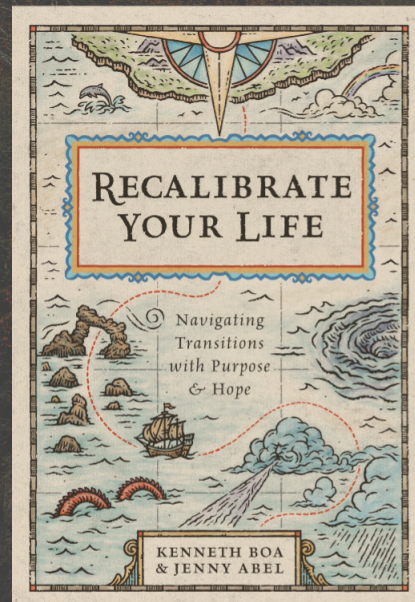


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GOD'S PROMISES

ACCOUNTABLE FOR LIFE

Read Hebrews 9:27

In 1831, Charles Robert Darwin, a student preparing for the clergy at Cambridge University in England, sailed aboard the *H.M.S. Beagle* on a scientific expedition. Returning to England in 1836, Darwin developed his theory of evolution through natural selection, which he eventually published in 1859 in his book *On the Origin of Species*.

Prior to the publication of Darwin's theory, the influence of the Bible on scientific worldviews, at least in the realm of creation, was still strong. That is, individual species were still widely believed to have been created intact and separate from one another. However, Darwin's views, based on natural selection, said that all living organisms are descended from common ancestors and have evolved over time—the stronger dominating the weaker. In the century and a half since the publication of Darwin's work, the creation/evolution controversy continues unabated.

At the end of the discussions, evolution and creation differ at the core in an important way: If evolution is true, God either doesn't exist or is not personally involved in His creation, and we are not accountable to anyone for our lives. All people exist as the product of chance, a roll of the genetic dice, and we are free to be and do what our strengths will allow us to get away with.

If, on the other hand, a personal and omnipotent God created us and acts as the moral governor of the universe, we are responsible for the stewardship of our own lives. One day we will stand before Him to answer for the honor or shame brought to Him by our lives. The Bible addresses this

issue: "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27). If the Bible is to be believed (and it is), all human beings are accountable to their Creator for the lives they have lived.

Some things in life do evolve, but humans from a primordial stew are not among them. Our conscience tells us that we owe our lives to our Creator (Rom. 1:20; 2:14–16), and the Scriptures tell us that after our life on earth is over, we will answer to that Creator. We can prepare for that day by letting this day be one of stewardship and honor to Him.

God's Promise:

You are the steward of
an important part of His
creation: your life.

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OCTOBER 2026

REFLECTIONS

A teaching letter encouraging
believers to develop a clear mind
and a warm heart

BEING DEFINED BY THE WORD

O Lord, You have revealed Your will and Your ways in Your Word. In its pages I discover truths about You, myself, others, and Your world. Grant me the grace to overcome the spiritual and moral inertia that keeps me from being a regular student of the Bible. May I read its pages, meditate on the words and truths, and hide Your Word in my heart so that I will not succumb to temptation and sin, but be increasingly honoring to You. Grant that I would choose to set my mind and heart on the things above, where Christ is, seated in the heavenly places. I want to be defined by the truths of Your Word rather than the lies of this passing world system. As I learn and reflect on Your truths, I want to respond with unconditional commitment, knowing that I love You because You first loved me.

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Psalm 71: What It Takes to Stay the Course

The actor Lee Marvin, who died of a heart attack in 1987 at the age of 63, once made this despondent statement: “They put your name on a star in the sidewalk on Hollywood Boulevard and you find a pile of dog manure on it. That tells the whole story, baby.” If we are citizens of this world only, Marvin was right; the achievements of fame, position, possessions, and power will not endure and will not satisfy. Our monuments and accomplishments will crumble around us and offer little comfort at the end of our brief sojourn on this earth.

By contrast, consider Peter Kreeft’s words in *Three Philosophies of Life*:

The world’s purest gold is only dung without Christ. But with Christ, the basest metal is transformed into the purest gold. The hopes of alchemy can come true, but on a spiritual level, not a chemical one. There is a “philosopher’s stone” that transmutes all things into gold. Its name is Christ. With him, poverty is riches, weakness is power, suffering is joy, to be despised is glory. Without him, riches are poverty, power is impotence, happiness is misery, glory is despised.

Once we have committed our lives to Christ, there should be no turning back—indeed, if we think about it, there is nothing of real

and lasting substance to which we can turn apart from Him. In spite of this truth, there is an epidemic of believers who drop out of the race during their middle years. Many begin well but finish poorly.¹

What does it take to “run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1)? Psalm 71, the prayer of a man who wanted to end well, offers insightful answers to this question.

First: Dependence

David begins with a plea to God for deliverance from his adversaries:

In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge;
Let me never be ashamed.
In Your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
Incline Your ear to me and save me.
Be to me a rock of habitation to which I may continually come;
You have given commandment to save me,
For You are my rock and my fortress.
Rescue me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked,
Out of the grasp of the wrongdoer and ruthless man... (Ps. 71:1–4)

The first thing it takes to stay the course is the stark realization that without utter dependence on our God, we will fail. Our warfare

is “not against flesh and blood,”² although these may be involved, but against the entrapments and entanglements of the world, the devices and desires of the flesh, and the schemes and seductions of the devil. Unless we find our life and power in Christ and walk in love and obedience to Him, we will be no match for our adversaries, and we will be impotent to accomplish anything of eternal value.

Second: Remembrance

The psalmist continues:

For You are my hope;
O Lord God, You are my confidence from my youth.
By You I have been sustained from my birth;
You are He who took me from my mother’s womb;
My praise is continually of You.

I have become a marvel to many,
For You are my strong refuge.
My mouth is filled with Your praise
And with Your glory all day long. (Ps. 71:5–8)

The second thing it takes to stay the course is the careful cultivation of a spiritual memory. In each of our lives, the Lord carves benchmarks and reminders of His gracious care, provision, and wisdom. We would do well to “forget none of His benefits” (Ps. 103:2); when we stop reviewing them, they pass out of memory, and we take grace for granted and sleep with the illusion that we got where we are on our own.

Nothing ages more quickly than gratitude, because the flesh cries out for independence and spurns dependence on God. Wisdom teaches us to acknowledge God in all our ways and give thanks in *everything* (1 Thess. 5:18, italics mine), from the small things to the great things.

Third: Acknowledgment

After another plea to the Lord for salvation from the hands of his enemies (Ps. 71:9–13), the psalmist writes:

But as for me, I will hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.
My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And of Your salvation all day long;
For I do not know the sum of them.
I will come with the mighty deeds of the Lord God;
I will make mention of Your righteousness, Yours alone.

O God, You have taught me from my youth,
And I still declare Your wondrous deeds.
And even when I am old and gray,
O God, do not forsake me,
Until I declare Your strength to this generation,
Your power to all who are to come. (Ps. 71:14–18)

The third thing it takes to stay the course is a public acknowledgement of the benefits and greatness of the Lord in our

lives. The blessings we receive from God are not ends in themselves, but are given to us in order to be a blessing to others. The more we receive from His hand, the more we must give, and these gifts include truth as well as treasure.

Fourth: Worship

Psalm 71 concludes with a declaration of praise to the God whose righteousness “reaches to the heavens . . . [and has] done great things” (v. 19). The fourth thing it takes to stay the course is a growing sense of wonder and amazement at the goodness, truth, beauty, and love of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The bigger your God, the smaller your problems; the smaller your God, the bigger your problems. Your vision of God will grow in proportion to your knowledge of Him, and this knowledge is not only propositional but personal.

How do you get to know Him better? The same way you develop intimacy with other people: time together, oneness of purpose, openness, honesty, teachability, and sacrificial love.

“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith” (Heb. 12:1–2).

1. This article’s introductory text draws from my concluding chapter of *Conformed to His Image*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 477–478.

2. Ephesians 6:12.

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