

## How to Wreck Your Life By David Feddes

When I talked with Jim, he was feeling devastated. Jim's wife had just dumped him in order to share her bed with a much younger man. Jim felt betrayed and crushed by his wife's adultery. I felt sad for him and told him of my concern. What a horrible thing to go through!

As we talked further, I asked Jim if he and his wife had any children. He replied, "No, we don't. Not together, anyway. She has two kids from a previous marriage. I have a child from a previous relationship—I lived with a girlfriend for several years and never married her, but we had a baby together. My daughter now lives with her mother, my former girlfriend."

A bit later I asked Jim whether he believed in God. "Oh yes, I believe in God," Jim said. "I also believe in guardian angels who look out for me."

I asked Jim if he ever read the Bible. "No," he answered, "I don't read the Bible."

I asked Jim if he ever goes to church. "No," he said, "I don't go to church. I've never really seen any need for church."

Then Jim changed the subject and said, "What do you think of psychics? Do you think psychics can read your mind and tell you what's going to happen to you in the future?"

I responded, "Why do you ask? Do you go to psychics?"

"I sure do—all the time," Jim declared. "I get lots of guidance from psychics. What do you think of them?"

"Well," I said, "at best psychics are fakes who have no special powers and make things up as they go along. At worst, if a psychic does have any special powers, those powers come from demons. So whether psychics are fake or downright demonic, they are bad news." Jim was taken aback. He said he'd have to think about it some more.

Then I said to him, "Jim, I'm really sorry about your wife's adultery, and I don't want to add to your pain. But your troubles go a lot deeper than your problems with your wife. You are out of tune with God. Sure, you believe God exists, but hey—your wife also believes you exist. That doesn't mean there's a good relationship. There's a big difference between believing someone exists and actually having a healthy relationship. Your wife believes you exist but she ignores you, goes against your wishes, and doesn't want you in her life. You believe God exists, but you ignore him, go against his wishes, and don't have him in your life. You lived with a woman for years and never married her, even though God says that sex is for marriage only. You go to psychics, even though God says not to, and you don't spend time in church, even though God commands it."

"You need to change," I told Jim. "Is your wife's adultery all that different from when you lived with a girlfriend as though marriage didn't matter? The root problem of it all is living without God. You need God in your life. Don't just believe God exists. Seek a *relationship* with Christ. Read the Bible. Do what it says. I'm sorry, Jim, if what I'm saying makes you even more miserable. I don't want to add to your troubles. I just want you to find a new life." Jim said I'd given him a lot to think about, and then we said goodbye.

Now, when I tell you about Jim, I'm not using his real name, and I've changed a few minor details to protect his identity. But our conversation went pretty much as I've

described it. I've talked about similar things with many other people. I'm saddened whenever someone's life is in ruins, and I'm reluctant to make them feel even worse by pointing out more problems. But sometimes the only way out of a mess is first to realize how you got there.

So let's pretend you're eager to wreck your life, and you want some clear, sure advice on how to do it. You want to know the road to ruin in three simple steps.

## **Be Yourself**

If I had to write a manual or produce a seminar on how to wreck your life, my first piece of advice would be this: be yourself! That's all it takes. Just be yourself. Hang on to your own opinions. Follow your own urges. Do whatever you feel like doing. Just be yourself, and you're sure to destroy yourself. In Proverbs 14:12, the Bible says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." The Bible doesn't repeat many things in the very same words, but it repeats this exact statement in Proverbs 16:25, which again declares, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." Nothing feels more right than being yourself—and nothing is more certain to wreck your life.

Jim was just being himself and following a way that seemed right to him. It seemed okay to believe in God and angels without any real relationship with Christ. It seemed okay not to read the Bible. It seemed okay not to worship in church. It seemed okay to move in with a woman, have a child, and then move out and move on. It seemed okay to depend on psychics for guidance. It seemed okay for Jim to follow his instincts and be himself, but when his wife followed her instincts and went to bed with another man, suddenly it didn't seem okay.

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death"—relationships die, dreams die, the body dies, and ultimately, there is the horrible death beyond death, in hell. So be yourself, do whatever seems okay to you, and you will wreck your life now, and you will wreck your eternal future. Being yourself is a key step on the road to ruin.

Isn't it insulting to be told that you will wreck your life and go to hell simply by being yourself? What is so awful and deadly about being yourself? Well, the Bible says that on our own, without God, all of us are spiritually dead in sin. We try to satisfy the cravings of our sinful self. We follow thoughts and desires that seem normal to us but anger God and bring us under his punishment (Ephesians 2:1-3).

This fallen self, sometimes called "the flesh" or "the sinful nature," is what we're all born with. We don't need to learn how to be selfish or sinful; it comes naturally. If your selfish, sinful nature remains your core identity, if you don't receive a new self through God's Holy Spirit, if you just go on being yourself and doing whatever your sinful nature tells you to do, you will wreck your life and go to hell. Scripture says, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction" (Galatians 6:7-8). Wrecking your life is as certain as planting and harvesting. Plant to please yourself, and you will reap ruin and hell.

## **Be Godless**

Let's look at a second simple step on the road to ruin, another guideline on how to wreck your life: be godless. You don't have to be an atheist to be godless. You can believe God exists and still be godless, simply by not listening to God and not putting him first in your life. You can be godless by seeking your own immediate desires instead of God's eternal blessings. You can be godless by putting your own decisions ahead of God's direction.

A biblical example of this was Esau. Esau knew God was real, but Esau didn't pay attention to the Lord or value the Lord's blessings. As the oldest son in the family, Esau was in line to receive the special birthright as the next family leader and as the main heir of the promises God made to his father and grandfather. One day, Esau was out in the open country for awhile. By the time he returned home, he was hungry—really hungry. His younger brother Jacob was cooking some stew. Esau said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm starving!"

Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."

Esau said, "Look, I am about to die. What good is the birthright to me?" Esau swore an oath, giving the birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. Esau ate and drank, and then got up and left. The Bible sums it up by saying, "Esau despised his birthright" (see Genesis 25:29-34).

Esau cared more about his stomach than about God. He didn't value having God's blessing on his life and on generations to come. His motto was, "I want what I want when I want it." Esau followed his immediate appetites, not only for food, but also for women. He found two women who were idol-worshipers, but he wanted them, so he married both, without regard for what God would think, without regard for what his parents would think. Esau's wicked wives were such a grief to Esau's mother, Rebekah, that she hardly wanted to go on living, and his father Isaac was also upset.

When Esau finally realized how displeasing his wives were to his parents, what did he do? He went out, found a woman he thought his parents would like better and added her to the wives he already had. Esau was just being himself, following his own instincts, trying to solve problems his own way—and in the process piling more problems on top of those he already had.

If you want to wreck your life, be godless like Esau. Do whatever your appetites tell you; don't think about future blessings you might be throwing away. Go ahead and assume that even if God exists, he won't mind being ignored. Your job is to do what you want; God's job is to send guardian angels to make sure you enjoy maximum fun and minimum damage. Even if you believe there's a God, just be unholy and godless, and your road will end in ruin—guaranteed. You'll stumble from one mess to another and end up exiled from God in hell. The Bible says that "without holiness no one will see the Lord" and warns against being "godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward ... when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected" (Hebrews 12:14-16).

## **Be Unbiblical**

If you haven't already heard enough on how to wreck your life, here's a third step on the road to ruin: be unbiblical.

One way to be unbiblical is to look for supernatural guidance apart from the Bible. Consult a psychic who claims to read your mind and see your future. Base your decisions on what the psychic says. Read a horoscope faithfully. Find people who are involved in channeling or witchcraft, and get guidance from them. The Bible warns that all such things are evil, so if you go ahead and do them, you'll wreck your life.

But maybe you don't believe these superstitions, and you do think the Bible is special. That still doesn't have to keep you from wrecking your life. If you want to keep racing along the road to ruin, you can think of the Bible as the Good Book and keep a copy lying around—just don't read it. Or, if you do read it, stick with just a few verses you like that make you feel good. Don't get into a habit of reading the Bible every day. Don't fill your mind with biblical thoughts. Don't meditate on God's promises. Don't tremble at God's warnings. Don't focus too much on Jesus. And make sure you don't put the Bible's message into practice in your everyday life.

Be unbiblical, and you will wreck your life, perhaps without ever knowing why. "The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble" (Proverbs 4:19). Sometimes this ignorant darkness comes from not having the Bible at all. But even if you have the Bible, you can still wreck your life. Just leave the Bible on the shelf and fill your mind with all sorts of other things. Read supermarket tabloids and romance novels. Listen to shock jocks on the radio or fill your headset with sleazy music. Play lots of violent video games. Spend lots of time on the Internet, especially on filthy porn sites or crude chat rooms. Watch as much television as you can. Go to the movies whenever possible. Rent several videos every week. Join the millions of people who watch show after show about sex and killing. Don't worry—you don't have to become a killer or act like a sexual sleazeball in order to wreck your life. Just fill your imagination and thoughts with such things. Feed your appetite with things that Satan finds delicious, and your heart will get darker and darker. Soon the Bible will seem dry and dull, and you'll have a taste for darker things.

But maybe you don't have a taste for media poison. Even so, you can still crowd out the Bible and wreck your life. You don't have to take poison. Just stuff your mind with junk food. Get glued to your TV. Watch hours of sports, soap operas, crime shows, cartoons, or whatever—it doesn't have to be horrible. Anything will do as long as it fills your time and keeps you away from the Bible. Feed your mind and soul with hours of junk food. Then, even if you spend a little time hearing the Bible in church once a week, God's Word will be crowded out by all the other stuff in your mind, and you will make major progress on the road to ruin.

### **From Ruin to Renewal**

Now, if someone actually wrote a manual on how to wreck your life and titled it *The Three-Step Road to Ruin*, you wouldn't try to follow its instructions, would you? Wrecking your life is not something you deliberately choose, plan in advance, and then carry out step by step. But maybe you've been doing it without even trying: you're being yourself, you're being godless, and you're being unbiblical. Now that you've heard the three-step road to ruin, think about whether you've been following these deadly instructions. Perhaps you've been following them to the letter. You didn't need advice to be yourself, to be godless, or to be unbiblical—you've already been doing those things without being told.

I've been blunt, and it hasn't been pleasant. But my only reason for explaining how to wreck your life is so that you won't do it. It breaks my heart to see marriages collapse, families fall apart, people enslaved to deadly habits and urges, souls moving down the broad road to everlasting hell. If you're in a horrible mess, you need to know how you got there. And if you don't feel like you're in such a mess yet, you need to know where you're headed if you continue to be yourself, be godless and be unbiblical. You may see no harm in it. But remember what the Bible says: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."

If you don't want to wreck your life, if you instead want your life to flourish, what's needed? Let's focus on three things. First, instead of just being yourself, become new—get a new self. Second, instead of being godless, become godly—prize God and his promises above anything else. Third, instead of being unbiblical, become biblical—feast daily on God's Word, the Bible, and live by it.

### **Become New**

Begin by becoming new. Get a new self. Without a new self, you change your behavior for awhile, but if you don't somehow get a new self, you eventually fall back into your sinful core identity. In fact, the Bible says that if leave your sin for awhile and know something of Jesus but then go back to your old ways, you're worse off than if you had never known better. If you're not born again, if you keep the same old nature, then you're bound to go back to the same old way of life. As the Bible puts it, "'A dog returns to its vomit,' and, 'A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud'" (2 Peter 2:22).

A dog may be well trained and have a fancy haircut, but it is still a dog by nature, and given a chance, it will eat its own vomit. That's just what dogs do. Likewise, pigs have a nature that is drawn to mud. It's not enough to get the pig out of the mud; you have to get the mud off of the pig. The nature of a pig is to love mud. Without a new nature, that pig will go back to wallowing in the mud the moment it gets a chance. To stay clean, the pig doesn't just need to be washed. It need to stop being a pig. It needs to become something else.

But how can a dog stop being a dog? How can a pig stop being a pig? How can you stop being you and receive a new identity? You can't do it on your own. The Bible says that just as a leopard can't change it's spots, so people with sinful selves can't make themselves good (Jeremiah 13:23). God commands, "Get a new heart and a new spirit" (Ezekiel 18:31). But God knows you can't do this on your own, so the Lord says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you" (Ezekiel 36:26). What you can't do, God can do for you. Jesus spoke of it as being born from above, born all over again.

So don't go on just being yourself. That's a dead end, a sure way to wreck your life. Give up on yourself, and humbly ask for God's mercy, forgiveness, and new life. By faith receive cleansing through Jesus' blood and a new self. A new you is born when God's Holy Spirit puts the life of Christ inside of you. As the apostle Paul put it, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). Once you have this new self, you won't be perfect yet. Your old self will still want its way. But through God's power, "live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of

the sinful nature" (Galatians 5:16). Instead of being yourself, become new, and you will be a truly healthy self for the first time.

### **Become Godly**

Second, instead of being godless, be godly. We saw earlier that being godless doesn't necessarily mean being an atheist. It means you don't make God a high priority or value his favor and blessing above all else. Being godly, on the other hand, means that you prize God above all else. Christ is your supreme delight. His friendship and favor is your deepest longing. Everything else is trash by comparison.

We saw earlier that Esau's appetites for food and women mattered more to him than God's blessing. Don't be godless like Esau. Become godly. Don't put immediate desires ahead of your eternal destiny. Make Jesus Christ your greatest treasure and pleasure. The Bible says, "Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3: 18-20). Think and act like a citizen of heaven. Become godly.

### **Become Biblical**

Third, instead of being unbiblical, become biblical. Read the Bible daily and think about it constantly. The Bible says that a person who delights in God's Word will flourish "like a tree planted by streams of water... Whatever he does prospers" (Psalm 1:3). Sink your roots deep into the Bible, drink in truth and life from God's Word every day, and you will grow strong and produce good fruit.

Get rid of media poison. Stay away from shows and songs that are bloody and filthy. Keep even the more harmless stuff to a minimum to make space for God's Word. Let Bible reading and prayer set the tone for your life. You'll be amazed at the joy and transformation you experience personally. If you're married, you'll find your marriage strengthened. Couples who read the Bible together and pray with each other and for each other every day grow in love. More and more couples who ignore the Bible find their relationships being wrecked. But if husband and wife nourish their love daily in Scripture and prayer, if they worship weekly in church with other followers of Jesus, such marriages thrive and almost never break up. If you have children, sit down as a family every day for Bible reading, prayer, singing, and personal encouragement. Your children will blossom, and many temptations that wreck other kids' lives simply won't have much appeal for those who relish God's Word. The Bible will make them wise for eternal life.

Don't wreck your life by following the three-step road to ruin. Instead, ask the Lord Jesus to save you. Instead of being yourself, become new. Instead of being godless, become godly. Instead of being unbiblical, become biblical. And you will flourish and live forever.

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