

# Lifelines

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Topic: Trade-offs

## **Life's Trade-Offs** © 2024 By Ed Jordan

Most situations in life involve a trade-off. What do I mean by that? Well, if you want to have a car you have to work to pay for it, to maintain it, to pay for insurance, and to pay for gas. So with the benefits of a car come responsibilities and expenses. Somebody might say, "I don't want to spend my days working in order to have a car that eats my money." That is an option, but then one needs to adjust his/her lifestyle to get to work without a car, get groceries without a car, etc. Life is full of trade-offs. In order to have one thing, you must also embrace the side-effects.

Medications come with side-effects. You can take the medicine and endure the side-effects, or you can refuse the medicine because of the side-effects and remain sick. Some people want an environmentally friendly world, but also want things fast and easy. Some want a vibrant economy, but don't want the side-effects of having industry in the community. You can't always have one without the other. When you choose a good thing, there are usually costs involved.

In thinking of this concept, my thoughts turn to Proverbs 14:4 (NLB) that states: "Without oxen a stable stays clean, but you need a strong ox for a large harvest." If keeping the stable clean is more important to you than feeding your family, that goal can be achieved. However, if you want a great harvest to provide for your family and others, then you have to put up with some manure on the floor of the stable.

This principle applies in many areas of life. We do not live in a perfect world, and everything we engage in that is positive also has some negative aspects to it. We like our area because it is a great place for families to live, but without good career opportunities our families move away. Good jobs are needed, but their presence makes it hard to keep the stable clean. So it is a trade-off. We might be fortunate enough to be able to choose a state-of-the-art ox that doesn't give off much waste, but we must have the oxen, if we are to survive.

Some people don't like being single, but they also don't want to adapt to share life with a husband or wife either. Some married couples really enjoy their mobility and freedom. They long for children, but don't want to give up their freedom to travel and play whenever they want. With children come responsibilities, a more complicated life, a need to enlarge the infrastructure (house), and income to provide for them. People with children also experience toys continually scattered on the floor.

The trade off, however, is the joy of watching your children grow, develop, ask cute questions, give interesting explanations, fall in love, get married, and carry on the things that you taught them are important in life. You can't have kids without all the things that go along with them. But you also can't have the joy of kids without the complications involved in caring for them. In the end, they are worth all the investment and added inconveniences that accompany them.

Life brings change. Someone has said that the most ordered and changeless place is a cemetery. To be alive requires continual change, and change requires trade-offs. If we want the benefits of a family, we have to put up with dirty diapers and messy floors. If we want the benefits of a college education, we have to study and learn. If we want friends, we have to invest time with them. If we want the benefits of a growing community, we have to put up with the trade-offs that come with having economic engines in our stables. If we want a relationship with God, we have to commit ourselves to spend time with Him, and let Him shape our lives.

Life is full of trade-offs. The question is, "Are we willing to embrace the trade, in order to gain the benefits we desire?" I hope your answer is "Yes!"

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