

Altering the Course of Life

Every four years the world gets to see an intriguing winter sport: curling. The Winter Olympics televises this sport for all to see. The casual onlooker sees what looks like an archery target on a sheet of ice. Players slide a 42 pound polished granite stone 138 feet and try to land it closer to the bullseye than the opposing team. When they release their throw they give it a slight spin. The spin allows it to bend as it travels down the sheet of ice, which gives it the



name of curling. Like shuffleboard, a player attempts to “take out” their opponent’s stones and set up blockers to protect their own stone. Like bocce, one point is earned for each stone that is closer than the opponent.

What is unusual is that teammates run just in front of the stone, sweeping the ice with small brooms to change the path of their stone after it is thrown. The sweeping, in effect, cleans the ice and makes a rock curl less and go

faster. Once a stone is bumped an opponent can sweep in the path of your stone trying to speed it past the target. .

To those of us used to faster paced games a curling match takes a long time – often times 2 ½ to 3 hours. There are 10 “ends” in regulation play, similar to innings in baseball. In doubles, each player gets to throw four rocks so there are 16 throws per end.

There are similarities to curling in our daily life. Something bad happens or a wrong decision is made. While we may incur human consequences, our life isn’t over. We can do something about the situation and alter our course. We can receive help from teammates – fellow believers – to smooth our path and help us to reach our goal. The help of others is critically important. Yes, the opponent – Satan – may try to affect our course of life. But, if we hold fast to our goal we can succeed. Curling, like faith, allows us to alter our future course by remaining steadfast in our efforts.

So, how do we alter the course of our life? We need to change if we are a follower of Jesus Christ. Listen to these steps suggested by a Christian website entitled Gospel Way:

1. **Change your purpose in life.** Make your purpose in life an intentional effort to serve God by serving others. That will re-direct your priorities and create a “new” you. *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24).*
2. **Believe you can change with God’s help.** Remember the familiar passage from Philippians 4:13, “*I can do all things through Christ^a who strengthens me.*” Don’t try to do this alone. New Year’s Resolutions often fail because it often is our goal and may lack spiritual direction. Know that God will be with you!
3. **Look for references in the Bible about what you need to change.** They are easier to find than you think. Just type into your browser, “bible verses about (whatever you wish to change)”. Remember that the Bible was written thousands of years ago so the terminology and culture will be different but modern day Bible scholars can translate the application of the Bible to your issue.

4. **Repent.** Now that you understand the biblical implications, repent of your sins. *Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart (Acts 8:22).*
5. **Develop a plan of action on how you will make the changes.** You can't do things the same way and expect different results. *Do not those who plot evil go astray? But those who plan what is good find love and faithfulness (Proverbs 14:22).*
6. **Pray regularly.** Bring God into the plan and be accountable to Him. Ask God to help you. *Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me (Psalm 119:133).*
7. **Seek help and support from other Christians.** Let others of the faith be your support group and keep you on track towards your goal. *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective (James 5:16).*
8. **Practice doing what is right.** To break bad habits you need to intentionally do the right thing. *Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).*
9. **Substitute good habits for old habits.** At times we do bad things to fill a void in our life. Fill that void with good habits so there is no void. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.¹ The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17).*
10. **Avoid temptation to go back to the old way.** *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Matthew 6:13).*
11. **Live one day at a time.** *Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself ... (Matthew 6:34).*
12. **Be patient.** Celebrate the small victories and don't expect a total make-over overnight. Recognize progress. *To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life (Romans 2:7).*

On the curling playing field the "house" is the target to score points. Its concentric rings provide an objective for the player to get their rocks closer to the button. In life, the button is God. Life is not a game, but the objective is to be as close to God as possible, and to bring others with you. As the curling players deliver their stones they gently slide forward almost in a praying position. Once the rock is underway you can continue to pray and make adjustments to your life and your teammates play a critical role in helping you stay on course. Like a long curling match, life is a marathon. We have many opportunities for a course adjustment guided by faith that will lead towards a new life.

You can do this. Sweep away the impurities of sin in your path. Alter the course of your life to be as close to God in the final "end" game.

Question to Consider in Your Own Mind: What changes would you like to make in your life? How can God help you on that path?

Prayer: Heavenly Father. The end we seek is to be as close to you as possible. Help us to remove those things that block our path to be in your house forever.