

RICK WARREN

Winning With the Hand You're Dealt

 **PASTOR RICK'S**
DAILY HOPE

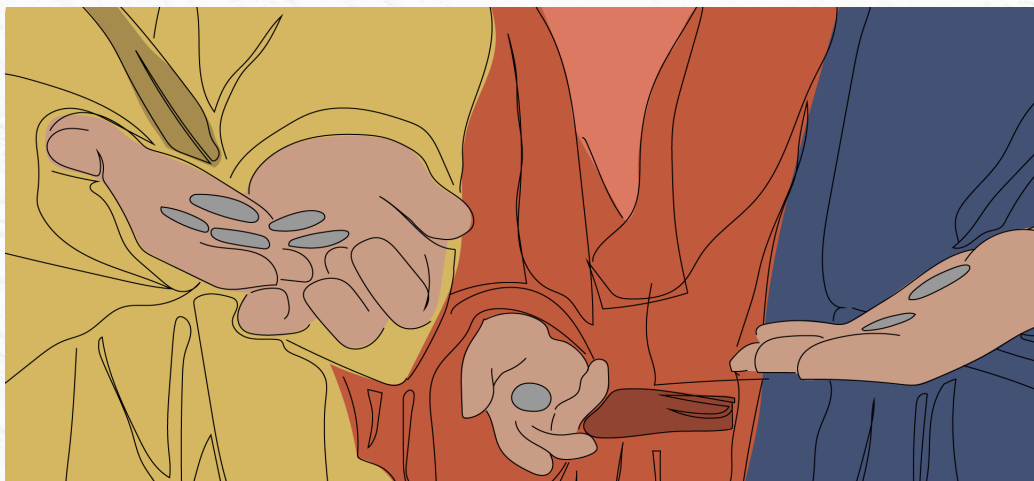


The Bible says there's nothing simple about you. You're not easy to understand or explain. God made you that way for a purpose! In Psalm 139:14, David said to God, "Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!" (NLT).

To become all that God intends for you to be, you have to look at every wonderfully complex dimension of your life and find out how to make the most of all of them.

One day God is going to evaluate your life on what you did with what you were given. You're not going to be responsible for talents you weren't given or opportunities you didn't have. In the parable of the talents, the master gives one worker 10 talents, another five talents, and another one talent. Then he tells them to go and make the most of what he's given them.

The point of the parable of the talents is we don't get the same thing. We don't have the same talents, background, problems, or potential. The only thing we've been given in equal measure is God's love. He loved us so much that he didn't just make us wonderfully complex. He also made us wonderfully unique.



If you've ever played five card stud poker, you know that you have to play the cards you're dealt. You don't get to mix and match them. You can't play someone else's hand. You can only play the cards you are given.

In many ways this is a metaphor in life. There are a lot of things that make up your identity that you had no choice in. You didn't choose your parents. You didn't choose when you were born, where you were born, or how you were born. But you have to play the hand you were dealt.

First, we'll look at the five things that make you *you*, and then we'll see what God says to do with them to make sure you turn what you've been dealt into a winning hand.



Five Factors That Influence Your Identity

There are five factors that influence your identity and who you are. Though we are sinners, which means these factors are all flawed, the Bible tells us how to win at life with the hand we've been dealt.

1. Your Chemistry

Your chemistry is your DNA. We've all been dealt a different hand in this area. Some of us were born with a low energy level and others with a high energy level. Some people need to wear glasses, are prone to heart issues, or have a higher metabolism.

No seeming flaw in your chemistry is sinful or shameful. It's just how you're wired! Your flaws are a part of your custom design. Your genes have intentional flaws to create your uniqueness. God designed you, and he uses those flaws for his purpose and glory.



2. Your Connections



You are a product of your relationships. Jesus said life is all about love. If you don't make meaningful connections with God and other people, then you have missed the point of life.

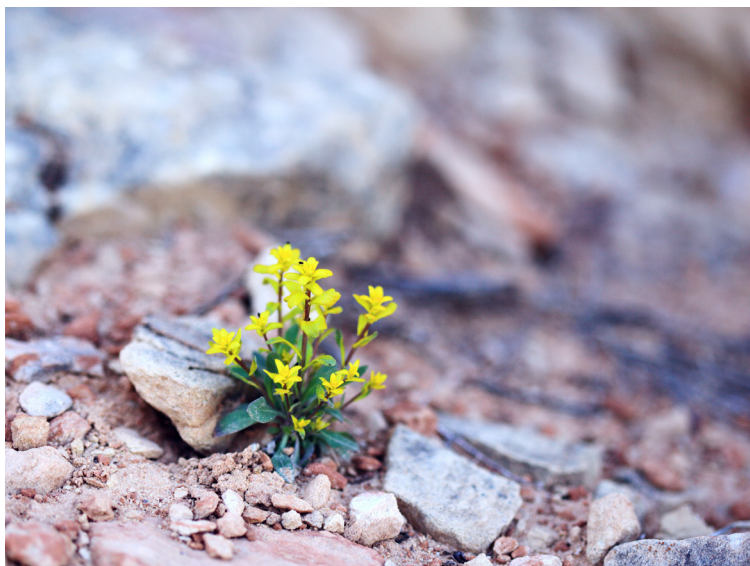
There are challenges to making these kinds of connections. We're all imperfect, which causes conflict in our relationships. Sin disconnects us from God and each other. And the more disconnected we are, the more fearful we become.

If you want to satisfy your need for deep connections, then you have to work through your fear of being vulnerable with other people. We were made to crave deep connection, not live in fear of rejection.

3. Your Circumstances

These are the things that happen to you. None of these things were in your control. You are a product of the traumas and the troubles, the suffering and the shame, and the problems and the pain you have endured.

If you've ever been abused or experienced rejection or failure, it has affected your identity. If you had a crisis or a catastrophe, they left scars on your identity. It's part of what you were dealt in life—and it's not your fault.



4. Your Consciousness

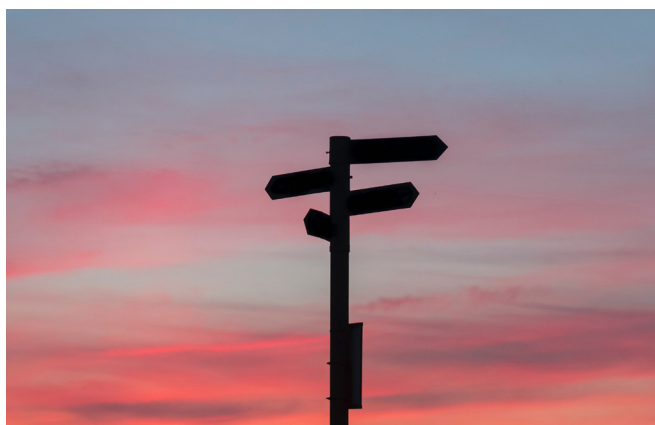
Your consciousness is what you say to yourself. But when other people say hurtful things to you, you file it away and then may start repeating it to yourself. A thought does not have to be true to hurt you—you just have to believe it. The more you say it to yourself, the deeper it goes in your consciousness.

These habitual thoughts make up your identity. The Bible says in Proverbs 4:23, *“Be careful what you think, because your thoughts run your life”* (NCV). If you want your life to go in a different direction, you have to direct your negative thoughts in a different direction.

5. Your Choices

Your identity is ultimately based on your choices. The freedom of choice is your greatest blessing, but also your greatest curse because we make foolish choices all the time!

But here's the good news: This can change the suit and the number of any of the other cards you're dealt. It's the wild card that can change everything else—including your destiny in eternity.



Five Choices for a Winning Hand

There are five winning choices that you can make with the hand you've been dealt. Each of them has to do with the factors we just reviewed.

1. Choose to Get Healthier

It doesn't matter what kind of handicap you have in your life. You can choose to be healthier than you are right now. There are choices you can make that will increase your energy, lower your stress, and better equip you to fulfill your purpose.

Instead of bemoaning what you don't have, you need to make the most of what you've got. The Bible says, *"You made my body, Lord; now give me sense to heed your laws"* (Psalm 119:73 TLB).



Improving the controllables reduces the impact of the uncontrollables in your life. There are a lot of things you can change! Maybe you need to get a checkup with your doctor, take a walk every day, or stop eating a certain kind of food. These won't often be the easy choices, but when you make the right choices when it comes to your health, God will bless your efforts and give you the grace you need to keep going.

2. Choose to Deepen Your Relationships

You can develop better communication skills. You can build new, healthy relationships and replace some unhealthy relationships. You can reach out. You can risk connecting.

Any connection you make is going to be a risk. The reason why you feel disconnected is your fear of being rejected and hurt. The Bible says in 1 John 4:18, *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear"* (NIV).



Love takes away fear because love takes the focus off you and puts it on somebody else. You get rid of the fear of making a commitment by moving against your fear. Fear is always worse than the reality. Fear does not go away with logic. Fear goes away with action. You go to the Red Sea, expecting God to move the water. And when you step in, your fear vanishes.

3. Choose to Trust God, No Matter What Happens

God wants to use every circumstance in your life to make you like Jesus. Romans 8:29 says, *“He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him”* (The Message).

The Bible also says, *“I will praise the Lord no matter what happens”* (Psalm 34:1 TLB). When you can say this, it shows a confidence that is not built on money or status. It’s built on your relationship to God, and it can’t be taken from you.

You are a product of your past, but you’re not a prisoner of it. You can choose to be different!



4. Choose What You Think About



You can’t choose what other people say to or about you. But you can choose what you continue to allow in your mind.

Everybody thought the adult brain could not be changed until a guy won the 2002 Nobel Prize in neurobiology for proving you can rewire the adult brain. That means you can change the way you think, which means you can change your life, regardless of what’s happened in your past.

It’s great that science finally caught up with the Bible. Because 2,000 years ago God said this: *“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think”* (Romans 12:2 NLT).

Change your brain, change your life. To do this, you must feed your brain with truth. You must read, memorize, and meditate on God’s Word.

5. Choose Jesus as Your Savior

The fifth card you're dealt—making choices—changes everything. And this choice is the most important one of all.

This is not just about having a Savior to get you out of hell and into heaven. It's not only about saving you from your sins and forgiving you. If you haven't made the decision to give your life to Jesus and secure your eternity in heaven, then you need to settle that first today.

The Bible says, *"When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same anymore. A new life has begun!"* (2 Corinthians 5:17 TLB). When you make this important choice, it's called being born again. It's starting over. It's a whole new identity.

But you also need to choose Jesus as your Savior every day. You can't stick with your decisions through willpower alone. You've got to depend on Jesus to give you the power to make these choices.

You may think you're waiting on God to change your life, but God is waiting on you to use your wild card. You get to choose how much he blesses you. And it is never too late to start over.

When you use the wild card God has given you to get healthier, start risking healthy connections, trust God no matter what, change the way you think, and choose Jesus as your Savior, he gives you a winning hand.





Rick Warren is the founding pastor of Saddleback Church in Southern California with campuses in major cities around the world.

He is the author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, which has been translated into 90 languages and sold more than 50 million copies in all formats.

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