



52

LITTLE LESSONS

*from*

*It's a Wonderful Life*

BOB WELCH

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

*52 Little Lessons from It's a Wonderful Life*

© 2021 by Bob Welch

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, scanning, or other—except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Published in Nashville, Tennessee, by Thomas Nelson. Thomas Nelson is a registered trademark of HarperCollins Christian Publishing, Inc.

Thomas Nelson titles may be purchased in bulk for educational, business, fund-raising, or sales promotional use. For information, please email [SpecialMarkets@ThomasNelson.com](mailto:SpecialMarkets@ThomasNelson.com).

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com). The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.®

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Any internet addresses, phone numbers, or company or product information printed in this book are offered as a resource and are not intended in any way to be or to imply an endorsement by Thomas Nelson, nor does Thomas Nelson vouch for the existence, content, or services of these sites, phone numbers, companies, or products beyond the life of this book.

ISBN 978-0-7852-6570-2 (HC)

ISBN 978-1-4002-0394-9 (eBook)

ISBN 978-0-7852-6606-8 (Audiobook)

#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Welch, Bob, 1954-

52 little lessons from It's a wonderful life / Bob Welch.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p. ).

ISBN 978-1-4002-0393-2

1. It's a wonderful life (Motion picture) I. Title.

PN1997.I758W45 2012

791.43'7--dc23

2012010657

*Printed in the United States of America*

21 22 23 24 25 LSC 6 5 4 3 2 1

## LESSON 1



# God Honors Our “Childlike Faith”

Read Matthew 19:14. How is Jesus “big on children,” as the author says?

---

---

---

---

Clarence, Angel Second Class, has the simple faith of a child. Is your faith too complicated? What are some ways you could simplify your faith?

---

---

---

## LESSON 2



### *Underdogs Matter*

Who are some of the underdogs that Jesus encountered in His ministry? How was He a champion for them, and how did He minister to them?

---

---

---

---

Ultimately, old man Potter is very alone on Christmas Eve. How do greed and selfishness separate us from others?

---

---

---



## LESSON 3



# Sometimes You Just Gotta Dance

The gym dance is one of many joyful scenes in *It's a Wonderful Life*. What are some of the things that have brought you joy in your faith journey?

---

---

---

---

The author mentions that comfort, though alluring, doesn't develop character. What are some ways that God makes us uncomfortable so that we can grow?

---

---

---

## LESSON 4



# You Matter to the World

The author calls this the most profound line in the film: “Each man’s life touches so many other lives.” Think of the people you love the most. What would your life be like without them, and theirs without you?

---

---

---

---

What are some of the ways you matter in God’s vast universe?

---

---

---

## LESSON 5



# Self-Pity Skews Our Vision

Which is worse: thinking too highly of yourself or too lowly? Or are they of equal detriment? Why or why not?

---

---

---

---

Have you ever thrown a pity party for yourself? How did you feel during it? Why do you think God does not want us to fall victim to our own self-pity?

---

---

---

## LESSON 6



# *Life's Greatest Adventures Are About People, Not Places or Things*

George Bailey longs for adventure far away from Bedford Falls.  
What are the differences between worldly adventures and the  
adventure called faith?

---

---

---

---

Read Matthew 6:19–21. What do you think Jesus meant by  
“treasures in heaven”?

---

---

---

## LESSON 7



# You Can't Run Away from Your Problems

Just like with George and Mary, sometimes we have a day marked by exhilarating highs and plummeting, discouraging lows that sometimes make us feel like running away. How does God's Word help you through days like these?

---

---

---

---

Life is full of choices. Think of a significant day in your life when you could have made a different choice. How might your life be different now?

---

---

---

## LESSON 8



### *It's Wise to Seek Counsel*

Read Matthew 7:7. What are some ways God opened the door to you when you sought His wisdom?

---

---

---

---

Like George approaching Mr. Gower, have you ever told the truth even when you were nervous or hesitant to do so? What happened? Was it worth it?

---

---

---

## LESSON 9



# Stop to Count Your Blessings

*It's a Wonderful Life* is full of celebrations, including the one welcoming the Martinis to their new home. What are some of God's blessings that you can celebrate right now?

---

---

---

---

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. How does knowing you are a new creation change your perspective?

---

---

---

## LESSON 10



# There's No Impact Without Contact

Interacting with someone we know nothing about can take us out of our comfort zone. Why do you think God wants us to reach out to and care for others unlike ourselves?

---

---

---

---

Think of acquaintances in your life that you wish you knew better. What are some ways you can show God's love for them?

---

---

---



## LESSON 11



### *When Criticized, Consider the Source*

Have you ever been on the receiving end of a hard truth? How did God use it for good?

---

---

---

Mr. Potter is deeply unhappy and seems devoid of humility. Why is humility so important in our walk with God?

---

---

---

## LESSON 12



# Find Your Own Bedford Falls, Wherever You Live

The author writes that “we burn brightest when huddled together with others.” Thinking of your own group or community, what are ways that you shine brightly to the world?

---

---

---

---

Look up the definition of “accountability.” How is accountability manifested in our faith journey?

---

---

---

## LESSON 13



# Trying to Keep Up with the Joneses Is Futile

*It's a Wonderful Life* offers subtle messages about materialism, a theme that also comes up often around Christmastime. Why is having more not necessarily a spiritually healthy aspiration?

---

---

---

---

Sam Wainwright's success is George's constant reminder of "what could have been." What are the things in your life that give you contentment and are more meaningful than the things you possess?

---

---

---

## LESSON 14



# Perspective Changes Everything

We all struggle with our attitudes. How does a good attitude affect your family, friends, and faith? What about a bad attitude?

---

---

---

One of the highlights of the film is George's rapturous change of heart. Has something ever brought about such a change of heart in your own life?

---

---

---

## LESSON 15



# Prayer Changes Things

Doubt often goes hand in hand with faith. What are some things you are doubting right now that need to be given to the Lord in prayer?

---

---

---

---

Think of a time in your life when you were on the edge of despair. How did prayer help give you the strength to “live again”? Read Romans 8:35–39 as an encouragement.

---

---

---

## LESSON 16



# Revel in the Accomplishments of Others

Acts of goodness and grace are often better done out of the public eye. What are some ways you can make a difference in someone else's life behind the scenes?

---

---

---

---

George Bailey's concern and respect for others is a persistent theme throughout the film. List three ways Jesus showed this same virtue in Scripture.

---

---

---

## LESSON 17



# Don't Wait to Tell Someone You Care

Think of three people important to you. What are some small gestures you can make in the next week that will be very meaningful to them?

---

---

---

---

Read Ephesians 5:15–20. Verse 16 encourages us to “[make] the most of every opportunity.” Why is it important not to put off telling someone you care?

---

---

---

## LESSON 18



### *Every Journey Has a Secret Destination*

Imagine a place you've always wanted to go but simply haven't gone yet. Similarly, are there destinations you'd like to reach on your faith journey? List them here and ask God to show you pathways to reach them.

---

---

---

---

Sometimes life's most transformational moments occur when we leave the beaten path. When did this happen in your own life, and where did you end up?

---

---

---



## LESSON 19



# Don't Look for What Is, but for What May Be

Mary Bailey sees the hidden potential of the old Granville house. Imagining your own life as a house with many rooms, which rooms have potential for transformation? Which ones would you leave as is?

---

---

---

---

Mary's solid practicality is a nice counterweight for George's dreamy ambitions. Who in your life keeps you grounded and how?

---

---

---

## LESSON 20



# It's in Helping Others That We Help Ourselves

Read James 1:27. How does *charity* (the act of looking outside of ourselves and helping others in need) give us *clarity*?

---

---

---

---

Jesus said it's better to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). What are the ways that giving enriches our faith journey and draws us closer to God?

---

---

---

## LESSON 21



# Life Is Not a Bed of Roses

In spite of the disappointment, tragedy, and setbacks that George has experienced in his lifetime, what are the things that make his life decidedly worth living?

---

---

---

---

Read Luke 12:22–30. What does this passage teach us about the struggles we face in our daily lives?

---

---

---

## LESSON 22



# *It Takes a Village to Raise a Child*

Jesus cared deeply for children, which likely surprised His contemporaries. Read Mark 10:13–16. What does it mean to “receive the kingdom of God like a little child”?

---

---

---

---

Think of a child or young person who is significant in your life. What are some ways you can uplift and encourage them this week?

---

---

---

## LESSON 23



# *Quiet Lives Can Speak the Loudest*

Think of people you know who work quietly behind the scenes, making a difference in the lives of others, often without praise or reward. List them here and offer up brief prayers, thanking God for their service.

---

---

---

---

Read Matthew 6:1–8. What does this passage reveal about “[practicing] your righteousness in front of others”?

---

---

---

## LESSON 24



### *No Man Is an Island*

Consider all the communities you encounter on a weekly basis: work, school, church, family, social groups, and so forth. How are these groups made stronger by unity versus self-interest?

---

---

---

---

Living in peace with others can often be challenging in today's world. Who is someone you've had conflict with in your life? What are some ways you can reach out and heal wounds to bring about peace?

---

---

---

## LESSON 25



# God's Greatest Gift Is Life

The movie pointedly suggests throughout that the thing that enriches life the most is sacrifice. Who made sacrifices in your life, and how was your life enriched by those actions?

---

---

---

---

Who in your circle of friends needs life-affirming encouragement this week? What ways can you help them recognize the value of their own life?

---

---

---

## LESSON 26



# *The Greatest Gift You Can Give Is Grace*

The author defines grace as “undeserved favor.” Have you ever received grace instead of what you really deserved? What did you learn from the situation?

---

---

---

---

Who needs a little grace in the upcoming month? What are some of the ways you can express this act of kindness?

---

---

---



## LESSON 27



# There's Much to Be Said for Long-Term Commitments

We live in a fast-paced world where technology grants us access to almost everything in a matter of seconds. Assess some areas in your life where you need to slow down, list them here, and say a brief prayer asking God to help you apply the brakes.

---

---

---

---

Have you ever been disappointed by not making a long-term commitment to some endeavor or someone? How can God help you stay the course and remain devoted?

---

---

---

## LESSON 28



# Actions Speak Louder Than Words

What does *It's a Wonderful Life* say about generosity? Why is generosity important in our interactions with others?

---

---

---

---

What does the Bible say about generosity? Start with these Scriptures: Psalm 112:5, Proverbs 19:17, Luke 6:38, Hebrews 13:16; 1 John 3:17.

---

---

---

## LESSON 29



# *Look for the Best in People*

The author writes that Jesus sees beyond the labels placed on us by others and ourselves into our very soul. What are some of your deepest needs that you need to bring before the Lord?

---

---

---

---

An old saying goes, "You can't judge a book by its cover." Are there people or situations that you initially misjudged? How did your mindset change when you learned the truth?

---

---

---

## LESSON 30



# Vengeance Is Not Ours, Saith the Lord

Have you ever wanted to get back at someone for something they said or did? How did that situation play out? Why should we leave vengeance up to the Lord?

---

---

---

---

What is the difference between revenge and justice? What are some creative ways Mr. Potter could have received justice for keeping the lost \$8,000?

---

---

---

## LESSON 31



# *Nobody Is Perfect . . . Which Brings Us to Grace*

The author describes continuity errors, imperfections, and anachronisms within the film. How does God deal with errors and imperfections in the lives of the people who love Him?

---

---

---

---

Unconditional love is a wonderful gift from God. What are some innovative ways we can share this powerful gift with others?

---

---

---

## LESSON 32



# The Essence of Life Is Relationships

Materialism is a constant threat and temptation not only at Christmastime but year-round. How does God help us combat the allure of materialism?

---

---

---

---

The film argues that relationships are more valuable than riches. Who are the people who have enriched your life beyond measure? Take a brief moment to thank God for them.

---

---

---

## LESSON 33



# What Triggers True Change Is True Humility

George Bailey does not arrive so easily to the truth that he has touched the lives of many. Why are we humans so resistant to the truth? Why does being confronted with the truth sometimes make us angry?

---

---

---

---

Read Matthew 5:1–12. What truths does the Sermon on the Mount reveal about humility?

---

---

---

## LESSON 34



# Fame Doesn't Equal Success, Nor Obscurity Failure

One might think “extraordinary” means *especially* ordinary, but it actually means *beyond* ordinary. How does God use ordinary people and circumstances to achieve extraordinary things?

---

---

---

---

Both the film and Scripture have a lot to say about friendship. Look up John 15:12–13, then think of the friends who have enriched your life. List them here and offer up prayers of gratitude to the Lord.

---

---

---



## LESSON 35



### *Bitterness Backfires on the One Who's Bitter*

The author defines bitterness as “self-induced misery.” Have you ever been bitter about a certain situation and how you were treated? How did God help you release your bitterness?

---

---

---

---

The old saying “Pride cometh before a fall” is actually modified from Proverbs 16:18. Why is pride so harmful to our interactions and relationships with others?

---

---

---

## LESSON 36



# Living Simply Helps Us Appreciate What's Most Significant

Christmas is a good time not only to remember the value of *people* but also the goodness of *place*. Think of a location important to your life and list the reasons you treasure it.

---

---

---

---

Society constantly pressures us to keep up with the latest trend, fad, technology, or celebrity. How do these things get in the way of what really matters in our lives and our faith?

---

---

---

## LESSON 37



### *High Ideals Are an Honorable Pursuit*

Charitable giving often increases during the Christmas season. Do people give out of guilt or genuine concern for others? If the end result is the same, why is one motivation better than the other?

---

---

---

---

Take time to read the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). What does this passage teach us about givers? About recipients?

---

---

---

## LESSON 38



# Lost Dreams Can Be Found Opportunities

Imagine suddenly becoming wealthy beyond your wildest dreams. Would you be happier? Why or why not?

---

---

---

---

It's hard to fathom the vast ripple effect a person's life has on others. Briefly consider your loved ones not being here. What are some ways you can show gratitude to them this week?

---

---

---

## LESSON 39



### *All That Glitters Is Not Gold*

One definition of integrity is “the state of being undivided.” In this sense, Mr. Potter and George are both undivided in their devotion to certain values. Who is the better person and why?

---

---

---

---

Have you ever pursued a dream for the wrong reasons? What kind of lessons did you learn or wisdom did you gain from the experience?

---

---

---

## LESSON 40



### People Respond to Honorable Examples

Who inspires you? Jot down their names and consider ways you would like to thank them for their encouragement and inspiration.

---

---

---

---

The author writes that “people don’t forget kindness.” Who is your favorite character in the film who ends up on the receiving end of George’s kindness. Why?

---

---

---

## LESSON 41



# Helping Others Requires Sacrifice

Think of a time when you made a sacrifice for the greater good of a certain cause or relationship. Was it worth it? Why or why not?

---

---

---

---

The prevalent American concept of “having it all” is hard to resist. How does relentlessly pursuing everything run counter to how God wants us to live our lives?

---

---

---

## LESSON 42



# Look for Friends Who Bring Out the Best in You

Who in your life has “helped you find the answers,” as Mrs. Bailey says? What are some ways you can show your gratitude and thank the Lord for their contribution to your faith journey?

---

---

---

---

The author refers to Mary Bailey as “one of those grow-where-you’re-planted types.” What does the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1–9) reveal about stewardship, discernment, and our God-given talents?

---

---

---



## LESSON 43



# Desperation Can Be a Catalyst for Great Things

When desperate times come, our initial response is often panic.  
What solution for desperation does Philippians 4:4–9 offer us?

---

---

---

---

Read Romans 8:28. Why does God often allow hardship to bring about positive change in us? Think of a time this happened to you.  
What did you learn?

---

---

---

## LESSON 44



# Miracles Happen

A core message in both the Bible and *It's a Wonderful Life* is the powerful impact a changed heart has on the lives of others. How does George's transformation in the film reflect how God's grace and love work toward our salvation?

---

---

---

---

Miracles aren't limited to grand demonstrations, like walking on water or raising someone from the dead. Small miracles occur every day. What are some small miracles that have happened in your life this week?

---

---

---

## LESSON 45



### *Age Is Insignificant; How You Live Is Not*

Sometimes the world feels rushed, fretful, and chaotic; our hectic lives are pulled in every direction. What are some ways this week you can take a breath and explore God's creation and the "wonder of right now"?

---

---

---

---

Why is contentment so hard to come by? Is contentment dependent on your age or mindset? What does the Bible reveal about contentment? Look to Psalm 37:3–4, Ecclesiastes 3:13, 1 Timothy 6:6–11, and Hebrews 13:5 for a good start.

---

---

---

## LESSON 46



# The Richest People in Town Might Have Little Money

What does it mean to be rich? Answer this question from an emotional or spiritual perspective, not in terms of material wealth.

---

---

---

---

Read about Jesus healing a paralyzed man (Mark 2:1–12). Although we may think of this story as one of faith, what does it reveal about the power of friendship?

---

---

---

## LESSON 47



# The World Needs More Sentimental Hogwash

The world can be a cynical place, making it difficult to connect emotionally with others. What are some ways to reach across the divides that separate us and express God's love to others?

---

---

---

---

If we are created in God's image, what can we discern about God's emotions toward us? About our emotions toward Him?

---

---

---

## LESSON 48



### *Pay Attention to the Task at Hand*

Think of a time when you “gave your all,” but it didn’t seem like it was good enough. How did God comfort you during this difficult time?

---

---

---

---

Has your forgetfulness ever hurt someone who was depending on you? What did the situation reveal about forgiveness and grace?

---

---

---

## LESSON 49



# People Can Change

God is in the business of changing hearts. Think of some Bible characters who underwent significant change. What valuable truths can we absorb from them?

---

---

---

---

If change is inevitable, why is it so difficult? Which character in the film goes through the most change? Which one doesn't change at all? What are some takeaways we can learn from either character?

---

---

---

## LESSON 50



# Entering a Child's World Expands Your World

Amid the stresses of your daily routine, who brings you back to reality and reminds you of what really matters? Jot down their names and say a brief prayer thanking God for their presence in your life.

---

---

---

---

The Christmas season is the perfect time to celebrate the innocence and unbridled joy of children. As an adult, what are some ways you can return to those foundational emotions and see things from a different perspective?

---

---

---



## LESSON 51



# It Takes Time for Some Flowers to Bloom

Although *It's a Wonderful Life* was a box-office disappointment in 1946, it is now considered one of the best Christmas movies ever made. What does this tell us about growth and God's timing?

---

---

---

---

God specializes in growing us over the long term. List some ways that He has changed you over time, and breathe a brief prayer of gratitude over each one.

---

---

---

## LESSON 52



# Life Revisions Strengthen the Script

The author writes that “our own life stories can benefit from revisions too.” What parts of your own story would you like to revise and why? Which sections would remain exactly the same?

---

---

---

---

Director Frank Capra’s original script offered a tiny glimpse at Mr. Potter’s possible redemption. Who are some of the Bible’s “bad guys” that found redemption? What can they teach us about our own lives?

---

---

---