

## **Eight Ball Answers**

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A few days ago, I saw a cartoon in the paper that I thought was funny. The caption referred to a scandal that resulted when one of the Supreme Court Justices was discovered using his “Magic 8 Ball” for answers. I thought it was especially funny because I have one of the toys in my office.

My children gave it to me a couple of years ago for Christmas after I had remarked how funny it would be to use it as a counseling tool. Imagine a Marine or Sailor coming to my office needing help and my replying, “I don’t know the answer, but let’s check the old 8 Ball and see what it has to say!” I’m not sure it is possible for a Chaplain to get sued for malpractice, but that would get close to justifying it.

Wouldn’t it be great if it was that easy to find answers in life? Should I go to Church today? Yes. Should I let the children go to the movies? Ask again later. Is this the person I am supposed to marry? Reply hazy – ask again. Should I get out? My sources say no. It certainly would be simple if answers were given to us this easily.

What is really strange is that teenagers will look at these answers and accept them without question, while they don’t want to listen to their parents. And some adults are almost like this, as well. In fact, many people who come to the Chaplain seem to want me to give them the answers and tell them what to do. With very few exceptions, I am not willing to do this.

If I tell someone what to do, I have assumed responsibility for their life. I’m not willing to do this, because I know that if I do this and they aren’t happy with the result, I am the one they are going to blame. As far as I am concerned, I will help them work toward making the decision, but ultimately, the decision has to be theirs because they are the one who has to live with the answer.

Every person has to assume responsibility for their own decisions. The mistakes are theirs. They have to live with the consequences. In the end, they will have no one to blame but themselves. We call this the freedom to choose. But with freedom comes responsibility.

The greatest decision we have to make is about our own spiritual well-being. Only I can decide whether I am willing to do what it takes to invest in my own spiritual life. I decided at an early age to give my life to Christ and have tried to follow Him ever since. Sometimes I make a mistake. Sometimes, I just make bad choices. But Christ always forgives me and sets me on the right path again. But the choice of whether to follow Him or not was mine and mine alone.

By the same token, we must decide every day how we are going to live our lives. We decide whether or not we are going to go to church, read the Bible, etc. And we each will reap the consequences for our choices, whether they are good or bad.

Look for answers in the right places. Don’t be left behind the eight ball at the end of your life.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in Church on Sunday.