

**Dynamic
Dimensions
Of the
Christian Life**

**Wednesday Night Adult Bible Class
Spring Quarter 2026**

A Workbook by Daniel R. Veas

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On The Day You Were Born Again...

On the day you were born what happened? On the day I was born on June 27, 1961, a couple of news worthy events occurred. Ghana imposed a total ban on exports to South Africa and South West Africa. Arthur Michael Ramsey was enthroned as the 100th Archbishop of Canterbury. On the day I was born, I was so upset I did not talk to anyone for a whole year.

What happened on the day you were born is not nearly as important as what happened on the day you were born again (John 3:3-5). Man was created in God's image. Sin destroys that creation. When someone is born again, he is regenerated into a new creature in Christ.

You Became a Citizen of God's Kingdom and Member of His Family

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night seek information about the coming kingdom. *"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'"* (John 3:3-5).

On the day you were born again, you began a new life. You were added to the kingdom or church. You gained the right to pray to the Father. As a Christian you now wear the name of Christ. No longer following our own path of sin, you are now under the new covenant. As a child of God you can look forward to a better inheritance. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"* (1 Peter 1:3-5).

You Became a Slave to Righteousness

Imagine being born to slavery. Yet on the day you were born again, you arose out of the waters of baptism as a slave to righteousness. *"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness"* (Rom. 6:17,18). In the spiritual world you are either a slave to sin by choice, or a slave to righteousness by being born again. John wrote that the duty of the slave of Christ is to do what is right, because Christ is righteous. *"If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him"* (1 John 2:29). And a sinner is not born again just to keep on sinning. *"whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God"* (1 John 3:9). Instead he has overcome the world by faith. *"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith"* (1 John 5:4).

Your Body Was Purchased by the Lord

Paul explained to the Corinthians that they had been born again into the Kingdom. *"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators,*

nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11). They had fornicated, committed adultery, practiced homosexuality, used their hands to steal, and drink. They had a philosophy that the body was for sinning and sinning was for the body. “Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” (1 Cor. 6:13). Like many today who claim: “it’s my body and I will do with it whatever I want.” Paul went on to explain that when they were born again, they no longer had the right to do what they wanted to with their own bodies. “And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:14-20). On the day one is born again, his body has been purchased by the blood of the Lord. Everything you do with your body from that day forward needs to be examined by the reality that your body is not your own. For example, before a Christian gets that new tattoo he should ask himself a couple of questions. Is getting a tattoo something that desecrates the temple of God, our bodies, or something that glorifies God? How is getting a tattoo on our fleshly temple any different from spray painting graffiti on the wall of a temple? Therefore, think before you ink! You have been born again.

You Obtained Access to the Throne of Grace in Prayer

“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:15,16). To live without prayer is to live as if we need nothing from God. Prayer presupposes the frailty of the Christian and the unlimited strength of the divine Father. The Christian whose life is devoid of prayer is one whose life is devoid of the sense of the need of and desire for God's help.

No matter how rough the world around us may be prayer brings help and mercy. Too many of us pray for forgiveness today when we should have prayed for help with temptation yesterday. Many times we cannot find the strength to stand on our feet until first of all we get on our knees. When life's burdens seem too heavy and there is a need for rest it is time to go to God. In this manner, each days' burdens should be laid aside each night. Just as the camel at the close of day kneels to have his burden lifted, I too as the day draws to a close should bow and let my Master lift the load and grant rest.

We simply cannot make it without God's help. We can go to God for help and mercy in any problem, at any time, in any place, in any position or condition. With such help there is no need to try going it alone (Pr. 3:5,6). No matter how extensively a Christian may engage in doing good, no matter how diligently he may study God's Word, no matter how energetic and intelligent he may be in the pursuit of the physical necessities of life, he stands continually in need of prayer.

It happened down south. A small boy gave his mother a hard time during services. Finally she gave up and turned him over to his father. The father had no better success and became exasperated. With measured strides he headed for a side door at the front of the auditorium. The little boy looked over his father's shoulder at the congregation as he exited and in a loud plea said "Y' all pray for me." We all need to pray for ourselves and each other.

You Gained a Brotherhood to Love

On the day you were born again into the family of God, you received a plethora of brothers and sisters in Christ. Therefore, Command: *“love the brotherhood”* (1 Peter 2:17). *Why? Because “whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him”* (1 John 5:1). By loving each other disciples can show the world, they are indeed born again and also demonstrate they are truly followers of Christ.

Most importantly on the day you were born again, you were saved from all sin. *“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”* (Titus 3:4-5). If you do not repent you will die in your sins (Luke 13:3). Instead die to sin and be born again never to die again.

Questions:

1. Why is the day you were born again (baptized) more significant than the day your were born?
2. What things changed for you on the day you were born again?
3. How was being born again a release from slavery?
4. How do we overcome the world?
5. What did the Corinthians use to be before they were born again?
6. What was the Corinthian philosophy about their body?
7. How does the world today apply this philosophy to their body?
8. With what and when does God purchase our body?

9. What should a Christian ask themselves before they get a tattoo?
10. How does Christ's temptations and prayer life motivate us to God to the Throne of God in prayer?
11. What has changed when you were born again which allows you the privilege of prayer?
12. Define "spiritual family" in your own words.

Application & Discussion:

1. List some other things you gained the day you were born again which are not listed in this lesson.
2. How long can you go without praying? Explain.

Homework: Find out the day of your baptism into Christ for the remission of your sins and each year celebrate that as your spiritual birthday?

Newness of Life

A new car that has that unique smell, a new job with hope of greater rewards, a new outfit, new book, are just a few things that spark excitement and stimulate the joy of living. When one is born again they experience rejoicing in the newness of life. Raising up out of the watery grave of baptism brings to each new born babe in Christ “*newness of life*” (Rom. 6:4) making him a “*new creation*” (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15) putting on a new man (Eph. 4:24).

On the day you were born again you were given a second chance and a brand new life to restart your relationship with God. Consider just a few of the new aspects of the Christian Life.

A New Creation

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). To be “*in Christ*” is almost exactly his definition of a Christian. The word “*new*” is from the Greek term *kainos* meaning new in quality, not just in sequence. The concept is a “re-creation” made over again; a “do-over.” “Christians are not reformed, rehabilitated or reeducated - they are recreated “Believers are not merely turning over a new leaf; they are beginning a new life under a new Master” (Life Application Bible Comm. p. 355).

Paul goes on to describe the results of being a new creation: “*old things have passed away.*” Our new relationship to Christ has brought about a new relationship to the world and the people around us. “The aorist tense indicates a decisive break with the old life at the moment of salvation” (20th Century, 105). Christians are different in what they say, wear, watch, read and how they spend their Sundays. This new creation has the same skin, with a new man inside. The idea is for this new man in Christ not to return to the old ways (2 Peter 2:22).

The Greek word for “old things” is from which we derive the English word archaic. What was vital to believers’ lives before Christ became archaic in their new lives in Christ. The Bible or Christianity is not archaic as the old life was. Old values, ideas, plans, loves, desires, and beliefs vanish. Old sins have been washed away (Acts 22:16). The old man of sin has been crucified (Rom. 6:6). The old slavery has ended (Rom. 6:17,18). The old man of sin put off and put on the new man. “*You put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness*” (Eph. 4:21-24).

A New Covenant

While Moses was up on Mt. Sinai, receiving the Ten Commandments and the Covenant God wanted with Israel, the people were already in the valley below breaking it. Throughout their history the Jews continued to violate the terms of their covenant with God. As God had promised in the Law of Moses, He would take away the land and blessings. This He did in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. However, God promised a new covenant to his people (Jer. 31:31-34). This is seen fulfilled in Hebrews 8:7-13:

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I

will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

In Christ not only do we have a better (new) covenant, but a better High Priest in Jesus and a better sacrifice Jesus the Lamb of God, etc. (cf. Heb. 9:15; 10:1-4, 11).

A New Commandment

On the night in which He was betrayed, Jesus set forth a new commandment for His disciples. *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"* (Jn. 13:34-35). This was not new in the sense of there never having been a commandment for us to love one another. It was new in quality, degree and example. We are to love like Christ has loved us in that He was willing to die for us. *"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends"* (John 15:13). Are we willing to give up our life for one another?

A New Name

Several hundred years before the coming of Christ and His Church Isaiah prophesied that God's people would be known by a new name. *"For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name"* (Is. 61:1,2). *"You shall leave your name as a curse to My chosen; for the Lord GOD will slay you, and call His servants by another name"* (Is. 65:15).

What is the "new name" prophesied by Isaiah? It is the name "Christian." The only new name to be found in the New Testament is "Christian". It is not until the Book of Acts that a "new name" is found. At a church filled with Gentile disciples this prophecy was fulfilled.

Notice the particulars of Isaiah's prophecy and how it finds fulfillment in the name "Christian." This prophecy was to be fulfilled when the gentiles *"see thy righteousness"*. The promise of remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit is not only to the Jews but also to those that are *"afar off"* (Ac. 2:37-39). It was not until the gentiles had seen the righteousness of the Lord that the "new name" was to be given. The first Gentile converts are found in Acts ten and it is discussed in chapter eleven (the conversion of the household of Cornelius). In Acts 11:26 a new designation is found: *"And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."*

This "new name" is given by God. Isaiah prophesied the name would be that *"which the mouth of the Lord shall name"*. If the name "Christian" is given by mouth of man than it isn't the "new name" according to prophecy. The Greek word for *"called"* in Acts 11:26 indicates a divine calling. Thayer defines *chrematixoi* to mean "to give a Divine command or admonition, to teach from heaven." Several English translations more accurately reflect this meaning. The Kingdom Interlinear Translation reads: *"And it was first in Antioch that the disciples were by divine providence called Christians"*. According to Young's Literal Translation Acts 11:26 is rendered: *"The disciples also were divinely called first in Antioch"*

Christians." Without exception, every time this Greek word is used in the New Testament it pertains to a divine calling. This is why God's children are only known as "Christians".

A New Song

The Book of Psalms tells of a promised new song (Ps. 40:3; 96:1-2; 98:1-4). According to the prophet Isaiah from the new things God had planned would come this new song. *"Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them. Praise to the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it. You coastlands and you inhabitants of them!"* (Isa. 42:9-10).

As we come to the end of the New Testament, those who have been redeemed by the Lamb's blood will sing this new song. *"And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation"* (Rev. 5:8-9; also see 14:3).

A New Heaven & New Earth

This newness of life is not just limited to this life. The apostle John saw a vision of Eternal Life in the new Heaven and New Earth. He gave a description of what it will be like. *"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.' Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new'"* (Rev. 21:1-5a). The newness of the Christian Life is wonderful but our future looks even better in Heaven.

In Christ you have been blessed with the free gift of salvation. Why stay where you are? When you can have a brand new life.

Questions:

1. When does our newness of life begin and why at this point?
2. What is the meaning of "new" in 2 Corinthians 5:17? What is this significant?
3. What are some of the "old things" which have passed away?
4. In what ways did the Jews continue to violate the Old Covenant/Law of Moses?

5. List the ways in which the New Testament/Covenant is better and that Old Testament.

6. How is the command to love one another a new commandment?

7. What aspects of Isaiah's prophecies concerning a "*new name*" have been fulfilled in Acts 11:26?

8. Did God give this new name or did man? Explain.

9. According to Revelation 5 when was the first time the New Song could be sung?

10. What makes the New Heaven and New Earth better than the old?

Application & Discussion:

1. List some other new things we have in Christ.

2. What are some of the old things which have passed when you became a new creation in Christ? What new things replaced them?

Homework: Examine Yourself! Are you still a new creature in Christ? Do you still have the new Christian smell.

The 7 Ups of Life

In the waiting room of a maternity ward were four anxious fathers. After awhile a nurse came out and told the first father, "Congratulations! You're the father of twin baby girls." The father leaped joyfully to his feet and exclaimed to the other fathers, "What a coincidence! I work for the Minnesota Twins. Shortly thereafter, another nurse comes out and tells the next father that his wife just gave birth to triplets, all males. He too leaped to his feet and said, "What do you know about that guys? I work for 3M". Just then another nurse came out and told a father that he was blessed with quadruplets. In totaled amazed me he explained, "I work as a chef at the Four Seasons restaurant". Suddenly, the fourth and final father jumps up and runs in a panic toward the nearest exit. The other three fathers ask him where he is running off to. "Do you want to find out what you have?" The frightened father called back, "Are you kidding, I work for 7 UP".

Unlike this father you will want to stick around and find out about the seven "ups" found in the New Testament.

Treasures Laid UP

During the sermon the Mount Christ commanded those who would be His disciples, *"but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."* (Matt. 6:20). So many today are heaping up riches upon this earth. One day they will leave it all and then who will possess all these earthly treasures. After all, you cannot take it with you. Think of all the wonderful things that await us in the next life. Heaven is a wonderful place where you will have no need of gold, silver diamonds or a fancy house. How foolish are we to work so hard to have a few precious items which we must let go in a few short years.

True Christians leave their mansion and run for the church building. They forget about the stock broker and call for the preacher. They reject their gold and cry out for their God. They neglect their phone to friends, business opportunities, etc. and spend hours in prayer. They neglect their magazines and newspapers and grab for a Bible. This is how they lay treasures up in heaven.

Grow UP in Christ

Paul told the Ephesians, *"but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-- Christ--"* (Eph. 4:15). Growing up in Christ is not optional, it is mandatory. It can only be done by speaking the truth in love. This requires actively speaking, from the right source, the truth, and with the proper motive, love.

Just as you can see how much a child is growing up by the way they talk, you can tell how much a child of God is growing up in Christ by the way they talk.

Take UP the Armor of God

In dealing with the Devil and the forces of evil, Paul tells us to *"take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand"* (Eph. 6:13).

Could you imagine a division of U.S. Marines coming over the hill at the enemy dressed in their pajamas? What is the enemy to do? Laugh to death. Many Christians are surprised about their inability

to withstand an attack from Satan and fall to temptations. It is because they have failed to take time to put on the WHOLE armor. Sure it is quicker to throw a robe over your pajamas than it is to put on the whole armor of God. However, you will not be able to stand up to the Devil if you do not first take up the whole armor of God. This armor involves: the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of the gospel of peace and the sword of the spirit.

Rooted and Built UP

Now that you have become a Christian it is needful for you to change. Just what changes are we to make? *“As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving”* (Col. 2:6). Just like a tree that has been dug up and transplanted into a new location it must become rooted first and then it can be built up. So many have a little faith. Too small to build on. Too shallow to take root. Many are too busy building up a savings or a mansion. They establish themselves in the community not in the faith. They abound in getting not giving thanks. Remember, just as the roots of a tree keep in firm and upright so does our faith in Christ establish us.

Lifting UP Holy Hands

Over the years I have been fastenated by the odd names of people I have come across. Once in a phone book I found a man named Weldon Rumproast. Later, in east Texas I met a woman named, Ima Hogg. Visiting our congregation a few years ago was a young lady named Anita Hand. Well, God needs a few good hands when it comes to prayer. *“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;”* (1 Tim. 2:8). Just what are your hands busy doing? Do you have your hands in the cookie jar or involved in the Lord's Work? Are your hands holding a news paper, remote, a fishing pole or are they lifted up to God?

Gird UP Your Loins

In 1 Peter 1:13 it says *“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;”*. Gird up is a metaphorical phrase and is based on the literal tucking of flowing garments so as to give one's limbs unimpeded movement on a journey. The English equivalent of the phrase would be to roll up one's sleeves or to take off one's jacket. This word “gird” is the term from which we get our word “girdle”. To “gird up” is to get ready, so to “gird up the lions of your mind” is to be mentally ready, mental preparedness is the meaning.

To gird up the means requires one to control their thoughts or to “pull your thoughts together” or “have a disciplined mind”. It is gathering up the loose ends of the mind. Peter is telling his people that they must be ready for the most strenuous mental endeavor. You would begin by gathering up all improper thoughts, feelings and activities of the mind and restraining them that they may not hinder one's progress toward heaven. The believer is to have his mind (mental powers) collected and always ready for Christ's coming, for sudden temptation (1 Pet. 5:8), for mistreatment or persecution (3:9-13), for opportunities to teach (3:15) and for unexpected crisis.

Caught UP to Meet Christ

Just what is going to happen when Christ comes again? Well, the dead in Christ will arise first. *“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord”* (1 Thess. 4:17). Think about it. We meet

Him in the air with all the saved ones who have gone on before us in death and from the time on we will always be with Him. Yet not every Christian will be caught up to meet the Lord when He comes again. Why? Because so many are caught up in the things of this world. They are so anchored to this world they will never be caught up to meet th Lord. Are you caught up in making money, caught up in a job, caught up in sports, and caught up in sin? If so, you are hindering your chances of being caught up in the end to be with the Lord.

You may never work for 7 Up, but if you are a faithful Christian these seven "UP's" will work for you.

Questions:

1. What are "*treasures on earth*" which many store up?
2. How can we grow up in Christ?
3. List some things we can do to help us grow up in Christ.
4. List the whole armor of God.
5. What is this armor essential for everyday Christian living?
6. How is Christian life like a tree?
7. What does it mean to lift up holy hands in prayer?
8. What is the meaning of the terms "gird" and "loins"? What does it mean to "*gird up the loins*"?
9. What things might we do to prep our minds in our daily walk in Christ?

10. When Christ returns in the clouds and the air who will be caught up with Him and in what order?

11. When Christ comes again what will most of the world be found caught up in at that time?

Application & Discussion:

1. Make a list of your treasures in Heaven.

2. What might you do every day to help be prepared for the Second Coming?

Homework: Make an assessment of what you have be UP to in your Christian life. Does it measure UP to this list? What changes do you need to come UP with for improvement?

VIPs of Life

We all have had some Very Important People in our lives, that is, VIPs. They are important because of what they can do to improve or enhance our lives on this earth. This cannot be said of everyone we with which have connections. As the saying goes: *"Some folk bring joy wherever they go; others bring joy when they go."*

Very Encouraging People

The first group of VIPs are the VEPs. They are the people who can encourage, enlighten, and edify us. VEPs impart to us their experiences, wisdom, knowledge, courage, approval, etc.

The Bible is resplendent with examples of men and women who were VEPs to some of the greatest spiritual men and women found in scripture: Eli to Samuel; Elijah to Elisha; Barnabas to Paul; Aquila and Priscilla to Apollos; and Jesus to His twelve disciples. Jesus understood this all too well and appreciated the fact that three years with the disciples as their VEP was all they needed (John 16:7).

I've had some men serve as VEPs in my life. Some of the more prominent ones which immediately come to mind are, my father, our neighbor and a member of the church where I grew up, Arthur Wagoner, and the elders of the Northside congregation in Fort Walton Beach, Florida where I labored for six and one half years. Think about it and you will think of some of those who are VEPs in your life both past and present.

We all should become VEP's. There is a time we should become teachers of others. *"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil"* (Heb. 5:12-14).

Very Helpful People

The VHPs are those who are fellow workers. They share the work load and help us bear our burdens (Gal. 6:1-5). These are the type we can call upon when we just need a helping hand. VHPs will rejoice when we rejoice and weep when we weep.

Barnabas was a VHP to Paul (although for a short while he may have been VEP); so were Silas and Luke. Paul used the word "yokefellow" to refer to those who had shared the yoke of ministry together. *"And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life"* (Phil. 4:3). Apollos and Paul were mutual VHPs though at times they were laboring far apart. Paul wrote, *"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase"* (1 Cor. 3:6).

While laboring with the church in Florida I was blessed by God to have Bro. Ron Goodson as a VHP. Every Tuesday evening at about 7:00 we went out to visit brethren and conduct Bible Studies with the lost.

It has also been my privilege to be a VHP to many brethren. Actually, all those who are VHPs to us have us in return as one of their VHPs.

Very Trainable People

The VTP is a very important person in our lives. They are the one's to whom we become VEPs. We are their mentors and they learn and are encouraged by us.

Paul who had trained Timothy encouraged him to instruct others and they in turn were to teach others. *"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also"* (2 Timothy 2:2).

As we become maturer as Christians we have the duty to find those whom we can train. The older women are even instructed to train the younger women (Titus 2:1f). One of my most memorable experiences in training a new born Christian was the two months spent with Tom Waters. Tom had no religious up bringing, but after he was baptized I spent seven days a week with him for the two months before he moved to Atlanta. This VTP would get off work at 6:30 a.m. He would be at my house by seven and stay till one or two in the afternoon. On Saturday he had to work, but during the slow times he would call and we would study over the phone for a couple of hours. Tom was an exception, and it nearly wore me out for those two months. When he placed membership in the church in Atlanta the elders were so impressed with his zeal and fresh knowledge they put him to work teaching a teenage and young adult class until they discovered he had only been a Christian for a few months.

Also, we must be Very Trainable People. There are those who are like the old saying, "You can tell a freshman a mile away, but you can't tell him much." If Brother Waters had not had a trainable disposition there would have been no way I could have been his teacher.

Very Loving People

Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ? Are you a lover of truth? Do you love God? Do you love what is good and hate what is evil? Do you wish for all Christians to improve and prosper in life? Are you motivated to do good for others? If you can answer yes to all of these, then you can truly say you have love for the brethren.

To love fellow Christians involves more than mere lip service. It is interconnected and interdependent with many other things. According to John 13:34,35 you can only prove to the world that you are following Christ if you have the same kind of love for the brethren that He has shown by giving His life for all men. A study of Christ's love for others will reveal what your love should be. *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* Christ gives his disciples a new commandment. This is not the first time they were told to love others by God. However, it is the first time they were told to do so in the likeness of Christ's love for mankind.

As a true disciple of Christ you will learn the love of Christ and apply that love to each other. By loving the sinner. By loving those who hate you. By loving in spite of one's health, physical appearances, personality, education, race, etc. Remember, Christ loves them and if you don't love them you are not a disciple of Christ.

According to the great chapter on love you cannot love the brethren, if you do not love the truth. Love *"does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth"* (1 Cor. 13:6). If you love the truth, you will love all others who uphold the truth. We often love those who share a mutual love with us. We love those who love us. We tend to love those who love the same things and same people. That is why it is so important that a father and mother love one another, because it reflects to their children that they are truly loved. Those who share the same faith, the same love for God and Christ, the same love for the brethren, the same love for the Word of God are easy for us to love.

My love goes out to those who stand for the truth and fight error at great cost. My expressions, thoughts, and attitudes of hate toward any brother who stands for the truth would demonstrate a hate for the truth.

Do you love your brother? Then prove it. Mere human testimony is no proof of your love for

God's children. Anyone one can say the words: "I love you". *"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.* (I Jn. 3:15-18). To say, "Why of course I love my brothers!" Doesn't prove it. You must show it. If I say I love my brother, but then, I refuse to encourage him when he is down, make fun and ridicule his personal characteristics, refuse to make friends with him, rejoice when he hurts, and feel hurt when he rejoices, then I haven't shown love. Nor could I show love if I burn with anger when he is honored and leap with joy when he fails, or go talk to others about something he is doing wrong, or said wrong, yet never be willing to go talk to him.

Sometimes we really do love our brothers, but simply find it difficult to show. Dropping your guard is hard. It leaves us vulnerable. There are many personal obstacles we must overcome to express our love to one another. Not to mention, the many obstacles to our love we see in others. Those people who are shy, lack self-esteem, are weak, burdened, or have a special personality, may find it harder to communicate their love for others. Others may find it hard to love them. Yet remember, love begins in the heart, moves through the mouth to the ears, and is planted in another's heart. *"Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones"* (Prov. 16:24). *"A soft answer turns away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger"* (Prov. 15:1). Gossip, tactlessness, rudeness, cruel joking, and hard answers stir up hate in the hearts of men, not love.

Do you love your brethren? Then show it. Do you love the idea of going to heaven forever to be with God and fellow saints? Then love the brethren on earth now and you will be blessed with loving them forever in heaven. Think about this: God isn't going to allow two brothers into heaven if they have never learned to love each other on earth. He has reserved another eternal abode for those who hate.

These VIPs are important to our lives. They enrich it and give it meaning and focus. Their value increases when we consider that VAPs (Very Average People) who surround us and the VDPs who are those very draining people can really zap our zeal. The VAPs and VDPs are also very important from the standpoint that we are to encourage, help, and train them.

Questions:

1. What is a VIP?
2. Make a list of some Bible characters who were Very Encouraging People to you.
3. Make a list of things Very Encouraging People do for others.
4. Who were some Very Helpful People to Paul in his ministry?

5. What are some common burdens brethren need help?
6. Who did Paul tell Timothy he should train?
7. Who are the older women to train?
8. What characteristics make for a very trainable person?
9. How does know Christ loves someone help you to love them too?
10. How does one love the Truth?

Application & Discussion:

1. What other VIPs can you think of?
2. List some ways you can be a Very Encouraging Person to others around you.

Homework: Explore ways you can be a VERY Encouraging, Helpful, Trainable and Loving person.

Crowns of life

Crowns are used in several ways in the Old and New Testament times. Some crowns were given to royalty as part of the coronation as Kings or Queens. The High Priest wore a crown of pure gold bearing the inscription, *"holy to the Lord."* Thus, signifying the consecration of the priest as the representative of the people (Ex. 29:6; Lev. 8:9). Other crowns were given as reward for victory. The conquering Christ has *"upon his head...many diadems"* (Rev. 19:12). Victorious athletes were given crowns of laurel or olive branches. Still other crowns were given as exaltation for a glorious occasions such as the bride at her wedding.

Christ has promised to give us greater crowns than these.

The Athlete's Incorruptible Crown

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

The Isthmian Games were near Corinth. The athletes involved were willing to endure weeks of self-denial and arduous training to obtain a crown. The word "strive" used here is the source of our English word "agonize". The athlete strives for the crown to the point of agony. He does not lounge around, eating sweets, but in self-control and discipline stays focused upon his goal. He is willing to "buffet" his body daily. Run his race with patience (Heb. 12:1). Victory is not found in the crack of the starter's pistol, but at the crossing of the finish line.

All this effort was expended for a corruptible crown comprised of leaves of oak, ivy, parsley, myrtle, or olive. In some rare cases these garlands were cast in gold. Most of these crowns soon became a faded memory just as the name of the man who won the 100 meters dash in this past Olympics. We dote upon our personal athletic achievements, those of our children, and those of our favorite team, but their fame and glory is short lived and soon fades away. Our crown is unperishable, everlasting. Many Kings have lost crowns. Contestants lose their standings in the record books. Conquerors, although once victorious, soon lose their territory to another. Yet, the Christians crown is infinitely superior, so it must be sought for all the more.

The Soul-Winner's Crown of Rejoicing

"But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. Therefore we wanted to come to you-- even I, Paul, time and again-- but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2:17-20).

An athlete who had won a crown for his city would with great joy bring the crown and give it to his king. Paul is saying that he strove hard at Thessalonica to win souls to Christ. They are his crown of joy which he rejoices in presenting to Christ. Preachers and parents alike can go in for this crown of rejoicing. Have you experienced the thrill of leading a soul to the Savior? If not, begin right away to work

for this conspicuous reward. Even the angels in heaven rejoice over the one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7). He that wins souls is wise (Prov. 11:30). Wise because he can win a soul from death and at the same time bring great joy to the lost, the angels, the Lord and to himself.

The Watcher's Crown of Righteousness

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Paul did not expect to receive this crown simply because he was once saved. He anticipated it because he had been faithful. The crown of righteousness requires keeping the faith. As an athlete must play by the rules or forfeit his right to the crown so Christians must be faithful. Dishonest contestants are not to be rewarded (1 Jn. 2:4; Rev. 21:8). Christians cannot transgress the Law of God, or he losses God's and Christ's blessings, such as, the crown (2 Jn. 9; 1 Jn. 3:4).

Notice, that Paul said this crown was for all others who loved Christ's appearing. Too many Christians do not look forward to Christ's return. They are too much in love with this world. To receive this crown one must watch with loving anticipation for Christ's return.

The Troubled's Crown of Life

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (James 1:12). This promise is in the form of a beatitude. The life promised here in these verses is not a better life on earth. It is an eternal life suggesting life in its fullness, completeness, unendingness. We are to look beyond this life to the greater things in store.

Again the reception of this crown is conditional. Christians must first endure trials and temptations. This is not a temporary or one time feat, but a lifetime of fidelity to the Master's Will (Rev. 2:11). Charles Surgeon once wrote, *"There are no crown wearers in Heaven that were not cross bearers here below"*.

The Shepherd's Crown of Glory

"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away" (1 Peter 5:1-4). In the context Peter is addressing elders concerning their work and example to the local church (vv. 1-3). They demonstrate good leadership by being examples instead of lords over the flock. They will have eternal glory given in the end, if they do not seek personal glory from the flock. A man may spend 20 to 40 years in preparation to serve as an elder. This success is in striking contrast with the one who decides to spend 20 to 40 days lobbying and politicking to be a bishop and then proves to be an abysmal selection.

The source of this crown is from the Chief Shepherd. The time to receive is at the Second Coming. So, may all good shepherds so labor among the flock in such a way that they will be crowned.

Once obtained these crowns can be lost. *"Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown"* (Rev. 3:11). The Lord is coming so hang on. Those who are permitted to take it from us do not gain, but we are sure to lose. If we lose the crown, Satan wins us. To forfeit ones claim to the crown is to forfeit eternal life, so hang on. What are we to do with the crowns we earn? Strut around with them as if to suggest, "See why I have won?" No! One day all the redeemed will have the opportunity to cast their crowns before Christ in acknowledgment and praise to Him who made such a victory possible (Rev. 4:10,11). Rome's "Emperor's Wrestlers." Before each contest: "We,

the wrestlers, wrestling for thee, O Emperor, to win for thee the victory and from thee, the victor's crown." Then they gave the crown back to him. Is there a crown laid up for you in heaven this day? Is your name written there, is it on the list for those who will receive a crown?

Questions:

1. How were crowns used in the Old and New Testament times?
2. What is the meaning of the term "strive" in 1 Corinthians chapter nine?
3. Contrast the athlete's crown on the first century Greek games with the crown Christians wear?
4. Why is the soul-winner's crown one of rejoicing?
5. How does Heaven react to one sinner who repents?
6. When does Paul believe he would receive a crown of righteousness? Who else could receive one?
7. What crown is promised to those who endure temptation?
8. Who is the "Chief Shepherd"?
9. Why did Peter promise a crown of Glory to elders in 1 Peter 5:1-4?
10. Can any of these crowns be lost? Explain.

Application & Discussion:

1. What training can you be engaged in everyday to win the race of the Christian life?

2. Why is winning souls - wise?

Homework: Live you life so as to turn in your helmet of salvation one day for a crown of life.

The Daily Life

Just as one must daily do these things physically, there are some things we must do daily for our souls or we will die spiritually. Being a disciple of Jesus demands doing daily duties. Someone has well said, "the problem with the Christian life is that it is so daily." There are many things we take time to do daily: shave, brush teeth, put on deodorant, read newspaper etc. What are those things which a Christians must perform every day?

Disciple's Daily Duties

▶ **Daily Performance of Vows**

When couples have problems with their marriage. Preachers and counselors have been known to advise them to repeat their vows to each other daily for a week or two. Well, I told my wife that we might give this a try and she said it would be kind of hard since we wrote our own and gave them from memory. I said I could remember mine from way back in grade school: A,E,I,O,U. She said that those are not the vows she had in mind but she really like the last three vowels: I.O.U.

In a marriage relationship there are daily duties to perform. The Christian's relationship with God requires them to perform their duties to God. F. Lagard Smith wrote a book entitled: *Baptism: the believer's marriage ceremony*. As a Christian you gave your promise to God when you were baptized. The Psalmist wrote, "so I will sing praise to Your name forever, that I may daily perform my vows" (Ps. 61:8). "The Christian life is like an airplane -- when you stop you drop."

▶ **Daily Praise**

For their 10th wedding anniversary, Danielle LeFeuvre of Toulouse, France brought her husband a throne, a crown, and a sceptre. "All of this talk about women's liberation and domination got him down." she explained. "He's a new man now that he knows the children and I consider him a king and master in his own home."

Praising God is to tell Him and the world He Is KING. Some reproach God daily. "Arise, O God, plead Your own cause; remember how the foolish man reproaches You daily" (Ps. 74:22). In contrast some praise God every day. "And He shall live; and the gold of Sheba will be given to Him; prayer also will be made for Him continually, and daily He shall be praised" (Ps. 72:15). "Seven times a day I praise You, because of Your righteous judgments" (Ps. 119:164). This praise will turn into eternal praise of God. "I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever" (Ps. 145:1,2). If you cannot stand praising God daily here you will not enjoy Heaven.

▶ **Daily Prayer**

Psalmist prayed daily for help in affliction, "My eye wastes away because of affliction. LORD, I have called daily upon You; I have stretched out my hands to You" (Ps. 88:9). Daniel Prayer Three Times a Day (Dan. 6:13). Prayer for daily bread requires daily prayers (Matt. 6:11). Paul's daily concerns for the churches caused him to pray daily for them (2 Cor. 11:28). Since we have daily benefits for God daily prayers of thanksgiving are needed. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation! Selah"(Ps. 68:19). As a believer said to an atheist, "God is not Dead, I spoke with Him this morning".

▶ **Daily Evangelism**

The disciples suffered persecution for preaching Christ, but instead of giving up "daily in the

temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Ac. 5:42). Daily evangelism equals daily growth. "So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Ac. 16:5). Consider Paul's daily debates on the Truth. "Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there" (Ac. 17:17). "But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus" (Ac. 19:9). Bailey Smith said, "we on the inside of the Church need to endure some inconvenience in order that those on the outside can hear the gospel."

▶ **Daily Exhortation**

The Hebrew writer urged "but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). The first Christians started off with daily encouragement. "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:46,47). So, call, write or visit one Christian each day. In college my friend Jorge told me of his summer working with the brethren in Mexico City. They did not take naps in the afternoon instead they gathered each day for Bible Study.

▶ **Daily Self-Denial**

Jesus demanded of His disciples, "if anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). Dying to self every day is essential if one is to live for Christ. Paul spoke of his daily death. "And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily" (1 Cor. 15:30,31).

All these daily duties are performed in preparation for one very special day - The Day of the Lord. All our days are focused on one day in the future. When Jesus comes again. Chinese proverb: "To be for one day entirely at leisure is to be for one day an immortal". One day we will be immortal and rest from all our labors (Rev. 14:13). The way you live daily will determine where you live in eternity.

How A Christian Should Start the Day

If you are like me, the poetry above may represent you as well. I am not much of a morning person. If you ask me, if the good Lord wanted us to enjoy sunrises they would have come at nine o'clock in the morning. However, having a good morning is the only real way to start the day.

✓ **Raise Early**

In contrast, the Bible is filled with evidence that successful men of God arose early in the morning. Abraham rose early to worship the Lord. "So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him" (Gen. 22:3). Jacob rose early to worship the Lord (Gen. 28:18). Moses rose early to serve the Lord: "And the Lord said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh"" (Ex. 8:20). And Joshua rose early to worship the Lord. David rose early to worship the Lord (Ps. 5:3). Job rose early to worship the Lord (Job 1:5). And Isaiah rose early. Daniel rose early. The apostles rose early. The women who came to the empty tomb of Jesus arose early (Mark 16:1,2). Even Jesus rose early to worship the Lord and spend time in prayer and study. "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35).

Don't misconstrue the point being made here. Getting up early does not make you righteous. We can find other examples of the righteous staying up late and even sleeping in all day at God's command. The wicked can rise just as early to do their deeds. The selfish can rise early to do whatever

they please. Many Christians are guilty of giving God only what is left over after a hard day's work.

Most people who have jobs that require them to be there at a certain time do not give a second thought about arising early to start the day. Getting up is just the first part of their every day morning routine. If it wasn't, they would be taking their shower and getting dressed while still in bed. A cup of coffee, and rush to shower and get ready for work. Then the kids have to be awakened, dressed, and fed. Once all is gathered, the children are loaded up, taken to school or day care, and then there's the rush to daily employment. Life has become a routine.

✓ **Awake**

Christians need to rise early, so they can have a spiritual routine. In fact, our soul's salvation may just depend upon a daily spiritual routine. *"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed"* (Rom. 13:11). Christ is the morning light that will shine on us: *"Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light'"* (Eph. 5:14). So, the first part of your daily morning routine is to AWAKE! Just because you are awake physically does not mean you are awake spiritually.

✓ **Get Clean**

Remember how your spiritual life began. Your filthy sins of yesterday were washed away in baptism (Acts 22:16). Start off the day with a clean slate. Remember your shortcomings of the day before, and turn from them. Confess your sins to God, and pray for cleansing. *"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7).

✓ **Get Dressed**

All of us get dressed for the day. What we are determines how we dress. For example, fireman, policeman, carpenter, lawyer, preacher, plumber, etc. all will dress according to the profession. Christians are Soldiers and must put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10-17). A good soldier does not arrive late at the battlefield in his pajamas in bare feet waving a toothbrush around and throwing an alarm clock. The enemy is not going to be beaten back by such an attack. Although, they might laugh themselves to death. How successful can a Soldier of Christ be if he crawls out of bed half-naked and unarmed? Here is what you do before your feet hit the floor: mentally dress your soul for battle by putting on the Belt of Truth, then the Breastplate of Righteousness; next the feet are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace; after this the Shield of Faith; next the Helmet of Salvation; and finally the Sword of the Spirit.

✓ **Eat**

Remember what they say, "Breakfast is the most important meal of the day." Our morning devotions are just as vital. Jesus Himself had a habit of morning devotions with the Father. *"Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed"* (Mark. 1:35). Toward the end of His life, *"early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him"* (Luke 21:38). We need a strong spiritual appetite (Mt. 5:6). A longing for God's Word like a baby will cry out for his milk when he is hungry (1 Peter 2:2).

✓ **Go to Work**

Most people get up to go to work. God commanded His servants to get up and obey Him first thing in the morning. Abraham was to take Isaac and sacrifice him first thing in the morning. He was also told to be circumcised and to circumcise Ishmael and his servants first thing in the morning. The Battle of Jericho was to take place in the morning. David killed Goliath in the morning (1 Sam. 17:20). The Apostles *"entered the temple early in the morning and taught"* (Acts 5:21). Why get a good start at work in the morning? Jesus said, *"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work"* (John 9:4). Furthermore, we need to give our work everything we've got. *"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going"* (Eccl. 9:10).

✓ **Talk to the Boss**

Before getting to work, many meet with the boss to talk about their work for the day. As Christians, we communicate with our Master through prayer. This must be done daily, because Christ

commanded us to pray for our daily needs. *"Give us this day our daily bread"* (Matt. 6:11). Paul told us to *"pray without ceasing"* (1 Th. 5:17). According to the Psalms, it appears the Jews had morning prayers. *"My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; In the morning I will direct it to You, And I will look up"* (Ps. 5:3). *"Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice"* (Ps. 55:17). *"But to You I have cried out, O Lord, And in the morning my prayer comes before You"* (Ps. 88:13).

A minister asked a little boy whether he prayed every day. "No, not every day," said the boy. "There are some days I don't WANT anything!" Mature Christians understand that prayer is not just for what we want from God, but for help and an understanding of what He wants from us.

An artist was found creating a great mosaic with tens of thousands of pieces. He was asked how he ever hoped to finish such a monumental task. His reply, "One piece at a time." The billions of the world are to be reached one soul at a time. You will make the journey to Heaven one day at a time. Isn't it time to start a morning spiritual routine?

Questions:

1. True False It is too much to expect a Christian to perform daily spiritual task in their busy day to day schedule.
2. What promises or commitments did we make to God when we were baptized?
3. Why should we praise God daily?
4. Why should a Christian pray to God everyday?
5. How can a Christian share their faith daily?
6. Who should we exhort daily?
7. What is a Christian exhorted to take up daily in order to follow Christ?
8. List men in the Bible who arose early. What did they do?

9. What does it mean to be spiritually awake?

10. How does a Christian get "cleaned up"?

11. What does the Christian put on each day?

13. List servants of God who did great deeds for Him in the morning.

Application & Discussion:

1. Explain why a Christian should not expect to be productive and effective in His Christian walk with God, if he does not start the day with prayer.

2. List some ways Christians can cultivate a spiritual appetite.

Homework: Begin this week to establish your own daily spiritual routine in the morning

The Abundant Life

What sort of life do you want to live? How about the abundant life Jesus offers in John 10:10: *“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”* However, many seek the good life in vain. They are like a man who tries to water his garden using a very, leaking bucket. The more he tries the more he just spills and waters the weeds.

Mankind’s Pursuit of the Abundant Life

What is the abundant life and how does one obtain it? Most of history is filled with the stories of those who spent the years of their short lives in acquisition of money, knowledge, fame and pleasure. With the attitude of *“eat, and drink, for tomorrow we die”* (1 Cor. 15:32). The pursuit of self-satisfaction only leaves one unsatisfied.

Some take the text of John 10:10 as a promise of health and wealth. This is also known as the Prosperity Gospel. Jesus asked, *“Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?”* (Matt. 6:25). Is this really what life is all about?

Solomon in his great experiment searched for the meaning of life. All he seemed to find was great frustration and disappointment, that they all came up empty. *“Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun”* (Ecclesiastes 2:11). Many souls in their disillusionment would have turned to drugs and alcohol. But at the end of his research paper Solomon noted, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all”* (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Meaning of Abundant Life

“The English word ‘abundance’ comes from the two Latin words *ab* and *undare* which means ‘to rise in waves’ or ‘to overflow’” (Boice 748). The term can be used to describe great overwhelming flood which overflows the banks of the river or illustrate the never ending pounding of the waves against the seashore.

“This word ‘abundantly’ is translated from the Greek term *perissos* which means: ‘superabundant or ...superior’” (Strong 57). This same Greek term is used to describe the surplus of twelve baskets full of leftovers taken up by the disciples after Jesus’ feeding of the 5000 (Matt. 14:20.). The word suggest richness, thriving, fulness. It is a bountiful, contented life filled with spiritual fulness of joy, love, peace, grace, mercy and hope. It is not a carnal life of hedonistic and materialistic pursuits but a superior life far more than what this world system could ever offer.

The Good Shepherd Gives the Abundant Life

✓ Right Relationship

In the context of John 10:10 Jesus claims to be both the door and the good shepherd. At night and times of rest and shelter, shepherds served as doors to the sheep fold. They would use their bodies to lie at the entrance of the sheep pen and act as a door. This would help protect them from thieves and robbers. *“All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers,...the thief does not come except to*

steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:8,10-11). Those sheep that are not part of the good shepherds flock are not protected or given the abundant life.

First, the abundant life can only be had through a relationship with the Good Shepherd. Jesus promised, *"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture"* (John 10:9). Later He would claim, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6). Until one has become a Christian through the obedience of the Gospel he will not gain access to this abundant life.

The twenty-third Psalm tells of the abundant life for those who proclaim, *"the Lord is my Shepherd"* (Ps. 23:1a). These are those who can claim, *"I shall not want"* (Ps. 23:1b). The abundant life for the Lord's sheep includes:

✓ **Relief**

Sheep do not easily lie down. First they need to feel freed from fear, stress, provocation and hunger. The Good Shepherd *"He makes me to lie down in green pastures"* (Ps. 23:2). Jesus promised to take our burdens and give us rest and an easy yoke to bear (Matt. 11:28-30).

✓ **Direction**

"No other class of livestock requires more careful handling and more detailed directions than do sheep" (Boice 750), The Lord *"leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake"* (Ps. 23:2b,3).

✓ **Protection**

Sheep are very vulnerable and in need of constant protection. They will succumb to winter's chill, fall prey to wild animals, perish from poison plants, drown in floods, scatter by storms, taken by thieves, thirst from droughts, hunger in famine, etc. They even need to be protected from themselves. Sheep will graze upon a pasture till they eat everything down to the roots and make the land barren. *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies"* (Ps. 23:4,5a). In the abundant life there will be trials, temptations, trials, torments, etc. but there will also be protection.

✓ **Provision**

"You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life" (Ps. 23:5b,6). Oil and juice from the vine were symbolic and perfect provisions. Jesus promised, *"I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst"* (Jn. 6:35). By seeking God's kingdom first, our needs will be met (Matt. 6:25-34).

✓ **Hope for A Heavenly Home**

Finally, there is hope for the future. *"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever"* (Ps. 23:6b). In Revelation chapters 21 and 22 Heaven is seen as a place lacking enemies, an abundance of water from the river of life, light from the throne of God, and fruit from the tree of life.

Blessings of the Abundant Life

Paul wrote to the church of Ephesus about the Abundant Life and all the blessings found in a relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"* (Eph. 1:3). He told them of *"the unsearchable riches of Christ"* (Ephesians 3:8). The reason for this is the great surplus which is *"exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think"* (Ephesians 3:20).

◆ **Joy**

In John 15:11 Jesus said, *"These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."* The Psalmist spoke of this joy, *"You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore"* (Psalm 16:11). Peter

spoke of Christians who *"rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:8). James told those who were suffering temptations to *"counting it all joy"* when facing trials (James 1:2-4).

◆ **Peace**

In John 14:27 Jesus promised His disciples, *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you."* Because of the abundant life in Christ we can *"be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:6-7).

◆ **Mercy**

"Mercy" is kindness and benefits those who deserve just the opposite. *"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ"* (Ephesians 2:4-5). *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"* (1 Peter 1:3).

◆ **Grace**

Grace is the unmerited favor of God. This favor He has shown in sending Christ demonstrating the *"exceeding riches of his grace"* (Eph 2:7). *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence"* (Eph. 1:7-8). Paul contrast the sin and death brought in the world by the first Adam with the grace wrought by the Second Adam, Jesus Christ. *"For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more"* (Rom. 5:17, 20).

The abundant life does not promise an easy existence free from any adversity. He sought to remove the thorn in his flesh three times in prayer. The Lord answered, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."* In response to this abundant grace Paul said *"Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"* (2 Cor. 12:9).

◆ **Love**

An abundant life includes the love of Christ which *"surpasses knowledge"* (Eph 3:19). While we were sinners and enemies of God, Christ loves us enough to leave Heaven and die on the cross for us (Rom. 5:6-8).

◆ **Hope**

Hope, as used in the New Testament, is more than just a desire for something, but is also an expectation to receive it. Peter began his first epistle with the assurance and security for our treasures and benefits in Heaven. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,...incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you"* (1 Peter 1:3,4). Paul told the saints in Rome, *"now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit"* (Roman 15:13).

The views of the abundant life are opposing sides in a game of Tug-of-War. One side emphasizes the pursuit of material gain, worldly knowledge and societal approval. The other focuses on a close relationship with God through Jesus Christ to receive spiritual blessings. These abound in prayer, study, service to others, and a spiritual family. The Abundant Life offered by Christ frees us from the tyranny of "more" and teaches stewardship of resources in hope of eternal life.

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Questions:

1. What was Solomon's conclusion about life at the end of Ecclesiastes?
2. What is the worldly view of the abundant life?
3. What is the Prosperity Gospel?
4. In your own words define "abundant" as it is used in the text.
5. Can someone find the abundant life apart from being baptized into Christ? Explain.
6. What things does the Lord provide us sheep according to the 23rd Psalm?
7. Where are all spiritual blessings found?

List the superlatives used to describe each of the following blessings:

8. Joy
9. Peace
10. Mercy
11. Grace
12. Love
13. Hope

Living Life in View of Tomorrow

People spend a great deal of time and money in preparing for tomorrow. Tomorrow is really consequential for the whole world. Many allow the sparkle of the worldly goods of this life and the temporary pleasures of the day to blind their minds to things of real value. So a lot of people go through life wondering about tomorrow. Most are more concerned about their physical, social, and mental well-being, than they are about their spiritual well-being.

Life is Brief

Man's life here on earth is short. In James 4:14 this life is like a vapor. *"You do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."* You do not know exactly when how long a vapor will linger in the air, but you know that it will not last very long. A life is the same way. It may end tomorrow or even today. Man does not have a great deal of time on this earth to disregard his spiritual needs. Many approach the future with the same attitude Felix demonstrated to Paul, which was, *"when I have a convenient season"* (Acts 24:25). The bad thing about this is that the convenient season may never come. Others plan to one day obey the Lord after they retire. The problem with this attitude is that one may not live long enough to retire or after he has retired he is old and has lived so long loving this world that he might not want to change his ways. Still others may have the belief they do not need the Lord. However, without the Lord it is impossible for us to be prepared for tomorrow. With Him all things are possible, even eternal life. So let us remember that life is like a vapor, for we are here today and perhaps gone tomorrow.

Life Is Not Made Up Of Material Abundance

Our lives are not made up of material abundance for which we often lust and covet after. In Luke 12:15-21, Jesus explaining this fact using a parable showing that we do not need a great deal of earthly possession. Because these are not necessary to save our souls. Jesus said...

"Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

In verse fifteen Jesus warns against lusting after material abundance. Life does not consist or is composed of material abundance. The things in this world are not necessary toward the saving of a man's soul. Starting with verse sixteen He begins the parable about a rich man who has been blessed with a bumper crop. So the blessed farmer builds bigger barns and sits back to enjoy earthly pleasures. All these riches were heaped up in vain for this rich man was foolish because he trusted in the abundance of his riches instead of trusting in God. All he gained was that he strengthened himself in his

self-centered, temporal earthly existence. The end result was that tomorrow when his life ended, all his earthly treasures were in vain. For they could neither save his soul or could he take them with him. Because the rich man trusted in his earthly treasures instead of trusting in God, he lost both his soul and all of his earthly treasures. Do not go through this life lusting after the riches of this world. If you do this all you will accomplish in the end is losing both our earthly riches and our soul. So let us not lay up our riches upon this earth, but let us lay our treasures up in heaven, for where your treasure is there will your heart be as well (Matt. 6:19,20).

Life's Most Valuable Possession is the Soul

Just what is your most valuable possession? It is not your house, your car, your relationship or even you health. Jesus indicates the most valuable thing you have came from God. It is your soul. *"Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?'"* (Mt. 16:24-26) First, true disciples of Christ must deny their own will, their own pleasures, and the fulfillment of their own ambitions to take up their cross daily and follow in the foot steps of Jesus. Jesus came and bore crucifixion on the cross for us, so we should at least take up our cross daily and follow after the perfect example of Christ's life. Those that do not take up their cross daily, are not worthy of Christ and also are not worthy of living eternally with Christ. Second, a man can gain everything in the whole world, every building in every city, every acre of land, every bit of gold and silver, ever dollar in every bank, etc. but that man has gained nothing at all if he loses his soul. After all he can give the whole world and still he could not redeem his soul from the penalty of one single sin. I cannot by any means redeem the soul of a lost brother by giving to God a ransom for him. The redemption of his soul is precious but it is gone forever. So let us remember that our souls are worth far more that the whole world. If you illustrate this on a scale with the earth on the left and a man's soul on the right, the soul will greatly out weight the world.

Life is to Be Lived Today

A great number people today do not put the kingdom of God first in their lives. They put their job, family, friends, worldly possessions, and their earthly pleasures before God. By putting all other things before God, they will profit little. However by seeking the kingdom first their godliness will be profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that is now, and of that which is to come. They need not to take thought for their life, or what they will eat tomorrow, or what they will put on tomorrow. Instead they need to cast all their cares upon the Lord for He cares for them. So anyone who puts the Lord first in their lives will have the necessities of life, which are food, shelter, and clothing. By living this way they will live for today and not worry about tomorrow. *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble"* (Read Mt. 6:33,34)

Life Provides Time to be Saved

Salvation of the soul can be found today. Paul made this very point after quoting from Isaiah 49:8. *"In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2 Cor. 6:2). Salvation in this life is today, not tomorrow, for tomorrow may never be. So we need not gamble with our most valuable possession, our soul, by putting off till tomorrow what we can do today.

Consider how easy the Lord made it for us to have salvation by giving us the Bible which has all the answers to all the problems of life, so we should take advantage of this great Book, the Word of God,

by taking it, studying it, memorizing it, and living by it. So when that final day comes may we at least have worn out two or three Bibles during a life time of preparation. The only good Bible is a used Bible. You cannot get much good out of a Bible that is set on a coffee table just collecting dust. Be determined to make the preparation necessary now, for tomorrow we might not have the chance to pick up a Bible and study it, believe it, obey it, and live by it.

Questions:

1. How is life like a vapor?

2. How did Governor Felix respond to Paul's call to repentance?

3. In the Parable of the Foolish Farmer, how did he respond to the blessing of a bumper crop?

4. What was Jesus' moral to the parable?

5. Why are heavenly treasures more important than earthly treasures?

6. What is your most valued possession and why?

7. What is the only thing that can redeem a lost soul?

8. What things do people of this world put as their priorities in life?

9. What two things did Jesus say should be our top priority in Matthew 6:33?

10. Why is today the day of salvation?

Application & Discussion:

1. Before making plans in this life list some things you should do before implementing your decision.

2. In order of important what is your priorities in life?

Homework: Pray to God to help you number the days of our life, so that you can spend them wisely.

Things to Come in Life

A young minister was preaching at a rural church and the front seat was not far from the front edge of the pulpit. He stepped around the podium to the front edge of the platform to quote Jesus and said, "I come ..." but forgot the rest of the quote. He stepped back to gather his thoughts and then stepped forward again and said, "I come..." but had the same mental block again. After stepping back and pausing for a brief while, he stepped forward with confidence saying, "I come..." only to step too far and fall forward onto the lap of an elderly lady on the front seat. As he arose he apologized profusely. She replied, "It's okay, sonny. I can't say you didn't warn me."

Most folks are interested in things to come. Many are looking for and writing about the signs of the times. Just what is to come? What does the future hold? The Bible tells us things to come from the one who holds the future.

A Life to Come

Paul tells us that there is a life to come. *"For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come"* (1 Tim. 4:8).

Physical life is not as important as the life to come. Science has discovered that there are countless benefits to physical exercise, such as, lots of energy, better ability to think, great endurance, better memory, etc. One of the greatest benefits is improved health, through reduction in weight, counteracting diabetes, reducing high blood pressure, etc. Paul is not saying physical exercise has no benefit. He is saying that compared to the benefits of Godly living, bodily exercise cannot compete.

If some Christians would put as much energy and enthusiasm into spiritual things as they do athletics and body-building, how much stronger they would be. A life of playing on a sports team requires exercise and preparation. The life to come for the Christian requires spiritual food and spiritual exercise. A good spiritual workout includes, prayer, singing, meditation, studying, etc. This can be done alone or with other saints. The assembling of the saints is a workout session which we do together. People do better if they have someone to train, walk or practice with. Rarely do you see good strong athletes who train alone. The life to come is eternal life. No matter how hard you work out eventually your body will succumb to age, sickness, injury and death. If you workout spiritual everyday you will, but grow stronger and stronger and one day have eternal life.

Christ to Come

Christ left this earth and ascended into Heaven. One day He will come again. Angels from God have promised Christ will return in the clouds. *"And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven'"* (Acts 1:10,11). No one knows when Christ will return. He could come again at any moment. For *"the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief"* (1 Thess. 5:2-4). Therefore, "we should live as if Christ died yesterday, ascended this morning, and will be coming back to tomorrow".

A City to Come

The Hebrew writer reminds us, "*For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come*" (Heb. 13:14). That city is Heaven. A place of eternal beauty and grandeur because it is the abode of God. Many men have built great cities that once flourished with many citizens. Nebuchadnezzar built Babylon. Today, it lies in ruin. Some great cities of yesteryear have vanished except from the pages of history.

Are you looking for a better world or city? Are you looking for God?

Judgment to Come

As Paul "*reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, 'Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.'*" (Acts 24:25).

What a pathetic response to the news of coming Judgment. Felix's approach is commonly duplicated by men and women of this nation. More than four out of every five Americans agree that "we all will be called before God at Judgment day to answer for our sins," says a poll conducted by the Times Mirror Co. (National and International Religion Report Quoted in the Sings of the Times, Aug. 1993, p. 6). Many are like Felix responding with terror and procrastination. When you think about it, these two responses should not fit well together. Fear is a powerful motivator. If you are afraid of an oncoming car, your fear causes you to react by getting out of the way. Felix's prayer is not the healthy kind.

We are warned so that we can be prepared. Jesus warned his disciples of the coming of His return and judgment. These parables are found in Matthew 25, they are, the parable of the Ten Virgins; the parable of the Talents; and the parable of the Sheep and Goats. All the warnings of the coming Judgment found in the New Testament are not given to cause us to freeze in terror, but to motivate us to get busy and be ready.

During his 1960 presidential campaign, John F. Kennedy often closed his speeches with the story of Colonel Davenport, the Speaker of the Connecticut House of Representatives. One day in 1789, the sky of Hartford darkened ominously, and some of the representatives, glancing out the windows, feared the end was at hand. Quelling a clamor for immediate adjournment, Davenport rose and said, "The Day of Judgment is either approaching or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. If it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. Therefore, I wish that candles be brought." Rather than fearing what is to come, we are to be faithful till Christ returns. Instead of fearing the dark, we're to be lights as we watch and wait. (Harry Heintz)

Wrath to Come

John the Baptist warns the Pharisees and Sadducees of the wrath to come - a baptism of fire. "*But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'*" (Matt. 3:7). Judgment will come with Divine wrath on those unprepared. The logical response should be to "flee". God has made it possible to flee from His wrath by following His Son. "*even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come*" (1 Th. 1:10) God "*who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Tim. 2:4).

Many are not fleeing from the wrath of God, but instead, are chasing after the wealth of this world. Some are so busy saving their money they are going to lose their souls. Some are so concerned about getting some rest on Sunday they will miss the eternal rest. Some are so busy traveling up and down the streets to places of entertainment and running errands that they will miss walking on the streets of gold. Wealth will do you no good when you face Divine wrath.

The best is yet to come, let us keep doing our best not less.

Questions:

1. Why is exercising the body of little profit?
2. Why is exercising unto godliness profitable for all things?
3. How does a Christian exercise the soul in godliness?
4. Who promised the apostles that Christ would return?
5. To what does Paul compare Christ's second coming?
6. What is this city which is to come (Hebrews 13:14)?
7. How did Governor Felix respond to Paul's preaching about the Judgment to come?
8. List three Parables of Jesus encouraging mankind to be prepared for His Second Coming?
9. What is the "wrath to come" or the "baptism of fire"?
10. How does one "flee" from the wrath of God which is to come?
11. Instead of fleeing from God's wrath, what are many doing?

Why Keep On Living the Christian Life?

To improve the ability to see through the dense fog two drivers were moving slowly down the road with their heads out the window. Suddenly they collided and put each other in the hospital with head injuries. No, there was not a single scratch on either car. Their heads collided. Now that is what you call a real "head-on collision"!

While robbing a house in Antwerp Belgium, the thief alluded capture by running out the back door and climbing over a tall fence. He was really surprised when the spot lights came on and the guard captured him immediately. He had dropped into the city prison with the stolen merchandise in hand.

You thought you were having a bad day! The fact is, it could be worse. And if we do not respond properly to life's disappointments it will get a lot worse. Giving up on life is never the answer for one who was created in the image of God. Regardless of how bad things may be there are many good reasons to go on living the Christian life.

Live For Christ

While in prison Paul wrote that he had something or someone to live for. *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better"* (Phil. 1:21-23). When life does not go the way you expect just remember you are not here to live for you, but for Him. You do not live for your own dreams or to have the good life. Your life was buried in Him so that you could arise and walk in newness of life as a Christian.

Work for God

Just after Elijah defeated the 450 prophets of Baal at the great Mt. Carmel challenge, he found himself running for his life. *"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!"* (2 Kings 19:4). Instead of letting the weary prophet die, God sent an angel to fix him breakfast twice and let him take a long nap in-between meals. He went in the strength of that food and rest for 40 days and 40 nights. God had work for him to do: anoint Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha.

No matter how empty and fruitless and futile your life seems, God may have a great many things to do through you. Instead of praying for death and complaining to God maybe we need to ask Him to refresh our spirits and renew our strength.

Instruction For Others

When the Psalmist was old he requested of God more time. More time to enjoy life or more time to live life for God and others? *"Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come"* (Ps. 71:18). Grey hair is not a sign of one's right to kick back and retire from life. Christians can never rest while another generation needs their wisdom and guidance. Your children, grandchildren and all other young people are in need of the Truth. What good is it to sit in a rocking chair complaining how this generation

is going to the dogs when you will not do your part by hounding them to repent?

Salvation for Your Family

There is an example of an attempted suicide in the Bible. Paul and Silas were in prison and singing and praying at midnight. There was a great earthquake that opened the jail and freed the prisoners of their bonds. *“And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself”* (Acts 16:27). A Roman jailor could have been executed for the loss of his prisoners. *“But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, ‘Do yourself no harm, for we are all here’”* (16:28). The jailor asked them what he needed to do to be saved. They went home with him and taught his household what to do to be saved. Instead of taking his life, the jailor rejoiced with his family having believed and being baptized into Christ.

No man lives for himself. If one's personal salvation is no longer a good enough reason to go on living at least the salvation of one's family should be.

Service for God

In his former condition the Christian found Himself in the grip of death for the sins he committed against God. Since no sinner can free himself, God sent His Son to die for the service of mankind. Someone died to serve you. You should live to serve Him and others. *“Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful”* (James 5:11).

As a Christian you have plenty of reasons to go on living the Christian life. However, many people of this world do not have these motivators for living their life. This is because their carnal-minded goals in life (such as, fame, fun, and fortune) are empty. Let's face it! In about a hundred years from now no one is going to be remembered for anything by anybody. This is true for famous people as well as for the average man and woman. Like fame, fortune does not provide a happy and meaningful life. Many wealthy people have more than enough possessions to make life comfortable, but they have little purpose in life to make it meaningful. This is why Jesus warned, *“Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses”* (Luke 12:15). Life is tragic for the person who has plenty to live on but nothing to live for. Jesus' apostles were not wealthy (Matt. 8:20; Acts 3:6), but their lives had real purpose. Although life and filled with fun and even sin can be fun for a season (Heb. 11: 25), all will either grow old or die young. Aging and failing health tends to put life in perspective. It is not all fun and games. Solomon warned, *“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’”* (Eccl.12:1).

What if someone lost everything and everybody in their lives? Would they have a good reason to go on living? Depends on why they lost these and for whom. *“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit everlasting life”* (Matt. 19:29). That should remind you of one more reason why you should go on living: eternal life.

Questions:

1. Is it common for those who are Christian to given into disappointments and doubts and just want give up living the Christian life? Has this ever happened to you?

2. Why was it better for Christ to go on living?
3. Why did Elijah want to give up after his Mount Carmel victory of Baal?
4. How did God reignite Elijah's prophetic passion after he suffered spiritual burnout?
5. What changed the Philippians Jailor's mind about taking his life?
6. How is Job a great example for this lesson?
7. What things do worldly people use as motivation for living their life?
8. What warning did Jesus give in regard to this?
9. What sort of things helps to put life in perspective?
10. True False Living the Christian is for Eternal Life.

Application & Discussion:

1. What sort of things cause you to suffer with spiritual burnout?
2. What helps you reignite after burnout?

Homework: What are your end goals for your life? Keep your focus on your goal(s).

Regrets of Life

An article on the internet by Sarah Crow spoke of the “50 Most Common Regrets People Have in their 50s.” For example, number seven was not traveling more and number twelve: “not attending to my health.” “Worrying about other people’s opinions” came in at number ten.

Looking in the review mirror of life at my sixties I can relate to some of these regrets. In addition to the ones she listed, I regret leaving my phone on silent. Because then I cannot find it. I regret teaching my mother about email - I don’t think I will ever get all those postage stamps off my computer screen. In particular I regret after preaching a sermon leaving the wireless mic on when going to the church bathroom. Not to mention failing to wash my hands before I left the restroom. Thanks to sister Jones for the prompt reminder. Although I still claim I did indeed flush whether or not it could be heard over the speakers.

As one ages regrets are a common part of maturity. They often begin with “What if I only would have...” or “maybe I could have...” or “I know I should have...” There are some who are in denial like the person who had a large tattoo on there are saying, “No Regrets.” But they were wrong. They regretted going to a tattoo artist who could not spell.

Many of these regrets are not only common to us all, but the Bible can relate to these missed opportunities. The Scriptures encourage us to give *“give thanks to the God of heaven! for His mercy endures forever”* (Psalm 136:26). We are to be *“giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Eph. 5:20). This corresponds with regret #34: “being ungrateful.”

Several of the regrets on the list have to do with our treatment of others, such as, “being unkind,” “not apologizing more,” and “not doing more for others.” In Jesus’ parable of the Rich man and Lazarus He spoke of the rich man’s regrets in how he treated the poor beggar, Lazarus. Abraham in paradise spoke to the rich man who was in torment, *“Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us”* (Luke 16:25-26). Jesus further warned mankind to be careful about what they say. *“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment”* (Matt. 12:36). Again in another parable depicting Judgment Day the righteous ask, *“Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?” And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me’”* (Matt. 25: 37-40).

Solomon encouraged, *“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’”* (Eccl. 12:1). Perhaps this is why the twenty-eighth regret is “not appreciating your youth.” Young people tend to waste opportunities, health, money doing drugs, drinking, smoking and just being lazy. They need to listen to the wise counsel of their Creator, parents and grandparents.

Singer Tina Turner once shared: “I regret not having had more time with my kids when they were growing up.” Regret number forty is “being inattentive to your kids.” The Bible commands parents to raise their children. *“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”* (Eph. 6:4). Paul also commands older women to *“admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children”* (Titus 2:4). Parents, do not become grandparents who regret: “I wish I could raise my children all over again.”

"Not telling people you love them" comes in at regret number sixteen. The Bible commands spouses to love each other, parents to love their children, children to love their parents, neighbors to love each other, Christians to love each other, to love God, to love the truth and even to love their enemies. Jesus summed up our obligations to love in Mark chapter twelve: *"The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*

One of the best ways to show ones love to others is by sharing the Gospel. The Gospel is the Good New that God loved them enough to send Christ to lovingly sacrifice Himself for them. You say "I love you" every time you share the Gospel. The converse is like saying to the lost sinner "I don't care about your soul, you can go to hell." Returning to Jesus parable of the Rich man and Lazarus. The Rich man had regrets concerning the souls and the eternal welfare of his brothers. He begged Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead to the rich man's five brothers. *"For I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment." Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead'"* (Luke 16:27-31). Do not wait till it is too late. Share the Gospel with your loved ones and even your enemies before their or your last breath.

Another regret which did not make the article's list is one's failure to prepare for death. This not a reference to funeral arrangements or wills. Many will come to the end of their life regretting they never did anything to save their soul. In the article it lists the regrets of "missing out on investment opportunities" or "not saving more." However, the greatest missed opportunity will be failure to save one's soul. Jesus told a parable to two brothers who were arguing about their inheritance. *"He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.'" Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God"* (Luke 15:13f). The greatest investment opportunity is not on this earth but in heaven. Jesus said, *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Matt. 6:19-21).

After meeting the Lord on the road to Damascus Saul of Tarsus had regrets. However, God sent a preacher named Ananias to him. Ananias told Saul, *"and now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16). At the end of Paul's life he had no regrets. *"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing"* (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Erwin Lutzer said, "Hell is the place of unquenchable, raging, unmet emotional needs, without painkillers or sedation. Hell is a place of eternal regret." Make sure the first thing on your bucket list is a trip to the baptistry or to the throne of grace. Otherwise, you might have this regret: *"The harvest is past, The summer is ended, and we are not saved!"* (Jeremiah 8:20).

Questions:

1. True False Looking back on life with regrets is nature.
2. Why do some people regret being ungrateful?
3. In the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus of what was the rich man regretful?
4. What are some things people are often regretful for doing in their youth?
5. What is one of the most popular regrets of parents of grown children?
6. What did Jesus say were the two greatest commandments? How to these relate to people's regrets?
7. What are we saying or demonstrating to people when we take time to share the Gospel?
8. What secular things should be done to prepare for death? What things show a Christian do to prepare for Death?
9. How did Saul of Tarsus deal with his regret of persecuting Christ?
10. What will being sinner's greatest regret of all?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are some of your greatest regrets at this time in your life?
2. How can you deal with the regrets for which nothing can be done?

Homework: Turn your past regrets into motivation to avoid future regrets.

How to Change Your Life?

A woman had four husbands. She divorced all of them because they turned out to be drunks and womanizers. How did she end up with four such men? She met them at a bar on ladies' night.

A drunk wants to get off the bottle. Yet he continues to visit with his same drinking buddies at the local bar. He is perplex by his inability to stay sober.

A young man has problems with temptations of a sexual nature. He watches R-rated movies with nudity. Then he looks at magazines with immodest pictures. He ogles girls jogging down the sidewalk and also goes to the beach where he is around half naked women. He spends time alone in his girlfriend's apartment. This young man wants to change and stop fornicating, but he cannot figure out how to flee fornication.

A family cannot seem to get up and attend morning worship, even though they know they should. Yet, they spend Saturday nights staying out late at Six Flags, the movies, watching TV, going to a ball game and generally staying up too late.

A couple has problems with saving money. They want to save, give and spend it wisely, but they find themselves constantly in debt. Several credit cards are maxed out. If they see something they want they buy it. They will not save up for anything. They think they have to have the newest of everything. If their neighbors, friends or co-workers have it, they have to have it too.

A good sister sincerely wants to study the Bible more. "I sure wish I knew the Bible like old brother so and so." When it comes to Bible classes at church, she never prepares. When it comes to the preaching of the sermon, she never follows along in her Bible or even listens to the lesson. She reads novels and the newspaper She watches TV and stays on-line until the late hours of the night. For some strange reason she just cannot increase her Bible knowledge.

A preacher has a strong desire to become a soul winner. He believes that he can help lead many of his friends and co-workers to the Lord. He has yet to even set up a Bible study. This preacher talks with people about sports, politics, even the weather, but he never finds time to bring up the subject of Christ.

From the reader's perspective there are no real surprising outcomes in the previous examples. The biggest problem with making a change in life is to start changing the little things that will make a difference. No one should expect to get different results by doing that same things the same way they always have. So life is like Mark Twain who said, "To cease smoking is the easiest thing I ever did. I ought to know because I've done it a 1000 times."

The Bible is filled with similar examples of those who had difficulty making changes. The children of Israel for centuries had a problem with idolatry. From the golden calf through the period of the Judges with the two calves of Jereboam and the Baal worship of Ahab and Jezebel they struggled with graven images. Their struggle with sin did not end until God sent the ten tribes into Assyrians captivity in 722 BC and the Judah into Babylonian captivity in 586 BC. When the remnant returned to the promise land they never had a problem with idol worship again.

While being lead through the wilderness by Moses the Israelites had a problem with murmuring. They complained and grumbled until that entire generation died in the forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

Samson, one of the judges of Israel, constantly had a problem with sin. The divinely mandated Nazarite vow demanded he not cut his hair. Samson was a He-man with she trouble. He was strong enough to defeat hundreds of Philistine soldiers, but he was unable to withstand his lust for Philistine women.

To help Israel come to repentance God sent a multitude of prophets. One by one they killed them. Stephen said, *“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it”* (Acts 7:51-53). Even with this stern rebuke they were unable to change. Instead, they took Stephen out and stoned him to death.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

☛ Stop Procrastinating!

A congregation had a problems with several members who were always ten to fifteen minutes late for services. The elders came up with a plan to solve the tardiness. All they needed to do was to start services fifteen minutes later. They soon found out that the problem could not be resolved. The tardy members were still ten to fifteen minutes late to services. You see procrastination is not about having more time, but having the right attitude about the use of time.

Procrastinators keep planning to make plans to change, yet never mature beyond the planning stage. God is more concerned with what we are doing with the present and not the thousand fancy fairy tales we have planned for tomorrow. Planning is important, but mere planning never got the job done. *“So teach us to number our days, That we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom”* (Psalm 90:12).

☛ Stop Making Excuses

Anyone can find an excuse if they really want to find one. The excuse may even seem plausible on the surface. I have dozens of excuses why I do not eat sweet potatoes. For example, all sweet potato eaters will die. All those who eat them will get sick soon or later. All excuses aside, the fact is I just do not like sweet potatoes. (I don't like yams either, but I yam what I yam). Most people never get around to changing their lives because they really don't want to, it is easier to make excuses.

☛ Get Motivated

Once a drunk stumbled into a cemetery and fell into a newly dug grave. He could not climb out so he laid down to sleep it off. Later a man was taking a short cut through the cemetery when he fell into the freshly dug grave. It had just rained so the sides of the grave were very slick. He tried to the point of exhaustion to get out. Finally, he decided to just sit down in the corner (alone he thought) and wait for help to come in the morning. Just then drunk spoke up and said, “You can't get out of the grave can you?” The man made it out of the grave in a single leap.

With the proper motivation great and radical changes are possible. Saul of Tarsus became Paul the Apostle. It all began with the appearance of Jesus on the road to Damascus. The prodigal son returned to his father's arms and home. He first had to hit rock bottom in a pig sty.

☛ Remember, You Reap as You Sow

Remember *“whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life”* (Gal. 6:7,8). You cannot sow tares for the devil throughout the week and expect to reap the fruit of the Spirit on the weekend. Giving an hour a week to truly studying the Bible will not be enough to change your life 168 hours a week. Many want to spend eternity in heaven but they do not want to spend more than one hour a week worshipping God. Discipleship requires a daily cross (Lk. 9:23).

☛ Rely on Christ's Strength

Paul believed, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (Phil. 4:13). The woman who touched the hem of Jesus garment found the power to be healed of her infirmity. Getting in touch with Jesus will help others find the means to make changes in their lives.

☛ Resolve to Change Today

Joshua didn't have the children of Israel make changes next week or next year, he said, *“And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the*

gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:14). When the Gospel was presented to the lost in the book of Acts they were not told to wait a month or a week or even a day to be baptized. The Pentecostians, the Ethiopian, Cornelius and his household, Lydia and her household, the Jailer and his household, etc. all obeyed the Gospel immediately. To change one's life demands immediate action.

➡ **Go Through a Metamorphosis**

A boy once noticed a moth struggling to emerge from its cocoon. He felt the need to show mercy and help it. So he took a pair of scissors and carefully cut open the cocoon so the moth could come out with ease. However, the moth seemed swollen and lethargic. It could not fly and within twenty-four hours it was dead. The moth needs to struggle through the small opening in the cocoon. By doing so the fluids were squeezed out of its wings allowing it to fly.

To change a carnal man into a spiritual man requires struggle. Paul wrote, *"that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness"* (Eph. 4:22-24). This is not accomplished by being like every one else, but by being *"transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"* (Rom. 12:1,2). This transformation is the metamorphosis of the Christian. He has a new manager in his heart, he has a new family, he has a new citizenship in a new kingdom, he has a new King, he has new riches laid up in heaven, he has a new name, etc.

Change is possible so long as the change agents are Christ and His Word in the heart of the saved. Begin your transformation today. To change your life into that of a Christian you must believe in Christ. Act on that belief by repenting of your sins, confessing Jesus as Lord and Christ before men, and being baptized into water to wash away our sins (Acts 22:16).

Questions:

1. What changes should the drunk make in order to stay sober?
2. What should the young man do to keep his heart pure?
3. What could the family do to help them get to Sunday morning worship services on time?
4. How can the family change their financial difficulties?
5. What can the preacher do to become a soul winner for Jesus?
6. How did God get Israel to stop practicing idolatry?

7. What happened to the generation of murmuring Israelites in the wilderness?
8. When Stephen rebuked the Jews for killing the prophets of old what did they do?
9. What can be done to stop the habit of procrastination?
10. What finally motivate the Prodigal Son to change?
11. True False A Christian just needs to rely upon his own strength to change.
12. What resolution did Joshua make?
13. What is spiritual metamorphosis?
14. What are the most effect change agents a person can employ?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are some changes you are needing to make? How has this lesson helped you?
2. Why is the mind/heart the best place to start for making changes?

Homework: Change is possible with the help of a changeless God. Start today.

Eternal Life Insurance Policy

You most likely have auto insurance to protect you and others from loss in the event you are involved in a traffic accident. Perhaps, you have fire or flood or comprehensive home owner's or renter's insurance to protect your home and belongings. Your place of employment may provide you with health insurance to help cover the costs for illness. Some companies offer burial insurance. Most people think it wise to have life insurance to pay off their home and provide for loved ones in the event of death. Have you considered obtaining an Eternal Life Insurance policy?

You Need This Policy

Salesmen have done all sorts of odd stunts to get prospective clients to buy life insurance, such as, backing up a hearse to the front door and asking the fathers if their families can afford for them to take this ride. Every mature living soul needs an Eternal Life Insurance policy to assure their destiny beyond the grave. Why? You need Eternal Life Insurance because *"the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23a) and *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23), *"but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 6:23b). Unlike mere life insurance which benefits others in the event of your death, this policy allows you to be the beneficiary. This is even better than fire insurance because it can allow you to escape the fires of hell, which is called the "second death."

A wise man once asked, *"if a man dies, shall he live again?"* (Job 14:14). Yes, there is life after death. The Founder and Head of the company has died and seen the other side. He returned to this side of death having resurrected from the dead to assure you that it is possible to have eternal life. You need this policy because this short life on earth is not all there is.

You also need this policy because eternity is a very long time. The word "eternal" comes from the Greek word "ainonios," which means, "everlasting, without end, never to cease, or indeterminate as to duration." Try and measure the length of eternity in your mind. The last verse of the hymn, *Amazing Grace* reads: "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we've first begun." If an ant could walk on the equator traveling at the rate of one-seventeenth of a mile an hour and wear the earth in half, how many years would it take? However long it might take would not represent even one day of eternity. Again, suppose the entire state of Texas were made of wood. How long would it take a termite to eat the entire state? However long it might take would not represent even one second of eternity. We are finite beings limited by time and subject to the limitations of space. This restricts our ability to comprehend life without time - eternal life. Yet, you still should be able to understand that your future in eternity is worth protecting with this policy.

You cannot afford to die without Eternal Life Insurance. If you die without this policy *"how can you escape the condemnation of hell?"* (Mt. 23:33). Those who do die without this policy *"will go away into everlasting punishment"* (Mt. 25:46). However, those who have this policy *"shall not be hurt by the second death"* (Rev. 2:11).

✓ **Your Policy Will Provide You with Protection**

Your Eternal Life Insurance Policy will protect you from *"flaming fire"* and the Divine *"vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Thess. 1:8) and from *"everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power"* (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Furthermore, this policy can protect you from *"the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death"* (Rev. 20:8b). If you have this policy you will be able to

rest easy without fearing *"Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matt. 10:28). These represent just a few of the protections provided you by this policy.

✓ **Some Essential Facts about the Company**

The founder of this Eternal Life Insurance Company is none other than Jesus *"the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matt. 16:16) who built His church upon that fact (Matt. 16:18). It is the only one He built. This Divine company was founded at Jerusalem in about A.D. 30 (Acts 2:1,16,47) making it the oldest and sole provider of this policy (Eph. 5:23b). Its home office and headquarters is located in heaven where Jesus is currently serving as the Head of the company (Col. 1:18; Ephesians 1:22,23). Branch offices (or congregations) can be found located in principal cities and even small communities all over the world. They are known as *"churches of Christ"* (Romans 16:16). The rate book used is the Bible. *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The authority for offering this policy resides in Christ from God (Matthew 28:18).

You will be happy to learn that the company's present standing is excellent. The company's capital consist of *"the unsearchable riches of Christ"* (Ephesians 3:8). The security and assurance of your benefits are *"incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you"* (1 Peter 1:4). The reason for this is the great surplus is *"exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think"* (Ephesians 3:20). Yet at the same time this company accepts all liabilities (John 6:27). To top it all off in dividends you *"receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life"* (Mark 10:30).

✓ **Cost of this Policy**

Unlike regular life insurance policies this policy is free. It has already been paid for. It is a free gift from God through the sacrifice of His Son (Romans 6:23). There is nothing you can do to purchase or earn the benefits of this policy.

✓ **Application for this Policy**

Although this policy is free. It can only be obtained by you (the sinner) by making a personal application for this policy. The first condition: you must *"believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved"* (Acts 16:31). Second, you must repent or turn away from your life of sin and turn back toward God (Acts 2:38). Next, this policy can only be obtained *"if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"* (Romans 10:9,10). Finally, this policy is given at the moment you are baptized to wash away your sin (Acts 22:16). Jesus has promised, *"he who believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mark 16:16).

✓ **Maintaining the Policy**

Once the conditions of the application by you (the sinner) has been met, the policy will become effective. There will be no monthly or annual premiums paid by you. Jesus paid it all. However, this policy will only remain in effect so long as certain conditions are maintained. It is possible to lose your Eternal Life Insurance policy (Gal. 5:4). You must continue *"steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers"* (Acts 2:42). And you must not forsake *"the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another"* (Hebrews 10:25). You must *"be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Cor. 15:58). It is also necessary *"to keep oneself unspotted from the world"* (James 1:27). Finally, *"be faithful until death"* (Revelation 2:10) and you will receive the full benefits of this Eternal Life Insurance policy.

✓ **Special Policy Provisions and Benefits**

This policy gives you benefits from the start. The immediate benefits are *"forgiveness of sins"* (Eph. 1:7). Furthermore, the moment you are saved from your sins God adds you to His company (the church) (Acts 2:47). From the first day you *"have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (1 John 2:1,2). You also have fellowship with God the Father, Christ His Son, and the Holy

Spirit (1 Jn.1:3; 2 Cor. 13:14). And you *"have become heirs according to the hope of eternal life"* (Tit. 3:7).

✓ **Not Covered in this Policy**

This policy is not for everyone. Some, due to their life choices, have been excluded from this policy unless they change their condition. People who will not hear Christ will not receive an Eternal Life Insurance policy (Acts 3:23). Those who will not believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Jn. 8:24; Mk. 16:16) or repent of their sins (Lk. 13:3; Ac. 17:30) cannot obtain a policy. Those who will only meet the first condition of the application (believe) will not be given this policy. *"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. ...For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"* (James 2:24,26). This exclusion also applies to those who will not confess Christ publically (Matthew 10:31,32). Those who attempt to earn eternal life by following the Law of Moses will not be issued a valid policy. *"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace"* (Gal. 5:4). *"The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall"* not receive an Eternal Life policy (Revelation 20:8). Believe it not, this policy will not even be issue to the one who hates his brother. *"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him"* (1 John 3:15).

✓ **This Policy Is a Limited Time Offer**

This offer may end without any prior notice. This is not some lame sales pressure tactic. You can die at any moment without a policy. Christ may return unannounced catching you without an Eternal Life Insurance policy. Time is running out on this offer of a lifetime. *"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2 Cor. 6:2). If you do not have an Eternal Life Insurance policy contact one of Christ's representatives immediately. If you already have an Eternal Life Insurance policy check to see if you have properly maintained it. Let us know if we can help you get your policy up to date.

Questions:

1. Why does everyone need an Eternal Life Insurance Policy?
2. What is the "second death"?
3. What will become of those who die without Eternal Life?
4. List the things having Eternal Life will you give protection?
5. Who is the provider of Eternal Life?
6. What security is there behind having Eternal Life?
7. What did it cost God to give us the hope of Eternal Life?

8. How does one obtain Eternal Life?

9. What must be done to maintain Eternal Life?

10. What are some special benefits to having Eternal Life?

11. Who cannot receive Eternal Life?

12. Why is Eternal Life a limited-time offer?

Application & Discussion:

1. How is it the Bible speaks of a Christian having Eternal Life as a current possession even though one has not died and gone to Heaven?

2. Considering the conditions of Eternal Life how great of a deal is it? Explain.

Homework: Use the tract titled "Eternal Life Insurance Policy" found in the church's tract rack and sell someone on the idea they must have it, now!