



the  
**Christian**  
**LIFE**

**JOSHUA GOODLING**



# **THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

**By Joshua Goodling**

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The Bible starts out in Genesis 1:1 with these words "In the beginning, GOD..." I don't think that is just a coincidence, because God does everything perfectly and on purpose. Not only are those four words the foundation for creation, they are also the foundation for the TRUE Christian life. In the beginning of a successful Christian life - GOD must be the foundation! When we try to build our lives on what we want, or what the latest religious fad is, or what our flesh desires - we are bound to fail. GOD must be the beginning. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 9:10, *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."*

In my job as a web developer, one of the things I hated the most was when people came to me and said, "Joshua, I want to use this tool or program to accomplish this." And I'd tell them that the program/tool they are using wasn't made for that. And then they would say, "I know that, but can't you MAKE it do this?" And sometimes, one can add certain pieces of special code or something to force a program/tool to act in a way in which it was not created to act, but usually this ends up causing problems down the road when they want to change something or update something. But so many people tried this, and when I told them that program or tool is NOT meant for this, they said "I know - but I like this tool/program, and I don't want to use a different one."

That's what many people try to do with God and His Word. They like a certain sin or fleshly pleasure or they don't like one of God's commandments, and so they try to find someone who will agree with them that God doesn't REALLY mean it when He says DON'T DO this or DO that. However, that NEVER works. We MUST put pleasing God and obeying God as the FOUNDATION for our lives. NOTHING else matters! Until you get that settled in your heart and life - you will NEVER be successful as a Christian.

Jesus used the illustration of building a house on a foundation when He spoke in Matthew 7:24-27 *"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been*

*founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."*

“In the beginning GOD!” That's the foundation. That's the starting point on which everything else in the Christian life MUST be built. Once we have that settled, we can move forward in following and knowing God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Christian life is an amazing adventure once we get the foundation correct. Jesus said, “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have LIFE, and have it abundantly.*” (John 10:10) That word “abundantly” means, beyond what is anticipated, exceeding expectation. Our life as a Christian should be amazing! And, in order to have that abundant life, God has given us specific guidelines to follow in His Word, but we choose if we will live like He commands and follow those guidelines. Many of us as Christians actually do not live the way God instructed us to live! Oh, we may talk like we do, and pretend like we do, but in reality we are living a lie. We have many areas in our lives that are in desperate need of correction and repair. Our life as a Christian is anything but “abundant”!

If we took an old house that was in a state of shambles, and just repainted the outside to make it look nice, it would still have the same problems on the inside. We are doing the same thing with our lives, when we "pretend" to follow God's plans, but know we're really not. We often talk the talk and put on an act for others to see, but inside we are not really living the way God expects us to live.

If just half of the Christians in the world today would live the way He commands us to live, we would have a huge impact on our world! The world would never know what had happened! So many lives would be changed, and people would want to know Christ, if only we would give our lives in complete and total surrender to Him.

Living the way He wants us to live is what each and every Christian should endeavor to do with their lives, and in this book I hope to give you some guidelines and reminders about living the right way.

## I. SALVATION

Of course, the most important thing we can do is to make sure we are truly born again. Our life for all of eternity depends on this one decision.

The story is told, that there was a mail carrier who used a canoe to deliver mail to the homes along a river. One day a man asked him, "Can you swim?" "Oh," replied the mail carrier, "there's no need for me to learn to swim. I've paddled this canoe up and down the river for years. I'll be alright." Sometime after that conversation, the newspapers reported that this mail carrier's canoe had capsized; and because he could not swim, he drowned. All his knowledge and experience at paddling a canoe did not suffice for him at that critical moment; he had neglected the means of his salvation - learning to swim.

How often we hear people say when spoken to about their souls, "I'm alright. I live a good life. I don't need God." And there is no hope for the soul in being saved from eternal damnation when it refuses the one means of salvation - faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is the most important decision you and I will ever make in our entire life. The Bible clearly states that all men are sinners, "*There is none righteous, no not one.*" (Romans 3:10) "*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*" (Romans 3:23)

When the Bible says **all** have sinned, that means everyone who has ever lived, is alive today, and will ever live. The only person who ever lived on this earth and never sinned was Jesus Christ. And that's because He was God in human flesh.

Because we are sinners, we must pay the penalty for our sins. The payment we will have to pay is eternal punishment and death in Hell! "*For the wages of sin is death.*" (Romans 6:23)

Ever since the beginning of time, man has tried to come up with ways to save himself from the eternal punishment that awaits us. Some people think that if they live a good life, go to church occasionally, perform some good deeds, give so much money to charity, etc., they will save themselves from Hell. But what does God say about this belief? *“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”* (Isaiah 64:6) We could not save ourselves if we spent a million years trying to do so. Hundreds and even millions of people have tried to and have lost their souls to eternal damnation in Hell. Our only hope of salvation is found in Jesus Christ, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Salvation is so plain and simple, that even a child can understand it.

1. We must admit we are sinners and doomed to eternal Hell and realize there is nothing we can do to save ourselves.
2. We must believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, that He rose on the third day, and that he is living Heaven today.
3. We must trust Jesus Christ and nothing else to save us, as we call upon Him for salvation.

This salvation that God has provided is a gift. This merciful gift was given to a poor, lost, and dying world. We have never done anything that would cause us to deserve salvation, but God in His love and generous mercy has so graciously provided it for us. *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us.”* (Titus 3:5) In His wonderful love and mercy, God sent His only Son to die on the cross as payment for our sins. *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8) *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”* (John 3:16-17) This gracious gift of salvation is available free to all who will accept it. There is nothing we can ever do to deserve salvation. We must accept it as a gift from God.

Salvation includes several important aspects.

**First, we are saved from sin.** “*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.*” (Matthew 1:21) This means that once we are saved, we are saved from all sin, past, present, and future. Now, this does not mean that we can no longer sin. This means that eternal payment for our sin has already been paid, and we can no longer face the punishment of eternal Hell for our sin.

As fleshly, mortal, humans, we daily commit sin, and daily must confess that sin. If we do not confess that sin, we will be punished for that sin, but not with eternal Hell. We should daily confess and repent of our sins. Notice, I mentioned we must confess AND repent of sin. Simply confessing sin is not enough. Confession is simply admitting we have sinned. Anyone can confess, but we must also be sorry for what we have done and resolve to not do that again. If we just sin then confess, sin then confess, sin then confess, and continue to sin and then confess, we are not seriously sorry for our sin, but are simply trying to ease our conscience, and perhaps prevent punishment from God. Just as a father corrects and punishes his children, our Heavenly Father will correct us when we have unconfessed sin in our lives. If we confess and repent, God will forgive us.

However, we as Christians will still face the consequences of our sin. “*Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*” (Galatians 6:7) For instance, if we steal something, God will forgive us when we confess and repent, but we must still pay for what we have done, such as go to jail, or whatever consequences are to be reaped by that sin. If we sin and do not confess, not only will we face the consequences, but will also face punishment by God. This punishment we receive cannot be Hell, remember at salvation we are also saved from eternal death in Hell. However, there are numerous ways God can choose to punish us for unconfessed sin, and let me tell you, none of them are worth sinning for. We are saved from sin in that we can no longer face death in Hell, and that our sin, when confessed, is forgiven and



forgotten by God. *“...saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”* (Jeremiah 31:34)

**Secondly, upon receiving salvation, we are saved from the power of Satan.** *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part in the same that through death He might destroy him that has power of death, that is the devil.”* (Hebrews 2:14)

By His death on the cross, and His victorious resurrection, Jesus Christ defeated Satan, who thought he could destroy Jesus by death. We as Christians are no longer under the bondage of sin and are no longer controlled by Satan. We have a power that is much greater than Satan, that is the power of Jesus Christ. In the book of Job, Satan had to ask God for permission before he could trouble Job. That was because Job was a Christian. Sure, Satan can, and will still tempt us to do wrong, but we now have the power to overcome and fight that temptation. *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man, but God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which ye are able, but will with that temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”* (I Corinthians 10:13) Satan holds the world in a vice-grip of power. He often tightens that grip. But even when it looks like there is no hope, God can do the impossible, and set free whoever calls upon Him.

So, as Christians, we are saved from sin and from Satan’s power, and from the eternal death of Hell. We are promised, and even guaranteed to be free from the bondage of Hell. *“He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already...”* (John 3:17)

Yes, salvation is a wonderful gift, which no person has ever deserved. We can accept it freely, if only we choose to do so. With salvation comes the great responsibility of serving God and living the way God has instructed us to live. Just how are we to live as Christians? The answer is quite simple, *“Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

## **II. BIBLE STUDY**

Our duty as Christians is to obey the commandments God has laid out for us in His Word. So, if we want to know how to live, we must read and study God's Word. The Christian who could care less about taking time to read the Bible, could also care less about taking time to live for God. Unless we read and study God's Word, we will never fully know who God truly is, and just how we are to live as Christians.

If I am going to take a trip in my car, I get out a map and closely study it to see which roads to take, where to turn, what exit to take off the interstate, etc. Well, as Christians we need to take the Word of God, like a map, and study it, learn it, and then apply what we have learned to our lives.

### **HOW TO READ THE BIBLE**

F.B. Meyer

Read the Bible, not as a newspaper, but as a letter from Home.

If a cluster of heavenly fruit hangs within reach, gather it.

If a promise lies upon the page as a blank check, cash it.

If a prayer is recorded, appropriate it and launch it as an arrow from the bow of your desire.

If an example of holiness gleams before you, ask God to do as much for you.

If the truth is revealed in all its intrinsic splendor, entreat that its brilliance may ever irradiate the hemisphere of your life.

We should not just read the Bible like we would read any other book. We need to read the Bible, re-read the Bible, apply what God has said to our lives, and live what is being taught us. Memorize it and know what the Bible says.

Now, there are several ways to study the Bible. We can study it as a book at a time, by different chapters, by studying the life of a person in the Bible, or by taking one word (such as FAITH) and studying that word throughout the Bible. One of the easiest ways to study the Bible is to start at the first book of the Bible and go to the end.

Always begin your Bible study with prayer, asking God to guide you as you study. I often pray Psalm 119:18 “*Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.*” We must have God’s power helping us as we read His Word. Then, pick the chapter or chapters you are going to read for that day and read them slowly.

Then, read through the passage again asking these important and helpful questions:

1. What is the main or important subject of this passage?
2. What is the key verse(s) in this passage?
3. Is there any sin revealed in this passage that is in my life?
4. What commands and instructions are there for me to obey and follow?
5. What promises are there for me to claim?

Keep a notebook, and write down your answers to these questions, and then leave spaces to write down what changes you are going to make in your life to better follow what God has taught you.

Of course, these are several study books and materials to purchase that can assist you in your Bible study and walk you through the Bible. Whenever you are using a Bible study book or aid, keep in mind that many of the things mentioned by the author(s) may only be their opinion on that subject. The Bible is ALWAYS the final authority on everything.

Remember what the Bible says concerning the people of Berea; “*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so.*” These people knew that the Bible was the foremost authority, and they knew their Bible as well. Always compare what anyone says with the Word of God. While a minister was packing his suitcase, he found a little room left in one corner. “So,” he told a friend, “There is still enough room for me to pack a guidebook, a lamp, a mirror, a telescope, a book of poems, a number of old biographies, a bundle of old letters, a hymn book, a sharp sword, and a small library of 66 books.”

When the friend looked at the small space for all this, he asked, “How can you manage to fit all that in the small space you have?”

“That is easy,” said the minister, “for the Bible contains all of these things.”

Yes, the Bible is a guidebook to guide us in how we live our life, and to instruct us in the many decisions we must make as Christians. In order to successfully fill our duties in this life, we MUST follow our guidebook! If we were lost in a dark forest or jungle and had a guidebook, we would be stupid to try to find our way out without studying our guide. But how many times do we as Christians try to live our Christian life without studying our guidebook? *“For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even until death.”* (Psalm 48:14) God guides us through His Word. Unless we constantly seek His Word, we will not be ready for the decisions we must daily make.

The Bible is our lamp that will shine on our pathway. If we were to go out on a dark night without any source of light to see our pathway, we would trip and fall, breaking our neck or something else. If we try to live in this dark world without our lamp, we will fall flat on our faces very quickly. *“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”* (Psalm 119:105) *“My son, keep thy father’s commandment...For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light.”* (Psalm 6:20,23) When we faithfully study the Word of God, we can see where to go, and where not to go, what to do and what not to do. It is important to point out that many times the Bible only reveals what we need to know for each day. As a lamp only shines a little way down the trail, we learn just enough from that light to allow us to make it, and each step we take, the light shines further.

We can also use the Bible as a mirror. When we get out of bed in the mornings, we often go to the mirror to see what corrections need to be made to make ourselves look presentable. The mirror shows us which hair is out of place, where there is a spot of dirt, etc. The Bible likewise will show us what is out of place in our spiritual life, and what is there that should not be there, so we can make ourselves look presentable in the eyes of the Lord. If we tried to fix our hair,

put make-up on, or shave without a mirror, we wouldn't do a very good job! We must look at the pages of God's Word to discern which areas of our spiritual life are in need of correction and change.

The Bible becomes our spiritual telescope as we learn to plan our future based upon what the Word of God tells us. *"But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."* (James 1:22-25) Through the Bible, we can see what is wrong with our life, but if we do nothing about it, it is useless to look. If we go to a mirror, and see that there is dirt on our face, but do nothing to clean the dirt off, our looking was a waste of time. If we read God's Word, we should be willing to take action and appropriate what we have learned.

As the mirror of the Bible helps us to see up close, the telescope helps us to see afar. We can look at the wondrous victory we can claim someday when we sit inside the gate of Heaven. We can see what rewards God has promised we will receive and can plan our life accordingly.

While the Bible has all of these things to instruct us and to guide us in our daily life, the Bible also has sections that are written to encourage and uplift us in our Christian life. Poems are written many times to give strength and inspiration to people who are hurting or to people problems. The Bible is full of poems and poetry. The Book of Psalms is one of the best books of poetry in the entire world. Psalm 4 is a Psalm of Deliverance. Psalm 5 is a Psalm of Guidance. Psalm 18 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving. Psalm 46 is a Psalm of Refuge and Strength, and the list could go on and on in just the book of Psalms. There are also other books in the Bible that contain poetry. So, if you are a lover of poetry, you will be blessed by reading the many poems of the Bible as you study it.

Many times as Christians, we are encouraged to read the biographies of good men. We too often look at “famous” men of our day as people to pattern our life after. We try to find out all we can about politicians, sportsmen, actors, and people who have reached “stardom” in the eyes of this world. We need to look up to men who are really important in the eyes of God. The Bible is full of men, whom I believe God would have us to look to as heroes. What about King David, whom the Bible says was a man after God’s own heart? What about Paul who could honestly say; “I have finished my curse, I have kept the faith.”? What about Moses, whom God chose to lead His children out of the slavery of Egypt? And the list could go on and on of great men and women in the Bible. We need to read about and study their lives closely to glean much from the way they lived. We can look at their achievements and see how and why God used them, and we can look at their mistakes, and learn not to make the same wrong choices in our own lives. There are many great biographies of people in the Word of God that could teach us much by their lives. Instead of placing people of the unsaved world upon pedestals, let us put the people of God on them, and have them as our heroes.

Of course, what better biography is there to study and pattern ourselves after than that of our Lord? The Bible tell us much about His life. If only we would take time to look at it closely. “*He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself so to walk, even as He walked.*” (I John 2:6) We have the biography of Jesus Christ, because we as Christians are to live and walk as He did. The book, *In His Steps*, has been written about a group of Christians who made the decision to live everyday with the question in mind, “What would Jesus do?”, and how greatly it changed their lives, and their whole way of thinking. Now, today there is a big movement of this very thing across our country. People all wear those WWJD bracelets and put the bumper stickers on their cars. However, a lot of them don’t even have a clue what Jesus would do. And most of them still listen to their rock music and still make their selfish choices without studying the life of Jesus and looking closely at the choices He made. Christianity isn’t made to be easy, and to fit our lifestyle. We are the ones who must change! We must conform to His image, not attempt to conform Him to ours! When we ask ourselves, “What

would Jesus do?”, our own desires shouldn’t be counted into the answer.

Often when we receive letters from people, we keep them bundled up in a drawer or box or someplace, and many times take them out to read them over again. We especially do this with letters from people we love or admire. When we get a letter from someone famous or important, we will even frame the letter and hang it on our wall. Well, what better friend do we have than Jesus Christ? His Word has many letters that we should love and cherish. We should read them and then read them again. We should never stop reading them. These are letters written by Paul, John, Peter, and others. These letters however, are not just ordinary letters such as we receive in the mail on a daily basis. These letters are inspired by God, which makes them extremely important to us. These are like letters we would receive bearing the words: URGENT - OPEN AT ONCE!!! Some of the most important and helpful letters we will ever read are found in the pages of God’s Word. The minister in the illustration referred to them as a bundle of old letters. I, however, would call them a selection of priceless letters inspired by a Holy God.

The Bible could also be classified as a hymnbook. The Bible speaks much on the subject of singing and making a joyful noise to our God. Many portions of the Scriptures have been made into songs and are sung in churches all over the world. Many of the Psalms are actually songs that David sang as a shepherd boy and as King of Israel. By reading these portions of the Bible, we can find real joy and true happiness. Charles Wesley was one day sitting by an open window, enjoying the fresh spring air and the fragrant breath of his garden below. Suddenly his attention was diverted to the frantic fluttering of a sparrow attempting to elude a pursuing hawk. The little sparrow flew straight to him and hid itself in the ample folds of his coat. Wesley himself was full of grave cares and anxieties at that time. He saw in the incident a parable of his own deliverance from fear. Inspiration came instantly to him to write a hymn, which will last as long as time lasts, “Jesus, Lover of My Soul!”. Thousands of tempest-tossed souls have found a comfort in that beautiful song.

The Bible refers to itself as a sharp two-edged sword. *“For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and to the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* (Hebrews 4:12)

The Bible cuts and pricks us where we need to be cut and pricked. When we purchase meat at a supermarket, often all the fat and unwanted pieces have been cut away. The fatter a person is physically, the less work they can do. And the same is true with our spiritual lives, the fatter we are with the things of this world, the less we can do for God. The “fat” of this world and of sin too often slows us down. If we apply the Bible to ourselves and our lives, the “fat” will be trimmed away.

The Bible is a small library filled with all the knowledge we will ever need for our Christian life on this earth. Every answer to every problem, every instruction to guide our daily life, poetry, biographies, letters, songs, yes, it is ALL there in those 66 wonderful books of God’s Word. If only we would realize the vast importance of reading, studying, and then memorizing the Word of God. Then, what we have read, what we have studied, what we have memorized, must be applied to each area of our lives. You see, it does very little good to read it, study it, or memorize it, if we never follow the advice and the instruction that is found therein. The Bible can change our lives if only we will allow it to do so.

## **PRAYER**

Prayer is the second important aspect of living the way He wants us to live. The more we are on our knees as a Christian, the harder it will be for us to stumble or fall. It is true that we spend days and weeks trying to get a baby to walk on its own, but we need to do the exact opposite, and stop trying to walk on our own; that is in walking the Christian life. We need to spend more time asking God how we are to walk. I cannot stress enough the vital importance of daily prayer in the Christian life. Prayer is the “heartbeat” of our life. If your physical heart stops beating, you will die. If you stop praying, you will die spiritually. This is what has sadly happened to many



Christians, they have lost the reality of the importance of prayer. Prayer is no joking matter. How much time we spend in prayer will either make or break us spiritually.

When we have a best friend, we don't dare allow a day to pass without spending at least some time with them. We often spend hours and hours with them, doing everything imaginable. We tell them our problems, ask them for advice, give them gifts, and do all sorts of things for them, because they are our "best friend". But, just stop and think for a moment. Shouldn't Jesus Christ be our BEST friend? Shouldn't He be the one we bring our problems to? Wouldn't everything work out better if it were Him whom we asked for advice? Shouldn't we spend hours with HIM? We sing the song, "What A Friend We Have In Jesus", but seldom treat Him like a real friend should be treated. Time spent with God is VITAL, VERY VITAL to our daily life as a Christian. Someone put it well when they said:

**Prayer is like:**

The porter - to watch the door of our lips.

The guard - to keep the fort of our hearts.

The hilt of the sword - to defend our hands.

A master workman - who accomplishes great things.

A barometer - to show our spiritual condition.

How we pray reveals a lot about how good a Christian we really are. It seems a lot of people picture prayer as only a spiritual wishing well. The only time they pray is when they need something or have some problem that they need help in. Sure, we should pray when we have needs, the Bible tells us; "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." God has promised to meet our needs, but we must turn our needs over to Him and allow Him to have control of our lives in the good times as well.

The Lord has also promised to be with us in every time of trouble. He said; "*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*" He has promised not to leave us, but we often times leave Him. God is always there to answer our prayers, the question is: "Are we where we should be in order to have our prayers answered?" Prayer is not just asking and

receiving, there are many things involved in prayer that should become part of our daily prayer life as Christians. First and foremost in our life of prayer should be praise and adoration. Someone once said, "Praising God for blessings extends them. Praising God for troubles ends them." Praising our great God and our Creator should become as much a daily task as breathing or allowing our heart to beat. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 71:6, "*By Thee have I been holden up from the womb: Thou art He who allowed me to be born, I owe my life to You, I will always continually praise Thee!*" Psalm 35:28 says, "*And my tongue shall speak of Thy righteousness and of Thy praise all the day long.*" Psalm 119:164 says, "*Seven times a day do I praise Thee because of Thy righteous judgements.*"

I really like the passage in I Corinthians 16:23-29; "*Sing unto the Lord, all the earth; show forth from day to day His salvation. Declare His glory among the heathen; for His marvelous works among all nations. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: He also is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols; but the Lord made the heavens. Glory and honor are in His presence; strength and gladness are in His place. Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord, the glory due unto His name: bring an offering and come before Him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*" This passage really expresses the greatness and holiness of God. It proves without question how much praise and adoration our great God deserves.

God is our Creator, our Judge, our King, He is our Defender, our Preserver, and our Shepherd. In Revelation 9:1, He is the Alpha and Omega; In Hebrews 5:9, He is the Author of Eternal Salvation; in John 6:35, He is the Bread of Life; in Isaiah 9:6, He is the Everlasting Father; and in Colossians 1:27, He is the Hope of Glory. The list is endless that contains the many wonderful names of the Great God we serve. Praise and adoration to a Holy God is what He deserves and should be a normal part of our daily prayer life as a Christian trying to live the way He wants us to live.

Then, prayer is also a time for confession. I John 1:8-9 tells us; "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is*

*not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” Verse 8 confirms that all of us have sinned. In fact, we sin daily because of our fleshly sin nature. Verse 9 tells us that God promises to forgive us of our sins, when we confess them to Him.

If we buy a new car and then drive it through a lot of mud and dirt, soon the mud and dirt would hide the shiny paint job of the new car. That same principle is true for us as Christians. The longer we live in sin, and do not confess it, the dirtier our life will become. We are commanded by God to be lights in this world of darkness. However, if our life is covered with sin that is unconfessed, our light will get dimmer and dimmer as the mud and dirt of sin covers it up. Our light will eventually be unseen by the world. Oh, it will still be there, because we are still saved, but it will be impossible to see it through all the sin in our life! The darkness of sin will cover it.

A lot of us just hurriedly mutter a quick prayer of confession, such as: “Lord, forgive my sins today, Amen!” For many it becomes just a ritual. We remember that we are supposed to confess our sins, and so we say a hurried prayer just before our bedtime to ease our conscience. Many times we think our hurried prayers are all that is necessary for forgiveness from God. But, the thing we must realize is, not only must we admit we have sinned, but we must be sorry for what we have done. I have seen convicted murderers on television, who admitted openly to what they have done, but also admitted they had no feelings of remorse for it. In other words, they confess to doing it, but they don’t repent. Confession is what the Catholic Church does. People go to the priest to confess a sin, they say so many “Hail Mary’s” or whatever they are told to do, and then go out and do the same sin again. A lot of good their confession did them! When we confess our sin, we must make an honest effort not to commit that sin again. Luke 24:47 says, “*And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*” Repentance, which means to feel regret over, equals remission, or forgiveness from God. We should confess our sins, but also we should repent of them.

Supplication is another important part of our daily prayer life. Supplication means to ask in a humble manner. This is where the idea of kneeling in prayer has come from. We realize how great our God is, and how weak we are as humans, so we must bow in His presence. When we come before the presence of a king on this earth, we bow to him out of respect. When we go to God in prayer, it shouldn't with an attitude like, "I need this, give me that, do this..." etc. No, if we truly understand our relationship to God, we will most certainly understand that He does not owe us anything, all that we receive from Him is based solely upon His love and mercy. Love and mercy that is beyond our wildest imagination. How or why a Holy God could ever love us so much, I will never really understand until I meet Him face to face.

Ephesians 6:18 says, "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...*" Philippians 4:6 says, "*Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication...*" If we do not learn humility before God, we will soon end up finding ourselves humiliated by God. When we start demanding things from God in a prideful attitude, we will learn how inferior we really are. Yes, God has promised to meet our every need, but only when we meet those circumstances which God has laid out for us to follow His Word.

We also must be sure that we are not selfish in our prayers. We shouldn't get so caught up in praying for our needs that we forsake the needs of others. Paul said in Romans 8:34, "*Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us.*" Hebrews 7:25 says, "*Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.*" Jesus Christ makes intercession to our Heavenly Father for us because He loves us. We likewise should love others enough to pray for them. Others have just as many needs as we have. We should be concerned about others enough to pray for them and for their needs.

## **Bobbie's Prayer**

Dear Father,  
There is this other boy tonight  
Who is praying to a god that's made of wood:  
He asks it to take care of him tonight  
And love him - but it won't do any good.  
He is so far away I cannot make him hear.  
I'd call to him and tell him if I could.  
That You'd take care of him, that You are near,  
And love him - but his god is made of wood.  
I know he'd ask You if he only knew,  
I know he'd love to know You if he could.  
Dear God, take care of him and love him, too,  
The other boy who's god is made of wood.

In Colossians 1:9, Paul told the church at Colosse, *“For this cause we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual knowledge.”* Also, in James 5:16, it says, *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed...”* In the first verse, Paul told the church that he did not cease to pray for them. In other words, he prayed daily for them. James said we are commanded to pray for others. We are here on this earth to live for others. Others should always come first in our lives, and also in our prayers. This is probably one of the most disobedient areas in many Christian's lives...they don't live for others.

Another, but very important part of our daily prayer life should be thanksgiving. Philippians 4:6 tells us, *“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.”* Notice, that Paul says to make your requests known, “with thanksgiving”. If there is one thing we really need to learn, it is the art of being more thankful. Colossians 3:15 says, *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”* Psalm 100:4 says, *“Either into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name.”*

How often we get upset or offended, when we do something kind or nice for another person, and do not receive the thanks we think we deserve. We even promise never to be kind or do anything for that person again, simply because they did not thank us as we would have liked for them to. But, on the other hand, do we always thank people for what they have done for us? Or more importantly, do we always thank God for what He has done for us? How many times do we thank Him for life, for the ability to live and breathe? How often do we thank Him for the “little” things in life that we so take for granted? If we feel hurt or wronged for not receiving thanks, how do you think our Heavenly Father feels when we don’t take time to thank Him? We need to be thankful!

### **Say So**

by Geraldine Searfoss

Does a neighbor help a little,  
As along the way you go -  
Help to make the burden lighter?  
Then why not tell them so!  
Does a hand clasp seem to lift you  
From the death of grief and woe,  
When an old friend shares your sorrow?  
Then why not tell them so!  
Does your Heavenly Father give you  
Many blessings here below?  
Then on bended knee before Him  
Frankly, gladly, tell Him so!

If all our blessings and answers to prayer were based entirely upon our thanksgiving to God, how many of us would endeavor to spend more time giving thanks? Thanksgiving is a vital, very important part of our prayer life. I cannot put it more plainly than the Word of God does, “In EVERYTHING give thanks!” (I Thess. 5:18)

So, prayer is a way of life for the Christian, and is not to be used just for emergencies. We have seen the importance of prayer, but the question is often asked, “How come I cannot get any of my prayers answered?” Well, what does the Bible say about the circumstances

involved in getting our prayers answered? We certainly don't want to spend all our time in prayer, if we never get any answers.

Psalm 66:18 tells us, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*" This goes back to the importance of daily confessing our sin. If we have unconfessed sin in our life, God is not obligated in any way, shape, or form to answer any of our prayers. You see, sin is like a brick, and each time we sin we add another brick to the pile, until we have a wall of bricks (sins) built between us and our Heavenly Father. In order to have our prayers answered, we must have our hearts and lives right with God. John 9:31 instructs us, "*Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, Him he heareth.*" It does not say that God hears anyone who only worships Him, but anyone who also doeth His will. We must be actively endeavoring to serve the Lord in our life. When the Bible tells us to, "*Pray without ceasing*" (I Thess. 5:17), it does not mean that we pray 24 hours a day, it means that we are always able to pray. Our life is right with God, we are doing His will, and we are serving Him. Let's take for an example if we went into a bar. Well, naturally, we would not be in a place where it is right to pray. If we are stealing something from a co-worker's desk, well, that's not a good time to be praying either. Whatever we do in our life must be within the will of God. Living a life that is pleasing to God goes hand in hand with an effective prayer life.

It is also important that we believe God will answer prayer. "*And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*" (Matthew 21:22) The key word in this verse is "believing". We must believe our prayers will be answered. James tells us in James 1:5-7, "*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.*" In other words, if we ask for wisdom, or for anything else, but do not believe that God will answer us, God is not obligated to answer us. It makes little sense to ask God for something when we don't expect Him to give us what we ask for. God commands us to ask in FAITH! Don't ask unless you

really believe that God can and will answer. Jesus said that if we just had the faith the size of a mustard seed, we could move mountains. If only we would exercise that faith that God says we should have. “FAITH” is a little word, but there is a lot of power wrapped up in that little word.

I John 5:14 tell us, “*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us.*” So, not only must we confess our sin, and believe that God will answer, but we must also pray according to the will of God. The Bible also tells us, “*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your own lusts.*” (James 4:3) Instead of making our prayer time a chance to get what WE want, it should be a chance to get what GOD wants!

As Christians, remember, we are bought with a price, we belong to God. As children, we often went to our parents to get their permission to have or to do certain things. When we did or got things without their permission (as I’m sure you never did), we received punishment. Is it not also fitting that as children of our Heavenly Father, we should ask His permission before we do things or make decisions about things? Yes! Of course, it is! And the best way to find His will in our lives is through prayer and Bible study.

When we pray according to our fleshly desires, we often pray for things that God, in His infinite wisdom, knows we do not need. You see, we are not able to see into our future, we cannot know for sure what our next day in life will bring us, but God can, and does know these things. Because of this, God knows exactly what we need, and the precise time in which we need these things. Instead of trying to get what WE want in our prayer life, we should be willing to take what HE wants us to have, and what HE has planned for our life.

Now, don’t get the idea that if we pray according to the will of God, our life will be miserable and we will end up with all sorts of things that we don’t need or want. When we live totally for God and are seeking to serve Him in our life, His will becomes our will and His desires become our desires. “*Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart.*” (Psalm 37:4) God



promises that when we live for Him, our heart will desire His will. When we look at the results of praying in the will of God, or out of the will of God, there is only ONE reasonable choice to make. The decision is quite simple - pray according to His will and receive answers or pray contrary to His will and waste your time by praying. After looking at all the aspects of an important and right prayer life, we may be tempted to exclaim, "I didn't realize prayer was so much work!" Well, prayer is not really work. If we are really interested in serving God completely and doing His will, all these things should fall into place in our life. We will soon get to the point where they become a daily process in prayer. Having our prayer life right should not be difficult, it should be natural!

Salvation, Bible study, and prayer are the basic necessities for living a life that is in accordance with God's will. Of course, we must naturally receive genuine salvation in order to have a real desire to serve God. Then, through Bible study and prayer we can learn more about God and His will for our life.

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

*"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."* (Ephesians 5:18) We must have the power of the Holy Spirit upon our lives in order to properly understand and enact God's will for our lives. It is just as much a sin for a Christian to not be filled with the Holy Spirit as it is for a Christian to be drunk with wine. Yet, I have heard hundreds of preachers and Christians who harp long and loud about people being drunk, but they themselves do not allow the Holy Spirit to have full control of their lives! God made a simple commandment here: DON'T be drunk with wine, BUT BE filled with the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit comes to live in our hearts at the moment of salvation, but that is not the same as being filled with the Holy Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit means that we allow Him to have TOTAL control of our own lives! For illustration purposes, let's picture a bucket and have that bucket be our life. Then, let's picture the Holy Spirit as water, and fill the bucket (our life) with that water (the Holy Spirit). Okay, you got the picture now? Here's the bucket (our life)

filled with water (the Holy Spirit). Then, let's stand a bit back from the bucket and grab a pile of stones (the stones illustrate sins that we commit). Let's take these stones one at a time and toss them into the bucket. What happens? Well, naturally each time we toss a new stone into the bucket, water splashes out! The more stones we toss into the bucket, the more water will splash out. Likewise, the more sins we allow in our lives, the more of the Holy Spirit's control we will lose.

Now, let's suppose we confess those sins and get right with God (like all Christians are supposed to do). Well, when we confess those sins, let's take the stones (sins) out of the bucket (our life). Well, now what do we have? We have a half empty bucket of water because we took the stones out, but the water is still gone that was splashed out! So, we must refill it! The same goes for our Christian life! We must daily confess our sin and surrender total control of our life back to the Holy Spirit. That is what the Bible means when it says "BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT!"

*"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."* (John 14:26) The Holy Spirit is our teacher and guide in our daily life as a Christian. Without His power and guidance, we can never accomplish what God would have us to do.

I've heard it said, "This Christian life is too hard to live!" Well, the problem with many Christians is, they are trying to live this life themselves! Then, yes...it is too hard to live! We are NOT to live this life, we are to allow the Holy Spirit to live this life THROUGH us! The Bible tells us in Philippians 4:13, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."* Notice, Paul said, "THROUGH CHRIST"! In the flesh, we cannot do what God has planned for us, or even what God has commanded us. *"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: FOR WITHOUT ME YE CAN DO NOTHING."* (John 15:5) You know, without Jesus Christ we cannot even breathe. If God were to decide today that it was time for you to die, you couldn't say, "Sorry, but I'm not ready yet." And keep on living...no,

you would die! We must realize the awesome power of God in just our daily life, and we must allow Him to have full and total control.

*“This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.”* (Galatians 5:16) The only successful way to resist the temptations of the flesh and of Satan is through the power of the Holy Spirit. Too many times we try to battle the flesh and the world on our own strength, and then we wonder why we fail. **YOU WILL NEVER HAVE VICTORY OVER SIN IN YOUR LIFE WITHOUT THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

“Of all the sailors the ancient Norsemen must have been the most daring. In their little boats they made distant voyages throughout the Northern Atlantic. Centuries before the time of Columbus, they are thought to have explored the route to America. When Columbus crossed the sea, he had the help of a compass. However, the Norsemen had no scientific instruments. They carried with them on their voyages a cage containing several ravens. When they were uncertain where they were or which direction to follow, they would release one of the ravens. As the bird flew high into the air, the daring sailors would follow the same direction the bird took. They knew that the raven with its keen eyesight and higher vision would lead them to land. When we are uncertain where we are or which way to follow, the Holy Spirit, if we give Him a chance, will show us the way to go.”<sup>7</sup>

## **THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

I’m sure we all realize that we are not left here on the earth only to read God’s Word and pray. If God’s only purpose for us as Christians was daily fellowship, He would have taken us home to heaven immediately after salvation, to fellowship with us face to face. Since God has kept us here on this earth, there most certainly must be a plan and a purpose for us to accomplish here. Part of that plan is that we as Christians would live a life that would bring others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Christ commanded us in Mark 16:15; *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”* Not only is this a commandment to witness to the unsaved by the words we say, it is also a commandment

to witness by the life we live! More people are apt to watch your life than they are to listen to your words. It has been said, “You teach little by what you say, you teach the most by what you are!” We are to be examples of Christ. We are to live as He would live.

Paul told Timothy in I Timothy 4:12, “*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*” He told him to be an example OF the believers. In other words, show by your life how a believer should live! This is living the way HE wants us to live!

Now, stop and ask yourself, “What kind of example am I? Do I live an example of a real Christian. By my life do I lead people TO Christ draw them AWAY from Christ?”

Notice first that Paul says we are to be an example by our “words”. Proverbs 18:21 says, “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue...*” What comes out of our mouth can either help or destroy them. James speaks of the great power of the tongue in James 3:5, “*Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!*” Just as a tiny spark can grow into a large and deadly forest fire, one word said in the wrong way can ruin and destroy us as Christians. Don’t allow your tongue to cut your head off!

A lot of things we say are said without really stopping to think about we are saying or what consequences it will have on ourselves or others. We need to remind ourselves that we will have to give an account to God for what we say. “*But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement.*” (Matthew 12:36) This verse alone should make us put a daily guard on our tongues. “*For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether.*” I cannot express enough the vast importance of keeping a very close watch on every word we say.

A right and proper use of our tongue on a daily basis is to praise God. “*And my tongue shall speak of Thy righteousness and of Thy praise all the day long.*” (Psalm 35:28) I have already mentioned in the

section on prayer, how important praise is to our God. God wants us to bring praise and glory to Him and to His name.

**Fanny Crosby** wrote:

Praise Him! Praise Him!  
Jesus, our blessed Redeemer!  
Sing, O Earth,  
His wonderful love proclaim!  
Hail Him! Hail Him!  
Highest archangels in glory;  
Strength and Honor give to His Holy Name!  
Like a Shepherd Jesus will guard His children,  
In His arms He carries them all day long;  
Praise Him! Praise Him!  
Tell of His excellent greatness;  
Praise Him! Praise Him!  
Ever in joyful song!

Fanny Crosby was blind! Yet, she still found the desire to praise her glorious King!

“*GREAT is the Lord, and GREATLY to be praised...*” (Psalm 48:1)  
“*For the Lord is GREAT, and GREATLY to be praised.*” (Psalm 96:4)  
These verses, as well as numerous other verses in the Word of God, speak forth the GREATNESS of our GOD, and how He is so deserving of our highest praise.

We also find that our tongue is to be used to speak wisdom, “*The mouth of the righteous speaketh of wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgement.*” (Psalm 37:30) Webster defines wisdom as, “knowledge and the capacity to make use of it.” Our tongues should speak of wisdom, not the wisdom of this world, but the wisdom of GOD! Instead of babbling about things of no importance and risking the possibility of saying something we should not, we should talk of the wondrous wisdom of a Holy God. Talk about things that are honoring to God. Share the Gospel with others. There is no higher or nobler thing to talk of than the message of Salvation!

The story is told of a minister who visited the editor of a large newspaper. The minister told the editor, “I have come to tell you about JESUS.” The editor silently rose to his window and stared out through eyes filled with tears. The minister quickly asked if there was a problem of some sort? The editor turned and said, “With the exception of my mother, you are the only one who ever told me about Jesus. I really didn’t think anyone cared!”

Sad, but true, that is the state in which you’ll find most Christians today. We really don’t care enough! If we cared as we ought to care, we would do a lot more in the effort of winning precious souls to Jesus Christ. Are we being “examples of the believers” in the way we use our tongues?

Psalms 126:2 says, “*Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them.*” Because of the happiness and joy of the Christians here, the worldly crowd knew God had done great things for them. Do people who watch your life daily know that God can do great things? Our words should be of great rejoicing when God answers our prayers or does things in our lives. Too many Christians live their lives in total misery when they should be rejoicing! No wonder so many people do not have the slightest interest in becoming a Christian, every Christian they see spends all of their time complaining, grumbling, or murmuring about things. Psalm 33:1 says, “*Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous...*” Paul said in Philippians 3:1, “*Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.*” In chapter 4, verse 4, he repeated, “*Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say REJOICE!*” Paul told the church at Philippi, rejoice in the Lord, rejoice in the Lord, and rejoice in the Lord... It’s like he was trying to drive home a point, he had something he wanted them to pay attention to. If you are truly a Christian, you have must to rejoice and be happy about. When others see your life, do they see a happy Christian, content at living where God has placed them, or do they see just another average person living according to life’s circumstances?

We should also use our tongue to speak kind and encouraging words to others. “*She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue*

*is the law of kindness.*” (Proverbs 31:26) Again, the words, “death and life” come to mind. Instead of cutting others down, and backbiting, and gossiping we should be uplifting and encouraging. “For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” (I John 3:11) *“Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God; and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.”* (I John 4:7-8) These verses express the importance of love in the Christian’s life. If we do not love others, the Bible says we do not love God either. For, through loving our gracious God, we learn to love others. The Bible commands us; “Be ye kind, one to another...” That includes being kind by the way we use our tongues. So, Paul instructed Timothy, *“Be thou an example of the believers in WORD...”*

Then, Paul continued and said to be an example in “Conversation”. Now, this word conversation is not the word that usually comes to mind today, but it is the manner of life live. In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul said, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”* (Romans 12:1-2) As Christians, we are to be “transformed”, we are to live differently than the world. The Word of God commands us to not even have the appearance of evil. In other words, don’t even look like you are living a worldly life.

We try to hard to get as close to the world as possible. We try to have our “part” of living it up as the world does. The world may look appealing at times, but the end results should make us stay as far away from it as we can possibly get. Many Christians say they don’t want to be a totally committed Christian because they “can’t do this, can’t do that, or have to give up too much”. We should not look at the negative aspects of this, we should look at the positive side. What CAN we do as Christians? We can rejoice in the Lord. Anyone who has faithfully surrendered their life to the service of God, and has served Him for any amount of time will tell you, that

serving the Lord is a LOT better than ANYTHING this world could ever offer us.

Hebrews 13:5 tells us, *“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”* Here we find that word “conversation” again. God tells us to live a life that is content with what He has given us. Too many people complain about what they don’t have and what they think they deserve, instead of being thankful and content with what God has so graciously allowed them to enjoy. Someone wisely said; “Whoever complains, has too much!” God is holy and without sin, He created us, He is not obligated to give us one single thing. As far as that is concerned, God could have us all living in cardboard boxes out in the desert, and that would still be more than we deserve! We have already discussed the importance of being thankful in our lives, so we won’t spend a great deal of time here, but along with being thankful, we need to be content. God has promised to give us everything we NEED in our lives, not everything we WANT! We would be a lot happier if we stopped complaining about what we don’t have and started being content with what we do have.

Paul said in Ephesians 4:22-25, *“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.”* Our old conversation is corrupted, it is sinful. We (those who are truly Christians) have a “new” life in Christ. We are to serve the Lord, and with our “old” nature or conversation, that is impossible. We must allow the Holy Spirit to completely control our life, and to direct us in just how we are to live. I cannot stress enough the importance of how we live our lives in the presence of this world. Many people will be looking at our lives just because they know we are a Christian. The story is told of a Christian businessman, who tried very hard to have a good testimony before his fellow employees, and his employers. They all looked up to him and admired him for the different way in which he lived his life. In fact, his boss had even



asked him questions about his “Savior” and had even begun to think very seriously about becoming a Christian. Then, one day as this man was leaving the office, he remembered that his wife had asked him to pick up some paperclips on his way home from work. Since it was already late, he decided to take a box of paperclips from the supply cabinet at the office. “It won’t matter, I can always replace it with a box from the store.”, he thought. He slipped the box of paperclips into his pocket and walked out of the office. However, he did not know that his boss had been watching him from the office the entire time. That man’s entire testimony was shattered, and he even lost his job, because of that one action.

Not only did this man hurt himself by losing his job and his testimony, he also hurt others. Now, anytime someone mentions the word Christian, that boss will think back to that moment he was watching from his office. All because he was not very careful about the way he lived. In Matthew 5:43-44; God said, “*Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.*” WOW, we have to read that verse a few times to make sure it really says what we read. Our natural tendency is to repay evil for evil. We want to get even, to get our revenge on the person(s) who have hurt us in even the smallest manner. Jesus tells us to do the exact opposite. We are to love our enemies. But not only are we to love them, we are also to do good to them! As if loving them wasn’t hard enough! And then, we are to pray for them as well. If we do these things, we will soon love our enemies as friends. Why do you think Jesus was able to forgive those who hung Him on the cross? Simply because He loved His enemies. Even as He hung there dying, He said, “Father, forgive them...”

Romans 12:14 says, “*Bless them which persecute you: bless and curse not.*” Paul said here to bless our enemies, but then he added “Bless and curse not”. In other words, don’t have the attitude, “Well, I guess I have to love my enemies because Jesus did, but I’m sure not going to enjoy doing it.” Don’t do it out of necessity, but out of LOVE! Do NOT speak kindly to them face to face, and then curse

and cut them down behind their back! Have you ever considered what the unsaved people would begin to think if all the Christians they met were always kind and nice no matter what the circumstances? The world would see something completely different in our lives. The world would actually see Jesus in us!

The story is told of a missionary whose entire family had been murdered by the soldiers of the country in which they were serving. The soldiers had killed his wife and all of his children.

One day as the missionary was working in the mission clinic, a badly wounded soldier stumbled in. The missionary quickly saw that he was one of the ones who had killed his family. It was his first thought to revenge the death of his family by some “accidental” mistake while the soldier was there in the clinic. Then, he remembered how Jesus would have him act, and that he should love his enemies. He kindly cleaned the soldier’s wounds and saved the life of the one who had taken the lives of his family!

I wonder, what would we have done in that same situation? Would we be able to love our enemies like that? Or should I rephrase the question; “Would we love others as much as Jesus loves us?”

Then, in his instruction to Timothy, Paul adds that we should be an example of the believer in “charity”. We have just discussed how we are to love our enemies. We are to love everyone else as well! We are to love the poor, the middle class, and the rich. It is many times easier to “love” those whom we think “deserve” our love, or those who have something to offer us. In doing so, we forget to love those who are less fortunate, those who have nothing.

I Corinthians 13 goes into much detail on the subject of love. In just looking at a few verses, we see the description of true love and charity; “...*charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself...charity never faileth, beareth all things...endureth all things...*” Charity is love in action. Does this passage describe the love and kindness we have and are endeavoring to demonstrate through our lives? Charity that suffers and endures everything? Charity that does not put any stipulations on its actions?

Charity that does not say, “I’ll be kind to you as long as...”? Charity that never stops nor gives up? This is the charity/love that is an “example” of what each Christian should have in their life.

We read in Colossians 3:12-14, “*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*” All of these things are necessary to live life the way GOD wants us to live. Notice that Paul tells us to make sure we “add” charity. In other words, we should be kind, longsuffering, and all that this verse instructs us to be, but we should make sure we do those things in love!

I like the words of this poem:

Love this world through me, Lord,  
This world of broken men.  
Thou didst love through death, Lord,  
Oh, love in me again!  
Souls are dying in despair, Lord,  
Oh, make me know and care;  
When my life they see,  
May they behold Thee,  
Oh, love this world through me.

“Be thou an example of the believers ...in Charity...”

Then, we are to be an example of the believers in “spirit”. This means that we are to be an example in our attitude. Look at the great example we have to follow: “*For even hereunto were ye called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again: when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously: Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by Whose stripes ye were healed.*” (I Peter 2:21-24)

Jesus suffered many things during His three and a half years on this earth, yet He took all of his persecution without uttering one word of complaint. This is the example that we are to follow? Yes, my friend, and what an example it is! Now, once again realize, without the help and the power of God on our lives, trying to follow this example will be totally impossible. Our flesh will not want us to live this way and will do everything in its power to see to it that we don't succeed. Remember the verse, "*I can do ALL things THROUGH Christ!*" (Phil. 4:13) Through the power and the help of our Lord, we can have the right kind of spirit in our Christian lives.

Some Christians live the right kind of life for the world to see, but inwardly their thoughts are killing them. They constantly think bad thoughts about those who seek their hurt, and many times only do certain things because "that is what they are supposed to do". Our thought life has a profound effect on our future. What we think about, we will soon become. If our thoughts are wrapped up in complaining and murmuring, soon our life will be totally ruined by the results of murmuring and complaining. If our life, our attitude, and our thoughts are all wrapped up in serving Jesus Christ and doing His will, we will reap everlasting joy! Philippians 4:8 says, "*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things.*" Here is a guidance system for our thought life. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Recall the statement, "Garbage in = garbage out!" It is very urgent that we guard our thought life. When a bank has a vault, they don't allow anyone in the vault except those who are supposed to be in there. Likewise we should not allow any thoughts in our mind that are not to be there. We may think that just on little thought will not really hurt us, but it will. Be very careful that your thought life is right. This is a part of the Christian life that others cannot see, but it is vital to our continual walk with God.

We are also to be an example of the believers in "faith". Faith is unquestioning belief in God, complete trust and reliance. The writer of Hebrews described faith as: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith is the foundation

of our Christian life. The Bible tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God. Our faith and complete trust in God should be obvious to the world. A schoolmaster gave two of his students a difficult problem. "You will find it hard to solve," he said, "but there is a way to properly solve it." After repeated attempts, one of them gave up in despair; "There is no way!" he declared. The second student had not succeeded either, yet he was smiling and unconcerned, as he continued working long after the other student had given up. He said, "I know there is a way, because the master has said it!"

We should look at the promises of God in that same light. ANYTHING that God has promised, WILL come to pass. If God said He would do something, you can count on it being done. Too many times we live like we really don't believe God can meet our needs, when He has promised in His Word that He WILL meet them. In I Kings 8:56 we read, "*Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto His people Israel, according to all that He promised: there hath not failed ONE WORD OF ALL HIS GOOD PROMISE, which He promised by the hand of Moses His servant.*" Our faith should be COMPLETE in Jesus Christ. We are only hurting ourselves more by not placing our faith and trust in Him and His Word. True faith in God sees the invisible and believes in the impossible. We often tell others that we believe in God, and then live contrary to that belief. If we are going to be an example of the believers in "faith", many of us have a lot of work to do in this area. "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." We are to faithfully entrust our entire lives to Jesus Christ. This world has nothing to place their faith and their trust in, and is constantly looking for answers to their many problems. We as Christians, have Jesus Christ to place our trust in, yet many times we don't do that.

We also need faith to completely and successfully defeat the snares and entrapments of Satan. "*Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*" (Ephesians 6:16) If we do not live a life of faith, we will not be successful in our battle with Satan. The Bible clearly tells us that with every temptation comes a way of escape, but without faith

that way is blocked. Without true faith in our lives, we are doomed for sure defeat from Satan.

Faith is so important and so necessary, that we cannot, and must not attempt our Christian life without it! *“But without faith it is IMPOSSIBLE to please Him.”* (Hebrews 11:6)

Then, the final thing Paul mentioned in being an example of the believers is in “purity”. Purity means clean and unspotted. *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you.”* (II Corinthians 6:14-17) This passage really needs no explanation, it quite plainly says that Christians are to be separated and apart from the world. I could really spend 500 more pages describing in detail how we are to be separate from the world. The word “separate” in this passage means to be distinguished from or to be different. In other words, people should be able to tell that you are a Christian. Like it has been said, “If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” Do people even know by your life and your words that you are a Christian? Many of the Christians I encounter and know don’t live any different than their neighbors and co-workers. Paul said in his letter to the church at Corinth, *“...as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them...”* we are the temple of God! So, whatever we do, wherever we go, and whatever we say, we should remember that God is right there with us.

Purity really sums up the rest of the instructions Paul gave to Timothy. When we live as “examples of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, and in faith...”, our lives will be pure. The question that we must ask ourselves each day is: “What kind of an example am I?” Are we really trying to live the way that God wants us to live? Are we really seeking earnestly to do His will

in every area of our life? How important and urgent it is today that we as Christians learn to live the way He wants us to live!

## KNOWING GOD

A. W. Tozer begins his book, “The Knowledge of the Holy” with this sentence: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

Getting to know God involves two basic things.

1. recognize who God is
2. recognize what God requires of us

C. S. Lewis said, “We must also understand that knowing God is not an optional part of the Christian life; **it is the Christian life.**”

And, most importantly, Jesus said, “*And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*”

In 2 Peter 1:1-8, the Apostle Peter wrote; *Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you **through the knowledge of God**, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, **through the knowledge of him** that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the **knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**”*

Notice how many times he mentions “the KNOWLEDGE of God” in these verses. If we want to truly grow in our Christian life and get to KNOW GOD, we will seek to ADD these important items to our lives.

In summary, we can say;

**Virtue** is the determination to do right.

**Knowledge** is knowledge of God and His Word because it is the only source which tells what is right.

**Self control** is the application of that knowledge in your life using it to govern your thoughts and actions.

**Perseverance** is remaining steadfast to the Lord and His cause.

**Godliness** is being like God, as He would have you to be.

**Brotherly kindness** is tender affection toward brethren in Christ.

**Charity** is devotion to God, Christ, and your fellowman which is expressed in obedience to God and service to man.

Experiencing true "life" and "godliness" can only come through the "knowledge" of God and His Son, Jesus Christ. This "knowledge" is much more than an academic, intellectual knowledge, it is a knowledge borne of developing and experiencing life in Jesus Christ.

J I Packer said, "What are we made for? To know God. What aim should we have in life? To know God. What is the eternal life that Jesus gives? To know God. What is the best thing in life? To know God. What in humans gives God the most pleasure? Knowledge of himself."

In his book entitled *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer writes, "God does not change. Let us dwell on this thought." He then proceeds with these points:

**God's love does not change.** He is from everlasting to everlasting.

**God's character does not change.** Many things can alter the character of man, but NOTHING can alter the character of GOD.

**God's truth does not change.** It is forever settled in heaven.

**God's ways do not change.** He still deals with people today according to His Word.

**God's Son does not change.** He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

James 4:8 tells us, "*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double*



*minded.*” There is NOTHING more important in the Christian life than getting to KNOW God!

I trust you have learned now that our lives on this earth are not just to take up space, but to fulfill what God has planned for each day we live. Through prayer, through proper Bible study, through being filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit, and by being what Christ has instructed us to be in our lives, we can live the way HE wants us to live! Of course, the choice is up to you.

Just as when someone takes a Driver’s Education Course, the instructor can spend weeks teaching the proper way to drive a car, the laws that are to be followed, but when that person places themselves behind the wheel of a car, they make the decisions as to whether or not they obey those rules and regulations. In your life as a Christian, YOU make the decision as to whether or not you will obey the clear instruction given by God. It is sad, but many Christians today have chosen not to obey God. In doing so, they have reaped a life of unhappiness and pain.

Search your life very closely today, and determine what areas need to be corrected and changed, and then make the most important decision that you WILL live completely for God from this moment on. You’ll certainly not regret it, and it will bring you much joy and happiness.

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SCAN ME







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