

Making Life Work

February-March 2013 Pulpit Series (**part 2**)



"Discovering My God Focused Purpose In Living"

Christ E Free Church Pulpit Series
February-March 2013

Jesus Christ
Our Highest Calling,
Our Greatest Purpose,
Our Soul's Source and Joy
And Our All-Consuming Passion.

Index

Introduction

My Life and Work: p9

 Meaningless Frustration vs. Meaningful Ministry

My Life and Finances: p21

 Possessed or Possession?

My Life and Entertainment: p33

 R & R and a Wasted Life

My Life and Health: p45

 Blessing and Curses?

My Life and God's Will: p57



INTRODUCTION - A review,,,,,

Take a moment and consider the various challenges of your life. Would you say *life* is working for you? Are there areas of your life that you view as a grueling rock pile of monotonous, unfulfilling punishment?

“*Making Life Work*”, is all about discovering God’s calling and purpose in living and making the most of our most important relationships.

Sometimes we think of God’s calling being connected with famous Christians, or missionaries or preachers. But discovering God’s calling and purpose in living is important for every Christian.

Ephesians 1:16-18 (ESV) I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, (17) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, (18) having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may **know what is the hope to which he has called you,** what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

Someone told me the picture on the front of the bulletin should be changed because that one does not present a very attractive image of life. But that picture depicts how many people feel about life – it’s a rock pile. Each day they pound away at the rock pile, like a criminal on the chain gang. For many, their *life* is a rock pile, for some, their *marriage* is a rock pile, their *job* is a rock pile, even *church* may be a rock pile. Its something they pound away at day after day, week after week, year after year. It is hard work. It is monotonous. There seems to be no perceived purpose in it- no end to it. It’s a process of smashing big rocks into medium size rocks, smashing medium size rocks into small rocks, smashing small rocks into even smaller rocks. Then it starts all over again. Its drudgery and its purposeless. To them, the rock pile of life is little more than grueling punishment.

Now, imagine the difference it could make in the rock piles of our work and our relationships, if we knew there was a diamond somewhere in the pile. Imagine the difference in attitudes, perspectives and motivation, if we expected, at perhaps the next swing of the mallet, to discover a beautiful, valuable diamond. It may change the way we view the rock pile. In fact we may no longer view it as a boring ole rock pile, but a treasure hunt, wondering what the next swing will bring. This is what *Making Life Work* is all about.

Making Life Work, is also about making the most of our most important relationships. This is part of who we are, why we are here and how God has put us together.

Patrick Morely, with *Man In The Mirror* Ministries, says “if you were to take a knife and cut the scriptures, it would bleed relationships – *it bleeds relationships*.”

The 10 commandments are all about relationships. Commandments 1-4 refer to our vertical relationship which is our individual relationships with God. Commandments 6-10 refer to our horizontal relationships which are our relationships with one another.

Matthew 22:36-40 ESV "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" (37) And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (38) This is the great and first commandment. (39) And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (40) On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Making Life Work is all about finding the diamond of Gods purpose and calling in living in the midst of this rock pile called life. Its all about gaining a growing clarity regarding our perspective and assurance on God's call and purpose in living, and a growing maturity in meaningful relationships with one another.

“My Life and Work”

Meaningless Frustration or Meaningful Ministry

TEXT: 1 Cor. 15:58

Feb.17, 2013

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable,
always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the
Lord your labor is not in vain.

--1Corinthians 15:58

Theme: Work - the untapped diamond mine of ministry

When I make a mistake, I'm an idiot.
When my boss makes a mistake,
it's because he's only human!

-source unknown

Discovering the diamond of God's will and calling in the rock pile
of my work. Work and the hidden ministry of discipleship

Remember our first lesson was on First Things First, which was a
focus on making the most of our most important relationship with
God. Everything else in life is an overflow of that all important
relationship. Then our second lesson was on the Jesus Connection.
Without the specific focus on Jesus, our God focus is a vague and
ambiguous object of religious ideas. Jesus is our only way and
connection to the Father. God's Son is not only the creator of all

things, He is also the sustainer of all things, which includes every aspect of our earthly lives.

INTRODUCTION

For most of us, a full third of our lives, if not more, is focused on employment. And yet many Christians see no more in their employment other than what they were hired to do.

I believe that our employment can be one of the most fertile mission fields yet to be discovered. Your job may be an untapped diamond mine of productive ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ask yourself these questions: Where does God have me? And what does God expect of me?

Making

Life

Work

means

work!

I am sharing on this topic today, out of personal experience and what I describe as some of the most meaningful ministry for Christ that I have personally experienced. While at our last church, I worked part time as a welder, in a local machine shop. It was a typical non-Christian environment with a lot of vulgar speech, with certainly a lot of non-Christian living going on.

Over the several years that I worked there, the people came to know that I was a Christian. When I had the opportunity, I tried to allow God to direct my conversation so I could give them some spiritual

direction, without coming across as preaching to them.

For quite a while, my focus there was little more than working and earning money so I could support our family and our church. But after a while, the Lord began to open my eyes to the fact that He was bringing people to me, who were seeking and open to learning about Jesus. There were also some who were not open to much of what I had to say, but were still part of my life as coworkers.

The Lord opened the door of ministry to one of the partners who owned and ran the shop there. For some time, he would attempt to make small talk as he tried to connect with all the employees there.

Soon, his visits were longer and his conversations begin to include questions about the Bible and religion. His family was Catholic and this young man had loads of questions.

While I was there, his wife became pregnant. The baby was discovered to have his umbilical cord wrapped around his neck. He was born with significant physical and mental complications. It was during that time, the owner came to me as asked me to pray for his wife and son. Following his son's birth, he often came to my welding area, informed me of his progress or his problems and would ask me to pray for him.

During that time, my welding foreman began taking me under his wing to teach some things about welding and the products we were building. We developed a friendship that was very much a discipleship relationships in nature. He would come to work Monday, after having listened to his pastor's message on Sunday and that would be the topic of our conversation for the entire week.

When I left there, I was regularly connecting, at various levels with several of the men there, in what I would describe as discipleship ministry.

<p>1Cor. 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.</p>

Our place of employment and the relationships we develop there may be a mission field of wide open opportunities to be abounding in the work of the Lord, while nurturing others along in their faith, into a deeper connection with Jesus Christ.

I believe that many Christians, see their work as little more than work, and fail to see their job as a mission field in which God has placed them.

If you view your job as a rock pile, which seems to have no end to it or no purpose in it, I would like to encourage you today to ask God to give you a vision for His purpose and calling in your life for your work. I believe that for every Christian with a secular job,

God has a diamond of productive, meaningful ministry for you to discover in the rock pile of your job.

I always give 100% at work:

10% on Mondays, 23% on Tuesdays

40% on Wednesdays 22% on Thursdays

and 5% on Friday.

—source unknown

WORK IN GENERAL

It is important to understand God's Biblical perspective on work.

Work is not a curse.

Some work their whole lives, looking forward to retirement so work will cease as though work is a curse.

God ordained work in the garden, before Adam and Eve ever sinned.

Gen. 2:15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

It was not until after their fall into sin, that hard, difficult and frustrating work became synonymous with the term, work. It was not until after God cursed the ground that work began to be viewed as a *rock pile*. [make footnote, Gen.3:17-19]

Work is a blessing

Work is a blessing from God and His means for providing for our needs to be met. It has always been through work that God has provided for human needs. It is through work that God blessed the harvests for His people. It is through work that God's people brought their sacrifices to God for forgiveness, as well as for

worship. It is through work that God brings about productive Kingdom ministry.

Gal 6:7-10 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. (8) For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (9) And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (10) So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Sowing and reaping = cause and effect. Sowing means working. Reaping means receiving the benefits or reward of our work.

The things we do, the way we live and the work we do or don't do has consequences. If we are temporary minded and self-centered in our manner of thinking and living, we will receive only reap or receive temporary self-focused benefits.

As Christians, we should be more focused on God's eternal kingdom work, rather than our own selfish attractions.

Let's make it a little more personal and consider...

MY WORK AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Making Life Work requires work!

Everyone must do their part.

Everyone must do their own part to do what it takes to Make Life Work for themselves. This is **NOT** addressing those who are handicapped, or elderly, or for some reason physically unable to work. This **IS** addressing the expectation that every person capable of working should be

*For those who
think work is
secular and
"ministry" is
sacred,
consider
viewing your
place of work
as an
unreached
mission field.*

working – they should be productive. It is God’s purpose and it is how He put us together.

1Thes. 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle.....

An idle person can be one who is lazy, or purposeful negligent in seeking to lead a productive life.

The lazy person suffers

Pro 18:9 Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys.

Laziness is akin to being self-destructive. It will most likely result in a lack of provision, lack of peace and joy and even mental and emotional health.

Others suffer because of lazy people

For those who are not working, are probably not contributing to the needs of others, nor to the system of the capable helping the incapable. That is not government socialism, that is God’s Biblical mandate.

Eph. 4:28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Everyone needs to be working. Helping the genuinely needy person is part of Gods plan. There are people who contribute to the helping system. There are those who benefit from the helping system. Then there are those who take advantage of the system, as they are satisfied letting other hard working people provide for their own needs and pay for their own bills.

Laziness is self-destructive

Again, laziness is refusing or neglecting to work for a living.

Prov. 12:27 Whoever is slothful will not roast his game, but the diligent man will get precious wealth.

If you are a hunter, we might say “you don’t do the hunt, you don’t eat the kill”. If you are a farmer, “you don’t sow the seed, you don’t reap the harvest”.

Pro 19:15 Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.

Hunger is being the want or in need and it is intended to be motivation for work and personal responsibility.

2Thes. 3:10-13 For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. (11) For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. (12) Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

Idleness is laziness and it is sin. If you aren’t willing to work, you should not eat. Being hungry and in need should make the lazy person become more diligent. When that does not take place, the lazy person is shown to be not merely lazy but a fool.

Some who are in need, rather than seek work, they work out a scheme to get someone else to do the work for them.

Prov. 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.

The fool knows he is hungry but still refuses to work and spends his time and energies orchestrating and manipulating others to work so he won’t have to.

Some people have mastered the art of avoiding work. One told me that the local temp agency was looking for him. One told me he had filled out an application and he is waiting for the people to call him back. How long has he been waiting? 2-3 months. He needs to get busy looking for work.

After telling one young man that there was an opening for work just half a mile from his house, he excused himself by saying, “I don’t have any transportation.” I said, “you could walk”. He said, “what if it rains?” I said, “you get wet – but you go to work!” Excuses, excuses, excuses. Laziness always provides excuses.

If you don’t have a job, pray for one. Do the research to see what jobs may be available in your area. Then go knocking on doors, filling out applications, making phone calls and attempting to talk to others, networking their input and resources.

MY WORK AND MINISTRY

* The Sacred vs. the Secular. Not only can your work be your ministry, but work can provide for your ministry

The Blessing of Helping

Isa 58:7-12 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? (8) Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. (9) Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, (10) if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. (11) And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. (12) And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in.

The Blessing of Giving

Act 20:35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

2Cor. 9:7-8 Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (8) And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

The Sacred vs. the Secular

Some view “church” work as sacred and non-church work as secular.

Quote: *There is a great deal of confusion regarding the relationship of a Christian's priorities to the expenditure of his or her time. Most Christians believe that their priorities should fall in this order: God, family, church, and – last of all – employment. If employment is one's lowest priority and yet consumes most of a person's waking energies, is this not unspiritual? No wonder the many hours one spends in secular employment is often viewed as wasted time.*

Perhaps if we quit looking at our jobs as rock piles and began seeing them as ministries, we would begin to discover the diamond of God's purpose and calling and would discover the joy of meaningful service to Jesus Christ.

*If you want to
put Billy
Graham out of
business, then
begin viewing
your job as a
mission field.
Your life and
your work will
never be the
same!*

God can transform your rock pile of meaningless frustration into a diamond of meaningful ministry, if we give it to Him and ask Him to begin using us as obedient disciple making servants of Jesus Christ.

Col. 3:17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Col. 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, (24) knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

1Cor. 10:31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

OFF THE PAGE AND INTO MY LIFE

1) Pray for God to open your eyes and show you the possibilities of discipleship ministry at your work. Discipleship is not sitting in a classroom and receiving a certificate. Discipleship is learning from other Christians the depth and width of true faith in Jesus Christ and Christ-like character.

2) Take steps to come out of your closet as a Christian. Begin to look at those around you at work and think about how you might begin nurturing others in their faith. Consider how you might begin pointing others at work, to Jesus.

3) Start leaving telltale evidence of being a true follower of Jesus Christ. Christian Literature, Posters, Pictures, Conversation, Prayer, maybe your own lifestyle and conversations...

4) Begin praying for those you work with by name. Ask God to begin bringing men or women into your life that you can begin influencing towards Christ.

If you are not working and *can* work...

5) Pray for work and then begin seriously looking for work.

Making Life Work, means working. There are some who need to come to grips with God's expectation for them and the need for everyone who is able, to work, to provide for themselves, rather than being satisfied with allowing others to carry them. At some point, for their own good and for the good of others - they - everyone needs to do what it takes to begin *Making Life Work* and to please God.

Making Life Work means working for our own good, for the good of others, and for the good pleasure of God.

-----*Thinking Through Things*-----

1) When you go to work, where do you leave Christ? _____

2) Do others at your work know you are a Christian? If not why not? _____

3) What is keeping you from being a light for Jesus Christ in your workplace? _____

4) What steps might you consider taking, in order to begin presenting the life and message of Jesus to those in the mission field where God has placed you? _____

*Dear Lord, I do not know how to view my work as my ministry.
Please help me to see my life and my work as You do. I want to
please you. I want to touch many lives for you. I want to impact
your kingdom for eternity.*

*Please take away my fear and give me the courage to live for you
and to share you love and forgiveness with others.*

*In Jesus' name,
Amen!*



“My Life and Finances”

Possessed or Possessions

TEXT: Luke 16:13; 1 Tim.6:6

Feb.24, 2013

Theme: Finances - the untapped diamond mine of our money

“No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” - Luke 16:13

Money, get away
Get a good job with more pay and you're okay
Money, it's a gas
Grab that cash with both hands and make a stash
New car, caviar, four star daydream
Think I'll buy me a football team
- Pink Floyd

INTRODUCTION

We are following up last weeks message on My Life and Work.
Too much work can be a sin and self-destructive.

Col 3:5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Greed => covetousness = > idolatry

Psa 10:3 For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one **greedy** for gain curses and renounces the LORD.

This is not the person who works hard to make life work. This is the person who works, but never has enough to satisfy their desire for more.

1Co 6:9-11 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, (10) nor thieves, nor the **greedy**, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

We might also consider the 10th commandment of God address the topic of greed or covetousness.

Exo 20:17 "You shall not **covet** your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

*"The lack of
money is the
root of all evil"
--Mark Twain*

Today, we look to the diamond in the rock pile of our finances. And yes, we are on a treasure hunt – a hunt to discover the diamond of God's purpose and calling for me, in the rock pile of my finances. This is a touchy topic!

THE BASIS OF WORK - *productivity*

The basis of work is productivity or fruitfulness. God is a productive God. He created all that is. We are created in His likeness. We are expected to be productive and fruitful¹.

¹ Gen.1:28

Work and Blessing

Work and blessing is a partnership with God. We tend the fields by sowing and reaping. We work in the shop, in the school, at our place of business putting forth effort and expecting results or reward for our labor – *a paycheck*. And when we work in partnership with God, we are praying and trusting Him to provide our needs, for the most part, through our work.

Deu 16:15 For seven days you shall keep the feast to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.

In it all, there is working and rewards, cause and effect, obedience and trusting, *and* blessing and productivity. Ultimately we are trusting God to bless the work of our hands and provide for our needs.

Partnership with God

Work is an act of faith, especially farming. It is a mixture of our obedience, God's blessing and our provision.

1Cor. 3:7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

It is God who brings the increase from the hands of man's work, whether it is physical farming or spiritual ministry, it all ultimately depends upon God.

Farming was spiritual exercise. Farmers would work, they waited trusting God, praying and enduring famine, draught, and then finally came the harvest and reaping. Through the difficulties and trials of farming, men have praised God and men have cursed God.

All work is depends on God as we are in partnership with Him.

((*While the basis of work is productivity...*))

THE DECEPTION OF MONEY - IDOLATRY

This is the work of the human heart. Man cannot serve both God and money². One will rule over the other. Work brings money or a paycheck or God's provision. Often times, the rich want more. Sometimes the poor want more.

The rich are prone to trust /worship what they have. The poor are prone trust / covet what they don't have. It is in the heart and nature of a human. Whether rich or poor, idolatry is in the heart of every human. It is something which dwells in the hearts of men.

If you have ever wondered of you are rich or not, here is one clue. J. Paul Getty of the Getty Oil empire once said, "if you can count your money, you are probably not rich." (I think that was before calculators.)

Rich and poor are relative terms, as it depends on your frame of reference. If you live under the poverty line, then a person making enough to purchase a new car may be considered wealthy. On the other hand J.P. Getty may consider anyone making under 1 million a year as poor.

Everett Dirksen, a Illinois Senator, is often credited with a statement which was made addressing the balancing of the national budget. "A billion dollars here, a billion dollars there, and before you know it, you're talking about a lot of money." Wealth or poverty is a frame of reference.

The Lust for More

Money can foster greed and idolatry as the heart of a person longs for more and more. Greed is simply the lust for more. Some never have enough, or are never content or satisfied with what they have.

J.D. Rockefeller who also made his fortune in oil, was once asked, "How much is enough?" To which he replied, "Just a little bit more." The lure of gambling. The snare of work. Some have

² Lk.16:13

enough for needs , but still desire and lust for more, because they cannot get enough.

Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Money is a temptation. Money is what we can see and understand. It is the material connection between need and provision. This does not mean we don't work, but we must not allow worry to drive us to work too much or we must not desire so much that we are consumed with work beyond our needs, so as to amass more as a means of our hope for the future and the lust of always wanting more.

*"I can resist
anything but
temptation."
-unknown*

Idolatry and the deceitfulness of Riches

Worship what you have or hope to have. Money is the answer. Money is our hope. Money is our source of peace and joy and overall well-being. Money can become our god and it *can* provide us with a sense of contentment.

Mat 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes *unfruitful*.

Oddly enough, too much work and too much money can make us unfruitful or unproductive for God's work. The monster of idolatry looms in the heart of every man and woman. It awaits the right opportunity to step out of the shadows and consume us.

The Curse of Abundance

We long for abundance and prosperity and yet abundance is the very thing that can numb us to our need for God.

Luke 16:13 No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

It is easy for the rich to think that because of their monetary abundance, they have no need for God. They have no need for

Church. They don't need help and they don't need any spiritual guidance. They may feel they are doing fine on their own.

In 1978, I was 3 years out of high school and I was attending vocational school for pipefitter welder. I was also pumping gas at a local gas station to pay my way through school. When I finished the VoTech school, our whole class got a job in LA (lower Alabama) as Boiler Makers working a shutdown on a coal fired TVA electrical plant.

Possessed

I left my gas pumping job on Friday, making \$2.01 /hr. I went to work Monday morning making \$10.01 / hr. The shutdown was 3 shifts working around the clock and you were allowed to work as many hours as you wanted. Overtime was all the way up to double time and a half, depending on the day and number of hours you worked. I was making \$300 plus a day and up to \$2,000 a week. I remember looking at my pay check and thinking “this is unbelievable”.

I began making some very productive investments and getting the investment statements from my investor. I remember looking at the amount of money I was making in interest and I remember thinking, “this is unbelievable”.

I saved a lot, but also spent a lot. I bought a new house on a trophy trout river. I bought new car and a new 4 wheel drive pick-up truck. I bought 3 boats, a new street bike, a new dirt bike and lots of other man toys. And I used to drive through the gate to my house and drive slowly up the driveway admiring all my possessions parked around it and I remember thinking to myself, “this is unbelievable”.

I was possessed. Not by demons, but by my possessions. Money and the things it could get me pretty much ruled a lot of my life, until God broke through.

Some are possessed by the possess they have. Some are possessed by the possessions they long to have. The result is, we don't serve Christ, because *wealth* distracts us. Or perhaps, we don't serve

Christ because our *wants* distract us. Whether rich or poor, in need or in abundance, money and abundance draws us to lust for more. Idolatry lingers in the heart of every person.

Making Life Work - application

How can we become content with what we have?

Practice Spending to the Glory of God

***Spending Responsibly** - Expenses vs. Income.*

This involves the understanding of the relationship between expenses and income. Our expenses must not be allowed to exceed our income. This is a principle each of us must allow to govern our lives, regardless of our level of wealth or poverty.

** If God rules your pocketbook, He probably rules your life.*

Spending responsibly means not spending more than you make.

***Spending Realistically** - Needs vs. Wants.*

This involves the understanding of the difference between necessities and luxuries. We must ask ourselves, “what can I live without?”

A man once said to me, “Pastor, once I make a million dollars I intend to tithe one tenth to the church.” In other words, he was saying, “when the molten core of the earth freezes over, then maybe I’ll tithe.”

I told him, “no you won’t”. If you aren’t committed to giving to the Lord now, you certainly won’t when you make a million. You will only come up with another excuse.

** I’ve never met anyone who was unable to tithe a dollar.*

*Once we are
possessed by
our
possessions
then we are
dabbling in
idolatry.*

Spending realistically means you choose to spend on what you need, not necessarily on what you want.

Spending Randomly - Credit vs. Debt

This involves the understanding that you do not spend what you do not have. Debt often drives people to purchase on credit. Credit is only one more hole in the hull of a sinking ship.

** In the sinking ship of our finances, at some point bailing becomes useless. The only thing that will save us from sinking is to quick poking holes in the hull and begin patching them up before the water fills the hull and takes you down for good.*

Spending realistically means you choose to spend on needs, rather than wants. These three points are acts of the will. They are decisions that are selfless and sacrificial, as one does what it takes to please God and make life work, before its too late.

Giving to the Glory of God

Consider 4 Firsts.

Selflessly

2Cor. 8:4-5 (4) begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints-- (5) and this, not as we expected, but **they gave themselves first to the Lord** and then by the will of God to us.

The 1st first is that we must give ourselves to the Lord first. When God has our heart, he will have our checkbook as well.

Sowing

2Cor. 9:6-7 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. (7) Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

The 2nd first is the work that needs to be done in order to get the desired result. We must sow before we reap. We must work before we expect to get paid or before we expect to get our needs met.

Both physical needs and in spiritual offering, it is prudent to thoughtfully and prayerfully consider what area we need to spend our money and to put our offering to the Lord's work first. Too often people give God what is left over, if there is anything, after hobbies, frivolous spending, personal pleasures and endless nickels and dimes for odds and ends.

As God promised, when we do things Gods way, things “*will go well with you*” and that means between you and God³.

Sacrificially

Mar 12:44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

The 3rd first is personal sacrifice. Here is a principle that is growing increasingly scarce in our American culture. Sacrificial giving is as much of a turn off for some people, as it would be if you'd called them some inflammatory name. Giving is a precious irritation many hold onto because it flies in the face of the selfish idolatrous desires of many people.

Kingdom First

Mat 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

This is the 4th first and it amounts to putting God first. Putting God's will and purposes before our own is what the Christian life is all about. If we are unable to accomplish this in our finances, we are most likely not actually pulling it off in any other area of our lives. If we do not desire God's kingdom work and will above all other things, then God has much work yet to do in our lives!

³ Deut. 4:40

Making Life Work may mean a change in the way we live and do business.

Seek First the Kingdom of God – Pray to God to help.

Give first to the Kingdom of God

Give of Self for the Glory of God

We must succeed in balancing expenses and Income . If you are unable to accomplish this on your own, then you must ***ask for help!***

Give to

God.

Give to

Others.

We must be victorious in dealing with credit and debt. If not, it is crucial that you ***ask for help.***

If you are falling in working out a workable budgeting and spending plan, then you must be willing to **ask for help.**

Making Life Work in the area of finances often requires that we humble ourselves and approach someone we know and trust and ask for their help, before it's too late. How much is enough for me?

Do the things I possess, possess me? Whatever your answer is -- *God can help.*

Phil. 4:13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

We often quote that verse for all kinds of situations, but the main context of that promise is in the area of finances.⁴ If you read this in the context of Paul's situation, he was referring to God strengthening him to the point where he has been able to be content in both poverty, as well as in abundance.

My friend, if you are struggling with your finances, God has His strength and provision on hand at this very moment to help you. It must be a choice and a determined commitment on your part.

⁴ Phil.4:11-13

1) Get help. If you are struggling in some aspect of *Making Life Work* in your finances, then share your struggle with someone and begin getting some help before your situation becomes a crisis. *Get help!*

2) Act now. If you are presently in a crisis situation, don't wait until this present crisis causes another crisis. A leaky roof is a crisis. Put off getting help and before you know it the leaky roof is causing the insides of your house to short out and cave in. *Act now!*

3) Seek contentment. If you struggle with having enough but always wanting and striving for more, being forever discontent and dissatisfied, seek contentment from God. Pray for contentment.

1Tim. 6:6 Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment,

Read the rest and you see that money is not our problem, but the love of money⁵. The unquenchable desire for more, the love of money, the hope that money appears to offer is all a part of the idolatrous inclination of the fallen, broken, sinful human nature. Get help from God today!

-----*Thinking Through Things*-----

1) When it comes to finances, how much is enough for you? _____

2) Do you tithe or give of your finances to the Lord? How often?
If not, then why not? _____

3) What would it take to free you up to begin tithing and giving to God? _____

⁵ 1Tim.6:6-10

4) Do you believe God's promises to bless those who give to His work? _____

-----Praying It Through -----

Dear Lord, I confess that money often has an uncomfortable hold on me. At times I feel I am possessed by my possessions or by money. I want to be free from greed and idolatry. I want to trust you for my needs, and my future. Help my unbelief.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen!*




“My Life and Entertainment”

R & R and A Wasted Life


TEXT: Eph. 4:1-5

Mar.3, 2013

Theme: Discovering the diamond of God's will and calling in the rock pile of my entertainment.



“No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” - Luke 16:13



The lack of money is the root of all evil.

- Mark Twain

INTRODUCTION

Pro 4:23 Guard your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

A bit of a warning

The topic of “*My Life and Entertainment*”, is one of greater subjectivity than we are comfortable with. We are typically more comfortable with cut and dry, black and white issues, with clear commands. Entertainment is more a matter of personal conscience. An activity which might be out of bounds for one

believer, may not necessarily be an issue for another. There was a time when playing cards or going to the movies for any movie, was considered sinful.

Areas of conscience are those areas which fall under the general Biblical *principles* of holy living, and may have no commandment which addresses it specifically. For instance being overweight may not be an issue for an overweight person. But for another, being overweight may seem a direct violation of the body being a temple of the Holy Spirit⁶. Therefore, according to one's conscience, the overweight person is not viewed as living a life fully surrendered to the Lord. Similar examples can arise in areas of hair length, musical style, the modesty or immodesty of one's clothing styles, and the list goes on and on.

It is within this category of Christian conscience that we address the topic of entertainment.

The Christian and Entertainment, Rev. Dale H. Kuiper,
Pastor Southeast Protestant Reformed Church (1999)

http://www.prca.org/articles/the_christian_and_entertainment.html

Q: Could you clarify what you mean by saying that professional athletes are cursed: what Scriptures help us here?

A: The remark was made that professional sports of every kind, and 99 if not 100% of professional athletes, are under the curse of God. We could have included much of college sports, the entire movie and television industries, and those who are engaged in popular "music." Professional sports are under God's curse because they produce nothing truly worthwhile for God, man or beast. They are merely the opiate of the masses, rather successfully drawing men's attention away from the issues of life, and fleecing them of their money in the process. The athletes, though splendid physical specimens, are actually among the most depraved in our society. They are all Sabbath-breakers. They are heady, high-minded, proud, and boastful. Among them are found adulterers, whoremongers, union members, alcoholics, substance abusers,

⁶ 1 Cor. 6:19

divorced and remarried individuals, all in higher percentages than in the general populace.

This sounds like something written at the turn of the century, but it was written in 1999. Some serious and I'd say, legalistic and judgmental statements are made by this man in the area of conscience.

Please consider the information with an open mind, a prayer for personal holiness and a spirit of graciously dealing with others with whom we may differ on these issues of conscience.

While holiness should be our goal, we have to guard against legalistically placing our convictions upon others. We must likewise guard against becoming judgmental toward others who do not practice the same conscience guidelines as we may.

The Grandeur of our Calling

Here we read of the purpose of your life as His child.

*Work is not
just about
making money.
It is about
discovering the
diamond of
God's calling
for the "rock
pile" of
your life.*

Eph 1:17-19 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, (18) the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the **hope of His calling**, and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, (19) and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us, the ones believing according to the working of His mighty strength

This is a text that we should read and think about, as we consider the grandeur of the purpose and calling of God in the lives of His children.

Life is a rock pile. Therefore, we seldom anticipate discovering a diamond there. But in God's grand design, there are diamonds galore, strewn throughout our perceived rock piles. Our problem is that we often don't expect to find diamonds. We aren't thinking about it. At the moment, we may not be interested in it. But the

grandeur of the calling of God is that there are diamonds in all areas of life.

The mistake we often make is considering God's calling as a place we will one day be going or a ministry where we will one day be serving. **There** is the call of God and **there** we will experience the diamond of God's will and purpose for living.

But God's calling is not simply a place, or a ministry – it is not a point in time or category of our life, like work or play or entertainment. God's calling is the mission of every believer, of which all of **life** and **every category and circumstance** become means of accomplishing that God focused mission.

Eph 4:1-4 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the calling with which you are called, (2) with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, (3) endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4) There is one body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling, ,

All of life is swallowed up in the pursuit and experience of discovering the diamond of the High calling of God in every believer.

ENTERTAINMENT TODAY

Entertainment today is broad and far reaching. Entertainment especially media, provides - impressions -images -ideas - promotes Lifestyle and character, and values both good and evil

The Content of Entertainment

Media Input often presents violence, sex, deceit, arrogance, and other specific sins, as being an acceptable for thinking viewers today. Christians must begin applying God's guidelines for living and purity to entertainment. I find that much of what we may consider to be Entertainment, is what God considers an abomination.

Luk 16: 15 And He said to [the Pharisees] , You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For that which is highly esteemed among men, is **abomination** in the sight of God.

1Cor. 6:9-11 Don't you know that evil people won't have a share in the blessings of God's kingdom? Don't fool yourselves! No one who is immoral or worships idols or is unfaithful in marriage or is a pervert or behaves like a homosexual (10) will share in God's kingdom. Neither will any thief or greedy person or drunkard or anyone who curses and cheats others. (11) Some of you used to be like that. **But now** the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of God's Spirit have washed you and made you holy and acceptable to God.

Entertainment isn't clearly expounded on in Scripture. It is an issue of personal conscience. Some entertainment does include many of those moral or immoral components.

The Influence of Entertainment

The content of entertainment can be good or evil. Likewise, the influence of entertainment can be either good or evil.

Certainly, not all entertainment is bad. I believe there is genuinely good, godly entertainment which promotes holiness of life, and directs people to Jesus Christ.

The Bible doesn't directly and clearly speak very much in regard to entertainment. We do, however have some Biblical principles pertaining to personal God pleasing holiness.

1Cor. 6:12 All things are lawful to me, but not all things profit. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

There is little said about the vocational life of Jesus, other than being a carpenter. We don't know many of the things He built or specialized in. We don't know about His entertainment or vacations or pass time hobbies.

*Entertainment
is about killing
time, rather
than making a
difference.*

It seems like entertainment is closely associated with what is done after work or in order to recuperate from the physical and mental rigors and stresses of work. Certainly the Sabbath is intended to address much of that.

Entertainment includes leisure and/or rest, but can also be a distraction, which can be something that gets our minds off other things. Perhaps a question we should ask is, "does our choice of entertainment replenish our strength? Does entertainment provide

renewal of our mental and emotional resources? How does entertainment benefit us spiritually?

Psa 23:1-3 The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. (2) He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. (3) He restores my soul; He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Entertainment is no doubt, intended to be a form of "rest". Jesus is not a form of entertainment, but is our Source of rest.

Mat 11:28-30 Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take My yoke on you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. (30) For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.

Its not the TV or movies that will give us rest. Its certainly not sports that restores our soul. It seems Scripture points to the source of our rest, replenishment and restoration as being found

and experienced in *the presence of God*. Everyone needs rest and what it can provide.

Spiritual restoration

Physical replenishment

Emotional nourishment

Mental relaxation

The Diamond of entertainment or leisure or rest may be discovered in the practice of drawing near to God and spending time in His presence, and drawing from His life giving resources. This is the content and influence of entertainment today.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS

The Most Important Things to Me

What are the most important things in life to me as a child of God?

John Piper: *“How Can I Break Free From an Addiction to Entertainment?”*

I was thinking the other day of the difference between our temptations and, say, 250 years ago, the day of Jonathan Edwards. Edwards would write about the folly of young people getting together to do "frivolous conversation" or other worse things. (Life gets boring in New England 250 years ago.)

Today we carry in our pockets radio, television, internet, and games, and anything that would be titillating, fun! And "fun" is a word in the church today that's just rampant! It's an adjective, it's a noun, it's a verb, because we do ministry in order to fit this “fun” mentality.

I'm deeply concerned about that. I want to stand for seriousness about God, instead of making him palatable by making him "fun"! Turning him into another piece of entertainment.

Should not the most important things in life to me as a child of God, align with the most important things in Life for Christ Himself?

When that happens, then our purpose and the hope of our calling will pervade all activities and endeavors of this earthly life.

C.S. Lewis said that too often we're like children who settle for playing in mud puddles when the beauty and immensity of the ocean are just a few feet away. We are too easily pleased with lesser things.

The beauty and immensity of the calling of God – the diamond of God's purpose in our lives - are the good works He has ordained for us to be involved in for His kingdom purposes.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

The most important things to me should be the most important things to Jesus.

The Most Important Thing in Life for Jesus

All you have to do is read the gospel and you see the things Jesus involved Himself in.

Jesus at 12

Luk 2:49 And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

Jesus was sitting, listening and asking questions as He was learning about God and His Word.

Jesus as an adult

Joh 14:2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

He came from Heaven to earth to gather to Himself, true followers and believers who would spend eternity with Him.

Listen to Jesus' own words regarding His purpose in living.

"I have come, not to abolish the law but to fulfill the law."
-Mat. 5:17

“for this very hour I have come” - Jn. 12:27

“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.” - Joh 6:38

“I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.” - Joh 12:46

For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world--to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." -Joh 18:37

“The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” – Jn. 6:38/Luk.19:10

These things were the most important things in His life. His purpose. His all-consuming assignment and reason for living. Should not the most important things in life to me as a child of God, align with the most important things in Life for Christ Himself?

Our God focused Purpose in living must pervades all activities and endeavors of this earthly life.

While here with us, we learn of....

Jesus' Personal Secret of R & R

What did Jesus do to relax and unwind? What did He do in His spare time with His buddies? Did He watch some sporting events? Did He enjoy rock climbing? Was there a Biblical equivalent to golf or cards?

Jesus spent time with what few friends He had.

Jesus and His Time with friends

John 11:5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

John 11:11 After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him."

John 12:1-2 Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the

dead. (2) So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at the table.

Jesus and His Time alone with the Father

Mat. 5:1 – he went to a mountain and his disciples came to him

*Time alone
with Jesus, is
not wasted
minutes. It is
productive,
renewing and
meaningful
relationship
building.*

Mat.14:23 - He went up to a mountain by himself to pray

Mat 17:1 - Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

Mar 6:46 And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

Mat. 26:36 - Gethsemane was a favorite quiet alone place for Jesus to go and draw near to His heavenly Father.

Making Life Work - application

Entertainment involves media, sports, fun, hobbies, time, resources, distraction – possibly distraction from important spiritual matters. Entertainment can help us disconnect from reality.

Entertainment can be personally renewing, and restoring for the depleted soul. Or it can be an activity of boredom and can waste your life, your time, resources and even waste the opportunities for which God has called us to be involved in the Kingdom oriented good works to which He has called us and prepared for us, long before the world was even created. (Eph.2:10)

Is entertainment related to boredom? If so, should we attempt to answer the question, “why, as a Christian, am I bored?”

Is entertainment an extended disconnection from the realities and responsibilities of life and the expectations of Christ’s calling for you? Or does entertainment amount to inner, spiritual renewal and refreshment?

Is it relaxation? Does it contribute to personal renewal? Is it simply something harmless that we enjoy?

Then why not make some form of productive kingdom advancing and God glorifying activity part of our entertainment? Could it be that we don't really enjoy that kind of thing?

----- *Thinking Things Through* -----

Questions to ask re: our entertainment and personal conscience.

- 1) Does my entertainment honor God?
- 2) Does it promote anything which God may consider an abomination?
- 3) Is my entertainment personally renewing, physically relaxing mentally refreshing, morally exalting, or spiritually restoring?
- 4) Is my entertainment a result of my being bored?
- 5) Does entertainment keep me distracted or disconnected from the urgency of God's kingdom work?

Piper: So this question is, "How do you break free from that kind of addiction?"

1. Recognizing it is a huge step in the right direction.
2. Seek the Lord earnestly about it. Pray like crazy that God would open your eyes to see wondrous things out of his law.
3. Immerse yourself in the Bible, even when you don't feel like it, pleading with God to open your eyes to see what's really there.

I know of 2 women at this moment who are on a feeding frenzy of seeking God and consuming His word. One young women has many new questions as she is searching the scriptures. Another middle aged women has many questions and is wanting to know everything the Bible teaches. "How long until I learn it?" A lifetime!

4. Get in a group where you talk about serious things, Biblical things.
5. Begin to share your faith. One of the reasons we are not as moved by our own faith as we [should be], is because we almost never talk about it to any unbeliever. It starts to feel like a kind of hothouse thing, [until] it starts to have a feeling of unreality about it. And once [we reach that point] the powers of entertainment have more sway in our life.

Php 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Pro 4:23 Guard your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

-----Praying It Through-----

Holy Father, keep my heart and thoughts pure. Help me to guard my heart from all impure content.⁷ Help me to keep my eyes from any vile or wicked thing.⁸ Give me a desire for you above all other desires.⁹ --In Jesus' name, Amen!

⁷ Prov.4:23 | ⁸ Psalm 101:3 | ⁹ Ps.73:25



“My Life and Health Blessings and Curses?”

TEXT: 1 Cor.10:13

Mar.10, 2013

Theme: Discovering the diamond of God's will and calling in the rock pile of my Health.

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,
do all to the glory of God.”
- *1Corinthians 10:31*

'Tis healthy to be sick sometimes.
-Henry David Thoreau

INTRODUCTION

Today we are dealing with a topic that deals with our most important relationship with God. Today involves specifically the areas of health and sickness. Within this context, we must remember that as Christians:

We must trust God in our health and our sickness.

We must praise God in our health and our sickness.

We must glorify God in our health and in our sicknesses.

It is not the purpose of our existence to live forever. Death is not the worst that can happen to the true child of God. The purpose of every human being who is created by God for His plan and purpose, is to glorify God in every area of our lives.

1Cor. 10:31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

DIET AND INTAKE - “self help”

What can we do to improve our health?

*Our Goal in
life must not be
self-focused
but God
focused. That
makes all the
difference!*

We are told that there are some foods we view as *comfort food* and some food we view as *victory food* (sweets / salty) However, I personally believe cheeseburgers are appropriate for any and all occasions!

When it comes to My Life and Health, we must balance living right with considering Gods’ plan and purpose for us.

Science & Medicine

Heart disease - There have been advancements in scientific research and medical breakthroughs. One of the greatest modern achievements in public health in the United States is the dramatic reduction in the number of lives lost to cardiovascular disease (CVD) over the past 40 years. Mortality rates have fallen 60 percent since the mid-1960s, but decades of research and analysis have failed to clarify exactly what was responsible for the decline. (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation) And when compared with previous trends, the cardiovascular disease death rates have declined about 30 percent from 1998 to 2008. (Georgia Regents Health System) While being unable to pinpoint the exact reason, most attribute the drop to a combination of reasons, such as

advancement in medical treatments, wellness education, resulting in healthier eating choices and lifestyle changes.

Cancer - In 1975, of those who were diagnosed with breast cancer, 94% were still alive after year 1 and 75% were alive at year 5. In 1993, the percentages improved slightly to 97% and 86% respectively. This improvement in survival is due mostly to a healthier population rather than medical treatments. Credit is also given to cancer screening and early detection.

Cholesterol - Medical science also tells us that cholesterol can be affected by both our food and our family. Cholesterol is affected by what we eat and what we inherit genetically.

Diet & Choices

Personal diet and Healthy choices also plan an important role. Along with other health issues, cholesterol can also be affected by our diet. A healthy diet begins with plenty of foods from the bread, cereal, rice, and pasta group (which will be referred to as the grain group since all are made from grains such as wheat, oats, corn, or rice).

Fiber is the tough or stringy part of plant foods like grains, fruits, and vegetables, therefore sometimes referred to as "roughage." People do not digest most dietary fiber, and so it gets pushed through the digestive tract helping the body rid of wastes.

We know that fast food is often unhealthy, as much of it is heavy with sodium, grease, and preservatives. Many are taking this knowledge and are making dietary changes for better health.

The OT dietary guidelines addressed both holiness to God, as well as health issues. Science and medicine provide the knowledge we need. Self has to provide the willpower to make the healthy appropriate choices.

Activity and exercise - “self help”

1Cor. 9:27 ...I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

I once saw a t-shirt that read: *“Pain is Weakness Leaving the Body”*. Exercise may be painful to us, but it can be beneficial for our overall health.

Personal exercise amounts to balanced physical activity. It is important to keep actively mobile for body productivity.

Healthy eating habits are good habits. This requires a balanced diet to ensure healthy intake for body needs. Both diet and exercise can serve together to contribute to overall physical longevity.

Motivation and diligence are key elements in making right choices and living a disciplined lifestyle. Therefore, partner accountability in diet and in exercise might prove helpful. Sometimes we need another person to help us along in our diet and exercise program.

Where diet and exercise cannot remedy, medicine can often address the problem of managing certain health problems, for extended duration and higher quality of life.

Diet and Intake are things we can control ourselves.

Health and Sickness - sin and the curse

What about sickness and diseases? This is outside the realm of simply “self help”. In this area, we must be assured that God has a purpose for everything!

Eph. 1:7-14 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, (8) which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight (9) making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ (10) as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (11) In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things

according to the counsel of his will, (12) so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. (13) In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, (14) who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

God has a purpose for everything. HE has a purpose in saving you. He has a purpose in everything that happens to bring you to the point of salvation. He has a purpose for everything that happens after your salvation, to bring you to the point of spiritual maturity.

Since God has a purpose for all those things, we can be assured that He has a purpose in whether or not we are wealthy or poor, tall or short, beautiful or cosmetically challenged -- even if you are healthy, or sick.

Sin and sickness

Sin and sickness is the cause and effect of the curse. Cancer, heart disease, and poor health practices are the result of the fallen state of humanity. We believe sickness was non-existent until sin entered the world. As a result, spiritual sin has affect physical life. Sin has brought sickness, affliction, diseases, pain and suffering and death.

Sickness may or may not be a result of your eating habits. Sickness is not necessarily evidence that you are personally sinning. But sin is responsible of the physical ills of mankind and those ills will not be fully removed until we step into eternity.

Rev 21:4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

All these things will one day be gone, because sin and sickness will be no more.

Purpose in Affliction

God has a redemptive purpose in affliction. God can take even bad things and use them for our good and His good purposes.

Personal Testimony: Affliction can bring about A personal experiential testimony of God's sustaining grace. Consider the outcome of Paul's prayer for relief.

2Co 12:9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

God's grace is sufficient for all our affliction and suffering.

I think the devil wants us to think affliction is a sign of weakness.

I personally think it can be a sign of great strength and Christian character. Thinking it means weakness, might tempt us to keep our mouths shut in the doctor's office.

People who are sick or afflicted are often presented with unprecedented opportunities to talk about their relationship with God and faith in Jesus Christ. Its often a time to encourage others who are weaker in their faith to be strong in the grace of God.

The obvious facts are... some are healed to the glory of God and some suffer affliction for the glory of God. Which takes more faith – to believe God for a

miracle or to cling to God when the miracle does not come? Both require faith – *great faith!*

Personal Opportunity: Affliction can present A personal opportunity to evidence to others, our faith and God's help. Consider Jesus' words in the case of Lazarus, the friend of Jesus.

*God is
Sufficient,
above all
things. And
above all
things, "God is
Sufficient!"*

Joh 11:4 When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do [suffer affliction], do it all to the glory of God (*1Cor.10:13 – my addition*). Jesus stated that Lazarus' sickness ...was for the glory of God. Christians know how to glorify God for good things. Most need to grow in the area of glorifying God in the times of trouble and affliction.

God's Purpose. Affliction can reveal a purpose of God in the lives of His people, in directing, disciplining or blessing. In the case of the man born blind, there arose the question as to who was at fault for the man's affliction.

John 9:3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

The fact was that the man's affliction was the purpose of God, in order that God's work of power and healing might be displayed in him. Right here in our church there are glorious testimonies of people who have been healed of their cancer, by God's grace. And there are equally glorious testimonies of people who are full of faith and whom God has gloriously and graciously strengthened and sustained during difficult bouts with serious illnesses and afflictions, but have not yet received their healing.

Paul and the thorn in the flesh –

2Cor. 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

Health and even healing can have a dangerous effect on any of us. And while health and healing may indeed glorify God, it may or may not produce the strength of faith and Christian character in us that God desires. Simply put, God may have other plans for us in our illness and affliction.

((Health problems and sickness are more an issue of sin and the curse))

Making Life Work – application

“J” and “B” were friends in our church. They believed in eating healthily and even getting their food from a special company who grew things organically and naturally for optimum health benefits.

When “B” came down with cancer, they were shocked and devastated. They were confident that healthy eating was a guarantee that they would remain healthy. But no matter how healthy we eat, the curse of sin is still on humanity.

Doing what it Takes to stay healthy

... as it is within our power to do so.

Common Sense Approach

- 1) Eat Healthy. While eating healthy, is no guarantee of physical health, it is still a wise habit to nurture.
- 2) Exercise. Stay as physically active as possible.
- 3) Checkups. While most people don’t like dental or medical exams, they do provide opportunities to catch potentially life threatening medical problems while they are still treatable. Have Regular Medical Checkups.

Mamograms and Early Detection

Before you can feel a lump, a mammogram can detect it. When a cancer is that small, it may be well-contained (as in not spreading), and may be successfully treated. Standard breast cancer treatments are most effective on smaller tumors. Women over 50 reap the most benefit from mammograms,

Benefits of Colonoscopies

By Salynn Boyles WebMD Health News

Jan. 3, 2011 -- It is considered one of the most effective cancer screening and prevention exams, but recent studies have raised concerns that a colonoscopy may not be useful for detecting certain colorectal cancers.

Now a new study from Germany offers strong evidence that the test can prevent colorectal cancers located throughout the colon .

Experts say the findings should reassure patients that a colonoscopy saves lives by detecting and removing precancerous polyps throughout the colon before they can become malignant.

Doing what it takes to be safe

...being careful and staying alert

Accidents and injuries are also a very large part of health and physical longevity.

1) Job Safety really is important

Number of deaths for leading causes of death for 2011 (CDC)

1) Heart disease: 597,689

2) Cancer: 574,743

3) Chronic lower respiratory diseases: 138,080

4) Stroke (cerebrovascular diseases): 129,476

5) Accidents (unintentional injuries): 120,859

Some safety regulations mandate, hard hats, safety glasses, and gloves. While these may be uncomfortable, they are often common sense practices to avoid injury and prolong healthy quality of living.

2) Driving safely really does make a difference

Watching out for the other guy, does make sense. Obeying speed limits does make sense. Wearing seat belts make sense. Wearing a motorcycle helmet makes sense.

Don't trust someone else with your personal safety. Watch out for yourself, and watch out for the other guy.

Doing what it Takes to Glorify God

...when circumstances are out of my control

Every situation, every challenge, every affliction is an opportunity to glorify God.

1Cor. 10:31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Making Life Work – application

This is the diamond of God's will and purposes in our health and sickness. Some in our church family have been healed of cancer. Some weren't. Some are still being prayed for and we continue trusting God for their healing.

God guides and teaches through circumstances. Medical problems can be the circumstances through which God has chosen for you, in order to guide you, teach you or use you for His will and purposes.

Health and physical well-being are not ultimately the main goals, nor are they the enemy of life. Our goal is not to live forever in our earthly state. Rather, our goal should be to discover the diamond of God's will in our living – even in our affliction and to glorify Him in all things.

2Cor. 5:9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

Life and hope are not found in physical duration of earthly life but in the Lord Himself. *My Life Is In You Lord!* Our bodies are like dwelling places. Sometimes we need some repair work, but your house won't last forever. This house is not your home.

2Cor. 5:1-9 For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2) For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, (3) if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. (4) For while we are

still in this tent, we groan, being burdened--not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. (5) He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (6) So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, (7) for we walk by faith, not by sight. (8) Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (9) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

Close in prayer for God's grace and after service time for prayer for healing.

----- *Thinking Things Through* -----

1) What do you trust in for a long and healthy life? _____

2) Do you intentionally eat healthy? _____

3) Do you see the common sense in eating healthy and making wise lifestyle choices? _____

4) Do you consider yourself to be you basically sedentary, minimally active, reasonably active, or very active? _____

5) What have been the results of your recent physical exams? Were they any warning signs of possible upcoming physical problems? Were any suggestions presented to you, that you might take proactive steps toward addressing some of your warning signs? Have you implemented any of those recommendations?

If now, why not? _____

-----Praying It Through -----

Loving Heavenly Father, thank you for my health. Thank you for all the reasons I have to praise you. I thank you also, for all the reasons I have to trust you for situations I fear and dread. I acknowledge that you are ultimately in full control of my life and my health. I also am certain, that you are Lord of all!

I believe. Help my unbelief.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen!*



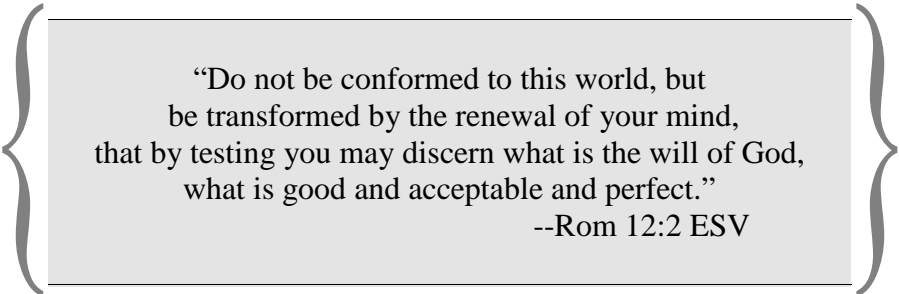
“My Life and God’s Will:

- decision making and the will of God -

TEXT: Rom.12:1-2

DATE: Mar.17, 2013

Theme: Discovering the diamond of God’s will and calling in the rock pile of my life and choices.



“Do not be conformed to this world, but
be transformed by the renewal of your mind,
that by testing you may discern what is the will of God,
what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

--Rom 12:2 ESV

INTRO

Before you came to church this morning, you made a number of decisions. Get out of bed. Brush my teeth. You chose what you will wear, and what you ate for breakfast. Some easy and insignificant choices. You probably did not stop to pray over most of those. But when choices get tougher and issues are more weighty, we become more concerned as to whether or not our decisions are within the will of God or simply our own personal desires.

Consider this image this morning, as we focus on hearing God’s voice and following God’s will. Imagine the will of God to be a great and mighty, raging river. This river is so powerful, that as it winds it’s way through eternity, it cuts it’s way through solid rock – digging out deep valleys, and heaping up high mountains – completely changing the landscape.

As this unstoppable force flows, it carries along debris - great washed out forests, and even human beings. Everything is caught up in its raging current and is taken to its intended destination. This mighty unstoppable river is the eternal will of God. In that river of God's will, all our choices have already been made and all our questions have already been answered. And all our problems have already been solved.

It is the challenge of every child of God, not so much to make all the right decisions, answer all our own questions and solve all our problems. Our greatest challenge and sole purpose is to enter into the flow of that river, allowing God to carry us away and take us to our intended destination - or perhaps, "pre-destination".



Today our message is focused on how we, as mere mortals, can find and enter into the flow of the river of God's will.

Charles Swindoll once stated: "Obey God in the small things, and He will carry us along through the larger things."

God's word always leads in God's will. God's perfect will never contradicts His holy Word.

2Sa 22:31 ESV This God--his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

Psa 119:101 ESV I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word.

Psa 119:9 ESV Beth. How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

Psa 18:30 ESV This God--his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

Isa 30:21 ESV And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

God's word always leads in His will. God's word and God's will do not and will not conflict. Therefore, we always check our understanding of God's leading by the unchanging truth of His word.

Personal experience must always yield to the Divine Revelation of God's holy Word. God's Word offers us specific commands for specific obedience. But it also offers general commands, which serve as guidelines for godly living and decision making for many life issues.

3 Things to be aware of when it comes to decision making and the will of God.

BEWARE: It is The Nature of Man to err

"To err is human...". It is our human nature to err. We are prone to sin and selfish pursuits. That is why divine instruction from God's Holy Word is necessary! We would do well to pray, as we seek God's will and prior to making any quick decisions.

Psa 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: (24) And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Luk 11:2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

Human nature is Deceptive

Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

The erring human nature can cause us to believe lies. We can rationalize our sin. We can talk ourselves into believing, that what we are doing or the direction we are going, is right. Yet Scripture informs us that we cannot know or trust our own heart. The human heart is deceptive above all things.

Human nature is Dangerous

Can lead us in the wrong path, thinking we are on the right path.

Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

It is difficult to determine our morality or morals. Once we are deceived, we are in dangerous territory. Our decisions are affected, even our behavior and lifestyle are affected.

Today's erring theologies and self-focused psychologies, illustrate the erring and self-destructive nature of mankind.

BEWARE: It is The Purpose of God to Lead

God always leads us in His perfect will. There is never a time when God is not leading. His raging river is always flowing in the way He wants to direct us.

Psa 23:1-3 *ESV* A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. (2) He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. (3) He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

That is the will of God! – *that is, the path of righteousness*. It must be the purpose of the sheep to follow the Shepherd.

Therefore, it must be the purpose of the sheep...

To desire and seek His will

This refers to obedience.

Col 1:9-10 ESV (9) And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, (10) so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

The will of God and obedience of His Word, must be the desire of His true sheep.

It must be the purpose of the sheep...

To know and follow His will

Eph 5:15-17 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, (16) making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. (17) Therefore do not be foolish, but **understand what the will of the Lord is.**

The idea is that once we understand the will of the Lord, we will obey that will. From God's perspective, His Truth is not *optional*.

It is...

The Challenges of Life to choose the path of righteousness.

IT is the challenge for every true believer to be willing to allow the raging current of the Mighty river of God's will to carry us away and along to our intended destination. Fight against the current and we drown. Allow it to carry us along and we experience a harrowing and humbling ride,

So, “How do we enter into that current?!?”

It is a challenge to Hear God’s Voice

We are commanded to Know God’s will.^[Eph.5:17] IT is an act of God, that we know and follow His will.^[Col.1:9]. Yet to find and follow the will of God is a challenge of a lifetime.

The Voice of the Lord thunders.^[Psalm 29]

Joh 10:1-5 ESV "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. (2) But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. (3) To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep *hear his voice*, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. (4) When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they *know his voice*. (5) A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do *not know the voice* of strangers."

Joh 10:14-16 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, (15) just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. (16) And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will *listen to my voice*. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

It is a life long challenge to learn to hear the Shepherd’s voice. We are prone to stray from the Shepherd’s voice.

Rom. 12:1-2 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. (2) 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*.

This is the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Without this principle in your life, you will not hear the LORD's voice, find His will or experience His blessed good pleasure in your life. You will always be struggling and striving, and swimming hard to go your way, while the raging river of God's will careens through eternity, bringing you to His appointed place for you, and most likely banging you up along the way.

How do we renew our minds, in order to know God's will?^[Rom.12:2]

We Must Remember Our source of God's Voice

* These are the instruments of God's leading in our lives.

Father's Voice through Scripture – truth and commands

Son – His life, example and commands

The Impressing and convicting work of the Holy Spirit in leading, impressing, and offering direction to our spirit.

God's Word, Expresses His Will, and Leads in His Way.

Rom 8:13-16 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (14) For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (15) For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (16) The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

Truth of God's word always trumps the subjectivity of Man's experience or feelings. The Holy Spirit of God always leads us to follow and fulfill the Holy word of God, through personal obedience. The Holy Spirit and the Holy Word of God ALWAYS lead us through the perfect will and plan of God.

How do YOU hear the voice of God?

How do YOU find God's will for your decisions?

Consider the Instruments of God's leading

Holy Scripture-

Psa 119:105 KJV Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

We can ask, “Is my situation addressed somewhere in Scripture, either directly or indirectly? Is it addressed in a specific command or a general principle?

Walking by faith and seeking God's direction is likened to walking step by step using the Guiding Light of the Bible as direction for both small and large choices.

Joh 17:17 ESV Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

God's Word sets apart, purifies and renews us. His word renews our minds and leads us in His will.

Counselors –

Pro 11:14 Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

This is not referring to professional “counselors” or psychologists. It is referring to input from other Christians who are also seeking to be led by God's Word and Holy Spirit. This guards against being influenced and possibly misdirected by one person. We should not seek out people who will tell us what we want to hear or to confirm a decision you have already made.

2Tim. 4:3-4 KJV For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; (4) And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

We should seek people who can help us find the will and direction of God for our situation.

Prayer – God directs, impresses, speaks to the spirit. John 6:44, promises that God will draw us if we are seeking Him. God's word directs. God's Son call. God's Spirit impresses.

Circumstances out of our control

Gen 50:20 ESV As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

God Always leads us, Always. And He always Leads us in the path of Righteousness for His name Sake.(Ps.23). And when we are concerned that our life is out of our control, we can rejoice that it is ALWAYS in God's control!

Opportunities

Opportunities are like doors. There are "Open doors" and there are "Closed doors". We have to be aware that God may do both or either in order to guide us along His perfect path of righteousness. It is seldom easy and often unpleasant.

Consider the Examples in Scripture

1) Samuel - Speak Lord I'm listening

1Sa 3:10 And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."

Initially, he was not sure if it was God. He asked his spiritual leader, Eli. He was instructed to respond, "Lord, I'm listening!"

2) Still small voice – God whispers to Elijah

1Ki 19:12 And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper.

He goes through windstorm, earthquake and firestorm. The word of the Lord did not come to Elijah in the manner which he had

expected. It was a still small voice, in the quietness of his aloneness in the cave.

3) Faith alone -

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

There will be times when we cannot see, or cannot hear from God. There will be times when it seems we can get no message or clear direction from the LORD. At this time, we have *to walk by faith* – trusting God, that in our circumstances, we are acknowledging Him and seeking Him and trusting Him.

Pro 3:5-6 KJV Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. (6) In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

4) Struggle and Wisdom – my will or God’s will?

Gal 5:17 ESV For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Flesh and Spirit. The Flesh is our own human, physical senses which can be deceptive and dangerous. We have an erring nature.

The Spirit is God’s Holy Spirit which seeks to lead us in Gods’ will and in His path of Righteousness. This process will most often times be a great struggle. The struggle is between our own desires and Gods’ desires. It has to be a struggle.

5) Step at a time – Swindoll says the Greater will of God is experienced by daily obedience of small steps.

Pro 16:9 ESV The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.

And Psalm 119:105 reminds us that Gods’ word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path”. We may not be able to see too far

down the path, but God's Word will show us the next step. God's word is not a million candle power, but a soft glow that gives just enough light for the immediate situation and for the very next step(s).

Unusual ways today - are the exception

*** *Dreams and Visions*** -- Muslims today

An angel spoke to Jacob in a dream to remind him of his vow to God.

Genesis 31:11-13. These situations are unusual and every personal experience must always be submitted to the inerrancy of God's Holy Word as our standard.

*** *"God spoke to me"*** – audibly – Be very careful. Just because you heard a voice doesn't mean it was God's voice. Just because someone had a dream or vision does not make it a message from God.

I remember speaking with a street person in Chicago who was asking for money. I asked him why he wasn't working? He said, "I hear voices in my head." In my insensitivity, I responded, "What do those voices tell you to do – *NOT WORK!*?"

When we think that has taken place, we always measure our experience with the standard of God's inerrant, unchanging word. Gods word will not contradict His leading or personal message. And Gods personal message or our personal experience will not contradict Gods holy inerrant, unchanging word.

I had a woman call my office at church asking for support, because she was Jesus Christ who had returned to earth and was attempting to gain support for her ministry. *Just for the record, I did NOT send her any money.*

<p>1Pet 1:24-25 ESV (24) for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, (25) but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.</p>

* **“The Lord told me”** or “the Lord showed me”. This often comes from well-meaning people, but again, it doesn’t make it from God.

These are almost taking the Lord’s name in vain. Invoking the name of the Lord, in order to make *their* word or idea carry more weight.

If someone tells you something, and says “The Lord told me” or “God showed me”, you are under no obligation to receive it or believe it. This manner or spiritual talk can be manipulative and not from the LORD.

Test the spirits

1John 4:1 ESV Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Search The Scriptures

Act 17:10-11 ESV The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. (11) Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

The Bereans measured everything by God’s known Word. Teaching, experiences, prophecies, dreams, claims, etc must always be held up to Scripture to determine its truth and validity.

Making Life Work – Off the Page and into my life

Our ideas, situations, predicaments and choices are like a rock pile, that we have to hammer through. The diamond in that rock pile is the pure will of God for us personally. That is worth working for, and working hard.

Some Questions to Ask when seeking God's will

*** Does it glorify God?** *What will be the potential outcome?*

1Cor. 10:31 ESV So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (Col.3:17, 23)

*** What is your motivation?** *What is your purpose in pursuing this?*

James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

*** Will it promote spiritual growth?** *Will it nurture or hinder my Christian life?*

Mar 4:18-19 And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, (19) but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

*** Will it lead to temptation?** *Am I sure I am not being influenced by my own deceptive and dangerous sinful nature? Am I struggling with this decision?*

James 1:13-15 ESV Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. (14) But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (15) Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

*** it a sin or compromise?**

1Cor. 6:12 ESV "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything.

God's will never conflicts with His Word! *NEVER!* Gods' Word Always leads in His way. *ALWAYS!*

Some Prayers to pray when seeking God's 'will.'

* Thy Will be Done - Luke 11:2

* Lead me in your everlasting way - Psalm 139:23-24

* Confession of ignorance and powerlessness - 2Ch 20:12 O our God,
wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.

* Acknowledge uncertainty –

James 4:15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

* Seek to be filled with the knowledge of God's will.

Col 1:9 KJV For this cause we also, since the day we heard 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 understanding;

* Ask God to renew your mind in order to discover the diamond of His will in your life and situation.

Rom 12:1-2 ESV I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (2) Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

- Prayer -

Lord, I want you to direct me and guide my life. I have tried to control my life and I have made a mess! Please forgive me. Please help me. I surrender to you and trust in Jesus today. I am entering into the raging current of you holy will and ask you to carry me along to your intended destination for me. --In His name. Amen!



Don't close this booklet yet

without considering this all important question.

Is Jesus Christ the Savior of *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; --
Romans 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come from
God.

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. --*John 3:16*

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him to die
in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal
life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
-- *Romans 6:23*

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of Jesus
Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still
sinners, Christ died for us. ---*Romans 5:8*

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved." -- *Rom 10:13*

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he
gave the right to become children of God, - *John 1:12*

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you are
truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

*Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your
sins and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.*

The ABCs

A - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

B - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

C - Confess your sins to God. *He already knows.*
- also Confess Jesus as you LORD.

Prayer: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

Connect with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

Commit yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Act 2:41-42 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:
Christ E. Free Church, PO Box 619, 19682 Hill Rd,
Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, www.christefca.org

We have a free booklet on:

Water Baptism: *The First Step of Believer's Obedience.*
and also

A New Creation: *Beginning Your New Life In Christ*

It is our prayer that you find Jesus Christ to be, your greatest purpose, your highest calling, your soul's source and joy, and your all-consuming passion.

Other Free Booklets downloadable at www.ChristEFCA.org

1 PETER, pt.1-2 (2Vol): *Suffering in Sojourning*
1 PETER, pt.3-5 (3Vol): *The Church God Always Wanted*
A NEW CREATION: *Beginning Your New Life In Christ*
ADVENT: *The Submission of Christ*
AMERICA ADRIFT: *A Culture in Crisis and the Challenges Before the Church*
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***May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience
and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship
of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit
in His Church and throughout our mission field.***

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