

1 John 2:1-6

A Life Changing Walk

There are times in our lives when we stop to think about our lives. One occasion is around New Year's Eve. Birthdays, weddings, anniversaries and even funerals are times of reflection. But there are times when we pause and think about the meaning and purpose of life. We think about ourselves and what we have or have not accomplished. We want our lives to matter. We want to make a difference.

The Bible is concerned about this as well—very concerned. And it declares that our lives take on a great purpose when we are in a right relationship to God. In the Old Testament God said to His people,

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,
says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil,
to give you a future and a hope.
(Jeremiah 29:11)

Just think of it, a future full of hope! And then in the New Testament, as Christians, we are told that we are God's "workmanship [or masterpiece]¹ created in Christ Jesus for good works" that He has ordained for us to do. When men and women take God at His Word their lives change and they change the world around them.

Names like Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses and David are heroic names. Then there are the names of two commonplace people, Ruth and Boaz. They were people who loved God and obeyed His Word. And they changed the world simply by being kind and loyal and falling in love and having a baby; a baby from whose family line came the birth of Jesus Christ. And then there is an almost unknown name tucked near the back of the New Testament: Philemon. Philemon brought joy and comfort to the apostle Paul, because Philemon did whatever he could to encourage and refresh the hearts of believers: simple as that.

The apostle John was concerned about helping people make their lives count too. He said it begins by knowing the truth about the Word of Life. And it builds by having fellowship with God and Jesus Christ and other believers. And a life that makes a difference is sustained as we walk in the light as God is in the

¹ Ephesians 2:10

light. We practice the truth. Now as we begin chapter 2, John shows us how we can know if our lives will make a difference. He is going to tell us how we can know if we really know God and believe His Word.

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin.
(1 John 2:1a)

In a very tender appeal we are urged not to sin. Remember the apostle is building off of the foundation of verse 5, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. And so the logic is simple: God is holy, so you be holy. Live your life in accordance with the light of truth revealed in the Bible. Do your best not to sin; strive to live righteously. We have this advice given to us all through the Bible.

Psalms 119:9 asks "How can a young man cleanse his way?" And the answer is, "By taking heed according to Your word." In Matthew 6:33 we read,

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,
and all [that you need] shall be added to you.

In Colossians 3 we are told "to put off...anger, wrath, malice" and "do not lie." But rather "put on tender mercies, kindness, humility" and especially "love."²

We are to put on the new man, the new nature we were given in salvation.³ The Christian life is a life of active pursuit of righteousness. We are to allow our lives to be transformed by having our minds renewed by the Word of God. We read in Romans 12,

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
(Romans 12:1, 2)

As Christians our lives are not to be fashioned like an unbeliever's life. We are not to walk or live a life-style as if we are in the dark about the will of God. This means we need to think about what we feed our minds. Reading, thinking

² Vss. 8, 9, 12, 14

³ Ephesians 4:17-32

about and obeying God's Word we can actually experience a transformation of our lives.

We sin when our lives are governed by worldly fears, values and desires rather than by divine truth. This is the very essence of our culture's moral problem. People are not interested in truth. People are driven by impulse, desire and passion not by the truths of Scripture. And so a spirit of lawlessness governs our world.

But we are called to be different. We are to walk in the light. Our lives are to be full of faith, love and hope. And when we live as God's children, we make a difference in this world. Again, let's read what the New Testament has to say about our minds.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. ⁹ The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.
(Philippians 4:8-9)

When we are careful about what we feed our mind, when we practice living the truths we learn from God's Word, then the God of peace will be with us in all that we do. That is a life that knows God; a life that makes a difference. Let's return to 1 John.

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.
2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.
(1 John 2:1, 2)

The apostle John encourages us not to sin. But what if in a moment of weakness we sin? If in a moment of weakness we give in to temptation we have an Advocate or a defense attorney to plead our case. This is the Lord Jesus Christ. And not only does Jesus plead our case before God so that we are always found not guilty; he strengthens us so we can be our best for God. We read these verses from Hebrews last week, but let's read them again and allow them to take root in our hearts.

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
(Hebrews 4:14-16)

Jesus knows what it's like to be tempted. He knows what it's like to have a broken heart. He knows what the struggles of life are like. And we can come to him boldly and not only find mercy, but grace to make us strong spiritually.

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
(1 John 2:3, 4)

We know intellectually from Scripture that we have fellowship with God. We know we are children of God when we confess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. But these verses are referring to knowledge gained by experience. If our relationship with God is real, it can be seen by what we do and say. If we are truly saved we will display a life-style of obedience to God's commandments. Now, we know about the Ten Commandments—don't murder, lie, or steal. But let's look at some commandments from the New Testament.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, *let us use it* in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹ *Let love be without hypocrisy*. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³ distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.
(Romans 12:6-15)

This is what a great life looks like. Using our spiritual abilities, our gifts, our talents to bless and serve others. Sharing the Word of God, teaching, leading, and encouraging others; sharing of our financial resources, showing mercy, loving people, being kind and affectionate, rejoicing in hope, and yes, weeping with those who weep, that's a life that makes a difference. Let me show you why.

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.
(1 John 2:5)

When you keep God's commandments you can be assured that you know God. And other people will know it too, because they will see and feel the love of God in what you say and do. Here's how the translation called "The Message" translates verse 5.

But the one who keeps God's Word is the person in whom we see God's mature love.

If we want our fellowship with God to be sweet, we have to learn to love the right way. If we want to love the right way we have to deal with God the right way. And our world so desperately needs to be touched by the love of God.

The man or woman of the world, those who walk in darkness, do only what they want to do. They have no desire to hear the Word of God. They have no desire to think about the Word of God. They have no desire to obey the Word of God. And they have no concept about how to really love with the love of God; a love the world badly needs.

He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.
(1 John 2:6)

Now, what does this mean? It means Christ's life of obedience and especially dependence is the pattern for us to follow. There are two sections of Scripture in Acts that show us the key to Jesus Christ's life of victory. He depended on God, his Father to work in his life.

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth,

a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders,
and signs which God did through Him in your midst,
as you yourselves also know
(Acts 2:22)

God was the power source for all the miracles, wonders and signs that Jesus Christ did. In John 14:10 Jesus said, "the Father who dwells in Me does the works." God was always at work in Christ enabling him to live a beautiful and noble life of love and service. Jesus Christ made a difference because God was in his life.

Do you remember what we read in Philippians? If we think about what is true and good, if we saturate our mind and heart with the Word of God, if we actually do the will of God, the God of peace will be with us just as He is with Christ! Jesus put his faith in God, he obeyed God and God worked in his life. But like dummies we keep saying, "Father, please, I'd rather do it on my own!"

We've been brought up with the idea that we can handle all of life on our own. But this is not what a Christian is called to do. We need to live our lives as Jesus did totally dependent upon God. And He will work within us.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed,
not as in my presence only, but now much more in
my absence, work out your own salvation with fear
and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both
to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.
(Philippians 2:12, 13)

When God begins to work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure it will revolutionize our lives. We will never be the same again. A day by day life-style of keeping God's Word, sharing the love of God and being totally dependent on God will change our lives.

This is what Christianity is all about—fellowship with God, our walking in the light as He is in the light, God working in us. This is how we know that we truly know God. We see the fruit of His working in our lives. This is the true life that John wants us to know and live.