

The Christian Life



"The Christian is not a good man. He is a vile wretch who has been saved by the grace of God."

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PRAY FIRST: O Father, thou hast loved me and sent Jesus to redeem me; O Jesus, thou has loved me and assumed my nature, shed thine own blood to wash away my sins, wrought righteousness to cover my unworthiness.

Understanding the Truth

Discussion

- If you could choose a single phrase to describe what the Christian life looks like, what would it be?

Two Important Questions

There are two questions that should be asked frequently and answered properly in the church: 1) What is a Christian? 2) What does the Christian life look like? Why is this important? Because if we don't understand *what is Christian is* and *what he/she looks like*, it proves that we don't understand the Gospel.

Illustrations That Teach

God uses many different illustrations to help us understand truths about the Christian life or the church, and a number of other important doctrines. Read the verses below to discover what metaphor the author uses and what it relates to.

- Luke 13:18-21: _____
- Ephesians 6:10ff: _____
- James 5:7-8: _____
- 1 Corinthians 9:24-27: _____
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-18: _____

A Key Truth about the Christian Life

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. The Christian life is a _____ life. Why is it new, according to these verses?

- A. Ezekiel 36:25-27: Because we have a new _____ and new _____.
- B. 1 Corinthians 2:16: Because we have a new _____.
- C. 2 Corinthians 4:6-7: Because we have a new _____.
- D. Romans 5:1: Because we have a new _____.
- E. Romans 6:16: Because we have a new _____.

The Illustration of How the Christian Life Looks

Read Ephesians 5:18-21. What is the **metaphor**? _____

In this passage, Paul uses *drunkenness* to contrast the old life of the flesh with the new life of the Spirit. But he also uses it to show the similarities between being *drunk with wine* and being *filled with the Spirit*. How does the Christian life look?

A. The Christian life is a spirit-filled life.

Drinking is not a stimulant; it is a depressant. It depresses the highest centers of the brain. It affects the highest parts of the brain that control a person's judgment, balance, moods, and passions. All of the things that cause a person to be sharp and in control are deadened by alcohol. The Christian life is not depressed by the excesses of alcohol but heightened by the entrance of the Spirit. What do these verses tell us about self-control and order?

1. James 3:2-10: _____

2. Galatians 5:22-23: _____

3. 2 Timothy 1:7: _____

- How *controlled* is your life? How well-ordered is it?

B. The Christian life is a productive life.

A drunkard lives a wasteful life. Think about the prodigal son who wasted his father's resources with loose living (*Luke 15*). He squandered time, threw away his morality and purity, and damaged his father's reputation. But the Christian life is different. It doesn't consume things, it conserves things.

1. Read Matthew 5:13-15. What are the two descriptions that Jesus uses to characterize believers?

2. What were the main uses of salt and light in that day? Salt was used to *preserve* and light was meant to *guide*.

- How *productive* is your life? Is it making people and environments better, or is your life consuming things? Are you managing God's resources well? Or are you squandering your time, talents, and treasures?

C. The Christian life is an energetic life.

The drunkard expends his energy on things that are wasteful and worthless. The alcohol that a drunkard consumes does not pick him up; it actually robs him of stamina and energy. It leaves him looking older and feeling worse than he did before. In contrast, the Christian life is filled with the energy of the Holy Spirit. (*Daniel 11:32; Philippians 4:13*)

D. The Christian life is a controlled life.

Once again, contrasting with the drunkard, Paul is seeking to show us that a man who is *soaked* with wine thinks that it will *stimulate* him, but it actually *depresses* him. His capacity is *diminished* and he loses control of himself. But the Holy Spirit truly *stimulates* and *exhilarates* our lives. What does the Holy Spirit stimulate according to these verses?

1. 1 Corinthians 2:10-12: _____

2. Romans 5:5: _____

3. Philippians 2:13: _____

- **Discussion:** In what way is God stimulating your life?

E. The Christian life is a joyful life.

Why do drunkards drink? Because they are *miserable*. They look at life and *they see no happiness*. They look at problems and *see no solutions*, so drinking becomes an escape from dealing with past or present problems. This is why the drinking time at the bar is called "happy hour."

How does Proverbs 23:29-35 describe a person who drinks?

The Christian life is a *spirit-filled, productive, energetic, controlled, and joyful* life. Can your Christian life be described in this way? Does this picture fit you? If not, here are some diagnostic reasons and answers:

- You are *religiously committed* but not *spiritually converted*. (Luke 18:14)
- Or, you lack the knowledge about how to grow spiritually. (2 Timothy 2:15)
- Or, you have the knowledge, but you are refusing to apply it. (James 1:22ff)

The Christian Life as a Walk

Read these verses and identify how they instruct us concerning the Christian life as a walk.

- **1 John 1:6-7**—*"If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."*
- **1 John 2:6**—*"The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."*
- **Galatians 5:16**—*"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."*
- **Galatians 5:25**—*"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."*
- **Ephesians 4:1**—*"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."*
- **Ephesians 2:10**—*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."*
- **Colossians 1:9-10**—*"For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."*
- **Colossians 2:6**—*"Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."*
- **Ephesians 4:17**—*"So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind." (Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:2; Philippians 3:17-18)*

The main idea in the **“walking” metaphor** signifies *all the activities of the individual life and the moral life*. One’s walk is a *proof of his or her ability* as well as sign of his or her *companionship*. The Christian is to walk in *newness of life* (Romans 6:4); *after the Spirit* (Romans 8:4); *in honesty* (Romans 13:13 KJV); *by faith* (2 Corinthians 5:7); *in good works* (Ephesians 2:10); *in love* (Ephesians 5:2); *in wisdom* (Colossians 4:5); *in truth* (2 John 4); *after the commandments of the Lord* (2 John 6); *not after the flesh* (Romans 8:4); *not after the manner of men* (1 Corinthians 3:3); *not in craftiness* (2 Corinthians 4:2); *not by sight* (2 Corinthians 5:7); *not in the vanity of the mind* (Ephesians 4:17 KJV); and *not in a disorderly fashion* (2 Thessalonians 3:6 KJV).

Using this metaphor, what principles can we glean that will aid us to live the Christian life?

- It is only a vital knowledge of *the character of God, the work of Christ, the nature of God’s ways with man, and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit* that enables you to walk worthy of your calling as a Christian when you descend to the depths of human experience.
- You must learn, again and again, to walk in Christ the same way you received Him—not depending on anything that resides in you, but on everything that is yours in Him.
- Your perseverance as a Christian does not depend upon the determination of your will to endure, but on the perfection of the work of Christ and His perseverance with you. (*Hebrews 10:36*)
- The weakest faith gets the same strong Savior as the strongest faith.

The Christian Life as a War

- **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**—*“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.”*
- **Ephesians 6:10-13**—*“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”*
- **2 Timothy 2:4**—*“No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.”*

The main idea in the **“war” metaphor** in the New Testament reveals the apostolic perspective of *conflict*. The apostles viewed all of life in a *“cosmic conflict context.”* The NT context of these verses in which the Apostle Paul drops this valuable teaching falls right between instructions about *the home* in Ephesians and supplication concerning *the pulpit* in 2 Timothy. What the apostles understood is that all of their *service* and *relationships* were performed in the environment of a *spiritual conflict*. Have you come to realize this vital truth?

Using this metaphor, we discover that, in order to live the Christian life, you need to know:

- The intelligent strategy of the devil always involves *deception* and *accusation*, and the primary weapon to deal with this strategy is the Word of God.
- The spiritual strength of the believer is to be found "*in the Lord*," or in union with the resurrected Savior.
- The well-tested armor of God is sufficient to help you stand.

The Christian Life as a Race

- **Hebrews 12:1-2**—"*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*"
- **1 Corinthians 9:24**—"*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.*"

The main idea in the "**race**" metaphor indicates *a concentration of purpose and will, as well as a strenuous and determined effort*. It means that a man, while he is on this course, gives himself wholly to one thing—running with all his might. It means that, for the time being, he forgets everything for the all-absorbing desire to gain the prize.

In this metaphor, we discover that, in order to live the Christian life, you need to know:

- We must *lay aside everything* (even lawful and pleasant) that can hinder success.
- We must deny ourselves.
- We must lay aside the "little" sins, no matter how much they may be our special weakness.
- We must run with endurance. This means you must reaffirm your desire, day-by-day, to live for God and learn how to receive fresh grace for an undivided purpose.

The Christian Life as a Family

- **2 Timothy 2:22**—"*Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*"
- **1 Corinthians 12:26-27**—"*And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.*"

The main idea in the "**family**" metaphor is that of *mutual dependence* and *spiritual encouragement*. For this lesson, I want to lean heavily upon Jerry Bridges, who offers some valuable insight in his book, *Growing Your Faith* (pp.94-97).

Scripture contains a number of exhortations and examples on this subject (*Proverbs 27:17; Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25*). This cannot be done sitting in the pews, row upon row, listening to the pastor teach. So, how do we go about it? *First, spiritual fellowship with one another presupposes fellowship with God.* If we are not having communion with God and learning from Him, we will have nothing to share with others. *Second, spiritual fellowship involves mutual commitment and responsibility.* Spiritual fellowship means that we “watch out” for one another, feeling a mutual responsibility for each other’s welfare.

Here are specific activities that will help us experience vital fellowship with one another:

- Sharing biblical truth (*1 John 1:1-3; Psalm 119:13*)
- Openness with one another (*James 5:16; 1 Corinthians 10:13*)
- Accountability (*Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:21*)
- Praying together
- Fellowship in small groups

Our growth, as well as the church’s growth, is connected to what we are to one another as the Body of Christ. Within the family of God, we have a *mutual unity*, a *mutual diversity*, as well as a *mutual dependence* (*1 Corinthians 12:12-27*). Just as bad company corrupts good morals (*1 Corinthians 15:33*), consistent, healthy, Christian fellowship strengthens our character and protects us from spiritual apostasy.

Embracing the Truth

Knitting the truth of God’s Word into our lives



The contours of the Christian life weave their way through *relationships* and *riches, habits* and *homes*, and *what you think* as well as *with whom you fellowship*. This fact signals to us that the Christian life is not to be compartmentalized. Instead of creating compartments in your life, where you have one set of values here and another set of behaviors there, commit yourself to living “one way” in all areas for the glory of God.

Challenges are to be *expected* and **weaknesses** are not to be *despised*. Remember what the Apostle Paul taught us about the Christian life: “...*Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me...for when I am weak, then I am strong*” (*2 Corinthians 12:9-10*).

APPLICATION

Being a doer of the Word

1. What did I learn (“teaching”)?
2. Where do I fall short (“reproof”)?
3. What do I need to do about it (“correction”)?
4. How can I make this a consistent part of my life (“training”)?



ACCOUNTABILITY

Placing yourself in transparent and accountable relationships

How are you doing in the area of **DISCIPLESHIP** and **GROWTH**?

- Assess your consistency with satisfying personal devotions:
(Unstable) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Stable)
- Are you implementing your Personal Disciple-making Plan? Yes/No/Somewhat
If not, in which areas are you struggling and how do you plan to adjust?
- What scripture have you memorized this week?
- Who have you shared the Gospel with this week and how did it go?
- What other ways this week have you worked to make disciples?
- Outside of the Bible, what are you currently reading and what are you currently learning?

Obeying the Truth—Your Mission this Week

Engaging the lost through word and deed with the intention of imparting the Gospel



List ways that your life is a new life. How has your life changed since you became a Christian? List ways that you can grow in a more Spirit-filled, productive, controlled, and joyful life.



MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK: Psalm 121:1-2

"I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth."



EXTRA RESOURCES FOR THE VAULT

MacArthur, John. "Spirit-filled Living". Grace to You. <http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/80-378/spiritfilled-living>. Web. 8 January 2012.

Piper, John. "Olympic Spirituality". Desiring God. <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/olympic-spirituality-part-1>. Web. 2 August 1992

Illustrations That Teach

- Luke 13:18-21: mustard tree and leaven, which relate to the kingdom of God
- Ephesians 6:10ff: wearing the armor of God, which relates to being strong in the Lord
- James 5:7-8: farmer awaiting the harvest, which relates to the Second Coming
- 1 Corinthians 9:24-27: runner or athlete striving for the prize of Christ, which relates to endurance in the Christian life
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-18: members in a body, which relates to the body of Christ

A Key Truth about the Christian Life

The Christian life is a new life.

- A. heart, spirit
- B. mind
- C. knowledge
- D. peace
- E. master

The Illustration of How the Christian Life Looks

What is the **metaphor**? drunkenness

- A. The Christian life is a spirit-filled life.**
 1. controlling the tongue is difficult
 2. self-control is a fruit of the spirit
 3. God has given us a spirit of power, love, and discipline
- B. The Christian life is a productive life.**
 1. salt and light

D. The Christian life is a controlled life.

1. mind—we understand
2. heart—we love
3. will—we work

E. The Christian life is a joyful life.

doesn't see or think clearly

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible: 1960, 1962, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation.