

WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO KNOW

Lesson 22

The Spiritual Life – Six Components of the Christian Life

INTRODUCTION

In today's lesson along with last week's lesson we are focusing on the practical aspects of living the Christian life. In the first 20 lessons of our class we have studied what we believe. In these 2 lessons we want to shift our attention to how we behave as a result of what we believe. Last week we looked at the topic of spiritual formation – the process of becoming more & more like Jesus Christ in our attitudes and actions.

Today we will ask and answer the question: What is the Christian life and how does it work?

[**TEACHERS:** This lesson is for believers, so you might want to briefly share the gospel at the beginning – make it crystal clear what we mean by the term “Christian”. If an unbeliever hears this lesson, that is great!]

The Christian life is 6 components working together – they overlap and work simultaneously...

1. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

It has been said and rightly so that Christianity is not a religion in the classic sense of the word. By religion we mean a set of rules, rituals, principles and beliefs that are observed by the followers of that religion. In this sense Christianity is not a religion it is a relationship. It is a relationship with a Person – the Person of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:21 – Paul says “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” What does he mean? John Eadie, in his commentary on Philippians states in reference to this verse, “Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.” [from *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians* by John Eadie, originally published by T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1894, page 49]

Eadie goes on to say, “Christ was the absorbing element of his[Paul’s] life. If he traveled, it was on Christ’s errand; if he suffered, it was in Christ’s service. When he spoke, his theme was Christ; and when he wrote, Christ filled his letters.” [pages 50-51]

Now, this kind of relationship with Jesus Christ is not reserved for special people like Paul or the elite among Christian leaders. It is for everyone – it is normal for any Christian.

John 14:19-20; 15:5(read) As believers we are to live in dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ. He dwells within us! In John 15:5, the NASB and KJV use the word “abide”; the NIV uses the term “remain”. What does it mean to abide/remain?

Dr. C.I. Scofield states, “To abide in Christ is, on the one hand, to have no known sin unjudged and unconfessed, no interest into which He is not brought, no life which He cannot share. On the other hand, the abiding one takes all burdens to Him, and draws all wisdom, life, and strength from Him.” [The New Scofield Reference Bible, Oxford U. Press, 1967, page 1148]

It has been said that the Christian life is not difficult – it is impossible – only Jesus Christ can live it!

2. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST REPRODUCED IN THE BELIEVER

Galatians 2:20(read) – This is THE signature verse on the Christian life. Paul says, “I have been crucified with Christ” – who was crucified? I am still here - who died?

Romans 6:6(read). Paul says that as a believer our “old self” died with Christ. The old you, the person you once were before you believed in Jesus Christ as Savior & Lord – THAT person died. Result? “...that we should no longer be slaves to sin.” The old you had to sin, you had no choice, you lived in the realm of sin. The new you in Christ is no longer a slave to sin. Here’s a great way to think of it: you cannot live as you once did because you are not the same person you once were. You are free from the slavery of sin. You are still tempted to sin but you are never in a position in which you have to sin.

Back to Galatians 2:20...

“...and it is no longer I [old self] who lives but Christ lives in me...”. The key is union with Christ. In lesson 19 we studied the Baptism of the Spirit which is the Spirit placing us in Christ the moment we believe (1 Corinthians 12:13). We are so identified with Jesus Christ that we are identified with His death, burial and resurrection; and, He dwells within us!

“...the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God...”. This is how the relationship works – I live the Christian life by faith. How did we receive Christ? By faith in Him. How do we live the Christian life? By faith in Him.

“...who loved me and delivered Himself up for me.” Notice the personal aspect – He did not just die for the whole world, He died for me; He died for you. Dr. Donald Campbell in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* states, “If He loved me enough to give Himself for me, then He loves me enough to live out His life in me.”(page 596)

3. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST REPRODUCED IN THE BELIEVER BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In lessons 18, 19 and 20 we studied the Holy Spirit and His ministry. When we refer to power in regard to the Holy Spirit we mean ability. He dwells within us and gives us the ability to live the Christian life.

Acts 1: 4-5(read) – This is after the resurrection but prior Jesus' ascension into heaven. He instructs His disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit to come. Then, in verse 8 He tells them that when the Spirit comes upon them they will receive power (ability) to be His witnesses. So, the Holy Spirit is associated with power/ability. This verse also gives the marketing strategy of the early church in spreading the Gospel: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. That strategy still holds today and is part of our mission statement at SBC: Houston, Texas, the United States and the world.

One more point from this passage – Jesus says that when we receive the Holy Spirit we will be His witnesses. Witnessing, sharing our faith in Christ with others, is not something we do as much as it is something we are. And, the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to be what the Lord calls us to be!

Galatians 5:16-17(read) – These verses teach about the conflict that exists in every believer between the flesh and the Spirit. We are to walk (live our lives) by means of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. Why? Because the flesh, which stills dwells in us, is in opposition to the Spirit. The flesh, described in detail in verses 19-21, will always oppose the things of God and never gets better. I don't care if you have been a Christian for 50 years – you still need to rely on the Spirit to be able to resist the temptations of the flesh. We cannot win the victory in our own strength and with our own will. The Holy Spirit gives us the power/ability to resist and live a godly life!

What is my responsibility in this process – just let go and let God? No - I will let Warren Wiersbe answer...

"The Holy Spirit does not work in a vacuum. He uses the Word of God, prayer, worship, and the fellowship of believers to build us up in Christ." [from Wiersbe's commentary on Galatians called *Be Free*, page 128]

Galatians 5: 22-23 – These are the character qualities the Holy Spirit produces in our lives as we walk by faith in Him.

4. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST REPRODUCED IN THE BELIEVER BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson 1 of this class started with God's Word, the Bible. We believe that the Scriptures are "God-breathed" according to 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (read). Everything we believe is tied directly to God's Word. It is not what you think or I think but what God says in His Word. We also said that there is no Christian growth apart from God's Word.

1 Peter 2:2-3(read) – Peter represents new believers as newborn babies.

ILLUSTRATION: As a baby reaches for the bottle so a new believer reaches for the Book! The proper nourishment for believers is God's Word and we continue in God's Word until the end of our lives on earth.

John Stott, in his excellent book *The Radical Disciple*, states, “Certainly God’s word is as indispensable to our growth as maternal milk is to a baby’s growth.”(page 88)

Notice what Peter says is the result: that by it (God’s Word) we grow in respect to salvation. Now, how do we know what the Bible means? How can we understand it and apply it to our lives? That is one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus promised that the Spirit would come He called Him...

- “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17)
- Jesus said the Spirit will “...teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”(John 14:26)
- Jesus calls Him “The Spirit of truth” again in John 16:13 and says, “...He will guide you into all the truth”.

So, the Holy Spirit works in cooperation with God’s Word to cause us to grow and mature in the faith.

5. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS THE LIFE OF CHRIST REPRODUCED IN THE BELIEVER BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD **INVADING EVERY AREA OF LIFE**

Our tendency is to compartmentalize our life especially when it comes to spiritual things. We think in terms of the “sacred”: worship, Bible study, prayer, “Christian” things – these belong to the Lord and are under His Lordship.

But then we have the “secular” compartments: our work, home life, finances, recreation, etc. Those areas we often think of as off limits to the Lord or that He is not interested in those areas.

2 Corinthians 5:17(read) – This teaches that when we trust Christ as Savior and Lord that we become a new creature or a new creation. It doesn’t say we become a “religious” person but a “new” person! The Lord does not want our spiritual life, He wants our life, all of it.

Jesus asked a crowd of His followers a very penetrating question: “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’, and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46) That is a good question for any of us. “Lord” means “Master”; it means that we don’t go on our own program in some areas and obey Him in other areas.

In the Upper Room Jesus said to His disciples, “You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right; for so I am.”(John 13:13)

John Stott states in his book, *The Radical Disciple*, “Basic to all discipleship is our resolve not only to address Jesus with polite titles but to follow His teaching and obey His commands.”(page 135)

Coram Deo – what does it mean? It is a Latin phrase which refers to something which takes place in the presence of or before the face of God. R.C. Sproul states, “To live *coram Deo* is to live one’s entire life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God.”[from his *Ligonier* website] As believers we are to live *coram Deo*!

The Lord Jesus Christ invades every area of our lives.

6. **THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS THE LIFE OF CHRIST REPRODUCED IN THE BELIEVER BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD INVADING EVERY AREA OF LIFE **IN RESPONSE TO OBEDIENT FAITH****

Colossians 2:6 says, “Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” We receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord by faith; we walk (live the Christian life) by faith.

Hebrews 11:6 (read) - This chapter in Hebrews is the “hall of fame” of faith. Now, what is faith? There is a lot of bad teaching about faith and a lot of confusion. Faith is defined in Hebrews 11:1 – it is the conviction of things “not seen”.

Ephesians 2:8-9(read) – The whole grace through faith process is a gift of God. It is not something we work up; it is not positive thinking or wishful thinking. Faith is believing God and taking Him at His word no matter what.

How can we develop faith? Faith is like a muscle – you must use it for it to become stronger.

Romans 10:17(read) – The more we read, study and memorize God’s Word, the stronger our faith!

Here's a great acrostic for faith...

F – Forsaking

A – All

I – I

T – Trust

H – Him

CONCLUDING APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Have you trusted Him as your personal Lord and Savior?

Are you trusting Him for each days challenges?

NEXT WEEK: Salvation: Faith vs. Works

