

Living The Christian Life Series
“Lesson 5 – Ye Must Be Born Again”

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Series Text: Romans 12:1 *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.*

Applicational Text: John 3:7 *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

Introduction:

We began this series titled “*Living the Christian Life*” with an introduction to understanding that our behavior is dictated by our “Worldview.” We concluded “*One’s Worldview Shapes One’s Life*” and identified the need to develop a Worldview based on the Bible, so we did a brief overview of the contents and structure of the Bible we titled “*The Instruction Guide/The Owner’s Manual*.” We followed that with a study titled “*God’s Time Plan for Humanity*” in which we presented the Dispensational Approach to understanding and applying the Bible to our lives. Then we did a brief study on The Seven Annual Feasts of Israel titled “*From Shadows to Reality God’s Plan for Man*” to establish where we are in God’s prophetic calendar. With that background of information we are now positioned to examine Living the Christian Life, and have titled this study, “*Ye Must Be Born Again*,”

As with physical life, spiritual life too begins with a new birth. Jesus said “*...except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?*” (John 3:3)

Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:5)

I. Man Was Created Trichotomous – Body, Soul, and Spirit:

When God created man, He created him body soul, and spirit. Genesis 2:7 says, “*And the Lord formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And man became a living being.*” The word “*life*” is plural in the Hebrew– “*He*

breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives-plural- soul life and spiritual life. In Isaiah 53:9 the Prophet Isaiah notes in speaking of the coming Messiah and His deaths-plural. Jesus was separated from the Father and the Holy Spirit for three hours on the cross-noon to 3:00 PM (Spiritual Death) and then declared that the debt had been paid and died physically. Spiritual death is the penalty of sin; physical death is the result of sin.

As a result of Adam's sin we are born with a body and soul but must be born again-literally, from above. We must be born spiritually.

I Corinthians 2:14 teaches that the unbeliever is dichotomous, body and soul. *"But the natural (soulish) man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."* But, the Apostle Paul in I Thessalonians 5:23 acknowledges the believer is trichotomous, *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

II. Dying Thou Shalt Die:

God told Adam he could eat of every tree in the garden, *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* (Genesis 2:17) Critics have used this passage in an attempt to discredit the accuracy of the Bible, stating "Adam and Eve did not die that day." However, quite the opposite is true. The Hebrew in which this was originally written says, *"...dying (instantly) thou shalt die (a future event) ..."* Two deaths are mentioned here, spiritual death (the death of the human spirit) and physical death (the death of the human soul). They died spiritually the day that they ate of the fruit and then died physically after living out their lives on the earth. Physical death is separation of the soul from the body. Spiritual death is separation of the soul from God.

III. Spiritual Birth is the Beginning of the Christian Life:

The Apostle Paul summarizes God's provision for us and the new birth- the spiritual birth- Ephesians 2:1-10: *¹And you hath he quickened (made alive), who were dead (spiritually dead) in trespasses and sins; ²Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³Among whom also we all had our conversation (manner of life) in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us (made us alive) together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ⁶And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: ⁷That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding*

riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

God provided His own grace (God's Righteousness At Christ's Expense) for our salvation. We acquire that salvation by Faith (Forsaking All In Trusting Him). When we call upon Him for that salvation we are born spiritually and have the capacity to understand spiritual things. We were born with a human soul by which we are able to understand and relate to human things. With the new birth we are born a human spirit through which we are able understand and relate to spiritual things. (I Corinthians 2:14)

IV. Developing A Structure for Living the Christian Life:

There is a biblical structure that we can develop which will enable us in effectively Living the Christian Life. We have called it the Structure of Spiritual Maturity. The Structure of Spiritual Maturity is the organization of Biblical information into a framework of structured doctrine for practical application in our daily lives-it is organizing what the Bible says into categories of application in our lives.

We have illustrated it to be like a five storied building with the foundation being the person and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ-the Bible- and the roof being the Promises of God. The five floors are formed out of basic biblical truths to create a visual picture of how basic Biblical teachings interact with each other to form a protective structure from which we can Live the Christian Life.

“Structuring Spiritual Growth”

The third chapter of John tells us that becoming a Christian is a new-birth experience. As a result of this new-birth, we become spiritual babes in Christ.

John describes at least three degrees of maturity, I John 2:13 says, *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him [that is] from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.*

In order to Live the Christian Life we must go through a development or maturing process. Observation shows that it's possible to develop both physical and spiritual maturity without any formal or structural guidelines. However, the maturing process is much quicker and more effective if proper guidelines are established and followed. The Bible sets up guidelines for us in the development of spiritual maturity.

Ephesians 4:11-13 says: *"And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the*

work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:"

According to I Corinthians 13, the role of the Apostle and the Prophet was phased out at the completion of the Bible. We will study this in more detail during our study of Spiritual Gifts.

God has given us evangelists and pastor-teachers. The King James text of Ephesians 4:11 says, "...pastors and teachers." The Greek grammar indicates that the pastor and the teacher are the same person. There is a rule of Greek grammar which dictates this. The rule says, when you have two nouns of the same gender and the same case connected by the conjunction "kai" and the first noun is preceded by the definite article (the) but the second noun is not preceded by the definite article (the), then the two nouns refer to the same person, place, or thing. So, it should be translated as pastors even teachers or pastor-teachers.

The evangelists and pastor-teachers are provided, along with the canon of scripture, to accomplish those things which are specified in Ephesians 4:12-13. *"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:..."*

The Greek word translated, *"perfecting,"* in Ephesians 4:12, is *"katartismos."* It is a military word which means, the equipping of a soldier. The pastor-teachers are to equip the saints, so the saints can do the work of the ministry and build up the body of Christ (the church). This is to be done according to verse 13 *"...until we all arrive in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of God unto a perfect man."* The word, *"perfect,"* in verse 13, is translated from the Greek word, *"teleion."* It means complete or mature. So, our maturity is to be accomplished in the structure of the church under the training of a pastor-teacher.

The biblical framework of the structure of spiritual maturity is illustrated in Ephesians by the erection of a building or structure.

There are three words in the Greek New Testament which are used in relation to this structure and its development. *"Oikodomi"* refers to the structure or building. *"Oikodome"* refers to the act of building the structure. And, *"oikodomos"* refers to the builders of the structure.

The one who holds the contract to develop the structure of spiritual maturity in your life is "Elohim." "Elohim" is the Hebrew word for God. "Elohim" is a plural word which identifies the Godhead. It emphasizes the triune aspect of God. The Father is the architect, the Son is the one who negotiates the contract, and the Holy Spirit is the working foreman. Believers are the laborers. I Corinthians 3:9 says, *"...we are laborers together with God..."*

The contractor, God, provides, at His own expense, all we need in order to develop the structure of spiritual maturity in our lives. He has designed the structure, or framework, from which we can operate. This structure is identified in I Timothy 1:4 by the English word *"edifying."*

For the sake of understanding the development of the structure of spiritual maturity, we will describe it as a building built on a foundation and having five floors and a roof. Each floor is composed of Scripture. It is the development and organization of Bible Texts that provide us with a framework or base from which we operate in living the Christian Life. This structure might be likened to an Embassy that reflects our culture and provides us a building from which we conduct the business of an ambassador - a representative of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Foundation of the Structure is the Person of Christ and the Word of God

I Corinthians 2:16 says, *For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.*

I Corinthians 3:11 says, *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

Many Christians never go beyond their salvation in spiritual growth. They are born-again, but never grow up spiritually. They can be seen as just camping on the rock, or foundation, which is Jesus Christ. They never develop the principles, promises and doctrines of the Word of God, and they remain victims of every wind that blows. But, God has provided the materials and assets for a structure which will protect us from the storms of adversity. However, we need to erect it.

The only foundation on which maturity is achieved is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the application of His teachings. Our maturity, and resulting stability, will be in direct proportion to our knowledge and application of Christ's teachings. Your foundation can be no broader than your knowledge of Christ's teachings. It is upon Christ and His teachings that the five floors of maturity are established. Each floor in this structure is dependent upon the floor beneath it for support. When we speak of the "Teachings of Christ" we speak of the entire Bible - The Mind of Christ. The material from which the foundation of the framework of Spiritual Maturity is developed is not just the Word of God, but Residual Bible Doctrine, that is Bible Doctrine that is resident in our minds-doctrine that has been transferred from our left frontal lobe, where communication and comprehension occur, to our right frontal lobe, where behavior is dictated. This transfer occurs when we accept what we have comprehended to be a norm or standard for our lives.

The First Floor Is "Orientation To Grace"

We must become oriented to God's grace before we can become mature. The better we understand God's grace, the more secure we become. We must learn that God has provided grace for our salvation. That is, we have God's Righteousness At Christ's Expense. We must learn that through grace we have God's Resources At Christ's Expense enabling us to live the Christian life. We must learn that for eternity we have God's Realm At Christ Expense.

God has treated us in grace, and we can have great peace through that realization. However, we must also understand that the doctrine of grace is a two-way street. Real joy and contentment come from treating others in grace.

The Book of Romans and Galatians are key in becoming oriented to grace.

Our understanding of grace, or orientation to grace, becomes the support for the second floor of spiritual maturity.

The Second Floor Is A "Relaxed Mental Attitude"

You see! When we understand the provisions, God has given us, through grace, and understand that He provides all the assets and abilities to do what He asks us to do, we begin to develop a Relaxed Mental Attitude. We relax in our expectations of ourselves and in our expectations of others.

This Relaxed Mental Attitude is dependent upon our learning that God has treated us in grace and therefore, places no expectations or demands on us. That, He has assumed all the cost Himself. We discover we are not responsible for results - only responsible to allow God to use as He directs and equips us.

However, we only truly relax in our mental attitude as we treat others in Grace and assume all the responsibility for our relationship with them. Treating others in grace requires that we set aside our expectations of them and be willing to pay all the expenses and assume all the responsibility for maintaining a relationship with them. Paying all the expense is no problem when we realize that God has provided all the assets needed to do that. It becomes only a matter of our self-will and personal desires being set aside for them.

Your Relaxed Mental Attitude will be in direct proportion to your relaxed expectations of God and others which is the result of a proper orientation to grace.

The books of Galatians and Hebrews are key in your development of a Relaxed Mental Attitude.

The Third Floor Is "Mastery of the Details Of Life"

God told Adam and Eve to subdue the earth and have dominion over it. But, instead, they submitted to the world and became dominated by it.

The happiness of most Christians is dependent upon their circumstances -- where they are -- who they are with -- what they have -- what they are doing. The degree of our maturity can be measured by the degree of our contentment.

In Philippians 4:11, Paul said: *"...I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."*

Notice, Paul said, he had learned to become content. Contentment doesn't just come to the Christian naturally. It is a progressive maturing which is acquired through knowledge and faith. As you become oriented to grace, drop your expectations and relax mentally, you begin to find happiness apart from your circumstances or situation and you begin to master the details of life. How great it is to no longer be in bondage to circumstances.

The Book of Job provides material for developing Mastery of The Details Of Life.

The Fourth Floor Is "The Capacity to Love" To Love God, Our Mate, And Others

There are four common Greek words for love: **Eros**- is based in the passions and is not used in the Bible; **Storge** means natural affection and is the kind of protective love that a mother instinctively has for her children. Paul told Timothy that in the last days people would be without natural affection; **Phileo**- which is a responsive love is dependent upon the proper response for continuation; **Agape**- which is a self-sacrificial love that manifests itself in giving and continues to love regardless of the response. A Capacity for Agape love is the fourth floor of the structure of Spiritual Maturity.

Our ability to love with and agape love is based on the degree to which we have mastered the details of life, which is in proportion to our development of a relaxed mental attitude, which is in proportion to our orientation to grace, which is dependent upon our understanding of Christ and His teachings.

Most Christians become frustrated in their attempt to love others as Christ loves them. Self-centeredness is the hindrance to agape love. It is through the development of Orientation to Grace that we develop an attitude of self-sacrifice toward others. Through the development of A Relaxed Mental Attitude our expectations of others is dropped. And, through the development of the Mastery of The Details of Life our demands upon those we love is eliminated. Thus, we finally begin to have a real capacity to love.

Self-Sacrificial Love is the motivator for grace. God was motivated by love to treat us in grace. As we begin to look at things from a divine perspective, we begin to love others with a self-sacrificial love. In grace, God has given us the ability to be filled (controlled) by the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit is, *"...love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control..."* (Galatians 5:22-23). Therefore, we can treat others in grace and self-sacrificial love through the exercise of grace and the elimination of our expectations and demands upon them.

Developing this floor provides us with a capacity to love God, to love our mate, and to love others. The biblical material required to develop this floor is the book of I John along with I Corinthians 13.

The Fifth Floor of the Structure of Spiritual Maturity Is "Inner Happiness"

True Inner Happiness does not happen in the believer's life apart from the development of spiritual maturity. Oh, there may be periods of happiness, a few, so called, mountain top experiences, but, the goal of every Christian ought to be to find that perpetual state of happiness and joy that comes from the development of spiritual maturity. I call this floor "The Penthouse." The carpet is about a foot thick and the view is fantastic.

Inner Happiness is the result of the believer applying the teachings of Christ to his life to the extent that divine viewpoint has replaced his old human viewpoint – his worldview. The floor of Inner Happiness is supported by Orientation To Grace, A Relaxed Mental Attitude, Mastery of The Details Of Life, and A Capacity to Love. This floor is developed through saturation of the mind of the believer with Bible doctrine. When saturation of Bible doctrine has occurred, the believer reflexively looks at things from a divine viewpoint, He has a "Biblical" worldview.

Isaiah 55:8 says: *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord."* All things take on a totally different perspective when viewed through God's eyes. The window for that view is in the Penthouse on the fifth floor of the structure of spiritual maturity. The Book of Philippians is the major source of biblical material for the development of the floor of Inner Happiness. The principles for inner happiness are found in Jesus' Sermon on The Mount in Matthew 5

1. Inner-happinesses belong to those dependent in the sphere of the spirit.
Blessed [are] the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. Inner-happiness belong to those who mourn.
Blessed [are] they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
3. Inner-happiness belong to those who understand that they operate in the power of God and not in their own strength.

Blessed [are] the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

4. Inner-happinesses belong to those who hunger and thirst to know the will of God.
Blessed [are] they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

5. Inner-happinesses belong to those who treat others in grace.
Blessed [are] the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

6. Inner-happinesses belong to those who keep on confessing their sin.
Blessed [are] the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

7. Inner-happinesses belong to those who reconcile men to God.
Blessed [are] the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

8. Inner-happinesses belong to those who are persecuted for righteousness sake.
Blessed [are] they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you], and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great [is] your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

These have citizenship in heaven! They have the Holy Spirit to comfort them! They are able to master the details of life! They will be satisfied! They will understand God! They will be called the children of God! And, they have the resources of Heaven available to them.

The Roof of The Structure of Spiritual Maturity

“The 7,000 Plus Promises of God”

The roof over the structure is made up of the 7,000 plus promises that are given to the believer in God's word. Most of us try to sit under an umbrella of one or two promises of God. That is helpful. However, there are over 7,000 such Promises which can be joined together to form a protective covering all the time. Biblical Promises are like a roof over our heads protecting us from all adversity.

An address book makes a handy Promise reference. Write the purpose of the Promise in the space provided for a person's Name. Write the chapter and verse in the space for Street Address. Write the book of the Bible where the promise is found in the space for City. This will become your most important "Little Black Book." It will contain the names and addresses of friends that will never let you down.

God has provided The Structure of Spiritual Maturity in kit form for every believer. At the moment of salvation you are provided with access to all the assets and techniques required to develop this structure. But as is the case with a lot of merchandise we get, "SOME ASSEMBLY IS REQUIRED." However, Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to serve as the construction foreman and direct the assembly of this structure in our lives.

The process of building this structure in our lives is under the direction of the Holy Spirit. We are to follow His leadership as we apply the teachings of Christ to our lives.

Some refer to the Bible as the blueprint for our lives. But, I would like to point out, that, while the basics for each of our lives are the same, God has a different design and assignment for each of us. The Bible is not the blueprint. Rather, it is the building code. It establishes the norms and standards of everything we are to develop in our lives. Because we have all been given different assignments, there are differences in the arrangement and furnishings of our personal Structure of Spiritual Maturity. Therefore, the Holy Spirit moves in with each of us as a working foreman on the job. He has the blueprint for our lives and goes ahead of us laying out the work for us to put together. We are not to develop anything in our lives that does not conform to the Word of God -- our building code.

The act of building begins with our comprehension of God's Word. Therefore, we must be exposed to the communication of the Word of God. Communication of God's word can come in various forms. Church services, radio, television, group Bible studies, online studies, and personal study are a few common ways for acquiring the comprehension of God's Word.

However, comprehension is only the beginning. We must mix what we have comprehended with faith. Comprehension alone will not affect our behavior. Only that which has been comprehended and mixed with faith affects behavior. We must trust God's Word, in order for it to be applied in our lives. We must accept it as truth and apply it to our circumstances and situations in order to erect The Structure of Spiritual Maturity

Because this structure is developed with Scripture, it is possible to develop this framework in your life and then not live in it. There is a natural tendency to operate outside this structure. What a tragedy to have such a comfortable structure and not live in it. God has not provided this structure as a shrine. He has provided it as an embassy from which we can effectively serve as faithful ambassadors. Yes! It's fine to move in before it is finished. As a matter of fact, it will probably never be completed. There will always be renovations and additions as we acquire more knowledge of God.

Conclusion:

If we are going to be effective in living the Christian Life, experience the peace and joy it promises, we must develop the structure outlined here. It begins with the foundation which we have described as a personal relationship with Christ and develops as we erect this structure of promises, principles, doctrine, and mechanics or techniques to deal with the issues we encounter in our day-by-day activities. We don't have to miserably await the return of Christ, but can experience peace and joy, even a sense of purpose and fulfillment as we live out the attitudes and behavior identified in the Word of God.

We will never develop the inner-happiness God has designed for us beyond what we believe about the Bible- the Owner's Manual. So, we will explore the basics of the Word and challenge you to apply its instruction and experience its promises.

Our Applicational Text in John 3:7 says, *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.* That is where it starts but to Live the Christian Life requires us to understand and apply the promises, principles, and doctrines of the Word of God using the Mechanics and Techniques found in the Word,

But it begins at Salvation:

- *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God...*
- *The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life...*
- *With the heart man believes unto righteousness...*
- *But with the mouth confession is made unto salvation...*
- *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!*

Calling upon the name of the Lord for salvation results in a new birth, a spiritual birth. We become new creatures in Christ Jesus and are given an appointment to Live the Christian Life. Our qualification for achieving the specific objectives God has assigned us is found in our series text...

*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.
(Romans 12:1)*