

Self Study Guide: The Good Life vs. The Easy Life

Based on Romans 8:1-17

Opening Prayer

Begin your time by asking God to open your hearts to honest self-reflection and to give you courage to pursue holiness over comfort.

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. **The World's Definition:** The world defines the "good life" as an easy life—one filled with wealth, comfort, health, influence, and constant entertainment.
 2. **The Smoke Analogy:** Just as smoke confuses bees and makes them vulnerable, a life of ease and comfort can distract us from the fear of the Lord and diminish our good works.
 3. **Freedom in Christ:** We are no longer slaves to sin but are God's beloved children who can cry out "Abba, Father."
 4. **The Battle Continues:** While salvation is a free gift, we are called to actively participate in putting sin to death and living according to the Spirit.
 5. **The True Good Life:** The good life in Christ includes anticipated hardship and requires us to wage war against our flesh, deny ourselves, and pursue holiness through God's power.
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Understanding the Text (Romans 8:1-17)

1. What does Paul mean when he says "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (v. 1)? How does this truth impact your daily life?
2. According to verses 5-8, what is the difference between setting our minds on the flesh versus setting our minds on the Spirit? What does this look like practically?
3. How does Paul describe our relationship with God in verses 14-17? What does it mean to be "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ"?

Applying the Message

1. **The Easy Life Trap:** The sermon suggested several ways our culture defines the "good life" (wealth, health, popularity, entertainment). Which of these temptations do you find most appealing? Why?
2. **Personal Inventory:** The pastor shared his struggles with pride and distraction. What attitudes, habits, or dispositions do you need to surrender to Jesus and wage war against? (Consider: greed, selfishness, arrogance, envy, lust, anger, laziness, etc.)
3. **The Smoke Effect:** In what ways has comfort or an "easy life" made you spiritually vulnerable or distracted from your walk with God?
4. **Suffering and Hardship:** How does this sermon challenge or reshape your understanding of suffering in the Christian life? How can we prepare ourselves for inevitable hardships?

Going Deeper

1. The Desert Fathers quote said: "Two things a monk ought to hate above all... an easy life, in vain glory." Why do you think pursuing an easy life is so dangerous to our spiritual health?
2. The sermon emphasized that "spiritual transformation is not surgery"—we must participate. How do we balance the truth that transformation is God's work while also requiring our active participation?
3. Someone told the pastor: "The Christian life is easy for me." What warning signs might indicate we've drifted into spiritual complacency?

Practical Applications

Individual Practices (Choose 1-2 to commit to this week)

- **Self-Assessment:** Set aside 30 minutes this week for honest self-reflection. Ask God: "What within me dishonors and displeases You?" Write down what comes to mind.
- **Practice Secrecy:** Engage in one act of service this week that no one will see—something done solely for God's eyes.
- **Wage War on Distraction:** Identify your biggest distraction from God (phone, TV, social media) and fast from it for a set period this week.
- **Practice Contentment:** Identify one area where you're tempted toward greed or discontentment. Deliberately practice gratitude in that area daily.

- **Embrace Difficulty:** Choose to do one task this week that you consider "beneath you" as an act of humility and service.

Accountability

- **Pair up** with one other person to check in during the week about the practice you've chosen.
- **Share** one specific area where you need to "wage war" against your flesh. Ask for prayer and accountability.

Personal Challenge

Consider engaging in a spiritual practice for the next month:

- **Corporate Fasting:** Choose a day to fast together and pray for spiritual renewal
- **Service Project:** Find a humble act of service to do together in your community
- **Scripture Memorization:** Memorize Romans 8:1-17 together over the next month

Reflection Questions for the Week

Spend time journaling or meditating on these questions:

1. If someone observed my life, would they conclude I'm pursuing the "easy life" or the "good life" as defined by Scripture?
2. What would it look like for me to embrace hardship as part of God's good plan for my sanctification?
3. How can I more fully rely on the Holy Spirit's power rather than my own strength in my battle against sin?

Additional Resources

- **Book:** *The Pursuit of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges
- **Book:** *The Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard
- **Practice:** Learn more about spiritual disciplines like secrecy, solitude, fasting, and service
- **Scripture Memory:** Romans 8:1-17; Galatians 5:16-26; Philippians 3:7-14