

## Spiritual Growth Lessons

### LESSON 1 of 32

#### A LIFE WITH A PURPOSE

*" . . . you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation, God's own purchased, special people, that you may set forth the wonderful deeds, and display the virtues and perfections of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9, Amplified Bible).*

Living a life without any real meaning to it--without any goal or purpose--is not only dull and boring, it is miserable! But to the Christian, such a life should not be. If we really understand who we are, what the purpose is for our being here--and where we are going--life will become very exciting indeed!

#### WHO ARE WE?

*" . . . a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation, God's own purchased, special people . . ." (above).*

*"...now are we the sons of God..." (1 John 3:2).*

*"... children of God... joint heirs with Christ..." (Romans 8:16, 17).*

*"...his wife..." (Revelation 19:7).*

#### WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE?

##### 1. Becoming:

*"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son . . ." (Romans 8:28, 29).*

What we are becoming as a person needs to be our number one priority. It is more important than what we are accomplishing, because if we have the proper character, we will accomplish God's will for our lives. Heaven is not our goal, it is our destiny. Our goal is to become more like Jesus!

We also noted in the last lesson that the Apostle Paul was a man who was not in a spiritual rut. He pressed towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. His one supreme goal was to know Jesus in a more intimate way, and to be identified with Him by his life.

*"I therefore so run, not as uncertainly (without a goal); so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:26, 27).*

Paul knew that if he would ever be the person Jesus wanted him to be, he must exercise discipline. He had desire, but discipline was also necessary. The body, with its own desires and cravings, must be brought under control and become subject to the Spirit of God!

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCIPLINE

The word "disciple" comes from the same root word that "discipline" comes from. If we are going to be true disciples of Jesus Christ, we must learn to discipline ourselves. This simply means we must learn to bring our body under subjection. We need to exercise control over our desires, thoughts, emotions, and behavior.

In almost every other vocation--for example: sports, music, and a military career--discipline is the key word for success. Our primary vocation or calling is to be a Christian (Christ-like), and this is only possible when we cooperate with the Holy Spirit and discipline ourselves.

*"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Corinthians 7:1).*

*". . . the marriage of the Lamb (Jesus Christ) is come, and his wife (the church) hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7).*

The emphasis in the above scriptures is that the Holy Spirit does not do it all. We must cleanse ourselves, and make ourselves ready for our bridegroom. It is not always convenient to fast and pray, but it is always necessary. There are many things we could do besides reading the Bible, but man cannot live by bread alone. He needs to partake of the bread of life (the Word of God).

### **YOU CAN BE WHAT YOU WANT TO BE!**

It really is true! What kind of Christian do I want to be? What do I really wish to do with my life? It is up to me to choose whether I will be just an ordinary Christian, or whether I will be a person that God can use in a very special way. Again, discipline is the key word!

Elijah was used of God to bring revival to a whole nation. Was he some super human being?

*"Elias (Elijah) was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:17, 18).*

What was the key to his success? A disciplined prayer life!

The book of Acts, Chapter Six, informs us of seven men who were appointed as the first deacons of the apostolic church. Five of them were Brothers Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. How many of them could you have named before you read the last sentence? Probably none. They were just good, ordinary men who did their job in a good, ordinary way.

But what about the other two deacons, Stephen and Philip? They had the same opportunities. The same doors opened to them that opened to the other five. But both went down in church history as great men of God.

Stephen became the first Christian martyr, and Philip became a great evangelist who set the city of Samaria afire with the flames of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and also was responsible for the gospel being carried into the country of Ethiopia. (Acts, Chapters 7 and 8)



### **2. Doing:**

*"Go then and make disciples of all the nations..." (Matthew 28:19, Amplified Bible).*

*"...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).*

*"...and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).*

The responsibility of reaching this world with the gospel of Jesus Christ does not belong to preachers only. Every child of God is to be a witness for Jesus Christ. The spiritual-minded Christian is not content with just existing. He has learned that the only truly happy life is when we get involved with the work of God, and are busy for Jesus. He has learned that true joy comes when we have the right priorities:

Jesus first, Others second, Yourself last.

There is a lot of meaning in the words of Jesus, *"Whosoever shall seek to save his life*

*shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke 17:33). When we truly lose sight of ourselves and begin to live for others, we will be partakers of the abundant life.*

Read Luke 6:38. What is this scripture referring to? Give what? Where does it say that this is referring to material things only? When you read the eleven verses before verse 38, you will realize that Jesus was talking about giving love. What we have is what the world needs most. We have Jesus, and we have truth. We also possess the love of God, because God is love! We are vessels of His truth, and we need to be channels of His love:

"God's love was not put in your heart to stay; Love isn't love, until it's given away!"

If we live our little selfish "walled-in" lives, we will go backwards in our walk with Jesus Christ, who said: "... *the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*" (Matthew 20:28).

Jesus Christ loved others, lived for others, and finally died for others! Is there a real reason for being in this world? Did God save us for a reason? Yes, He does love us, and wants to share eternity with us, but He also wants us to be busy becoming more like Him, and doing His will--becoming, and doing! (*ds*)

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