

Life Worth Living

The following set of studies has been developed especially for teens so that they might become grounded in the faith, stand against the tide of this world, and find a life worth living as the apostle Paul did (Philippians 3:8-12).

The studies have been developed to be used with a mentor. A mentor is an adult who could fall into any of the following categories: (1) A mature college student who has a good grasp of the Word and can interact well with teens, (2) an adult who has been led into ministry to teens, (3) a mature older teen working with a younger teen.

PREPARATION: The teen should be given the booklet before the studies begin and prepare for each study by reading the assigned passage and answering the questions. Don't worry about those questions, which you may not understand, as there will be time in the study to discuss these. The memory verse should be memorized before the session.

THE STUDY: When the mentor and teen get together, the memory verse should be reviewed first. Then the passage should be read and the questions reviewed. These questions will serve as the starting point from which discussion can center on the strengths and weaknesses of the teen's walk with Christ. The study should be opened and closed with prayer, and this prayer should bring the teen and mentor into communion with the living God who cares for us and stands ready to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). The mentor should see the student as a prayer partner.

These studies will offer opportunity for sharing on a deep level. The mentor and teen will note that confidentiality is the key to deep, trusting sharing and should be maintained at all possible cost unless it violates scripture to do so.

Study #1: Regeneration, Repentance, Renewal

A life worth living begins with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus said that he came that we might have an abundant life (John 10:10). But the Bible teaches that we are born sinful, cut off from God. Jesus Christ died to pay for that sin and rose from the dead in order to continue a living relationship with those who will come to him by faith. The abundant life is living in relationship with our Lord and God. There are three steps in coming to Christ: Regeneration, Repentance, and Renewal (The last two are ongoing for all our Christian life.) We could call these the three R's of Christianity.

This study will examine the above steps through the conversion of the Apostle Paul where he began his "life worth living". Please prepare yourself for the study by reading Acts 9:1-22.

Memory verse: John 3:16

1. What was Saul's (the apostle Paul's original name) life like before he became a follower of Jesus?
2. In what ways did his life change?
3. What caused the change?
4. When did you meet Jesus and how has he changed your life?
5. One of the first signs that a person has truly met Jesus is repentance: a realization that one has missed the mark and not lived, as God would have wanted him to. What is the evidence that Paul repented of his life? (see verses 8, 9, 18, 19, 29, 22)
 - a. What was the sign of Paul's repentance? (18)

b. Have you ever been baptized?

For related verses see Acts 2:37, 38 and Luke 3:7-9.

6. Once a person has been regenerated (as Paul was on the Damascus road), he begins a life worth living, which will be progressive, involving ongoing repentance and renewal of the mind (Romans 12:2). What are some of the things Paul might have done while he was with the disciples (verse 19), which might have contributed to the renewing of his mind (verse 22)?

7. What kind of activities should you be involved in if you are going to be strengthened in your walk with the Lord?

Study #2: Sanctification: Becoming like Christ

Last week we studied the 3 R's. This week we will look at how one's life has to change (through Repentance and Renewal) when one comes to Christ and how one ought to feel about it. We will look at the change in Zaccheus' life as recorded in Luke 19:1-10.

Memory verse: Luke 6:40

1. How do you suppose Zaccheus felt about himself? What were some contributing factors to him feeling this way?

2. What mixed feeling do you suppose Zaccheus might have had when Jesus recognized him?

3. How do you think people feel when they come face to face with their sin?

4. What did Zaccheus do about it?

5. How do you suppose Zaccheus felt after he had repented? Do you suppose he was happier with his new life or his old one?

6. How does our behavior affect our feelings?

7. If you have come to Christ you are now "In Christ". How should this affect how you feel about yourself?

Related verses: I Cor. 6:9-11; Ephesians 1:3-14; Galatians 2:20

Study #3: Authority

All men are under authority and teens are under many. Often there is conflict on whether or not to obey. Without a clear understanding of authority and the response we ought to have to authority, we can get into much trouble and harbor much resentment thus derailing our "life worth living".

Memory verse: Luke 6:46

Today we will study authority and the appropriate response by looking at Daniel in the very difficult experience he had with authority in Daniel 1:1-21.

I. Conforming to authority:

1. What pressures were brought to bear on Daniel to conform to the traditions of the Babylonians rather than keep the strict dietary restrictions, which God had given to the Jews?

2. How did Daniel respond to these pressures?

3. What does his response teach us about the way to appeal to authority?

II. Read Romans 13:1-5, Hebrews 13:17, I Peter 2:18-20.

1. What are the authorities you are under?

2. What is the purpose of the authorities God has placed in you life?

3. What is the appropriate response to authority? Should this be only when you believe the authority is correct?

4. When is it necessary to disobey authority? (see Daniel above)

5. How should this be done?

Study #4: Peer Pressure

A life worth living can be compromised from any number of directions. Last study we learned how an incorrect response to authority could compromise a life worth living. This week we will study how giving in to our friends can do the same.

Memory Verse: I Corinthians 15:33

Read Daniel 3:1-18

1. How was peer pressure brought to bear on Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?

2. How do you suppose they felt when all the people fell down before the idol? (v. 7, 12)

a. Why did they stand firm?

b. How did having the others as friends help them stand firm?

c. It is certain they had some friends among all those who fell down and worshipped the idol. Do you suppose they felt pressure to conform?

3. Have you had situations where you should have stood against the crowd?

a. How have you felt?

b. What steps could you take to help you persevere? (see above 2b. and Hebrews 10:23-25)

4. Sometimes it is difficult to determine what activities we ought to get involved in. What principles in the following verses would help?

I Corinthians 6:12; 10:23

Ephesians 5:18

Romans 14:22, 23

4. Another area of difficulty is often sharing our faith with our friends. How have you found witnessing to friends about your faith in Christ?

Study #5: Friendship

In this study we will take a closer look at friendship. (We looked a little at this in the last study with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) We will look at Jonathan and David's relationship. Prepare for the study by reading 1 Samuel 10:1-42.

Memory verse: Philippians 2:4

1. How would you describe David and Jonathan's relationship?
 - a. Whose welfare did Jonathan seek?
 - b. In friendships who's welfare should we seek?
 - c. What are some ways in which we can do this?

2. Evaluate your relationships with your friends.
 - a. Do you have a good circle of friends?
 - b. If you have trouble making or keeping friends what might be the problem(s)?
 - c. What motivates you to act the way you do in friendships?
 - d. What are some ways your friendships may get strained?
 - e. What do you do when they do get strained?
 - f. Is this response appropriate? What should you do?

- e. Should our relationship with non-believers be any different than our relationship with fellow believers?

3. Was there jealousy or competition between David and Jonathan? Could there have been? Why wasn't there any?

4. Is there any place for competition between believers?
 - a. When does this become unhealthy? Who's interest are you seeking?
 - b. Would you characterize yourself as competitive? Are there any unhealthy leanings?

Study #6: Friendship (Part II)

In this study we will take a closer look at relationships. (Last week we looked at Jonathan and David's relationship). Prepare for the study by reading 1 Samuel 10:1-42.

Memory verse: Galatians 5:13

1. Real love sacrifices for the benefit of the other person as opposed to seeking one's own benefit. When Jesus talked about self-denial and loving one's brother (literal and figurative) as well as one's enemy certainly this applies to our interpersonal relationships. See Matthew 25:31-46.

a. How would you describe your relationship with the other members of your family? (Parents, brothers and sisters)

b. How do you respond when tensions arise in the family? (You might look at Galatians 5:15, 20, 26).

c. How should you respond? (You might look at Galatians 5:22).

2. Certainly an area where teens are under tremendous pressure to compromise God's guidelines for a life worth living is in the area of relationships with the opposite sex. How would you describe your relationships with those of the opposite sex (dating relationships)?

a. Do you always seek what is best for them? How?

b. What kind of limitations should be put on these relationships to keep the flesh from being inflamed and exploiting the relationship for our own gain?

c. What kind of limitations should be put on friendships with unbelievers of the opposite sex? (see 2 Cor. 6:14-18)

IF YOU ARE GOING TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THE NEXT STUDY YOU WILL NEED TO GET AN EARLY START ON THE READING SINCE IT IS MUCH MORE THAN USUAL. READ THE FASCINATING STORY OF JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS IN GENESIS CHAPTERS 37-50 (You don't have to read ch. 38 since this is a side story, not directly related to Joseph).

Study #7: Forgiveness

The last two studies have been on relationships. In a fallen world we are sinned against regularly and this can cause a breakdown in relationships and deep hurt. Handled improperly this can surely destroy a life worth living. Forgiveness is God's solution. To prepare for the study you can read Genesis chapters 37-45 (excluding chapter 38 which is a side story not relevant to the study). If you are unable to read the entire story, at least read 37:2-28, 45:1-15, and 50:15-21.

Memory verse: Luke 11:4

1. What did Joseph's brothers do to him? Why?

2. What was Joseph's response when he saw them years later? (Genesis 45, 50).

3. Do you think this was natural? Why was he able to greet them this way?

4. When people hurt us it is natural to be hurt and then "nurse a grudge". This is what bitterness is. The solution is forgiveness. If we don't forgive those who sin against us we will never be free to love as Jesus loved. The result is misery and bondage to past hurts. Notice how free Joseph was---free from guilt and fear. Free to love. We need to forgive and love.

Read Matthew 18:21-35.

a. What is symbolized by the king forgiving the slave's debt?

- b. What is symbolized by the wicked slave not forgiving his fellow slave?
 - c. Why should the slave have forgiven his fellow slave?
 - d. Why should we forgive those who have sinned against us? What if we don't (35)
 - e. Look at Ephesians 4:31, 32. What should characterize our lives? Does this characterize your life?
5. Should we ever confront a person who sins against us? (see Matthew 18:15-21, Matthew 7:1-5).

When?

Study #8: Planning for the Future

Some people have the idea that Christianity is a matter of "let go and let God". Any planning smacks of unspirituality and not trusting God. You are in one of the most crucial preparation stages of your life. How should you view planning and preparing for the future? Read Acts 22:3-5; Acts 26:1-20, and Philippians 3:4-14.

Memory verse: Matthew 6:21

1. What sort of preparation and planning did Paul have in his early life? (Education, etc.). What was his career path?
2. Was Paul successful? Was he content?
3. What happened to change Paul's career path?
4. What was his new career? What did it cost him?
5. Was he successful? In who's eyes? (see I Cor 4:10-13)
6. What did Paul find really important in life?
 - a. Was he content? (see Phil. 4:11-13)
 - b. Did he have a life he found worth living? Why?

III. Examine your life.

1. What are your goals? Will you be content when you achieve them? Why?
2. What decisions do you need to make, to make achieving these goals possible?
3. How are you likely to be sidetracked?

Study #9: Patterns for Growth

Certainly you are in the early stages of your Christian life and you need to cultivate this abundant life, this life worth living, which Christ promises for all who come to him. There is much room for growth. These

studies end with a view toward establishing patterns in you, which will lead to ongoing cultivation of this life. Read Acts 2:41-47.

Memory verse: Philippians 3:14

1. What four activities do you notice the disciples involved in which led to growth in verse 42?
2. How are you doing in these areas?
3. What are some things you need to do to improve?
4. The disciples were active in ministry; preaching, helping as God enabled them. What are some ways you could begin to serve in the body?
5. TIPS ON STUDYING THE WORD: You may have noticed that in each of our studies we focused on a person. This is a great way to study the scripture in such a way that it comes alive to us since the Bible presents people as they really are (instead of in idealized portraits we often see on T.V. of today's heroes). It is also a principle that we try to become like those we admire.
 - a. In the entire world who is it you most admire?
 - b. In the entire Bible, who is the person you most admire? You might want to study more about him so you get to know every facet of his life. If you don't know many Bible characters you could go through the Bible Hall of Fame in Hebrews 11 and study the Old Testament accounts of these men. The person you are doing these studies with would be glad to show you how to do this.
 - c. One person we ought to admire is Jesus Christ. Your Bible has four entire books dedicated to his life. One good way of studying the gospels is to read through them to look at how Jesus dealt with different incidents you can relate to (like those covered in this booklet). For example: How did Jesus relate to authorities? Or how did he act when ridiculed? Under pressure? Standing alone? etc. You will want to study the life of Jesus regularly so that you can become more like Him (2 Cor. 3:18).
6. Right now set up a plan of action to study your Bible in such a way that it will change your life. Also write below your specific intentions on how to follow the patterns for growth in Acts 2.

We hope these studies have helped you get a handle on what the abundant life is all about. We hope you will have many fruitful years of ministry in the kingdom and that one day you will be gathered together with all the saints to share in the rewards in the eternal kingdom, which is laid up in store for all those who wait and hope for His appearing in great glory (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

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