

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

GREAT BIBLE LESSONS **“A Life that Glorifies God”**

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God said, “Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him” (Is. 43:7). Not only is that a wonderful passage about the handiwork and creative power of God, but it also expresses the fact that every person who claims to be a Christian (the new name given to God’s people—Isaiah 62:1-2) ought to make it his or her purpose to live for God and live for Him every day. There are so many people who are living life without any real purpose. There are others who are seeking fleshly, earthly pleasures—whether it be power, money, fame, or the lusts and passions of the flesh. Welcome to our study of “a life that glorifies God.” I want us to think for a few moments today about how a person can instill in his or her life the idea contained in Isaiah 43:7. Every day we need to glorify and magnify the name of God.

One of the ways by which we can glorify God today (as suggested in Isaiah 43:7) is to live a life that has real purpose. A life that has as its purpose the glorification of God is a life that will strive to honor and magnify God’s Son. In 1 Corinthians 10:31 we are given instructions regarding what every waking moment should be about. Paul said, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” This expresses the purpose of a Christian’s life. When it comes to even smallest things like eating and drinking, we are to do things in such a noble, reverent, and holy fashion that it will bring God honor and glory. Thus, we need to be living lives that have real purpose to them. A life that has real purpose will be a life that strives to obey God every day. We cannot live a life of purpose, yet not obey the Scriptures. In John 14:15 Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” In John 15:14 Christ said, “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” We need to understand that a life that glorifies God is an obedient life. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” In Luke 6:46 Jesus asked a haunting question: “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say? The word “lord” means “owner” or “master.” Jesus, then, was asking, “Why are you referring to Me as One Who is over you, yet you refuse to do the things that I teach you?” Man’s whole purpose is bound up in obedience to God, as Solomon expressed in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 when he wrote, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.” To live with purpose, we need to obey God every day, and attempt to glorify Him in everything we do. We also need to live for His Son, Jesus Christ. In Philippians 1:21, Paul said, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” We must be completely dedicated to Christ on a daily basis. In Luke 9:23 Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” We need to be able to say, as Paul did, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). We need to be the type of living sacrifice that Paul encouraged the

Christians in Rome to be when he wrote in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." By living holy lives, we give God what He deserves, in light of all that He has done for us. A life that glorifies God, then, is a life that is lived with real purpose—a purpose to obey God and live for His Son every single day.

Another aspect of a life that gives God the glory is for us to live lives that are willing to recognize and confess our sins. There are so many passages that teach us the destructive nature of sin. Sin entered into the world in Genesis 3, and thereafter every person sinned due to personal choices (Rom. 5:12). The results of our sins are terrible. In Romans 6:23 we read, "The wages of sin is death." Ezekiel said, "The soul who sins shall die" (Ezek. 18:4). The psalmist said in Psalm 38:4, "My iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me." Our sins are too heavy for us to bear alone. Thus, we need to be willing to recognize sin in our lives, and to admit and confess that we do sin. In Joshua 7 we find the story of Achan, who, in spite of the fact that God told the Israelites to destroy everything during a battle, took some bars of gold and Babylonian garment and hid them in his tent. God was upset with the entire camp of the Israelites. In Joshua 7:20 Achan said, "I have sinned." Saul said the same thing in 1 Samuel 26:21—"I have played the fool and erred exceedingly." David said, "I have sinned greatly" (2 Samuel 24:10). We, too, must be willing to admit and confess our sins if we are going to be pleasing to God. James 5:16 is usually remembered for its statements about the power of prayer. James said, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." But he also said, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed." It is a scriptural principle that we need to be willing to confess our sins by laying them alongside what God already knows. In 1 John 1:9-10, John wrote, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." Are we willing today to recognize our sins, confess our sins, and turn from our sins? Recognizing and confessing sin is not enough. Once we recognize the sin and are willing to confess it, then we must "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). We also must "bring forth fruits worthy of repentance" (Lk. 3:8). We must make a determined effort every day not to go back into a life of sin.

Another way by which we can live a life that glorifies God is by striving every day to live pure and holy lives. The one thing that God desires of His people is for them to be more like Him every day. What is God like? Look at 1 Peter 1:15, which beautifully illustrates God's nature. "As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct." Part of living for God every day is living a holy and righteous life. We are to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age" (Tit. 2:12). If we live a holy life, we will follow in the footsteps of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul wrote, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." We are to follow the pattern of Jesus—the One Who was completely holy. The Lord Himself was without sin, as we read in Hebrews 4:15—"He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." In 1 Peter 2:22 we are told that Christ "committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth." Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:21 that God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." We know, of course, that we are not perfect. We fall short and sin at times. But we need to do our best not to get caught up in sin so that we can live a holy and acceptable life. In Hebrews 12:14 we are told that without holiness, no one can see God. Thus, we must represent the holiness of God in our lives by striving every day to live for Jesus.

Additionally, a life that glorifies God is a life that is devoted to prayer. Jesus taught His disciples to pray ardently (Jn. 14:13-14). We, too, must have that same kind of mind-set. How we need to give God glory in our prayer lives! Prayer should not just be about asking God

for things or telling Him what we need. Prayer ought to be a time when we can lift our hearts to Heaven and approach God to give Him the thanksgiving and honor that He deserves. If you read prayers within the Bible like those of Daniel, Nehemiah, or Ezra, then you will see men who were dedicated to honoring God and lauding and magnifying His name. We, too, should have the same mind-set. Are we really going to be people of prayer? Mark 1:35 says of Jesus, "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." Are we willing to have a life of prayer like the one that Jesus had—where we get up early, get away from the rat race of life, and spend time devoted to God in prayer? In the early verses of Matthew 6, Jesus taught His disciples that they should not be like hypocrites who stand on the street corners to pray long prayers with big words just so they can be heard by men. Jesus said that instead, a person should go into his or her inner room to pray to God. That is what prayer ought to be. It should be a time when we express our love and devotion to God, as well as a time when we can express to God our needs in this life. In 1 Peter 5:7 we read, "Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." In James 5:16 we are told, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." As Christians, we ought to live a life that is considered to be like "a prayer without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). This does not mean that everything in our lives is prayer, but that there ought to never be a time when we cannot pray to God.

If we expect to live a life that glorifies and honor God, then we should strive to live a life that is filled with thanksgiving. One of the aspects of God's children is that they are a thankful people. Jesus expects us to give thanks. In Luke 17:11-19 we read the story of where Jesus healed ten lepers. Of those ten, only one returned to give God the glory. Here is the haunting question that Jesus asked: "Where are the nine?" (vs. 17). What is Jesus teaching us in that question? He expected each of the lepers who had been healed to be thankful, and to give God the honor and glory. Today, we sometimes are like the nine foolish lepers. When God gives us blessings, we are quick to forget, or we think that we somehow "deserve" those things. In 2 Corinthians 4:15 Paul wrote, "For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God." The things that God gives us—His grace, His love, and His mercy—should motivate and challenge us to be more thankful. Think about all that God gives us. In Matthew 6:33 we are taught, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." In Psalm 37:25 David said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread." In Philippians 4:19 Paul said, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." In view of the fact that Christians do not grow hungry, do not go without clothes to wear, and are given the things they need in this life, we ought to give God the glory and thanksgiving that He is due. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 we are taught that we are to give thanks in everything so that God will receive the glory and honor. We need to ask ourselves if we are really living lives that say "Thank You!" to God. While saying "Thank You" is good, a life that is devoted to God, that recognizes all that He has done for us, and that is willing to give Him glory and honor every waking moment, is the best way to say "Thank You!"

Another characteristic of a life that glorifies God is a life that is willing to suffer courageously for the cause of Christ. In 2 Timothy 3:12 we are told, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." Just as Paul was persecuted, so we today may be persecuted as followers of Christ. In Acts 14:22, after Paul had been stoned and left for dead, he wrote, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." There are going to be trials. There are going to be thorns that accompany the roses of life. We simply need to understand that what separates the Christian from those in the world is that the

Christian sees suffering not as an end in and of itself, but as something that can make him a more-faithful child of God. In James 1:2-4 we read, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." The trials and sufferings that we endure should cause us to have more faith, patience, and trust in God. In 1 Peter 4:16 we are told, "If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter." When, as children of God, we suffer for doing right (Mt. 5:10-12) as we trying to live a good Christian life, we ought to look up to Heaven and say, "Thank You, God, for giving me the opportunity be one of Your children, and for the opportunity to stand up for Jesus." Our suffering needs to be viewed in light of what Jesus did for us. In Hebrews 12:1-2 we are told,

"Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

A life that glorifies God is a life that overcomes suffering. When you think about a character in the Bible who really stood out because of his faithfulness through suffering, it would have to be the great Old Testament hero, Job. He received many trials and tribulations in his life. He was blameless and upright, yet Satan came after him. He took away Job's wealth and his family. He gave him a dreaded disease. Job's wife encouraged him to "curse God and die." Everything seemed to be causing Job to suffer. But Job said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). While it is true that Job did not understand everything that was happening to him, and while it is true that he had a lot of questions, he still was able to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him" (Job 13:15). So, even through the darkest hours of our suffering, we still can bring honor and glory to God.

Another way that Christians can bring glory and honor to God is by striving to grow spiritually. One of the things that should separate true followers of God from those who simply want to wear God's name when it is convenient, is that true followers of God want to grow on a daily basis. God's children should not be stagnant, but instead should be people who always want to learn more about how to serve God. Early Christians encountered certain problems because some of them were acting like babies. In 1 Corinthians 3:1 Paul identified the main problem in Corinth when he wrote that some of the Christians there were still "babes in Christ." Wherever you have babies, you will have whining and flaring tempers. That is still a problem that occurs in the church today. In Hebrews 5:12 the writer gave a strong rebuke when he said, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food." His point was, "By this time you ought to be eating a steak, but instead you are still like a baby who drinks milk from a bottle." Can you imagine how ridiculous it would be to walk into a room of grown adults, and see those people sucking on a bottle?! We would think that such people had something seriously wrong with them. Yet how is it any different when we see people who have been Christians for twenty or thirty years, yet they do not even know how to go beyond the milk of the word (1 Pet. 2:2) in order to move on to perfection? We ought to do what Jesus said in Matthew 5:6—"hunger and thirst after righteousness." We ought to be willing to launch out into the deep in order to grow in our knowledge of God and His Word.

Another way that Christians can glorify God is to bear fruit for them. In John 15, Jesus is presented as the Vine, and Christians are presented as branches. In verse 8 we are told, "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." When we think about bearing fruit, we might be reminded of an event in the life of Jesus. As He was walking down the road, He became hungry. He saw in the distance a fig tree that apparently had blooms on it. Those blooms basically proclaimed, "I have fruit!" Yet when Jesus got to the tree, He saw that in spite of the blooms, there was no fruit. Jesus cursed the fig tree, and as the disciples passed by it later, they saw that the fig tree had died. What is the lesson found in this story? The lesson is that we must not proclaim to be something we are not. If we proclaim to be Christians, then we must bear fruit through our works. James 2 discusses the idea of works (or fruits) that show that we are true children of God. James wrote, "Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (vs. 18). James is saying, "If you are a Christian, but you do not do any works, then how will you prove that you are a Christian?" How could a person prove that he was a faithful child of God if he never **did** anything? That was James' point. Faith, by itself, is dead. We must have works in our lives. We must do the things that God has told us to do. We are not talking here about things that can "earn" us Heaven. Rather, we are talking about works that show that we are Christians because we have correct speech, a correct live, correct dress, and correct actions, and because we avoid immoral practices. Part of being a faithful follower of Christ is the fact that we are willing to bear fruit. In Matthew 20 Jesus compared the kingdom (the church) to a vineyard. Think for just a moment what a vineyard is. In the context of Christ's remarks, a vineyard is a place of work where a fruit is produced. This is a beautiful illustration of what the church is all about. The church is not a social club. It is not a place where we obtain "feel-good religion." The church is a place of **work** where we produce spiritual fruit for God. In John 15:6 Jesus spoke of branches that did not bear fruit, and said that they should be cut off and thrown into the fire, which illustrates that if a person claims to be a Christian, yet does not live the life that he should, he will eventually be lost.

Another way for Christians to glorify God is to give sacrificially. One of the best ways for a person to do that is for a person to give himself or herself to God. In the context of financial giving in 2 Corinthians 8:5, Paul said that the Macedonians "first gave themselves to the Lord." Once we give ourselves to the Lord, we must be willing to give to Him in every way. We know that the Lord loves a cheerful giver. In 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 Paul wrote, "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." If a farmer tills the ground, and then drops in seeds about every ten feet, he will have a very sparse crop. Similarly, the person who sows sparingly in a spiritual fashion will not have a bountiful harvest. We need to remember the principle of James 1:17—"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." God is the "Good Giver" of all things! The things we have are not our own. Rather, we are merely stewards of those things, which we must use to the glory and honor of God. Jesus said in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom." Today, we are not making a plea to you for money. When we talk about giving, we are talking about Christians giving in the local congregations in which they live and work. That is the principle that is found within the Bible, where Christians are told to give on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Christians are to give as they have purposed in their hearts, and they are to give because they love God and are happy to give back to Him. True giving is something that glorifies God.

Another thing that glorifies God is unity among believers. Christ wants His followers to be unified. In John 17:20-21 Jesus said, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." Jesus' prayer was that His followers "be one" so that the kingdom will be united. If that is the prayer of Christ, then it is obvious that we have a lot of work yet to do in order to accomplish that. There is a lot of division in the world today related to the name of Christ. There are many people who are following the teachings and doctrines of men (Mt. 15:7-9). True unity can be found only by going back to the Bible. Today, it is my prayer that all of us will strive to glory God in our lives by uniting upon the basis of the Scriptures. Let us set our hearts to do only those things that are commanded within the Word of God. If you have not given your life to God, please do so today so that you can live a life that really glorifies the King.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “A LIFE THAT GLORIFIES GOD”

1. According to Isaiah 43:7, why did God create humans?
2. What principle is contained in 1 Corinthians 10:31 that teaches us when and where we should glorify God?
3. In John 14:15, what did Jesus say about how we can glorify Him?
4. According to John 15:14, who are Jesus' friends?
5. What, according to Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, is “man's all” (i.e., his whole duty on Earth)?
6. What must we do, according to Luke 9:23, if we truly want to glorify Christ?
7. What does Romans 12:1 urge us to do in order to glorify God and Christ?
8. How does 1 Peter 1:15 admonish us to glory God?
9. What does Titus 2:12 admonish us to do in order to glorify God?
10. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:17, what should Christians do as part of glorifying God?
11. What principle regarding glorifying God is taught in Luke 17:11-19 (the account of Christ's healing of ten lepers)?
12. What does 2 Timothy 3:12 tell us to expect if we are faithful Christians?
13. What does 1 Peter 4:16 tell us about what our reaction to suffering should be?
14. In Job 13:15, what attitude did Job express that gave glory to God?
15. According to Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 3:1, what problem afflicted some of the Christians in Corinth, and thus kept them from glorifying God?
16. In Matthew 5:6, what did Christ urge us to do?
17. What can Christians do, according to John 15:8, that will glorify God?
18. According to James 2:18, what should Christians do in order to glorify God?
19. In John 15:6, what did Jesus say would happen to all of the “branches” that did not bear fruit?
20. What, according to Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 8:5, did the Christians in Macedonia “give first” to the Lord?
21. What important principle is found in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7?
22. In John 17:20-21, for what did Jesus pray that could help us glorify God?