

Life's for Living

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. Jesus, John 10:10

A lot of people want a better life, and some even have an idea of what that life would look like: more money, a better job, the right spouse, a house full of children, a bigger car, a second house for vacations, a second car, a second spouse, no children, or a combination of any and all of these. It's confusing because life can be confusing. It's also ultimately dissatisfying to pursue life outside of God and his plan for how we should live.

This week we will study what it means to have a life we love living. It is a life that includes peace with God and acting rightly toward those around us. Let's explore this week the full life Jesus offers us.

Monday – Harmony

"Happiness is not a matter of intensity but of balance and order and rhythm and harmony." Thomas Merton, 20th c. Anglo-American priest and poet

1. Please read 1 Peter 3:8-12. What qualities and actions come to your mind as you read verse 8? How easy or difficult is it for you to follow these instructions?
2. In John 13:34-35 Jesus set the stage for exhortations like we find in 1 Peter 3:8. How does Peter put flesh and bones to what Jesus commanded in John 13?

Digging Deeper (optional): What guidance do you find in Romans 12:9-13, Galatians 6:1-5 and Philippians 2:2-4 to help you "fulfill the law of Christ" and "live in harmony with one another?"

Making it Personal: Ask God to give you the strength and grace to pursue harmony, sympathy, love, compassion and humility with others.

Tuesday – Inheritance

"Faith cannot be inherited or gained by being baptized into a Church. Faith is a matter between the individual and God." Martin Luther, 15th-16th c. German theologian

1. Please read 1 Peter 3:8-12 (focusing on verse 9). What is your inheritance according to this verse?
2. What is your first reaction when suffering evil or insult? Is it to repay it with the blessings you have inherited from God? How do you usually react? Why?
3. In Romans 12:14-21, how does Paul tell us to treat those who harm us?

Digging Deeper (optional): Read Ecclesiastes 11:1-6. What are we to do with the blessings ("bread") we receive from God? What sort of diligence do you see in verses 3-6 even when the outcome of your efforts to bless others is unknown?

Wednesday – Pursuing Peace

"Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let each new year find you a better man." Benjamin Franklin, 18th c. American statesman and writer

1. Please read 1 Peter 3:8-12 (focusing on verses 10-11). What are we to do with our words? How will this help us fulfill verses 8-9?
2. Compare verse 10 with Galatians 5:16-21. When do you find yourself acting in any of these ways?
3. Compare verse 11 with Galatians 5:22-26. Where do we find our ability to "turn from evil and do good?"

Making it Personal: What might the fruit of the Spirit look like in your life today?

Thursday – Eyes & Ears

"The awareness of our own strength makes us modest." Paul Cezanne, 19th c. French painter

1. Please read 1 Peter 3:12. What does it mean to you personally to know that God's eyes and ears are turned your way?
2. How should God's people view God's careful attentiveness to them in light of Numbers 6:22-27?

Digging Deeper: In Psalm 14:1-7, what does God say about the acts of those who oppose him? What promise does God make for the benefit of those who belong to him?

Friday – Whoever would love life: Peter's experience

"We must learn that the setbacks and griefs which we endure help us in our marching onward." Henry Ford, 19th-20th c. American industrialist

1. What do you think was going through Peter's mind after the events recorded in Mark 8:27-30?
2. How might Peter's outlook on life have changed after hearing Jesus' next statements recorded in Mark 8:31-38? How would you have felt?
3. Now look at John 21:15-22. How might these encounters with Jesus have led Peter to write the words found in 1 Peter 3:8-12?

Making it Personal: Whether you are receiving God's approval in your walk with him at present or his discipline, remember Peter's example and pursue life with God.

For the Weekend: Re-read 1 Peter 3:8-12. Which portions do you find easier to follow after this week's study? Where do you still have difficulty? Ask God to guide you into the life he has for you.