

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF LIFE

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10.

How can I get the most out of life? That is a popular and justifiable question. With only one life to live here in this world, I ought to be concerned about how I can get the most out of it while it lasts. With the passing of time I have had a growing conviction that every life should be lived at its best. Obviously there are many who do not agree with this conviction. Rather, they prefer to take life in their own hands and suffer the consequences of their own misguided ways and deeds.

There is considerable public sentiment against those who refuse to live life at its best. Many admire or look down on others in proportion to the way in which they take advantage of their opportunities to live at their best. A man may be an expert salesman, but, if he chooses to loaf three weeks in each month, he is not looked upon as a good salesman but as a loafer.

Life should be lived at its best because it is sacred. Man was created in answer to the longing of God's heart to have fellowship with a creature made in His own image. Life therefore is sacred, and no person has a right to drag it into the mire of sin.

When life is lived at its best, one enjoys the greatest happiness and satisfaction. If the confessed goal of human happiness is to be achieved, one must live at his best.

One should live his life at its best as an expression of gratitude for the priceless heritage that has been bequeathed to him. The most priceless things that we have were purchased with the blood of others. Christ went all the way to Calvary that life might be lived at its best. Your life should be lived at its best because of the influence that you will have over others.

Let us bear in mind that life at its best is not measured by time. People in their eighties have remarked, "I am ashamed of the way I have lived." The tragedy of tragedies is a misspent life. Neither can life at its best be measured by the possessions that one accumulates for Christ said: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses." Nor is life at its best a matter of success according to the standards of the world. Millions who are looked upon as successful here in this world will have a terrific shock when they stand at the judgment bar of God and find that success there is determined by an altogether different standard.

Life at its best from the physical standpoint requires a sound body. So, take care of your body, for it is the only one that you will have, and you want it to last as long as possible. Keep out of your body the things that will injure it. Life at its best from the mental standpoint is a clean mind. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Life at its best from the social standpoint embodies a friendly disposition. If you want to have friends, be one. It takes thirteen muscles of the face to smile, but it takes sixty-five to frown. Life at its best from the spiritual standpoint requires the reception of Christ and a complete surrender to Him. When Christ is enthroned in the heart, the life will be victorious. Those who live life at its best can find success in seeming defeat, victory in apparent failure, and joy even in sorrow.

Christ came to bring life. Whatever else He accomplished, that was His definite goal. He came that all who would believe on Him might have abundant life, the life which lifts us above the circumstances and changes of this world. The life that Christ gives transforms everything. Paul wrote: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." It must be remembered that this life does not emanate from blood, from the will of the flesh, or from the will of man. Neither does it spring from education, culture, or position. It is the result of spiritual regeneration, or a new creation.

Christ came to give to people a life which they did not have. He not only came to give us an abundant life, but also to show us how to get the most out of life. The abundant life is not inherent in human nature, acquired by human means, or possible to human strength, but it is found in Christ alone. If we are to have and to enjoy it, Christ must give it to us. There is an overflow in the life that Christ gives, It is life with a surplus. It has peace and joy and power.

If you are to get the most out of life:

I. You Must Have Christ As Your Saviour.

Christ is not a luxury, but an absolute necessity. He is as necessary to the soul as food is to the body, light is to the eyes, a path is for the feet, and truth is for the mind. Receive Him as your Saviour, enthrone Him as your Lord, let His mind be in you, and follow His leadership.

II. You Must Get More Life Into You.

A famous philosopher remarked that a person's aliveness is in proportion to the number of points at which he touches life. If you touch life at fifty points you are twice as alive as the person who only touches it at twenty-five. Some people hardly touch it at all. If a man is touching life at only a few points, he should begin touching it at more so as to let more life get into him. Right now you are in the presence of life. Are you touching it? If you will go into the house of God, where there is a thought and a faith atmosphere, and yield yourself to it, you will receive new vitality and vigor of body, mind and soul. Let more life get into you if you want to get the most out of life.

III. You Must Have The Right Attitude Toward Life.

Attitude means so much. The person gets the most out of life whose attitude is that of appreciation instead of criticism. The words criticism and appreciation call to our minds the contrast. Criticism implies microscopes and dissecting knives. Appreciation suggests open minds, open ears, open hearts, wonder, adoration and love. It is the difference between scanning verses for their meter and listening to poetry for its inspiration and charm. It is the difference between analyzing the chemical properties of pigment and canvas and looking enraptured upon a noble painting. It is the difference between weighing out the lime, fat, and sulphur of a human body and enjoying a friend. It is easy to become more interested in ferreting out ugliness than in appropriating beauty. The tenor of our age is critical. We have been trying to debunk great men. We have been tracing down the mistakes and wrongs of yesterday. We like to pick things and people to pieces. The disease of our day is "the paralysis of analysis."

We see that for which we are looking. Christ said: "Seek, and ye shall find" -- what you are seeking; "knock, and it shall be opened unto you" -- that is, the door on which you knock will be opened; "ask, and it shall be given unto you" -- the thing for which you ask. Two men walking in a rose-garden may see entirely different things: one sees beautiful and fragrant blossoms, and the other sees only prickly thorns.

Particularly is this true in your attitude toward people. If you go forth to find the faults of others, you will not be disappointed. There are plenty of faults. But why major in faults? Try to see the good in others. People tend very definitely to meet your expectations. Smiles evoke smiles and frowns bring forth frowns.

For self-appointed critics one is made to feel the most poignant pity. Their lives are puckered, sour, and unhappy. Where others smell the fragrance of roses, they feel only the sting of thorns. Where the poet sees green pines and a rippled lake, they notice only the mosquitoes and gnats. Where the artists behold God's hand upon the western canvas at sunset, they perceive only the dying of another day. May God have mercy upon them! And may God pity us if we join or belong to their joyless order!

IV. You Must Open Your Soul to the Good Things Which Life Has to Give.

Many people will not do that. They remain satisfied with a bare margin of life's good things, like a hermit who exists in his dark cave when the fresh and bright world is waiting just outside; like a poor bird that stays in a tiny cage when an open gate welcomes to the joys of liberty.

A man took a trip by boat and during the whole journey lived absteniously on cheese and crackers. But, at the end of the trip, he learned that the ticket he had bought and paid for called for three meals a day at no extra charge. There we are, living on cheese and crackers when our tickets call for fine food. There is the man living without God and just to think of the available power which he refuses to appropriate. He is tugging at his shoestrings, when nearby is a Hand from above able, willing, and waiting to lift him up. You cannot get the most out of life until you open your soul to all the good things which life has to give.

V. You Must Put the Most Into Life.

There are two ways of getting money out of a bank. One is to hold up the bank and at the point of a gun make your demands. The other way is to put more money in the bank. The more money you deposit in the bank the more you can take out of it. Any farmer knows that the way to have better and greater crops is to plant more seed, fertilize the soil, and cultivate it better. A character in one of William Locke's novels exclaims, "I would like to take life by the throat and choke something out of it." But we know that life cannot be handled like that. One might as well talk about dynamiting a garden to get roses, or hacking a piano with an axe to get harmony, or clubbing a friend to get love. Paul could not have spoken more truly if he had been talking about this very thing when he said, "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully."

To get the most out of life you have got to put a lot into it. The more you withdraw into yourself the more life will ebb away from you. The more you give of yourself the more you will get out of life. If you are going to succeed in business or one of the professions, you have got to give it all you have, more than it expected of you; you have got to pour yourself out. Whatever you are doing, give of yourself. Put more into life and you will get more out of life.

There is one class of people you will never hear whining about whether life is worth living. They are the people who are sacrificially spending their lives in human service. They are too busy serving God and meeting the needs of men to ask the question, "Is life worth living?" Can you imagine Paul on his missionary journeys saying, "Is life worth living?" Can you imagine William Booth working in the slums of London and saying, "Is life worth living?" It simply did not happen.

Your life will be sour until you reach your grace unless you sweeten life for someone else. If you will sweeten life for others, it will become more worth living for you. The useless life is always unsatisfactory. Listen to these two contrasting appraisals of life. Lord Byron, after years of self-indulgence, near the end of his life wrote these lines:

"My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flower and fruits of life are gone;
The worm, the canker and the grief are mine alone."

How could anyone feel any sense of satisfaction with such a life? It would be very strange if he did. But listen to these words of Adoniram Judson, spoken on his death-bed, and while you listen to them, do not forget that life of his which was buried in suffering among the Burmese people:

"I suppose they think me an old man and imagine it is nothing for one like me to resign a life so full of trials. But I am not old -- at least in that sense; you know I am not. No! No man ever left the world with more inviting prospects, with brighter hopes, or warmer feelings."

If you want to get the most out of your life, receive Christ as your Saviour, get more life into you, have the right attitude toward life, open your soul to the good things that life has to give, and put the most into a life of service for Christ.