

The Way to Life

What is “the way to life”? Well, it’s not down *easy street*...that’s for sure. When Jesus instructed his disciples, the way to life was carefully marked out: at first, he may not have been so open or apparent to the life of the believer; but as he spent time with these men, more became evident.

In the translation of the book of Matthew, Jesus tries to emphasize that a “shortcut” does not exist; in other words, the life of believer does not allow (or accept) some alternate route purported to an alternative. For some (of the early followers or disciples), this rigorous route was too much...to difficult; and at least once, a group of them left or gave-up their following, their faith.

Matthew 7

“Don’t look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with surefire, easygoing formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don’t fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires total attention.

- *The Message*

Even in our modern day, the same alternatives avail themselves. Some profess that the Gospel or salvation is the key to earthly wealth and prosperity. Sometimes referred to as the “Prosperity Gospel”, this theology is not firmly grounded in the scripture and contradicts the scriptures that instruct believers to “live in the world, but not of the world.” We have needs to be sure; after all, we are *flesh and blood* and therefore require some necessities of life. This concept of “necessities” can be rather *gray* however – or can be relevant to the perceived or subjective views. We may need a car for transportation – but how much of a car do we need?

In keeping with this better-life-now proposal is the concept that happiness is the same as joy; that momentary feelings or emotions equate to the joy that Christ offers believers – and that is exemplified in Christ as well as others in the New Testament. This confusion between happiness and joy lends to the pursuit (or gratification) of happiness in spite of our natural emotions and the problems of life. Perhaps happiness is achieved when we have either eliminated all problems or otherwise have excused ourselves from them; but I don’t think that happiness and joy are the same.

Happiness is created by our circumstances – even in the moment; whereas, joy occurs despite our circumstances. When Paul and Silas were experiencing joy in jail, they were indeed experiencing *the real article*. I speak from experience that jail does

not offer much (if any reason) to be happy; and the jail that I've experience pales in comparison to the dungeon of those days. Those guys received lashings on top of all other deprivations. But they found joy even so...or maybe, joy found them.

Not to contradict myself, but the way to life is not meant to be purely miserable either. Again, joy and peace are among the *fruits of the Spirit* that lend to a passion for Christ...not a miserable, bleak-filled life. If the believer does not have a passion for Christ, he should be wondering (and praying) for an understanding. The true miracle of this passion is that it does not depend on the natural events and motivations that drive our emotions and happiness; but it is something unexplainable and profound...

In the book of 2 Timothy (chapter 3), the believer is warned of false theology and similar proposals:

These are the kind of people who smooth-talk themselves into the homes of unstable and needy women and take advantage of them; women who, depressed by their sinfulness, take up with every new religious fad that calls itself "truth." They get exploited every time and never really learn. These men are like those old Egyptian frauds

How then do we find the way of life? Three things are important – even vital – for the believer to find and then stay in the way of life:

1. Stay in the word of God – or read, study and live the word
2. Pray to God through Christ – as we must communicate to have a relationship
3. Fellowship with the people of God – or find and serve in a church or Christian organization

It seems easy enough – but it is only possible through our faith in Christ. Without faith, salvation cannot be found and the way cannot be maintained. Alone, we are not match for what can easily *trip us up*; but with Christ, we have already won the victory.

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