

The Secret to a Joyful Life Part 4

“He may have started out living a life of sin and crime, but once this man was saved, he became one of the greatest examples of faith and prayer the world has ever known.

And it all started while he was studying for the ministry, not because he wanted to serve God or help others, he wasn't even saved! He just figured it would be an easy comfortable way to earn a living from the State Church. But God met him even in his bad motives, and while at a prayer meeting in a private home, he found Jesus and got saved!

And it didn't take long to see the fruit of his salvation either! Immediately, he began to preach and minister to those in need wherever the Lord would open the door. In fact, one time there was such a crowd of people inquiring about the way of salvation that it took four hours just to minister to them.

And then eventually his desire to help the downtrodden led him to open an orphans' home for 26 girls with no financial assistance. But that was just the beginning! Soon he had five orphanages and was feeding 2,100 orphans every single day and he never once asked a soul for support! Why?

Because he had learned early on that God would simply supply his needs through the power of prayer. You see, when God put it into his heart to build those orphanages, this man only had 50 cents in his pocket. So he simply prayed and trusted that God would supply the need. And boy did He ever.

In all the years of serving the orphanages, even though this man never asked a soul, God always provided and the children never missed a meal. For instance, one time the children were dressed and ready for school, but there was no food for them to eat. So this man simply took the 300 children into the dining room and had them sit at the tables where he proceeded to thank God for the food and simply waited.

Within minutes, a baker knocked on the door who said, ‘Last night I couldn't sleep and somehow I knew that you would need bread this morning. So I got up at 2:00 AM this morning and baked three batches for you. I'll bring it in.’ But that's not all.

Soon, there was another knock at the door. It was the milkman. His cart just happened to break down in front of the orphanage whereupon his milk would spoil by the time the wheel was fixed so he asked them if they could use some free milk. And the not only brought in ten large cans of milk, but it was just enough for the 300 thirsty children.

And day after day, month after month, year after year, no less than ten thousand orphans were faithfully cared for by this faithful kind of prayer. In fact, when all was said and done, God poured out upon this one Christian man, in response to his faith and prayers to Him, a total of \$7,500,000 dollars, to be used for the purposes of the Lord.

The man's name of course was, George Muller."

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say ol' **George Muller** had a pretty cool life as a Christian, you know what I'm saying? In fact, so much so that I'd say **now that** is A Life Worth Living For, amen? But that's right folks, as we've been seeing, **we've got a problem**. You see, even though God's the same God and we're just as much His children as George Muller is, most Christians read the Bible in one hand and take a look at their life in the other and say, "Man, something's missing here. Something doesn't match, something's not right. What's going on? Why do these people like George Muller get to have an amazing walk with Jesus Christ and here I am keep fumbling around in the dark? I don't have a life worth living for. I've got a life worth giving up!"

Oh, but people, once again, I'm here to tell you this is the great news. It doesn't have to be that way! That kind of life, a life worth living for, like

George Muller had, **is available to every to every single Christian!** And that's exactly why we're going to continue in our series entitled, "**A Life Worth Living For.**" And what we're doing is taking a look at **4 different keys** that I believe are absolutely pivotal if we're ever going to have that amazing walk with Christ like George Muller had.

And we've already seen that **first key** to having **A Life Worth Living For** is when you and I finally learn **The Secret to a Worshipful Life** not a cry baby whiny complaining life. And then last **three times** we saw the **second key** was when you and I finally learn **The Secret to a Joyful Life** not a some sour ungrateful grumpy life. And last time we saw the **third way** we get tricked into missing out on **A Joyful Life in Christ** is by **Seeking Happiness in Personal Exaltation Instead of the Lord of All Creation.** And there we saw instead of receiving a permanent joy in Christ, this world tempts us to find a temporary happiness in a **Perfect Emotions, Perfect Control**, and that right, even **Perfect Comments.** And once again, you talk about the ultimate pipe dream! As we saw, every single one of those things are never going to happen because we live in a sinful wicked rotten world. Therefore, our search for happiness will likewise never happen. Hello!

Oh but that's still not all. That's only half the battle. We not only need to expose the lies of seeking a temporary happiness over a permanent joy,

but more importantly we need to see how we can maintain this permanent joy. People, as we saw before, Jesus has **already** given us is joy, but the question is, “Okay then, why don’t we experience it? Why did it start out with a bang when we first got saved, but now we’re back to looking like we’re sucking on lemons, sour pickles, and prunes? Well hey, thanks for asking? It works well with my notes!

The **first way** we get tricked into not maintaining that permanent joy in Christ is by **Not Having a Permanent Prayer to Christ**. But don’t take my word for it. Let’s listen to God’s.

Philippians 4:4-7 “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Now folks, according to our text, I think it’s pretty clear. If you and I are going to not just rejoice in the Lord but rejoice in the Lord always, what should we be always be doing? We should be presenting our requests to God in what? In prayer, right? That’s when we’re full of peace! That’s what keeps us from getting anxious! And might I add, that’s what keeps us rejoicing in the Lord always!

And people, this is precisely our problem. Instead of maintaining a prayerful life in Christ so we can maintain a joyful life in Christ, we come

up with excuses. And the **first excuse** we come up with is “**I don’t have time for prayer because I’m too busy with personal care.**” That’s right! Whether its physical exercise or the latest food diet, we don’t even bat an eye at spending hours doing whatever it takes to whip our bodies into shape. In fact, as I’ve shared before, Barna Research shows that 91% of adults consider good physical health as their top priority in life, making it the highest-rated priority of all.

Now don’t get me wrong. I’m not against exercise. Although personally, I think it’s kind of annoying. I mean, that’s why I quit jogging. It kept making the ice jump right out of my glass. And this going to the gym thing. What’s up with that? One time I joined a health club and spent over 400 bucks and I didn’t even lose a pound! Apparently the gimmick is you have to show up. What a rip off! In fact, to me, exercise is not only annoying, it’s flat out dangerous. For instance, my grandmother started walking five miles a day back when she was 60. She’s 89 now, and we have no idea where she is! In fact, this exercise craze is not only getting dangerous, it’s getting just a little bit **off-balanced**. For instance, I recently came across a new version of the 23rd Psalm that’s out there. You tell me if this sounds familiar.

The 23rd Diet “Strict is my diet. I must not want. It maketh me lie down at night hungry; It leadeth me past the Baskins Robbins; It trieth my will

power; It leadeth me in the paths of starvation for my figures sake. Yea, tho I walk through the isles of the pastry department, I will buy no sweet rolls for they are fattening. The cakes and the pies, they tempt me. Before me is a table of celery and lettuce, my day's quota runneth over. Surely calories and weight charts, shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the fear of scales forever.”

Now folks, does that sound familiar or what? Of course! Why?

Because we are now more consumed with, yes even in the Church, **physical care over spiritual care**. And people, in all seriousness, don't get me

wrong, there is nothing wrong with exercising and trying to eat healthy.

Please be responsible. But the problem is that even these healthy things can

become **unhealthy** if they steal away your time with the Lord. That's

exactly what Paul was saying!

1 Timothy 4:7-8 “Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness. Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is much more important, for it promises a reward in both this life and the next.”

Now folks, according to our text it pretty clear. It much more important to be spiritually strong than just physically strong, right? But the facts reveal that the average person, yes even Christians, **still** don't get it! **By the age of 75 the average person spends less than ½ of 1 percent of their lives in worship and prayer to God and yet He's the One Who gives us life!** And the irony is we all know that if we don't take the time to eat right and get proper exercise, that we can run into some serious health problems,

right? But what in the world do we think is going to happen if we fail to pray to God everyday? Hello! We're going to start having some serious **spiritual problems**, aren't we? But not only that, we're going to miss out on the joy of the Lord as well.

People of God it's not that hard to figure out! Don't you see what the enemy is doing? It's not by chance that every time you go to pray you all of a sudden get sleepy or thoughts start popping through your head. Are you kidding me! He knows that if He can steal away your time from the Lord, then He can steal away your prayer to the Lord. And if he can steal away your prayer to the Lord then he steals away your joy in the Lord. And then the next thing you know you come up with one of the lamest excuses of all time, "**I don't have time for prayer because I'm too busy with personal care.**"

People of God, wake up! If you can't sleep, don't count sheep. Talk to the Shepherd. There is never a day when you don't need to pray. Why? Because the Scripture says if you want to maintain the joy of the Lord you've got to maintain a **prayer to the Lord**. Therefore, wake up Christian! If you're too busy to **pray**, you're too stinking busy. But not only that, it's a sign that you're being tricked and seduced into missing out on a Joyful Life in Christ. You're being strangled to death!

Oh, but that's not all. The **second way** we get tricked into not maintaining a permanent joy in Christ is by **Not Having a Permanent Study with Christ.**

Psalm 19:7-8 “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The commandments of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart.”

Now folks, according to our text, I think it's pretty clear. If you and I are ever going to revive our souls and receive God's wisdom, what in the world should we be doing? We should be studying the Law of the Lord, right? But not only that, what else did it say? It said the Word of God brings what? It brings joy to the heart, right? Oh people, how many of us realize that?

And herein lies our problem. Instead of maintaining a studious life in Christ so we can maintain a joyful life in Christ, we come up with excuses. And the **first excuse** we come up with is “**I don't have time for Bible study because I'm too busy playing with my Buddies.**” That's right, whether its physical sports or our fantasy novels, we don't even think twice about spending hours being totally engrossed in them. In fact, we'll get excited just thinking about them. And people, again, please don't get me wrong. There's nothing wrong with sports “per se” or reading novels if they're “clean.” Please, be responsible, you need to relax once in awhile. But the problem is,

in comparison to the time we spend studying the Bible, once again, I think we're getting a little bit **off-balanced**. How do I know? Well folks, you tell me if our knowledge of the Scripture is declining. Here are some actual statements from Sunday School students. Not this Church. It must be from one of those weird ones down south.

1. Lot's wife was a pillar of salt by day, but a ball of fire by night.
2. The Fifth Commandment is humor thy mother and father.
3. Moses died before he ever reached the UK. Then, Joshua led the Hebrews in the Battle of Geritol.
4. The greatest miracle in the Bible is when Joshua told his son to stand still and he obeyed him.
5. David was a Hebrew king and fought with the Finkelsteins.
6. Solomon, one of David's sons, has 300 wives and 700 porcupines.
7. When the three wise guys from the East Side arrived, they found Jesus in the manger. Jesus was born because Mary had an emaculate contraption.
8. Jesus enunciated the Golden Rule, which says to do one to others before they do one to you. He also explained, "Man doth not live by sweat alone."
9. One of the opossums was St. Matthew, who was by profession a taximan.
10. A Christian should have only one wife. This is called monotony.

Now those statements would be funny if they weren't what? So true!

People of God, many people talk about knowing the Bible from cover to cover but all they know is the cover. In fact, J.H. Smith said, "If all the Christians were to dust their Bibles at the same time, we would have the greatest dust storm in history." And folks, let's be honest, when was the last time we got hogwild and crazy just thinking about studying the Bible? Not that I recommend we start coming to Church services wearing wigs and

painting our faces purple. If you did that, we'd probably have to lay hands on you. But seriously, think about it. Why is it that we can **faithfully** spend hours researching the stats of our favorite sport or **passionately** share the story line of a best-selling novel, yet the very Word of God continues to gather dust?

And here's the point. We all know that if we don't relax once in awhile and take a mental break, we can run into some serious health problems, right? But what do you think is going to happen if we fail to study the Word of God everyday? We're going to start having some serious **spiritual problems**, aren't we? But not only that, we're going to miss out on the joy of the Lord as well. And that's precisely what the enemy is up too. It's called busyness, like this man shares.

“When the family is not being distracted by financial demands, keeping up with the Joneses, or trying to figure out what went wrong with their marriage, there is the ever pervasive distraction of ‘busy-ness’.

Today Americans are so busy that they hardly have time to be families. Children are involved in little league, soccer, band, clubs, extra curricular activities at school, and so many other all-absorbing activities, that there simply isn't time for family.

But in case there is a little time left on the weekends, there are televised sports: baseball, football, basketball, hockey, and countless other distractions. What time is left for family, marriage, and the spiritual somehow gets eaten up.”

People of God, don't you see what's going on? Don't you see what the enemy is doing? Do you really think it's by chance that every time you get ready to study the Bible that you're tempted to do something else or have thoughts going through your head how boring it will be? Are you kidding me! The devil knows that if he can steal away your time from God then he can steal away your time from the Word of God. And if he can steal away the time from the Word of God then he can steal away your source of joy in God. And then the next thing you know you come up with one of the lamest excuses of all time, **"I don't have time for Bible study because I'm too busy playing with my buddies."**

People of God, let's be honest! It's not that we don't have time to study the Bible. It's that we just don't take the time to study the Bible. And yet, the irony is that we can actually read the whole Bible through in just one year in only 12 minutes a day. I mean, isn't Jesus worth at least 12 minutes a day after all He's done???

People of God, wake up! The Bible is not to be a cake for special occasions. Are you kidding me! It's our daily bread. Why? Because the Scripture says that if you want to maintain the joy of the Lord you've got to maintain a **study with the Lord**. Therefore, wake up Christian! If you're too busy to for **Bible study**, you're too stinking busy. But not only that, it's a

sign that you're being tricked and seduced into missing out on a Joyful Life in Christ. You're being strangled to death!

People of God, wake up! If you want to maintain the joy of the Lord you've got to maintain **prayer** and **Bible study** with Lord. Why? Because unless you do, one day you're going to wake up and discover that you've turned into a phony baloney believer! People of God, when in the world are we going to learn that the joy of the Lord doesn't come when we **fake** prayer. And it certainly doesn't come when we **fake** Bible study. No! The joy of the Lord comes when we **take** prayer and when we **take** Bible study seriously! Why? Because that's how the Bible says we maintain the joy of the Lord!

Oh people, don't you get it? What in the world are we doing with our time? Don't we realize that one day we're going to die and they're going to plop us in a hole, throw dirt on our face and go back to social hall and eat potato salad. And here's the point. What will people say? "Wow! She sure had good muscle tone." Or, "Man! He sure could name all the players of that ball team." Or will they say, "I'm so glad they prayed with me in my hour of need. I'm so glad they took the time to teach me the Scriptures and show me how to go to heaven too."

People of God, the one thing we don't have time to waste, is time itself. We can either spend it with the Lord receiving His joy, or we can spend it on things that will eventually leave us spiritually dry. And this is precisely what God is trying to warn us.

Jeremiah 2:12-13 “Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror, declares the LORD. My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”

People of God, don't be fooled into drinking putrid muck from a broken cistern that can never satisfy. Rather, if you're here today and you're not experiencing **A Joyful Life in Christ**, drink and be filled from the spring of living water. Run to Jesus and **out of love** for Him, commit the time to **prayer** and **Bible study** and start rejoicing again! The choice is yours. Amen?

To find the way to God, to understand the *truth* of God's Word, and to received the gift of eternal *life*, begin by repentance and faith through a prayer like this:

“Dear God, I understand that I have broken Your Law and sinned against You. Please forgive my sins. Thank You that Jesus suffered on the cross in my place. I now place my trust in Him as My Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”
