

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

AUGUST 9 - 13, 2021



MONDAY

John 1:1-4

Physical Life

John 14:6 must be one of the best-known verses in John's Gospel, where Jesus declares Himself to be "*the way and the truth and the life.*" In our devotions this week, we want to have a look at the LIFE that Jesus promises to each of us who enter into a vital and complete relationship with Him. The first kind of life we consider, inevitably, must be that of the physical life.

John tells us that through the involvement of the "Word" (Jesus as the second Member of the Trinity) "*all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made*" (John 1:3). This is not surprising news to us, since the opening verses of Genesis explain very clearly how the Godhead (Father, Son and Spirit) brought everything into being from nothing by His creative power. On the sixth day, that included the creation of human beings into whom God breathed "*the breath of life*" (Genesis 2:7). The result is man becoming "*a living being.*" Since that day the human race has continued by "*natural descent*" (John 1:13) to who we are today.

However, we are not "just" created as the highest form of animal. Paul is quite clear in Romans 12:1 that we are to offer our "*BODIES as living sacrifices,*" set apart and pleasing to God. Christianity does not believe in some kind of dichotomy, where we worship God with our spiritual side but can do what we like with our physical side. We

are called to offer everything to be used by God—all our gifts, faculties, and energy—which is why Jesus urged us to love the Lord our God with heart, soul, mind and strength (Luke 10:27). We see the parallel through what the children of Israel were urged to do by Moses in Deuteronomy 6:5.

There are many implications to an understanding that physical life is indeed a gift from God, not least of which is our biblical position towards those who would take that life away from infants in the womb or from victims of abuse or murder. We often use the term that “life is sacred,” which really means a life that it is “dedicated to God’s purposes.” That alone should make us think carefully.

QUESTIONS

How does my physical life and my understanding of God’s gift of life influence my behavior and actions as a person dedicated to God’s purposes?

PRAYERS FOR PERCH.CHURCH (ECO CHURCH PLANT IN GLENDALE)

Pray for Perch. Church attendees as they begin gathering in-person. After 15 months of Sunday gatherings online, Perch.Church started meeting in-person on July 11. Perch desires that her members be eager and excited to come together. May the Holy Spirit bring about newness, revival, and joy in the community.

TUESDAY

John 16; Romans 6

Spiritual Life

Having clarified in our minds that physical life is not an accident of evolution, but a carefully-designed creation by Almighty God, it's obviously important for us to note that, unlike all other creatures on the planet, we have been uniquely made to have a spiritual relationship with our Creator. A central theme of the ministry of Jesus was the coming of the Kingdom, and Jesus taught clearly that unless one is born of the Spirit, there is no access to this Kingdom.

It's interesting that, although Jesus only mentioned the term "church" twice in His ministry, the Gospels include some 162 times that He spoke of the Kingdom, many of them in the context of the parables that He taught and as recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. When the disciples were struggling to understand the concept of entering the Kingdom through the work of the Spirit (i.e., gaining "spiritual life"), Jesus told them that on His departure the third Member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, would come to "*convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment*" (John 16:8). For those responding in repentance to that convicting work of the Spirit, a new dimension would be added to their physical life in the form of a spiritual life defined by a relationship with God Himself.

Paul is very clear about what this entails to us who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. Spiritual life is not just a ticket to heaven, but involves living for Christ right here, right now. He insists that our sinful bodies must be “*rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin*” (Romans 6:6). Clearly, then, we have a significant part to play in demonstrating what a “*new life in Christ*” looks like. We must work daily on “*putting to death*” the old life and living in a way that truly brings glory to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS

What does it mean to you today to surrender your old life and to have a living relationship with Jesus Christ your Savior? Will this change the way you go about your day?

PRAYERS FOR PERCH.CHURCH (ECO CHURCH PLANT IN GLENDALE)

The location where Perch.Church met prior to the lockdown is no longer available. This gives Perch a new opportunity to meet and serve in a different part of Glendale. As the Perch community tries out a few different places, pray that God would make it clear where their permanent house of worship will meet.

WEDNESDAY

John 10:10 KJV

Abundant Life

When Jesus spoke to His disciples about being the “door” through which people could enter in order to be saved, He told them that He had come “that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10) Modern English versions translate this as having life “to the full,” but it’s actually more than that. The word means not just “full” but, in fact, actually means “overflowing.” The implication is that what God gives to His children is more than we need (a father indeed!). It is somewhat similar to Jesus’ comment about giving, which results in the Lord “pouring into our laps” not just enough of His love and grace, but “running over” (Luke 6:38).

When unbelievers look at us as Christians, one wonders if this is the picture they actually see. Sadly, what many unbelievers observe when they view Christians are people who are not really rejoicing in their salvation or, even worse, are downright hypocritical in claiming a relationship with God, and living in a way that doesn’t look much different from the rest of the world!

Sometimes God has to use things like natural disasters, pandemics, or other societal challenges facing us right now to help us “believe what we believe.” It’s no use saying we trust God and are delighted to be His children if, when the going gets tough, we are first in line to moan and complain and give every evidence of losing faith of this

good God whom we claim to love and serve. As a modern song puts it, it's important that, like Job, we can still say "blessed be the Lord" when we are on the "road marked with suffering." That doesn't mean we enjoy the suffering.

Living an abundant Christian life means that the "overflowing" nature of God's grace, love, mercy, forgiveness, and peace continues to sustain us at all times. Perhaps it would be good for us to do some introspection to see whether the term "abundant life" truly characterizes how we are living and the picture we are portraying of what it means to be a committed follower of Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS

Would every stranger you meet today witness you as a person who is obviously living an "abundant life"? If not, what could you change in your life to change this?

PRAYERS FOR PERCH.CHURCH (ECO CHURCH PLANT IN GLENDALE)

After two years of having only one staff member, Perch is ready to take a step of faith and invest in a part-time worship director. Pray that God would bring about the right person for the community who can align with Perch's vision, values, and mission long-term.



THURSDAY

John 6:32-58 NIV

The Bread of Life

One of the most astounding miracles that Jesus performed is recorded in John 6, where we read about Jesus feeding over five thousand people by multiplying five small barley loaves and two small fish into a meal for everyone. We seldom read on in that chapter, unfortunately, to see how Jesus used this miracle to launch into a teaching to His disciples on Him being the “bread of life.” Jesus put it this way: *“The bread of God is he who came down from heaven and gives life to the world”* (John 6:33). Now what exactly did Jesus mean?

This was not the moment at which He instituted the Communion service with bread and wine, even though He spoke of eating His “flesh” (v. 51). This is clear from verse 53, since we do not obtain life from participating in this meal of fish and bread. Nor, we must insist, was Jesus advocating any form of cannibalism, however much the opponents of Christianity may try to make this accusation stick. No, Jesus was using a rather unusual image to tell His disciples that if they accepted the teaching and eventual sacrifice of Jesus on their behalf, it would be absorbed into who they were, causing them to “remain” in Him (John 6:56).

William Hendriksen states it very clearly: “As food and drink are offered and accepted, so also is Christ’s sacrifice offered to believers and accepted by them. As those are assimilated by the body, so is this sacrifice assimilated by the soul.” Put very simply, if we have not absorbed into our spiritual lives the wonderful truth of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins, with all its amazing implications both for this life and the next, we have not eaten the Bread of Life, and therefore do not have access to eternal life. “*I am the Bread of Life,*” one of the seven “I am” statements in the Book of John, expresses His saving relationship toward the whole world.

QUESTIONS

Bread for many is an essential food for sustaining life, and this is probably why Jesus used this metaphor. It is used elsewhere (“Give us this day our daily bread”) in His teaching. How essential is your relationship with Christ in your daily life?

PRAYERS FOR PERCH.CHURCH (ECO CHURCH PLANT IN GLENDALE)

Since Perch started, it has engaged with what God has been already doing in the Glendale area through existing charities and non-profits, such as Family Promise of the Verdugos, Children’s Hunger Fund in Sylmar, and Angel Tree Ministries. Pray that Perch would become more actively involved in loving their neighbors.



FRIDAY

John 3:1-16 NIV

Eternal Life

Arguably the best-known verse in the whole of the Bible, John 3:16, comes from the lips of Jesus as He is explaining the concept of “life” to Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. Jesus had astounded him by talking about being “*born again*” (John 3:3), and we can have some sympathy for Nicodemus when he wrestled with the idea that a person surely “*cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born*” (John 3:4). So Jesus spelled out to him that the life He was talking about was not physical but eternal, made available to those who have experienced a spiritual rebirth in this earthly life.

As we have seen this week, we as human beings all have physical life, but spiritual life and abundant life only come to those who have assimilated the Bread of Life through faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for our sins. Many religions and cults specify very arduous paths to reaching their form of “salvation,” but the wonder of the Christian faith is that it is so simple. Jesus simply tells Nicodemus that all he has to do is to “believe” and he will have “eternal life.” Of course, “believing” in the biblical sense is more than just an academic or cerebral agreement to something. The Gospel writer, John, uses this verb no less than ninety-nine times, compared with Luke’s nine times!

W.E. Vine helps us understand the word *believe* when he defines it as “to be persuaded of, and hence, to place confidence in, to trust ... reliance upon, not mere credence.” So this is different from believing, for example, that Everest is the highest mountain in the world. That probably makes no difference in your life! The kind of believing that Jesus spoke about implied that it changes the way we live. It affects our thinking, our ethics, our family life, our approach to spiritual gifts—in fact, there should be few aspects of our life that are not affected by this believing.

This makes sense, since the eternal life Jesus promises is a present reality, not just a future hope. We begin to live right now in the light of the inheritance that is to be ours when this physical life ends and we transition to being in the presence of God forever.

REFLECTION

Do we live life each day knowing that our life never ends when we know Christ personally? How does this belief in eternal life change your attitude and your thoughts about life on this earth today?

PRAYERS FOR PERCH.CHURCH (ECO CHURCH PLANT IN GLENDALE)

The reason why Perch exists is to be a hospitable community for spiritual wanderers. Perch desires to love spiritual wanderers like Jesus loves us. Pray that this church would reach out to more spiritual wanderers and that they would be drawn to what Perch is creating.

Sources

- William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973), 242.
- W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (London: Olifants, 1975), 116.

