

The Christian Life

Life

Lesson #4 for April 25, 2009

Scriptures: Genesis 2:7; Psalms 139:13,14; John 1:1-3; 3; 10:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 2:1-5.

1. The purpose of this lesson is to explore what Jesus had in mind when He said that we could have a “more abundant life.” (Read John 10:10 in its context.) Who was Jesus talking about? Think about what you would like to have happen in your life to make it “more abundant”—more money, more time, more friends?
2. Read John 10:10 again in its larger context. Jesus was in conflict with the Pharisees. On the Sabbath He had healed a blind man, and they were “grilling” the man to try to find anything that they could use against Jesus. When the blind man expressed his firm faith in Jesus, they cast him out of the synagogue! In His subsequent discussion with the Pharisees, Jesus stated clearly that He was “the Gate” and that He was “the Shepherd.” As such, He is the only way to salvation. When one rejects Him, he/she is rejecting salvation. In this context, Jesus mentioned the “more abundant life.” Does that include eternal life?
3. What do you think Jesus had in mind when He talked about the “more abundant life”? What things can you name that set Christian lives apart from those of our friends in the world? Does the Christian life have greater possibilities? A higher purpose? Greater inner peace? A more meaningful mission? **Or is the Christian life quite boring compared to a “worldling’s” life? Why do you think God tells us to avoid so many of the pleasures that attract worldlings? This is a real issue for teenagers!** Does church seem boring to them? Why? Why do so many of Satan’s schemes seem attractive?
4. Could you make a list of some of the things that seem to be so prominent in our world today that you are very happy to be without? Sickness? Alienation? Crime? Sexually transmitted diseases? Drunkenness? Cancers due to cigarette smoking and other harmful substances? Injuries? Following the Christian lifestyle protects us against a lot of problems. What should we say to a patient who is dying of lung cancer? Should we say, “You should have lived without those cigarettes”?
5. God has given us more-than-ample guidance for caring for our physical well-being, our social well-being, our intellectual well-being, and especially our spiritual well-being. Do you think Jesus had all of those ideas in mind when He spoke about that “more abundant life”? (John 10:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17) Do we need to “grow into” this more abundant life? (2 Peter 3:18) How do we “continue to grow”? If we really lived the Christian life, would it be more attractive to our children?
6. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. What do you think this verse means? Is it talking about spiritual life, or physical life, or both? What does it mean to say that the old is gone and the new has come? Do we really get the chance to “start over” when we are baptized? Do we still have some of those old habits? Is there a new power in our lives? How does this text fit with 2 Corinthians 3:18? (Remember Moses’ face that “shone”! Exodus 34:29-35) In intellectual and spiritual matters, our lives, our characters, and our personalities are at least a partial reflection of everything that we have read, seen, heard, and believed. That process is often described by

Ellen White with the words, “by beholding we become changed.” (GC 555) These words reflect Paul’s idea stated in 2 Corinthians 3:18.

7. Read John 3:1-10. What happens in the new birth? Why does God use such a dramatic metaphor to describe that experience? How would you describe the “old person” (the “old habits”) which “dies” and the “new person” (Would that be Someone “new” in charge?) which is “born”? Is there some kind of magical transformation that takes place when we first profess faith in Jesus Christ? We all recognize that a birth is just the beginning! So, what do we expect to see as a Christian grows? (2 Peter 3:18) Have you been “born again”? **Can you have a meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ without being born again?** Is there any way around it?
8. Loma Linda has been honored by the *National Geographic Magazine* and certain other news media and publications as one of four places in the world where people live the longest. Americans are living longer all the time. But a more abundant life certainly must include more than just more years. What is the quality of those years? What are we able to accomplish? Modern medical science can keep a human body alive almost indefinitely. But at what cost and for what purpose?
9. What about all those people who are eating, drinking, and smoking their way to shorter, less productive, sicker lives? What would Jesus say to them? What does He want us to say to them? Are smoking and drinking a greater hazard to your eternal life than selfishness and covetousness? My patients seem to be inspired by the fact that I run every day and even run marathons from time to time. They sometimes say that it looks to them like I am getting younger instead of older! Lifestyle does make a difference!
10. The greatest meaning in life comes from relationships with other human beings and with God. If Jesus intends for us to have more meaningful lives—even more abundant lives—would that include more meaningful relationships? Family, church, community, social groups, even our ethnicity are groupings that help us to identify ourselves. What gives your life the most meaning? Just living longer? Or having better relationships?
11. The Bible makes it clear that God is the source of all life. (Acts 17:26) The Scriptures clearly suggest that life is a gift from God. He is the One who keeps us alive day by day, hour by hour, even minute by minute. **“Every pulsation of the heart is a rebound from the touch of the finger of God.”** {RH, December 2, 1890 par. 15} Every one of our bodily processes happens because God gives His power to make it happen. If God removed His power from us at any moment, we would be dead.
12. There is a giant intellectual debate going on in the scientific literature and in the general press about the relative merits of the theory of creation versus the theory of evolution. Do we live in a world that just happened without any intelligent guidance? Or was our world created in a relatively brief period of time—specifically one week—by a God who is supremely intelligent? Is it possible that there is some kind of compromise between those two extremes? Could it be that God worked through the process of evolution? That idea is sometimes called “theistic evolution.” Did God take millions of years to accomplish what He describes in Genesis 1 as “seven days”? If God is infinite in wisdom and power, what would be the point of taking millions of years to create our one little planet? Or do we think that God does not have the power to do it in a few days?

13. Think about all of the material that you have been exposed to or read in the last few years about the origin of the human species. Do you think evolution is gaining ground in the world? Or is creation making a comeback? Atheists and evolutionists are realizing that they are being challenged and they are becoming “evangelistic” about their views. There is a big ad campaign being placed on the sides of London buses: “There’s probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/7681914.stm>

“This campaign to put alternative slogans on London buses will make people think - and thinking is anathema to religion,” said Professor Richard Dawkins.

Here is a look at the other side: <http://www.expelledthemovie.com/aboutthemovie.php>

Also take a look at Sean Pitman’s website: <http://naturalselection.0catch.com/>

14. Two enormously important questions arise when we discuss the differences between evolution and creation. The first is how did life first start? And the second is when did it happen? Evolutionists obviously give very different answers to those questions than do Bible-believing creationists.

15. Is the Bible clear about what happened at creation—specifically in the creation of Adam and Eve? (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:7, 18-25; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16) The Bible states that God made Adam from the dust, or dirt, of the ground. In turn, Eve was apparently made from a rib taken from Adam’s side. This suggests that we are made of exactly the same basic materials as are all the rest of life here on this earth. Why are worldly scientists so determined to get rid of creationists views? They do not want to think that someday they might face a judgment conducted by the Creator God! He made moral standards as well.

Remember, these people want to compare their “science” with our “religion.” We must never let them get away with that. If they want to talk science, we all have the same data, and we will compare our “science” with their “science.” The data is the same but the interpretation is very different. Their interpretation is their “religion.” Our interpretation is part of our “religion.” If we are comparing religions, we will win every time!

16. Christians look at the source of life and consider what the Bible says about life. They regard life as very “sacred.” (Psalms 139:13,14) Only God can give life. (Acts 17:26)

17. At what level is life sacred? Is it because only God can give it? We go to extraordinary lengths to preserve human life. But if we are honest, we recognize that at the cellular level, human life is created and dies millions and even billions of times every day. Our cells are recycled. They break down and the body reuses the basic materials to make new cells. What about at the organ level? Is a surgeon committing murder if he removes an organ or part of an organ from a patient? What about at the animal level? Is it murder to take the life of an animal for whatever purpose? Am I a murderer because I wear a leather belt?

18. Many of our Christian friends believe that what sets human life apart from all other forms of life is that a “soul” is implanted into each human being sometime before birth. Is such a view supported by Scripture? Seventh-day Adventists do not believe in the “implanted soul theory.” Roman Catholics believe that when the sperm meets the egg, a “soul” is implanted. So, if one does anything to prevent or hinder that process, he/she is guilty of murder. There is pretty solid medical evidence that for whatever reason, 60-80% of fertilized embryos never implant in the uterus. Does that mean that God is a great murderer because He allows all those “souls” to perish? So, why do we regard “life” as sacred? How should this impact our views on the death

penalty, abortion, and even euthanasia? A correct interpretation of Genesis 2:7 should clarify this issue: "Then the LORD God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it; he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live." (*GNB*) A soul is the living combination of a spirit and a body.

19. In His discussion with Nicodemus as recorded in John 3:1-21, Jesus stated that spiritual life begins when we are "born again." What do you think He was implying? Is that a specific mention of or reference to baptism?
20. How did Jesus regard physical life during His time on this earth? We are told that Jesus spent more time healing than He did teaching. (*RH*, September 10, 1908, par. 4) Consider the miracles He performed as recorded in Mark 5. Jesus recognized that as human beings, it is normal for us to become weary and tired. He called His disciples to "come apart" for a while and rest. (Mark 6:30-32) On more than one occasion when Jesus was surrounded by hundreds or even thousands of followers, He fed them to meet their physical need for food. (Mark 6:33-43) Jesus also recognized that it is important to follow spiritual practices—such as the keeping of the Sabbath—that lead to renewal. (Luke 4:16) Jesus had great respect for every aspect of human life which He Himself had created.
21. Why do you think Jesus cares about how we treat our physical bodies? Isn't the purpose of health reform so that we can have clear minds, and be able to concentrate and focus on the message that God has for us and which He wishes for us to spread to the world? The Bible clearly states that our bodies are God's temple. (1 Corinthians 6:19) They belong to Him. We do not have the right to abuse them. In that light, why do you suppose the Bible tells us we should not eat the blood or fat of animals? (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 3:17; 7:25; 17:14) **Does eating blood or the fat of animals really disqualify us from being God's people?** While the world seems to be discovering the advantages of a vegetarian lifestyle, or even a vegan lifestyle, many Adventists seem to be moving away from that! Why do those who carefully follow God's advice on diet live 10 years longer?
22. As the children of Israel were on their way out of Egypt, Jesus gave two lists of clean and unclean meats. (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14:3-21) Are those lists intended to be universal in their application? How should we feel about eating the flesh of animals not mentioned in those lists? What would happen if we always made certain to completely eliminate the blood and the fat when we eat meat?
23. Should your religious beliefs have anything to do with your diet? Or what you drink? Or even whether or not you smoke? Do you believe that your religious convictions impact every aspect of your life? If our bodies are "temples of the living God," should we be allowed to abuse them?
24. We believe that we are "creatures" created by God. Does He also have the ability to give our lives meaning? What is supposed to be the meaning of life? Why are we here? Think of all the different answers that have been suggested to this question? Atheist Richard Dawkins has suggested in his book, *The Selfish Gene* (1976), that human life was developed simply for the purpose of reproducing genes! Others have suggested that life is for the purpose of enlightenment, or success, or exercising power, or enjoying pleasure. Christians should have better answers!
25. **The Bible authors of the books from Genesis to Revelation clearly accepted the idea of a supernatural creative act being the source of all life.**

26. How could God create light on the first day of creation week and not create the sources of light until day four? Why would God set aside one whole day just for creating something that was derived from another source? Why do you think Jesus refers to Himself as “the Light”? (John 8:12)
27. Read Psalms 139:1-14. Radiologists who work with ultrasound imaging have the privilege of observing the tiniest little human beings being developed in the human uterus. In almost its very earliest stages, the heart is already beating. How much do you think David understood of all that when he wrote Psalm 139?
28. So, what is supposed to be the purpose of physical, mental, spiritual, and social life? (Philippians 2:1-5) Can we learn to give up our inherently selfish ways and become like Jesus Christ? Are people who learn to serve others really happier than those who pursue a selfish course?
29. What do you think God intended for the church to be? Is the church a club where like-minded people gather to share their common views? Should the church be a place where we can comfortably invite non-Christian and non-Adventist friends? Studies have shown that most new Adventists lose virtually all their non-Adventist friends within seven years. Why do you think that happens? Do we have such a “firm wall” fixed between ourselves and the world that it is impossible for us to be friends with people outside our church? Are we afraid to let them know what kind of social groups we belong to in the church?
30. What do you think are the implications of the fact that our bodies are called “the temple of the living God”? (2 Corinthians 6:19) Are we to be God’s temple so that we can be a witness to all who look upon us? Was God’s temple ever meant to be surrounded with an impenetrable wall? Are we intended to be “help stations” where the world can receive assistance on their way to becoming more like Christ?
31. There is considerable evidence for the idea that God considers what we now call visible as being temporary, and that which we know as invisible, God considers to be more permanent. Why hasn’t God allowed us to see more of the permanent things?
32. What would you say to a non-Adventist or even a non-Christian friend in order to make your life and lifestyle more attractive?
33. For more than a century, Seventh-day Adventists have been known as people who are focused on health. Is that a good thing? What percentage of Seventh-day Adventists are fully following our “health message”? Do those who follow our health message reap any benefits? Why is it that those who are carefully following God’s counsel in the area of health live 10 years longer? When do those 10 years occur? Does that mean 10 years longer in the “old folks home” with minds deteriorating but still surviving? Or are those 10 years—10 more years of active, productive, healthy, happy, holy life—life at its best? It is the best years of our lives that we sacrifice when we engage in harmful health habits. How can we convince even members of our own church and our own Sabbath Schools that to serve others can bring the greatest happiness of all? Read *Steps to Christ*, pp. 67-76—“Growing up into Christ.”
34. In the larger context of the great controversy over God’s character and government, why would God think that it is very important that we have the best possible health? Is it just to make us happy? Would it help us to understand Him? Would it help us to represent Him better? Can unhappy, unhealthy, misbehaving people represent God correctly?

© 2009, Kenneth Hart, MD. **Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution is encouraged. It is our goal to see them spread as widely and freely as possible. If you would like to use them for your class or even make copies of portions of them, feel free to do so. We always enjoy hearing about how you might be using the materials and we might even want to share good ideas with others, so let us know.** Info@theox.org

Last modified: March 21, 2009

C:\My Documents\WP\SSTG-Hart\Christian Life\SS-4-Christian Life-2009_04_25-2009_03_07-Fin+.wpd