

Faith Life Lesson
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It has been said there are two things that are true of every person: we all want to be happy, and we are all going to die. From the moment you and I were born, we have been on a quest. What we have been searching for isn't exactly clear, but we know we want our lives to have some kind of meaning and purpose. We want to be happy.

Many people hold to preconceived notions about God. Some envision God as an angry, hostile, uptight Supreme Being perpetually in a bad mood, waiting to nail them when they fail or sin. Others think God is strange, because they have seen or talked to strange people who call themselves Christians.

What is God like? How does He look at us? More importantly, does He approve or disapprove of us? We find the answers in Scripture, where God reveals Himself. Jesus Christ, gives us a snapshot of God in the parable of the prodigal son.

Text: Luke 15:11–32 ASV

A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread

enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called to him one of the servants, and inquired what these things might be. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. But he was angry, and would not go in: and his father came out, and entreated him. But he answered and said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but when this thy son came, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou killedst for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine. But it was meet to make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Being Prodigal is the story of a boy living at home with his dad and his brother, who one day thought, I am sick and tired of living here. I am tired of the rules of my father. I am tired of the regulations. I want to go out and live the life that I have chosen to live. The bright lights of the

big city were calling. So he went to his dad and basically said, give me the portion of the inheritance that is coming to me. I don't want to wait until you die. I want to experience life now. So the father gave his son what he asked for, and off the boy went. What began as living high on the hog ended up in hanging out with the hogs. Eventually, even their food was starting to look good. It dawned on him how ridiculous this was, and he decided it was time to go back to his father. Suddenly the home that he couldn't get away from fast enough, the home that was so full of rules and regulations, was looking a whole lot better. It dawned on him that everything he wanted in life was there with his dad. He just needed to go home. So he started his journey back. He was still a long way off, his father saw him. Not only did he see him, but started running toward him to embrace him. This father could have stopped short and said, go take a bath, son! (The prodigal had been hanging out with hogs, after all). Then maybe I will give you a hug. The father accepted him just as he was.

In that culture, it was considered undignified for an older man to run. It just wasn't done. But the father knew that he had to get to his son as quickly as possible. So the father, willing to lose his dignity, pulled his robe above his knees and sprinted toward his son. Then he threw his arms around him and kissed him over and over and over again. That is how he felt toward his son. He told his servants, bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. Bring the fatted calf and kill it. Let us eat and be merry. My son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. God accepts us as we are. He doesn't want to leave us that way. He will change us.

We recognize the hole in our hearts. We know there is a God. We hear God can come and live inside us and give us meaning and purpose. We hear we can have our guilt removed and go to heaven when we die. That is an offer we can't refuse. We won't regret the

invitation to live with Christ. Jesus brings meaning and purpose to our lives, making life worth living.

We must take advantage of the privilege of pointing others to Jesus Christ for the same reasons. The gospel of Jesus Christ is relevant today. These are critical times for sharing it. Doors that are open today may not stay open forever. Jesus said, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it (Revelation 3:8). Speaking to His disciples, He said, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! (John 4:35).

I pray the Lord will raise up more people to go out and share the good news. No one can honestly pray that this work will be done who is not actually willing to help do it. We all have a part to play. Not all of us are full-time ministers, but all of us are called to sow seeds. Everyone has a part to play. That means you. That means me. Unbelievers are not the enemy, they are people for whom Christ died. Are you a laborer in the harvest? The complainers are many. The observers are many. The spectators are many. The critics are many. But the laborers are few. We need laborers in the harvest. Will you become one?

God can use you to bring others into His kingdom. Otherwise, why would God have commanded us to do so? The calling of God is the enabling of God, and He wants to use all believers to bring people to Himself. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise (Proverbs 11:30). Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:3). God wants you to turn others to righteousness. God wants you to win souls.

The harvest is always urgent. The destiny of men and of nations is

always being decided. Every generation is crucial; every generation is strategic. We are not responsible for the past generation. We cannot bear full responsibility for the next one. We have our generation! God will hold us responsible, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, for how well we fulfilled our responsibilities taking advantage of our opportunities. The world today is actually hungry for the message we have to offer. People are searching, especially young people. Opportunities for sharing this message will be seized or lost. Take hold of the moment or lose it forever.

Seven principles used in the first century for proclaiming the gospel still hold true for us today. In Acts 17, we find a page right out of the apostle Paul's playbook as we observe this master communicator bringing his message to Athens. Seeing the situation in Athens, Paul could have cursed the darkness, instead he turned on the light. That brings us to our first principle of effective evangelism.

Principle 1: Effective Evangelism Always Begins with a Burden
Paul's message began when his spirit was stirred. He was grieved to see absolute absence of the living God. In Athens, he was distressed to see the city was full of idols. So he took action. He reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day (Acts 17:16–17 NIV). Paul was burdened to the point that he declared, Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:16)! We simply have to care, or nothing will happen in the way of effective evangelism. Does your heart ache for lost people? C. H. Spurgeon knew the need for such a burden when he said, The Holy Spirit will move them by first moving you. If you can rest without their being saved, they will rest too. But if you are filled with an agony for them, if you cannot bear that they should be lost, you will soon find that they are uneasy too.

Principle 2: Effective Evangelists Need to Know Their Audience

We need to know the people we are speaking to. Paul went right to where these people were and brought the gospel to them. We see Paul taking the time to familiarize himself with these people and what they believed. He examined their idols. He read their poets. He understood their culture. And He wanted to build a bridge to them. It is important for us to have contact with, to be out and among the people we are speaking to. Jesus certainly modeled this. Time and time again, we see Him breaking free from the multitudes to bring the message to one individual. From the midst of a crowd, He called Zacchaeus out of the tree. In the blazing noonday sun, He engaged the Samaritan woman in conversation. He managed a late-night meeting with Nicodemus, the religious man.

Principle 3: Effective Evangelism Must Be Culturally Relevant

Paul could have blasted his listeners with both barrels. He sought instead to build a bridge to them and quoted one of their own poets: For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring (Acts 17:28). It is so important our listeners know we are living in the same world as they are. We don't necessarily want to build our message on these issues, but to completely ignore them is to miss an opportunity. We need to keep up with the times. Far too often, those of us who are called to communicate are out of touch with the people we are speaking to. The Bible speaks of the leaders of the tribe of Issachar, who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do (I Chronicles 12:32). An interesting statement on this same subject: For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light (Luke 16:8). Sons of this world are far more shrewd in the way they present their message and advertise their wares. It's too common in the Christian community to put out mediocre presentations. The problem is that the devil never goes on vacation. He never goes to sleep. He is ever vigilant to pull more and more people into his web of destruction.

Principle 4: Effective Evangelism Must Be Biblical

Paul's message was biblical. He opened with a cultural connection, then took his listeners to the Word of God. This is important because God's Word will never return void (Isaiah 55:11). Illustrations have their place, but the power is in God's Word. Paul reminded Timothy of the power and sufficiency of Scripture: from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (II Timothy 3:15–17). Everything we need to know about God is found in the Bible. We don't need some new revelation. The objective is not to make the Bible relevant, because it is relevant. If we do not believe, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, we will have problems from the very beginning.

Principle 5: Evangelism Must Focus on Jesus, Crucified and Risen

An effective message will always make a beeline to the cross. Paul concluded his message in Athens with, He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:31). I am amazed to hear messages that make only a passing reference to the cross at best. Paul said he determined not to know anything . . . except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (I Corinthians 2:2). There is power in the simple message of the life, words, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This cannot be emphasized enough.

Principle 6: Effective Evangelism Presents the Whole Gospel

We do not hear about judgment in our day and age. Yet if we fail to talk about it, then we are not declaring the whole counsel of God. I want to help people fully appreciate the good news of Jesus Christ. To do that, they must first understand the bad news of their situation. If we don't tell people they need to repent, then we have not told them

the entire gospel. There are a lot of people who feel remorse for their sin, but never truly repent. Remorse is being sorry, while repentance is being sorry enough to stop. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death (II Corinthians 7:10 NIV). When Paul stood before the Roman Governor Agrippa, he told of how, on the road to Damascus, Jesus met him and told him, I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me (Acts 26:17–18). Paul laid out for Agrippa (and for us today) the process of salvation, which clearly includes repentance:

1. We must have our spiritual eyes opened.
2. We must turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.
3. We will receive, as a result, the forgiveness of sins and an inheritance.

Paul told his listeners there was a coming judgment. And he told them they needed to repent. Our job is not just to make people feel good. It is to tell them the truth.

Principle 7: Evangelism Leaves the Results in the Hands of God
God will hold us responsible for proclaiming the truth and being faithful. But the rest is up to Him. Paul had days when the response was minimal. When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, we will hear you again on this matter. So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them (Acts 17:32–34). The word mocked could be translated “some of them sneered and burst out laughing.” Paul had just shared the gospel, and they started laughing in his face.

These elitists, who thought they were so brilliant, dismissed out of hand the preaching of the gospel from one of the greatest preachers in the history of the church. This is a reminder to us that no matter how effectively we communicate, some people will react that way. And that will hurt. It happened to Paul; it will happen to us. That is why we need to be praying that God will open their eyes and help them see the reality of what we are saying. Conversion is the work of God and God alone. Jesus said, No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:44). He uses us, but we must be completely dependent on Him for the results. Many of our attempts at sharing the gospel fail because we do so in our own strength. We are like the disciples who fished all night and caught nothing, only to see everything change when Jesus came on board.

Remember that it is all in the hands of God. The results are up to Him. All that God holds us responsible for is faithfulness and proclamation, not how many people responded. People don't convert people. The Holy Spirit does. Our job, if you will, is to proclaim the gospel faithfully, lovingly, accurately, clearly, and understandably, and then let the Lord do His work with His message in His way.

It's worthwhile to look at three W's of evangelism—the who, where, and why. Who is called to go into all the world and preach the gospel? Where are we to preach the gospel? Why are we to do this?

Text: Matthew 28:16–20 ASV

The eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him ; but some doubted. And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you:

and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

The First W: Who?

Who is called to go preach the gospel is simple and straightforward. The Great Commission, tells us, go and make disciples of all the nations. In the original language, the implication is that these words are addressed to everyone, not only ministers, evangelists, and missionaries, but everyone. From those in business to homemakers to students, no one is exempt. Also in the original language, these words are a command. Jesus was not saying, if you can find time in your busy schedules, as a personal favor to Me instead, He was saying, as your commander in chief, as your Lord, as your Master who purchased you with His own blood, I order you to go into the world and preach the gospel.

The Bible says we are redeemed by Christ. Redeem is an interesting word that means to be bought out of a slave market. Imagine being a slave in shackles, about to be sold, Jesus arrives and purchases you. He tells you that you are free. Wouldn't you want to serve, for the rest of your life, the One who would do that for you? Paul reminds us, our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's (I Corinthians 6:19–20). As we recognize all that God has done for us, it should be our delight, our joy, and indeed our privilege to obey His command and preach the gospel. We should say, Lord, what is it that You want me to do? I want to fulfill Your command. Evangelism seems daunting, overwhelming. How can we do it? It's been said, the way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time. And the way to fulfill the Great Commission is one person at a time.

The Second W: Where?

Where are we to preach the gospel? Everywhere. In the Gospel of

Mark, he said, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). Preach the gospel to your family, in your work place, on your campus, in your sphere of influence. Jesus said, all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. If the authority is in Him, and He is living inside us, His followers, then His power and resources are at our disposal to accomplish this task. What is this task of making disciples? It's teaching them to observe all things that Jesus commanded. It is to live by our faith in this world and to share it with others. To teach it by word and model it by example. The full concept of going into all the world and making disciples is to share our faith, to seek to lead people to Christ, and then, to the best of our ability, help them mature spiritually. To sum it up: Jesus is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ (Colossians 1:28).

The Third W: Why?

Why are we to do this? God chose to reach people through people. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things (Romans 10:14–15)! Why does He want to use flawed people like us? How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things! Through speech we are to share God's message. That is not to say that you should not live it first. Indeed you should. The Bible does not advocate what some call lifestyle evangelism, meaning you just live a Christian life and wait for someone to ask you about it.

In Acts 8, we find the story of a powerful, wealthy dignitary from Ethiopia who had gone to Jerusalem searching for God. Instead of finding the vibrant faith of the glory days of David and Solomon, he found a cold, dead ritualistic faith that offered him little. But he happened to obtain a scroll containing Isaiah 53. Reading the words, He was led as a lamb to

the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent . . . Philip approached him on the road and asked if he understood what he was reading. The dignitary replied, how can I, unless someone guides me (Acts 8:31)? That is what people need and what many want; someone to show them the way. Someone like you. If we really believe what we claim we believe, there really is a heaven and hell, that the wages of sin really are death, how can we be so casual about telling others?

People can tell whether you really care. An interesting story came from the 1870s in England. A criminal named Charles Peace was arrested and condemned to death. As he was on his way to the gallows, the chaplain who walked by his side went through his often repeated speech about the power of Jesus Christ to save from sin. Charles Peace stopped, looked at the minister, and asked him if he believed what he was saying. If we really believe, then why aren't we doing more to get the message out? Jesus cares about people, and so should we.

15 May 2006, British mountaineer David Sharp died near the summit of Mount Everest in a rocky cave. Forty-two people passed Sharp that morning on their way to the summit, people who could have saved him. Some looked the other way, a few paused long enough to hear him say, My name is David Sharp. I'm with Asian Trekking . . . Before he left on his trip, Sharp had assured his mother, You are never on your own. There are climbers everywhere. That tragedy on Everest sounds a lot like a modern version of Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan. It also sounds like some Christians who are so busy on their way up the summit bypass lost people without so much as a twinge of concern. They watch them slowly die, or worse, never even notice them to begin with. Jesus had time for individuals, patiently engaging, conversing, loving, and winning them to faith. All of us as believers have been called to do this as well. We know Jesus has

given us marching orders. In all honesty, many, if not most of us, are not following His command.

What Is the Gospel?

Gospel is a word we hear tossed around a lot today. We call a certain style of music gospel, designated as such because of the particular sound it has. When we want people to believe what we're telling them, we say, it's the gospel truth! We hear people say they are preaching the gospel, when in reality, they don't seem to know what the term means. Sadly, the word gospel has largely lost its meaning in today's culture.

We all need to know the gospel is for two very important reasons:

1. We want to make sure we have heard the true gospel and have responded to it, lest we have a false hope concerning a salvation we think we have. Our very eternal destiny hangs on it.
2. Jesus commanded us to "go into all the world and preach the gospel." His words were not merely addressed to pastors, teachers, evangelists, and missionaries. They are addressed to every follower of Jesus Christ. We cannot be disengaged or disinterested in this subject because the literal eternal destinies of people hang in the balance.

The Bible reminds us that we as Christians are to rightly divide the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15). It also tells us to watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (1 Timothy 4:16). We must be careful, therefore, to accurately present the gospel, meaning that certain elements must be in place, because there is also a false, counterfeit gospel.

I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in

the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema (Galatians 1:6–8 ASV). Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia, astonished you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel, which is really no gospel at all. Some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!

The real Gospel in a nutshell is: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day. Imbed that thought deeply into your mind. There are other elements, but this is the cornerstone, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Someone once asked the great preacher C.H. Spurgeon if he could put his Christian faith into a few words. He answered, it is all in four words: Jesus died for me. Paul was a brilliant orator and communicator. He was deeply schooled in biblical law as well as in Greek wisdom. If anyone could have leaned on his intellect, it would have been Paul. Read accounts in the book of Acts of his sharing the gospel with powerful government leaders and realize that he kept it so simple. Paul emphasized the importance of this simplicity again and again in his writings; Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void (1 Corinthians 1:17 ASV). So it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:1–2). Typically, Paul began with his personal testimony. Then he would always key in on what happened when Jesus died on the cross. That is the pattern that we too should follow. Of course there are hard questions that unbelievers

can fire at us. But we need to know that the essence of the gospel message is the cross. If you were to simply use the information I have just shared with you, then you would have enough to be spiritually dangerous and to make an impact for the kingdom of God. We often underestimate the raw power of the gospel for reaching even the most hardened heart. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (I Corinthians 1:18) and I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). Paul reminds us there is power in the simple message of the life, words, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The gospel message is that we are all separated from God because of our sin, and the result of sin is an emptiness, an ever present guilt, and a certain fear of death. God loved us in spite of our rebellion, He sent His own Son to die in our place and bridge the gap between Him and us. There are people right now who are waiting for you, to show them the way. As we make our way up the summit, let's not forget those along the way, those people who are waiting for someone to reach out to them and help them with the only message that can change their eternal destiny: the gospel of Jesus Christ. Don't underestimate the gospel's appeal. Don't be ashamed of its simplicity. Don't add to it or take away from it. Just proclaim it and then stand back and watch what God will do.

Seeking to share the gospel message with others, there are some biblical concepts we need to grasp. Two key terms we must know and understand are justification and sanctification. Terms that impact your Christian experience are the results of conversion.

Justification

What does it mean to be justified before God? The word justified

carries a twofold meaning. First, it speaks of the forgiveness of all your sins. This simply means that the day you put your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is the day that all of your sins were instantaneously forgiven and removed. Have you ever done anything that you are ashamed of? If you have repented of that sin and have turned your back on it, then the Bible clearly declares that you are forgiven. Speaking of our sins, God says, For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more (Jeremiah 31:34). In Micah we find these encouraging words; who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:18–19). Simply translated, it is gone. Therefore, we should not choose to remember what God has chosen to forget. Justification is more than forgiveness. If all justification consisted of was forgiveness, then I would venture to say that it's the greatest deal ever offered to humanity. Justification not only speaks of what God has taken away; it speaks of what He has put in its place. Justified means to have something placed to your credit. The Greek word describing this process is used eleven times in Romans 4. It is translated by the English verbs account, count, and impute. It means to put to one's account. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness (Romans 4:5). Justification is more than what God has done for us: forgiveness and the removal of guilt and the condemnation that accompanied it. Justification is what God has given us. Justification is a legal act of God, declaring the sinner guiltless before God. It is a complete acquittal. When God justifies us, He does so by placing the righteousness of Christ into our account. That balances the moral and spiritual budget for us. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith (Philippians 3:9). This is not a gradual process. It is instantaneous. It is immediate. That is what God has done for you

through justification. He forgave you of all of the wrongs you've done. He removed your sins. Now He has put Christ's righteousness into your account.

Sanctification

Having experienced justification, we are sanctified. Sanctification means being set apart. That is, set apart to be used by God and to become more like Christ; but in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work (II Timothy 2:20–21). Living a sanctified life is working out what God has worked in. Sanctification is a part of the whole process of the new birth. D.L. Moody used six words to describe it:

1. Repentance—a change of mind. A new mind about God.
2. Conversion—a change of life. A new life from God.
3. Regeneration—a change of nature. A new heart from God.
4. Justification—a change of state. A new standing before God.
5. Adoption—a change of family. A new relationship toward God.
6. Sanctification—a change of service. A new condition with God.

Having learned what God has done for us through justification and sanctification as part of the process of new birth, this brings us to a question: Can you really be a genuine child of God, yet continue to live a sinful lifestyle? In Romans 6, Paul refuted a similar argument he was anticipating from the religious leaders of his day who would think that because he was teaching that salvation comes totally and completely from God and there is nothing we can do to earn it, then it stands to reason that we should keep sinning so that more of God's

grace may come. After all, won't God forgive us? Obviously, this is not what Paul was teaching. One thing we often forget is although there is forgiveness of sin, there are still repercussions. We confuse God's leniency with God's approval. We think because we have committed a sin and have not paid an immediate price for it, that somehow God doesn't mind. If a believer sins but truly repents, that doesn't mean there still cannot be very strong ramifications. Scripture is clear about this; do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap (Galatians 6:7). If you were to rob a bank, get caught by the authorities, and then repent before God and say you're sorry, God would forgive you. But you still would go to jail.

The teaching of justification is not a license to sin, but an incentive to obey. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God (1 John 3:9). God's favor toward us comes not on the basis of what we've done for Him, but on the basis of what He's done for us. Holy living will not produce salvation. Salvation will produce holy living.

Greg Laurie, *Making God Known: How to Bring Others to Faith*, Austin, TX Kerygma, 2007.