

## **Advent 2010**

### ***Your Best Life Later***

*(slightly less than) 7 Steps to Living Life with Real Hope  
in the Kingdom to Come*

#### ***Step One: Find New Life***

##### ***Word Faith***

*Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. 2 Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. 3 For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory. (Colossians 3:1-4)*  
**NLT**

#### ***Step One: Find Life***

This is what makes the world go around right? Life. We all want it in some form or another, and we go about seeking to get it with every thing we think, say, or do - consciously or subconsciously we reach for life. It's either the

good life, or love life, the high life, the easy life, a hard life, party life, night life, wasted life, sober life, free life, real life, single life, married life, thrill of a life, the journey of life, the meaning of life or the after-life. Bottom line is that we are seeking life – all of us.

Then of course there are the questions of life.

What have I done with my life? Is this all there

is to life? How long will I have my life? Is

there really life after life? Where has my life

gone? Sometimes life can get a little crazy! In

the middle of all of this there are the words of

Jesus which we Christians have formed our

entire life around. Jesus said, “*I am the*

*resurrection and the life.*” And because we

believe Him, we seek a new life in Him. He

also said that life in Him is for all of those who

believe. Believe what... you ask? Believe that

Jesus is the Son of God and that God the

Father has given us eternal life in Jesus Christ His Son. For people courageous enough to reach out in faith finding life all lays out like this...

### ***FIND NEW LIFE***

- ***IN OUR OLD LIFE WE DIED IN CHRIST (ROMANS 6-8)***
  - *The best explanation of this amazing truth is found in Romans 6-8. Christ not only died for us (in our place), but we died with Him (identified with Him). Christ not only died for sin, bearing the consequence and penalty; but He died unto sin, breaking its power. Because we (you and I) are "in Christ" through the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13), we died with Christ. This means that we can have victory over the old sin nature that wants to control us.*
- ***IN OUR NEW LIFE WE LIVE IN CHRIST (1 JOHN 5:12)***
  - *Christ is our life. Eternal life is not some*

*heavenly substance that God imparts when we, as sinners, trust the Savior. Eternal life is Jesus Christ Himself. "He that has the Son has life; and he that does not have the Son of God does not have life" Paradox - We are dead and alive at the same time - dead to sin and alive in Christ.*

- ***IN THIS NEW LIFE WE ARE SECURED AND SHELTERED IN CHRIST (ROMANS 8:31-39) - Colossians 3:1-4***
- *We no longer belong to the world, but to Christ, and the sources of life that we enjoy come only from Him. "Hidden in Christ" means security and satisfaction. The eminent Greek scholar, Dr. A.T. Robertson, comments on this: "So here we are in Christ who is in God, and no burglar, not even Satan himself, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:31-39)" The Christian life is a "hidden life" as far as the world is concerned, because the*

*world does not know Christ (1 John 4:1-6). Our sphere of life is not this earth, but heaven; and the things that attract us and excite us belong to heaven, not to earth. This does not mean that we should ignore our earthly responsibilities. Rather it means that our motives and our strength come from heaven, not earth.*

- ***WE WILL HAVE OUR BEST LIFE WHEN CHRIST RETURNS (1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18)*** - *Christ is now seated at the Father's right hand, but one day He will come to take His people home. When He does, we shall enter into eternal glory with Christ. When He is revealed in His glory, we shall also be revealed in glory. According to the Apostle Paul, we have already been glorified! (Romans 8:30) This glory simply has not yet been revealed. Christ has already given us His glory (John 17:22), but the full revelation of the glory awaits the return of the Savior (Romans*

8:17-25).

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***Step Two: Love Life***

***Word Faith***

*Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. 16 For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. 17 And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.*

***(1 John 2:15-17)***

***STEP TWO: LOVE LIFE***

The word “world” has at least three different meanings in the New Testament. It sometimes means the physical world (the earth): *"God that made the world [our planet] and everything in it"* (Acts 17:24). It also means the human world, (mankind): *"For God so loved the world"* (John

3:16). And then sometimes these two ideas of the world appear together: *"He (Jesus) was in the world, and the world [earth] was made by Him, and the world [mankind] knew Him not"* (John 1:10).

But the concerned warning in our advent text, *"Do not love the world!"* is not about the physical world of nature or the world of men. As Christians we can appreciate the beauty and usefulness of the earth that God made, since He *"gives to us richly all things to enjoy"* (1 Timothy 6:17). And as Christians we know that we are to love people - not only lovable friends, but even unlovable enemies.

The term "world" used in this writing is describing an invisible spiritual belief system opposed to God. The clear intention and the expectation is for us to consider "the world" in this context as the enemy Jesus Christ – which as His followers makes it our enemy as well.

We use the word world in the sense of ideological and philosophical system in our daily conversation. News commentators say, *"We bring you the world news"* or sports commentators say, *"here is the latest in the world of sports."* "The world of sports" is not a separate planet or



continent. It is an organized system, made up of ideas, opinions, personalities, players, and mostly “freaks and geeks” who we all know take themselves and the games they play way too serious. And then there is Neil Cavuto and "the world of finance" and "the world of politics" which is basically the same thing - a system of their own opinions and research. Behind what we see, in sports or finance, is an invisible system that we cannot see; and it is the system that *"keeps things going."*

"The world," in the Bible, is Satan's system for his continued opposition to the work of Christ on earth. It is the very opposite of what is godly...

*“For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride (arrogance) in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world.”*

The contrast to that is this... *"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one"* (1 John 5:19, NASB). Jesus called Satan *"the prince of this world"* (John 12:31). The devil even has an organization of

evil spirits (Ephesians 6:11-12) working with him and influencing the affairs of "this world." *“Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. 12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.”*

I think we get the picture.

So by now we should have a clear idea of what Jesus meant when He said, *“Do not love the world or the things of this world.”* But in order for us to fully understand **“our best life later”** we must see that Jesus is even clearer that we should love life. Which one is it Steve? How do I hate the world and love the life I have in this world. This is not a contradiction, but rather it is the path to understanding and living for our best life later! Jesus directly said that the most important laws were to love God and our neighbor as ourselves, with the entire strength of our entire being (mind, body, soul). Within this truth is the complete key to our being in this world but not of this world. It is the

complete key to loving life – but not loving this world.

Listen to this passage from Romans 9:10... *“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling embrace (love) to what is good.”* And now add to that the words of Jesus...

*“And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.*

*“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal*

*life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:14-17)*

*“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. (John 11:25-26)*

*“I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life.*

*Yes, I am the bread of life! Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the*

*world may live, is my flesh."*

*(John 6:47-51)*

So, here is the conclusion... *In loving Jesus I can find life and love life – but the life I love is not this worldly life, but it is Jesus who is new life and life in the world to come. ...Our best life later!*

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## ***Step Three: Live Life***

### ***Word Faith***

*I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he appears to set up his Kingdom: Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching. For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths. But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you.*

*As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize*

*is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.”*

*(2 Timothy 4:1-8)*

### ***STEP THREE: LIVE LIFE***

The fact that Paul the apostle of Jesus instructed followers to set our thoughts and affections on things above and not below did not mean however that we are expected to abandon any love or passion for living life here and now! Paul seeks to teach like Jesus in the sense that our heart for God and His coming Kingdom must never be replaced by the kingdoms, values, and ideologies of this world. If anything it is perfectly clear in this letter that the Paul was instructing Timothy to go full throttle with living this life! As we say at Reunion... love openly, forgive quickly, give freely, and serve graciously. Followers and even casual believers must be know this truth... that we live life in love with Jesus Christ, having the full knowledge and complete hope that He has gone before us to prepare a better place for us – and that *is* our best life later! This is what Paul told Timothy.

**LIVE LIFE...**

**WITH A CLEAR MIND** – Don't be angry, bitter, possessive, jealous, perverted, smashed, stoned, high, drunk, or stupid

**READY AND WILLING TO SUFFER FOR WHAT WE BELIEVE IN –**

Never hesitate to do the right things and the hard things. Things that will cost us something and require deep conviction and personal sacrifice...

**SHARING OUR FAITH IN GOD AND OUR HOPE IN CHRIST IN ANY**

**AND EVERY WAY WE CAN** – Use wisdom, be passionate, and show love... but never live life with regrets for sharing or not sharing the Gospel of Jesus!

**POURING OUR LIFE INTO LOVING AND SERVING OTHERS –** Our

self-worth in this life is not what we do but who we are in Christ. What we do is a direct result of who we are. Our legacy in this life is measured by our love for others and service for the Kingdom of God. We can teach what we know but we reproduce what we are.

**WITHOUT FEAR OF DEATH – PREPARED FOR IT –**

**GIVING OUR BEST – FINISHING WHAT WE START** – Strive for excellence, set goals and high standards, value what God values, and love what God loves. Being faithful to our

commitments and loyal to those to who we are committed. Expect to complete what we begin and always start with the end in mind so we will know what it will take to achieve the outcome God desires for us!

**KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE PRIZE** — Look forward to heaven and our best life, and don't apologize for it. Don't get distracted by the short-term amenities of this world and. Not living disappointed that we missed out on something when we know that in Christ we have everything! Live this life until this life won't let us live it anymore and then move on into the Glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!



## ***Your Best Life Later***

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### ***Step Four: Unseen Life***

#### ***Word Faith***

*For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. 2 We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. 3 For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies. 4 While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. 5 God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit. 6 So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in*

*these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. 7 For we live by believing and not by seeing. 8 Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord. 9 So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him. 10 For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body. (2 Corinthians 5:1-10)*

*For at just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. 16 He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honor and power to him forever! Amen. (1 Timothy 6:15-19)*

#### **STEP FOUR: UNSEEN LIFE**

I love that Paul had the courage and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to do more than simply remind us that the

difficult things you and I see in this world are just temporary. I love that Paul the apostle, in spirit-led inspiration, steps out to take our hope and us to another level of faith. He does all this in truly amazing fashion by describing to the Corinthian church with considerable detail and clarity the unseen life to come – the eternal life in the Kingdom to come - the life not yet seen. I think it is a remarkable and everlasting sign of God's love that to give Paul such revelation and insight into His world and the word to come. But because He spoke and wrote the way did millions have had the courage to live this life with faith and hope in the unseen life. It is the same Spirit that was with Paul who affirms this even in you and I today - the unchangeable and unseen realities and promises of Jesus and His eternal Kingdom.

It is historically documented that Paul was a, highly educated man. The evidence of his life and character shows that he was relentless, brilliant, practical and logical, yet spontaneous and fearless, and he was a passionately gifted man of faith. But I promise you this, he was not just taking a shot in the dark or trying to sell books for a living when

he wrote... *"We fix our eyes...on what is unseen. For what is...unseen is eternal."* By faith, he was delivering *hope eternal* to all who would believe! Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit Paul wrote to the Corinthian church words describing the unseen life to come, and is precisely why nearly two thousand years later people from around the world, in more languages than we can even count, can stand as one and sing with complete confidence and hope... *"I'm gonna' worship you forever – I'm gonna' worship you."* *"O Come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord."*

You see... there are realities that only God knows - and then there are realities that God has chosen to reveal. By His Spirit God reveals truth that forms and builds our faith, and leaves us filled with hope. These are the realities of the unseen life, and on good authority I can tell you that they are absolutely stable rock solid realities on which we can completely frame our faith and build our hope upon. It is so important to know that in our ministry with others that we not just encourage that life will not always be so hard in the temporary things that are seen; such as death, suffering, pain, sorrow and sickness. But in a step of faith, we have to

take courage (just like Paul) and tell them why! We have to go on further to that next level, and encourage with eternal things of great hope – the realities of the unseen life! And we too must fix our hope on those unseen things in an unseen life - those things that are forever real and forever eternal. Yes, I said it... the unseen life is real, and is really made complete in Jesus Christ, as He changes us from this very temporal and mortal body, to a very immortal and resurrected eternal body. That is so hard for us “human types” to wrap our brain around simply because we can’t see it – and we tend to reason that if we can’t see it then it isn’t real. But remember, with God, just because it is unseen and not yet complete, it does not make it untrue. That is why Paul was courageous enough and inspired to also say,

*“But when full understanding comes, these things we can see will become useless. When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. Now we see things imperfectly as in a cloudy mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but*

*then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely. Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.”*

C'mon, how powerful is that word? For me it is all-powerful, and it answers many, many, questions for me personally. But it doesn't stop there for me – the power of that kind of word continues on in me, stirring and creating many new and exciting questions in place of the old ones. Not questions of doubt and fear, but questions of growing and continued faith, and hope of the unseen life!

What this means is that in ***the reality of the unseen life*** I know that there is no longer a process of aging and subsequent death. I know that there will no more sickness or disease to disable, weaken, and threaten the quality of life. I also know that in the ***unseen life*** there will be no more addiction to destroy and deteriorate life. I know too that there will be no sadness, sorrow or suffering to disturb and diminish life. Listen to how the writer of the book of Revelation put it... He said, *I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people.*

*God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.*

Thank God Paul so passionate about his faith and desire to serve the Lord Jesus. Having been redeemed himself from death to life, knew just how important it was to the spiritual growth of followers and believers and go ahead in faith and look at some of those realities of the unseen life. I'm leaving here today with three realities of the unseen life that I believe that God imparted to Paul to share with us.

**One** - Paul says that there is a literal *"eternal house in the*

*heaven*" that will replace our mortal earthly body. So we know from that we will not be indistinguishable spirit beings, without shape or formed bodies. The word *house* in this context and in its original Greek text is *Oikos*, and means "*a dwelling for all we have and all we are.*" Aware of this reality, we can look beyond our earthly life and desire and hope to be present in a new body with Jesus, and all of those that have gone on before us.

**Secondly** - Paul says, "*God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit.*" It is only logical that because we believe completely in this unseen reality, we should go ahead and confidently plan and prepare for it by "*making it our goal to please our heavenly Father.*" In other words, we have something truly eternal to live for! "*In Christ* we can live here in this life in ways to prep for the unseen life that is coming *through Christ*, as part of His eternal Kingdom!"

**Finally**, Paul says *No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will, but that at just the right time Jesus will be*



*revealed from heaven.*” Wow! It will be just at the right moment that we will be changed by Him - and being made like Him we will see beyond this temporal life and see Him as He is and all that is eternal and that has been unseen will be seen (no longer just hope, but living reality).