

Living The Good Life, Part 1

- The gospel of John is quite different than Matthew, Mark & Luke. While the first three writers major on describing EVENTS in the life of Christ, John emphasizes the MEANING of these events. For example, all four gospels record the feeding of the 5000, but only John records Jesus' sermon on "The Bread of Life" that followed.
- The reason for this difference is that John writes many years after Matthew, Mark and Luke. As a result, he has the perspective of a wise elder who has watched the New Testament Church begin, grow, suffer ... and persevere through it all.
- Since he has the perspective of more than a half-century of "Spirit-filled living," John – more than any of the other gospel writers – talks about the Holy Ghost and shows us the actions and reactions of Jesus AS HE WALKED IN THE SPIRIT. This is certainly to prove that He is the Son of God, but it also has incredible implications for us today: we will never be "God incarnate" but we are "filled with the Spirit of God" – and we should act like it!
- Today, we begin a series on the subject, "Living The Good Life." When we say that we usually mean someone who has an abundance of money, but Jesus came to teach us otherwise. In John's gospel, LIFE is equal to LIGHT and LIGHT is equal to JESUS – if you don't have HIM, you don't have LIFE!
- **John 1:4-5 (KJV)** In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.
- In the first verse of Genesis we read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." In the first verse of John we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John is using a deliberate parallel to show us, not how God spoke the WORLD into existence, but how He spoke SALVATION into existence. This time, God's Word takes on human form and enters history in the person of Jesus Christ.
- According to Hebrews 1:1-4, Jesus is God's last Word to mankind on the subject of salvation. God spoke "at sundry times and in divers manners" before, but Jesus is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." So, when Jesus speaks, we listen!
- There are four essentials for human life: light, air, water and food. John presents Jesus as being all of these!
 - He is the light of the world (John 8:12)
 - He is the breath of life through His Spirit (John 20:22)
 - He is the water of life (John 4:14)
 - He is the bread of life (John 6:35)
- **John 10:10 (KJV)** The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.
- You would think that, since we messed things up so bad back in the Garden of Eden, human beings would welcome the light that God brings. But instead, many people are blind to it and "comprehend it not." Light and darkness cannot coexist, and people love either one or the other. The first creation began with "Let there be light!" and the new creation begins with the entrance of light into our lives. Without Jesus, no light ... without light, no life!
- **2 Corinthians 4:6 (KJV)** For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness (FIRST CREATION), hath shined in our hearts (NEW CREATION), to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
- **John 1:10-12 (KJV)** He was in the world, and the world was made by him (FIRST CREATION), and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him (SECOND CREATION), to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
- That's why this gospel starts with the ministry of John the Baptist – his message was to let Israel know that REAL LIFE had arrived! But they were so shackled by religious tradition that they missed it.
- **John 1:17 (KJV)** For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
- Literally, Moses brought RULES but Jesus brought RELATIONSHIP!
- It is a principle in life that families and friendships operate on the basis of relationships, not rules. The stronger any relationship is, the fewer rules you need. This is especially true of God's family – if you are one of His children, you don't need a pastor to police you. You live for God and worship Him because you love Him!
- Jesus shows us how to "live the good life" by walking in the Spirit. We need to pay special attention to the "snapshots" that we see in John's gospel ... and let the LIGHT enter in to give us LIFE!

- **John 2:13-17 (KJV)** And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, **The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.**
- **VIDEO CLIP HERE (?)**
- Passover was the biggest annual celebration of the Jewish people. It was the day that all who were able were to come to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate what God had done for them in taking them out of bondage, slavery and oppression in Egypt and setting them free so that they could go out in the desert and worship Him. It was the celebration of God passing over their sin, giving them life instead of death, freedom instead of bondage, and hope instead of despair.
- It was necessary for Jesus to go to the temple on this day. If you were a male over the age of 19 and within a 15 mile radius of the temple, you were required to come to the temple with your sacrifice. It was required; it was not an option.
- On Passover, before they went to the temple, every Jew would take all leaven out of their home and discard it. Leaven was used to puff up bread (yeast). In the Bible, it is compared to sin which puffs us up, making us proud and arrogant. So each Jew would get rid of all the leaven, purifying their home from the symbol of sin. And they would go the Passover as a pure worshiper of God.
- But when Jesus gets to the Temple on this particular Passover, He quickly realizes that it is not simply the homes of the Jews that needed cleansing, but the entire religious system of the Jews! They have turned God's house into a marketplace, livestock auction and currency exchange all rolled into one! It is "business as usual" to all of them, but Jesus doesn't like business as usual!
- Most people look at this passage of Scripture and conclude, "Well, God just doesn't like it when religion is mixed with business." That's true, but it's far from the whole picture.
- **The real problem here is lazy worshippers!** These people were breaking the commandments of God through their religious customs and traditions.
- It wasn't that the animals that were being sold at the Temple were not the right type of animal. It was that the individual was supposed to bring their own animal to be sacrificed. Jesus' problem with this business was that it was a shortcut to the commandments of God.
- God had commanded that they were to raise the animal, ensure that it was without blemish, transport it the many miles to the Temple, and then give it to God as a sacrifice. But lazy worshippers would simply show up without doing any of the work necessary and pass some money to a priest, because it was more convenient to them.
- Can you imagine having a little lamb that your children helped you groom and feed every day, then having to carry that lamb several miles to the Temple so you can watch it slaughtered? But that's the point! It was supposed to cost something to worship! The sacrifice was to be the best you had. You were supposed to feel the loss of it. You were supposed to work at it. You were supposed to be inconvenienced. You were even supposed to wonder, "Why does God insist that I do this?" That's real worship!
- **2 Samuel 24:24 (KJV)** I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing.
- But these worshippers have grown lazy. They wanted the convenience of paying someone else to do what they were supposed to do. Things haven't changed much in 2000 years, have they? We want to let someone else do our worshipping, our soul winning, our fasting, our praying, our ministry, our giving.
- The greatest tragedy is that this was taking place in the court of the Gentiles, the very place where the Jews should have been meeting the Gentiles and telling them about the one true God. But any Gentile who was sincerely seeking God would certainly be turned off by all the lazy worship going on. It was just like any other religion.
- "I would like to buy \$3.00 worth of God, please. Not enough to explore my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy \$3.00 worth of God, please." - **Wilbur Rees**
- It's all just too much for Jesus to take and, to the chagrin of His new disciples, He makes a scene in the House of God. Suddenly, they remember the words of a Psalm from ancient times ...

- **John 2:17 (KJV)** And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.
- **Psalms 69:9 (KJV)** For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.
- Take a close look at John's first snapshot of what a Spirit-filled man looks like, feels like, and acts like. HE JUST CAN'T STAND MEDIOCRE WORSHIP! He has to do something drastic to change it.
- ZEAL means "enthusiastic devotion to a cause, ideal, or goal and tireless diligence in its furtherance."
- The Hebrew word means "to provoke to jealousy" and the Greek word means "to be hot, to boil." Literally, ZEAL is getting STIRRED UP with passion for God.
- A footnote to John 2:17 in the New Living Translation: "Concern for God's house will be my undoing." Literally, "I'm going to get in trouble here, because I get upset when someone misuses God's House!"
- **ILLUSTRATION: UPSET TABLE (?)**
- Jesus just couldn't stand to be in the House of God and not experience what God intended for that sacred place. And neither can any Spirit-filled child of God!
- HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BEING IN GOD'S HOUSE? Is it routine, or is it real to you today?
- Here's how David felt about God's House ...
- **Psalms 63:1-4 (KJV)** O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.
- **Psalms 26:8 (KJV)** Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.
- **Psalms 77:13 (KJV)** Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?
- **Psalms 96:6 (KJV)** Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
- **Psalms 134:2 (KJV)** Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord.
- **Psalms 150:1 (KJV)** Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.
- **Psalms 122:1 (KJV)** I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.
- **Psalms 73:2-3, 16-17 (KJV)** But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked ... When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.
- **Psalms 27:4 (KJV)** One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.
- **Psalms 23:6 (KJV)** Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.
- **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT ZEAL?**
 - # 1 – It impresses God.
 - # 2 – It influences others.
 - # 3 – It changes me.
- **2 Cor. 9:2 (KJV)** And your zeal hath provoked very many.
- **Isaiah 9:7 (KJV)** The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.
- **Isaiah 37:32 (KJV)** The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this.