

THE GOSPEL AND THE FULFILLING LIFE

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Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are marks of the life that we all desire. The million dollar question is, “How do we get there from where we are?”

The Bible calls this information about how to find the life we’ve always wanted the gospel, or the good news. In this brochure we are going to explore how contentment, purpose, joy, and harmonious relationships emerge from accepting and living out the gospel.

The truth is that God created us with the desire for these things and fully intends to fulfill them (Psalm 37:4). This is the very reason Jesus came (John 10:10).

Life is fulfilling when it has purpose. We experience joy and peace when we know we are making progress towards this purpose. Conversely, we experience frustration and despair when this progress is impeded. There is only one purpose, however, that can faithfully provide fulfillment for a life-time—worshipping God. There are four truths you must understand to have this type of relationship with God.

TRUTH #1: GOD HAS A GOOD PLAN

The first piece of the gospel is that God has a plan for each individual that is worth a total life commitment (Matthew 13:44-46; Ephesians 3:20). “For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope,” Jeremiah 29:11.

This truth provides peace of mind. It means that when we place our faith in God we are investing our life in a “sure thing.” It is the only relationship that comes with a 100% satisfaction guarantee, because God is the only Person who is completely loving in His intentions and has the power to always carry out His good intentions.

TRUTH #2: WE HAVE FAILED

Surprisingly, there is encouragement to be found in these words. The Bible is aware of our condition. God is not surprised by our short-comings. Amazingly, the Bible says, “God shows his love for us in that *while we were still sinners*, Christ died for us,” Romans 5:8.

We can quit trying to clean ourselves up before we come to God. He knows, and He still cares. Our failures—sin—are serious, but they need not be fatal to living a fulfilling life.

TRUTH #3: THERE IS GRACE

Grace is one of the most amazing words in the English language. While it can be simply defined as “undeserved favor,” the freedom of soul that comes from not being held liable for a lifetime of failures, mistakes, blunders, slip ups, and faux pas is breath-taking.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord,” Romans 6:23. We earned death by sinning. Death of our peace of mind, death of our meaningful

relationships, and ultimately eternal death—being separated from God for eternity in Hell. These are the “natural consequences” of our sins and short comings.

Fortunately, God is willing to offer us the gift of salvation. The fact that we do not have to work for salvation (Ephesians 2:8-10) means that we are no longer bound to the tyrannical slave master of motivation by guilt. The reason the gospel leads to a fulfilling life is that it is a gift of love that is responded to with loving obedience (John 14:15).

This love-motivated service is the model for all other healthy relationships. The score-keeping mentality of “what have you done for me lately?” is removed. Both parties in the relationship (God and man, husband and wife, parent and child, friend and friend) act based on love rather than guilt, duty, obligation, legal restraint, or duress. That is the amazing affect of GRACE!

TRUTH #4: WE MUST ACCEPT THE GIFT

This is the “Christmas-morning principle.” The gift is yours only when you unwrap it. The way we accept God’s gift of salvation is by talking to God (prayer), telling Him that you understand these four truths, and committing to live out the implications of these truths. “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved,” Romans 10:9. Such a prayer might sound like this:

God, I know you have a plan for my life and that I have messed it up with my sin.

I realize that there is nothing I can do to change that.

Thank you for sending Jesus Christ to die on the cross for my sins.

I want to accept your free gift of salvation. I want to live the rest of my life as an expression of gratitude for this great thing you have done for me.

Thank you for your love and allowing me to love you in return.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FULFILLMENT

How does the gospel—these four truths—lead to a fulfilling life? We have already mentioned several ways. **Truth 1:** you have a relationship you can fully rely on. **Truth 2:** you do not have to hide who you really are. **Truth 3:** you can exchange guilt motivation for love motivation. **Truth 4:** you received the best, most permanent gift you could ever imagine.

As you can see the gospel is about more than Heaven and Hell. The gospel is about here and now, you and me, peace and joy. This is seen in many ways.

First and most obvious, you now have a purpose in living. You are God’s ambassador for the love and forgiveness you have received (2 Corinthians 5:20). God expects you to share this good news with people you know (Matthew 28:18-20). Life can no longer be boring or pointless. If it becomes that way, then you have forgotten your new purpose. You are an ambassador of the greatest message—salvation—from the very Creator of the world.

Second, pain now has meaning. When life was just about you and your pleasure, pain was tragic. It was irredeemable. It was wasted time in a brief life. Now your life is about honoring God. Pain becomes an instrument to refine your character (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4). Pain

becomes an opportunity for you to imitate Christ and draw others to Him (Colossians 1:24-25). You now have company, Christ and the church, to encourage and strengthen you during hard times (Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 12:1-2).

Third, you have something to offer in your relationships. Because you have access to the unending supply of God's love, you can now afford to no longer be a relational consumer. You can love your spouse, children, friends, neighbor, family members and strangers without having to be concerned over whether there will be enough affection left over for you. This is the approach to relationships that makes them flourish.

Fourth, you can quit being driven by performance. God saved you by grace; it would be foolish to now judge yourself by works (Galatians 3:1-3). The performance trap destroys the quality of your life and shortens its span (Matthew 6:27).

Finally, you can understand and overcome your sinfulness. Even after your salvation your sinful flesh is still active. Notice the testimony of Paul, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate," Romans 7:15. You no longer have to worry if this is normal. The Bible acknowledges our struggle with sin and guides us through the life-long process of overcoming it.

WHAT TO DO NOW?

If you did not pray your own version of the prayer on page three, continue to consider these four truths and their implications. Talk with Christian friends about them. Pray that God would make His truth clear to you.

1. If you did pray to accept God's gift of salvation, then there are a number of exciting things ahead for you.
2. Talk with your church, or the church that shared this flyer with you, about being baptized. This is a visual illustration of your identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:3-4).
3. Begin sharing this good news you have received with family and friends. Do not wait to begin acting as an ambassador for Christ. Start by teaching this brochure to someone who you know is not a follower of Christ.
4. Get involved in a regular Bible study group. This brochure references many Scripture passages, but there is so much of God to understand and love. The Bible is God's love letter telling you how to access the fulfilling life He promises. Learn to treasure it.

There is nothing more fulfilling than knowing your purpose and being able to pursue it with reckless, loving, passionate abandon. I hope this brochure has led you to your God-given purpose in life; that living out the implications of the gospel will radically transform your relationships with others for the better; and that you now have a permanent foundation to support you through the struggles and joys of life.