



Practical Christian Living

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you". Matthew 6:33
Course 4 Lesson 24

The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life



KEY VERSE:

*"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."
Romans 8:28*

Trouble is a part of this life. The Bible says, "Man is born unto trouble."¹ Sometimes Christians expect God to keep them from problems and hardship, but God has not promised to do this. Christians, as well as unsaved people, experience trials, troubles, and suffering.

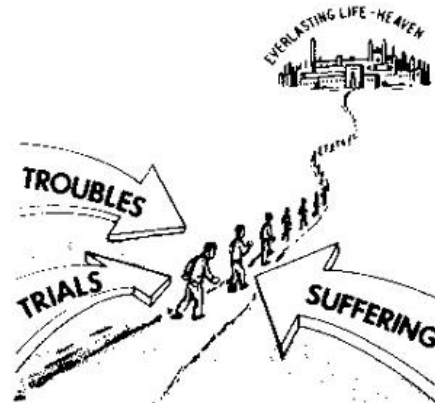
The way in which we meet the trials of life depends on the way we inwardly see and believe things to be. If we see things from a purely human point of view, we will be discouraged and defeated. If we see things from God's point of view, recognizing His wonderful character and seeing His hand in all our circumstances, we will know peace, joy, and happiness. In this lesson we will learn the Christian's secret of a happy life.

SOME THINGS WE MUST KNOW

Before we consider the steps to a happy Christian life, there are some things we must know:

1. We must know what to expect in this life.

There is a false teaching circulating among God's people which goes something like this: "Become a follower of Jesus Christ and all your troubles will be over. God will keep you from sickness and make you successful if you just believe the right things and claim them."



Trouble is a part of life.

Nowhere in the Bible does God promise this. Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation."² Trouble is a part of this life. No one escapes it. The Bible says, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble."³

Christians must expect trial and suffering. The Bible says, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."⁴ Again, the Bible says that we must "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."⁵

2. We must know that God loves us and desires only what is best for us.

The Bible says that God loves us as He loves His own Son. Because He loves us as He does, God desires only our best. He always seeks our highest good, even when we would gladly settle for less. When David thought of how much God loved him and how God was always thinking of him, he exclaimed,

*"How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!"
Psalm 139:17*

3. We must know God's goal for us in this life.

To understand God's dealings with us, we must know what His goal is for us. His goal is not just to make us happy and successful. God's goal for us is this: **To conform us to the image of His Son.** The Bible says,

*"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren."
Romans 8:29*

How does God conform us to the image of His Son? He does it through our circumstances and the discipline of the Holy Spirit. This involves trials, troubles, and suffering. Therefore we must ex-

pect these things since they are a necessary part of God's dealings with us to make us like Christ.

STEPS TO A HAPPY LIFE

To enjoy our Christian life and to enter into all that God has for us, there are some definite steps we must take:

1. We must believe that God is sovereign.

When we say that God is sovereign, we mean that He rules over everything in this world and in the entire universe. He has all power in Heaven and in earth. There is nothing that can hinder or prevent God from doing what He purpose to do. The Bible says,

"He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"
Daniel 4:35

Everywhere and at all times, God rules over His creation and exercises His sovereignty. The Bible says,

"Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places." Psalm 135:6

The Bible says that all things are God's "servants." This means that all things are used by God to accomplish His purposes. We tend to think that only the good people and the good things of life serve God. But God's Word tells us that all things, whether good or bad, are God's "servants" and must therefore do His will.

In Psalm 119, David is telling how he had been "almost consumed" by the proud, who had "dugged pits" for him and had "persecuted him wrongfully." Yet in the face of all these trials and troubles, he declared God's faith-

fulness and said that all things were God's servants. David wrote,

"Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: Thou hast established the earth, and it abides. They continue this day according to Thine ordinances: for ALL ARE THY SERVANTS."
Psalm 119:89-91

David realized this great truth: All things are God's servants and must therefore do His will. Even the fierce and cruel things of nature serve Him and fulfil His Word. The Bible says,

"Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire, and hail; snow, and vapors; stony wind FULFILLING HIS WORD."
Psalm 148:7,8

All things are God's servants. This is true, not only of the things of nature, but also of men, nations, and kings. All are under His control. The Bible says,

"The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord ... He turns it whithersoever He will."
Proverbs 21:1

Even Satan and those who serve him are used by God to accomplish His will. It was Satan who plotted the death of the Lord Jesus. It was Satan who put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. And it was Satan who instigated the crowds to cry out for His death. But Satan and his wicked followers were used by God as His "servants" to accomplish His perfect will for the salvation of men.

2. We must believe that God is good.

When trials and difficulties come to us, Satan tries to put his wrong thoughts into our mind. He suggests something like this, "God doesn't really love you.

How could a good God let this happen to you?"

If we accept Satan's wrong thoughts, they will lead us down into self-pity and depression. The remedy for wrong thinking is right thinking. God's Word tells us that God is good. This is true, regardless of our circumstances. The Bible says,

"Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for HE IS GOOD: for His mercy endures forever." Psalm 106:1

L. E. Maxwell, founder of Prairie Bible Institute, said, "When we can believe that God is good in having allowed some trial to come our way, then faith can believe that God is great, and abundantly able to deliver us."

There was nothing unusual about his two brothers and a sister that preceded him, but Charles Rentz was born with both arms ending in stubs and no legs below the knees. His birth came during the Christmas season. The holiday season for that Christian family turned into a time of prayer for guidance.

As soon as the parents of Charles realized that their baby had a good mind, they resolved to treat him as much like the other children as possible. His family, his friends, and his teachers never allowed him to feel or act differently from any others. They accepted him on equal terms and taught him that a wise person does not question the will of God.

Charles soon learned that everyone has some sort of challenge to face, not the same in having to operate with no hands or feet, but in doing the best possible job of living and serving God with whatever gifts God deems best to give him. He learned to write by placing his pen or pencil between the padded ends of his arms and moving them from his shoulders. Though he was not able to afford a colle-

ge education, Charles leaned all that he could. Best of all, he learned to love and trust God.

Today, Charles can capably perform any physical maneuver that he needs in his daily life. He drives his own car, moves confidently up and down stairs on crutches, rolls around his office in an ordinary office chair. He can dial a telephone, type, use an adding machine, play chords on a piano. He can dress himself to the final detail except for buttoning the topmost button on his shirt. He even puts on his tie. When any machine breaks down in his home or office, he can generally make the needed repairs himself. All of this is quite remarkable when we remember that he has no hands and not feet.

Charles has worked as a service station employee, an automobile salesman, an insurance agent, and as capable clerk of the circuit court in his county. He has a lovely home and a devoted family. His wife says, "The most rewarding part of my life has been living with Charles."

How did this man become a "classic in courage"? Charles himself tells the secret: "My entire life is built upon my faith in my Creator who has endowed me with so many blessings."



"My entire life is built upon my faith in my Creator who has endowed me with so many blessings." Charles Rentz

3. We must believe that God's will is perfect.

There are many mysteries in life that we cannot explain. Christians suffer the same tragedies

and sorrows as other people. Many things are hard for us to understand because we are seeing things from the earthly viewpoint and not from God's viewpoint. But God makes not mistakes. No matter how things may look in this fallen world, all of God's acts are perfect. His way cannot be improved upon. The Bible says,

"As for God, His way is perfect." Psalm 18:30

The story is told of a man who made a clock and showed it to a friend of his who had never before seen one.

The fashioner of the clock opened the back of it and asked the man what he thought of its maker. The man saw some wheels, and other smaller ones, some going one way and others another way, some wheels slow and other wheels fast. Seeing this seeming confusion, he answered, "I think the man who made that is mad." Then the maker took his friend to the front side of the clock and asked what he now thought of its maker. The man looked at the two hands of the clock moving smoothly and regularly, each one in its appointed circle, and both of them telling perfectly the time of day, and replied, "I think the man who made that is the wisest person who ever lived."⁶

This story helps us to understand a great truth concerning life. We are here on earth, and we see only the "earthly side" of God's doings, and thus we fail to see His perfect design and plan. The "wheels" are going every which way, and they sometimes seem to have no purpose or design. But, one day, we will see the "heavenly side" of God's doings. We will see His perfect design and plan for our life, and we will say, "Lord, I praise You and thank You. You way is indeed perfect."

"All of God's acts are done in perfect wisdom, first for His own glory, and then for the highest good of the greatest numbers for the longest time."⁷
A.W. Tozer,



4. We must surrender our will to God.

There is something within us, behind our feelings and our wishes, which decides everything and controls everything. What is it? It is our will.

Our will, which the Bible sometimes calls the "heart," is the stronghold of our entire being. It is not our feelings and our wishes that determine what we do. It is our will. In order for God to get complete control of us, He must possess our will. When God says, "My son, give me your heart."⁸ He is asking that our will be surrendered to Him. He does not ask for our feelings or our wishes. He wants our will.

Though God's will for us is indeed perfect, He does not force His will on us. God never takes

away from us our free will. If we do not surrender our will to God, then we will miss out on His perfect plan for our life.

What does it mean to surrender our will to God? It means to will what God wills, in all things and at all times. This allows God to work out His perfect plan in our life. A great saint of God said, "Our wills are ours to make them Thine."

5. We must believe that all things work together for good to those who love God.

Nothing that comes into the life of a Christian is accidental. All that comes to us is ordered or permitted by God. And all things that come to us work together for our eternal good. The Bible says,

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

The reason why all things work together for good to them that love God is that God is sovereign. All things are His servants, and He causes them to serve His children who love Him. We may not see how all things are working together for our eternal good, but we can know it because God says so.

"God's will and your best interests are always synonymous."
Charles Stanley

6. We must receive everything from the hand of God.

To the trusting child of God, everything comes from the Father's hand, no matter who may have brought it.

You may say, "I can accept a thing if I know that it has come from God, but I cannot accept the things that come to me as the

result of somebody's failure, or meanness, or sin. What about these things?"

We know that God cannot be the author of such things as meanness or sin; but the Bible teaches that nothing can touch a child of God except God wills it or permits it. And if God wills it or permits it, He does so because He sees that it will ultimately be a blessing to His child.

The Bible says that our life is "hid with Christ in God." We are surrounded by the very presence of God. Nothing can come to us or touch us except as God permits it. And, if He permits it to come to us, it is because He sees that it is for our good. It may have come from evil men and they may have intended it to be evil to us, but if God permits it to come to us, by the time it reaches us, it will be a blessing.

Take Joseph, for example. Few things could be worse than the action of his brothers in hating him and selling him into slavery. Undoubtedly, this was a terrible sin, and Joseph's brothers meant

time, Joseph saw God's hand of blessing in the whole matter and he said to his brothers, "You thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good."⁹

Your must utterly believe that everything that has happened to you is from God and is exactly what you need.
Madame Guyon

7. We must be thankful.

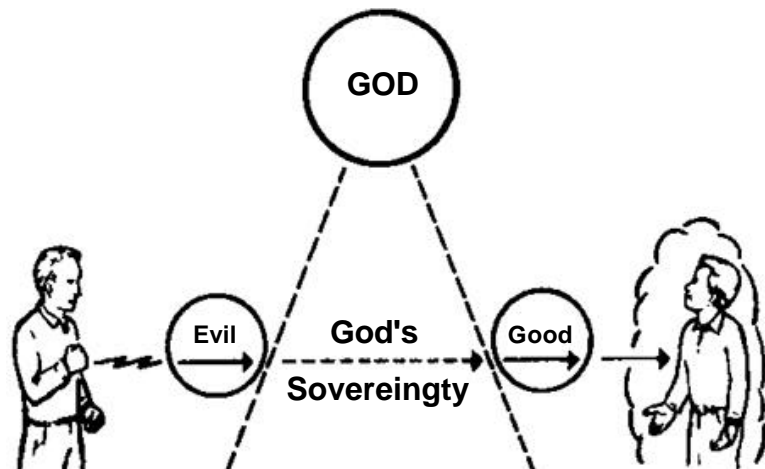
In all of God's dealings with us, He is teaching us to trust Him. The proof that we are trusting God in all our circumstances is thankfulness. The Bible says,

*"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."
1 Thessalonians 5:18*

THE CHRISTIAN'S SECRET OF A HAPPY LIFE

What is the Christian's secret of a happy life? In a nutshell it is this: Seeing God in all our circumstances.

Always in this life we have two choices before us. We can



Whatever God permits to come to us will be for our good by the time it reaches us. only evil to him. But God permitted it, and by the time it reached Joseph, it had become God's will for him. It turned out to be the greatest blessing in his whole life, though he did not see it then. In choose to "walk by sight" or we can choose to "walk by faith." To walk by sight means that we look at our circumstances and go by what we see. To walk by faith means that we look beyond our

circumstances and see God at work behind the scenes.

Let us illustrate what we mean. Suppose you are sitting in a house with a window which opens toward a beautiful mountain scene. There are two things you can do. You can look toward the window and let your gaze stop on the window glass itself with all its flaws and imperfections. Or you can let your gaze pass through the glass to behold the beauty of God's creation beyond.

In our situation, when we choose to "walk by sight," we see only our circumstances. But, when we choose to "walk by faith," we look beyond our circumstances and discover God at work.



Faith looks beyond circumstances and discovers God at work.

Faith is not some kind of feeling or emotion. **Faith is the choice of my will to believe what God says in His Word.**

By faith you can believe that God is in every circumstance that comes to you. By faith you can believe that His will is good and perfect and the very best thing for you, regardless of how things may look. By faith you can believe that all things are His "servants." By faith you can thank Him for everything that comes to you. By faith you can say, "I KNOW that all things are working together for my eternal good." Watchman Nee expressed these thoughts:

Formerly it was hard for us to believe the idea that things in the world could not move against His will; but now we know that every element in the universe - be it human, natural or supernatural - is under His careful scrutiny and clever ordering. We acknowledge that all things come to us either through His order or by His permission.

The soul that comes under the Holy Spirit's authority is a restful one. Once we busily planned; today we calmly trust in the Lord.

Once we were flushed with anxieties, today we are like a child quieted at its mother's breast. Once we entertained many thoughts and ambitions, today we consider God's will best and rest ourselves in Him.... We now seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness because we believe God will supply our daily need.¹⁰

*"He has done all things well."*¹¹



Discovered Gem

The secret of a happy life is seeing God in all my circumstances.

1. Job 5:7
2. John 16:33
3. Job 14:1
4. 2 Timothy 3:12
5. Acts 14:22
6. Quoted by L.E. Maxwell in "Abandoned to Christ," page 80 © Eerdman's Publishing Company. Used by permission.
7. A.W. Tozer, "Knowledge of the Holy," page 66 © Harper and Row
8. Proverbs 23:26
9. Genesis 50:20
10. Watchman Nee, "The Spiritual Man," 3 volumes, (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1968) Volume 1, pages 205, 206.
11. Mark 7:37

MEDITATION GUIDE

(TO STUDY AS YOU PREPARE FOR THE NEXT LESSON)

INSTRUCTIONS

On the following pages there is a Meditation Guide for each of the three lessons in this booklet. Each Guide has a key verse, comments, and questions that will help you to see from the Bible the main message of the lesson.

AFTER YOU FINISH the Question Pages, and have sent them in, we suggest that you work on the meditations. Do NOT send in your meditations. They are for you to personally use and keep.

THE PURPOSE of the Meditation Guide is to help you learn how to study the Bible on your own. It will help you to think (meditate) about a portion of Scripture in order to understand it. It will help you learn how to get in touch with God through His Word and through prayer.

MEDITATION. What does "meditation" mean? It does not mean to let your mind go blank. Quite the contrary, meditation means that you get hold of your thoughts and bring them all

together to concentrate on a portion of God's Word. As you do this, it gives the Lord an opportunity to make Himself known to you.

PAUSE TO PRAY. Before beginning each meditation, pause to pray, quieting your heart before the Lord so that you will be ready to hear what He has to say to you from the Bible.

If there are any words you do not understand, be sure to look them up in a dictionary.

MEMORY VERSE. You may wish to memorize the Key Verses, or other verses found in these Meditation Guides. Memorizing Scripture is one of the best means to meditate on God's Word. It would also be very helpful in keeping before you the main truth of each lesson.

NOTE: The King James Bible was used in preparing these Meditation Guides.

KEEP THIS GUIDE - DO NOT SEND IT IN

Lesson 24: THE CHRISTIAN'S SECRET OF A HAPPY LIFEKey Verse:

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

In Lesson 24, we learned that the secret to a happy life is seeing God in all our circumstances. Here is a practical exercise to help us see God's faithfulness in your life. Think for a moment of the worst things that ever happened to you. Write this down at the top of a piece of paper. Now think of the good things that came about as a result of the incident. See how many you can list. As you finish, thank God for His goodness and faithfulness. Thank Him for the truth of Romans 8:28. Memorize this verse.

RECOMMENDED READING - "Nothing sets the heart on fire like truth."

SIT, WALK, STAND, Watchman Nee (Christian Literature Crusade). The spiritual position, walk, and warfare of the Christian as set forth in Ephesians. Very readable.

THE ART OF PERSONAL WITNESSING, Lorne Sanny (Moody Press, 820 N. LaSalle St., Chicago, Ill. 60610). Written by the president of The Navigators, this book tells believers how to witness effectively.

THE PURSUIT OF GOD, A.W. Tozer (Christian Publications). A deeply spiritual book for every believer who hungers to know God.

BONE OF HIS BONE, F. J. Huegel (Zondervan, 1415 Lake Drive, Grand Rapids, MI 49506). The central theme is that we are to see in the cross of Christ not only expiation, but also identification.

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE, Watchman Nee (Christian Literature Crusade). A Christian classic setting forth in clear, understandable language the truths of the believer's union with Christ and the way of victory.

THE THREE-FOLD SECRET OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, James H. McConkey (Moody Press). A study of the incoming, fullness, and manifestation of the Holy Spirit by a most gifted Bible teacher. This is one of the simplest and clearest books available on this subject. Over five hundred thousand copies have been printed.

ABIDE IN CHRIST, Andrew Murray (Christian Literature Crusade, Fort Washington, PA 19034) A thirty-one chapter devotional study based on John 15. To thirsty souls this book can open up an entirely new and blessed experience in fellowship and communion with Christ.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY, A. W. Tozer, (Christian Publications, 25 South Tenth Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101). One of the best books ever written on the attributes of God. Every believer should read this at least once a year.

GOD'S WORD MADE PLAIN, Mr. Paul (Kay) Friederichsen (Moody Press). An excellent, bird's-eye course on what the Bible teaches. Many valuable pictorial illustrations.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Turn to the Question Page as you finish each lesson. Fill in the answers for that lesson before going on to the next lesson.
- 2. When you have studied all the lessons and have completed the Question Pages, prepare for mailing. Don't forget to write in your name and return address. Send in your ANSWER SHEET ONLY!

EXAM

Lesson 24

- 1. Before we consider the steps to a happy Christian life, there are some things we must know:
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
- 2. God's goal for us in this life is _____
- 3. Seven steps to a happy life are:
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
 - 4. _____
 - 5. _____
 - 6. _____
 - 7. _____
- 4. The Bible teaches that nothing can touch a child of God except God _____ it or _____ it. If He does so, it is because _____
- 5. In a nutshell, the Christian's secret of a happy life is _____

Send your exam to the following address:
Latin Evangelical Outreach
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 Irvington, New Jersey 07111-0549

Your Name and Address.....Please Print

Complete Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

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Do you have friends who would like to receive these lessons?

Please send us their address:

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Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____