

Die to Live

Introduction

I love that God speaks to our potential. He doesn't focus on our past, instead He focuses on our future. He knows who we are to become and He speaks that potential to us.

God knows that the person we are before we receive the Holy Spirit is nothing like the person we will become under His Guidance. All of us who are believers in Jesus have already lived two lives.

The sinful Satan following enemies of God....and then reborn into Children Of God. The change is so dramatic that often God changes people's names after they encounter Him.

Abram became Abraham. Sarai became Sarah. Jacob became Israel. Cephas became Peter, Saul became Paul...I know people who wanted to change their name when they accepted Christ. I often speak of Frank BC and Frank AD because we are nothing alike.

I think one of the reasons that God gave people new names is that they would hear that name and remember that God changed them.

God has already given His children new names, we just don't know what they are yet.

Revelation 2:17 (ESV) 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

Isaiah 62:2 (ESV) 2 The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give.

God renames His children and often places in order to reflect the changes that occur once man encounters the one true God.

Yet many believers still try to hold on to their old lives and just add Jesus to them. They think that Jesus just made them new and improved instead of making them someone completely new.

The Scriptures are clear. In order to fully live in the life led by the Holy Spirit you must die to the person you once were. You have to destroy the person that you were before Christ in order to live your new life in Christ. Whether we change our names or not, we must become one or the other.

Jesus constantly taught His disciples about their potential...both on earth and one day in heaven. He had to prepare these 12 men for His absence. He had to teach them about what was to come...the real reason for His mission.

You see Jesus had to die in order for us to live. That is our paradox today. You must die to live.

Our Passage Today

Mark 8:31–33 (ESV) 31 And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

Mark 8:34–35 (ESV) 34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.

Mark 8:36–38 (ESV) 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul? 38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

At another time, Jesus was teaching His disciples.

John 12:23–26 (ESV) 23 And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

During our Lord’s three years of ministry on earth, He not only taught the multitudes publicly, but He also taught His disciples privately and equipped them for the ministries they would have after He had returned to heaven. During these private sessions, He tried to explain to them what was going to happen, but without the Holy Spirit and because of God’s will, they didn’t really seem to understand what was going to happen.

Jesus knew that they did not yet understand. They could not imagine what God had planned. So, Jesus prayed for them....

John 17:8 (ESV) 8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

They understood who He was and where He came from....but they struggled understanding the mission and what Jesus was really here to do. So God send them a Helper. On the Day of Pentecost, He sent the Holy Spirit to teach them and enable them to recall what He had taught them.

John 14:26 (ESV) 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Notice that Jesus promised that they would understand what He had taught...the Spirit would remind you....If we surrender to Him, that same Holy Spirit will teach us, remind us, and empower us so that we might bear witness of Him

Until the day of Pentecost...the disciples were on their own to try and understand.

Mark 8:31 (ESV) 31 And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.

The time had come for Jesus to tell the apostles clearly that He was going to Jerusalem to die. The apostles had been given “metaphorical hints” of Christ’s sacrificial death, but now the Master was clearly explaining it to them. John the Baptist had called Him “the Lamb of God”, which clearly speaks of sacrifice.

And Jesus spoke of His “temple” being destroyed and built up again. He spoke to Nicodemus (and whomever else was present) about the serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness, and He compared Himself to the prophet Jonah, whose experience with the great fish pictures death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus told them that He was headed to Jerusalem for a purpose.

Luke 13:33 (ESV) 33 Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.’

The apostles were learning slowly and painfully. They had attended the synagogue and the temple where the Scriptures were read and expounded, so they had heard the things pertaining to the Messiah . But the priests and scribes did not have a clear understanding of the subject.

The Old Testament speaks of both a suffering Messiah and a reigning Messiah, and the teachers could not explain this puzzling conflict between suffering and glory. Some taught that there would be two Messiahs! One to suffer and one to rule.

Yet Jesus made it clear to His apostles that He was the Messiah and that it was prophesied that He would be rejected by His people, suffer humiliation and pain, and finally die on the cross. First the suffering and then the glory, as Peter makes clear in his first epistle

Yet even after teaching clearly, it was obvious that the disciples weren't catching it. After Jesus had spoken about the cross, James and John selfishly asked Him to give each of them a throne !

I wonder how many times the apostles had seen convicted criminals, each carrying his cross out to the place of execution.

So humiliating and inhuman was crucifixion that it was not mentioned in polite company, and no one would have made a cross into a piece of jewelry any more than

we today would the electric chair or the gallows. Jesus had declared what lay before Him and His disciples, and there was no denying it or escaping it. The Son of Man must be lifted up

John 3:14–15 (ESV) 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

It wasn't just James and John...Peter joined in as well...

Mark 8:32–33 (ESV) 32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Before we criticize Peter severely for his impetuous words (imagine telling God what to do!), we must remember that what he said was meant to be an expression of his love for Christ. He did not want Him to suffer and die.

He was a young believer and still had much to learn; but he loved Jesus and could not understand why He had to die. Peter did not realize that Satan was using him to discourage Jesus from obeying His Father's will

So Jesus shared with His disciples what was to come. They didn't understand it at the time, but later the Spirit would explain it to them. In the moment, it seemed like nonsense to them.

Peter had previously declared that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the Living God. He knew where He came from...but He didn't understand where Jesus was going and why,

Peter essentially cried Save Yourself....

"Save yourself" is the world's philosophy of life, but Jesus pointed out that "give yourself" is His philosophy of life.

Note that "Jesus turned" (the Greek is "turned sharply") and looked at the other disciples before He rebuked Peter, because what He said to Peter applies to all of His followers

The basic question is, "Whose side are we on, God's or Satan's?" There must never be compromise. Nobody is more dangerous to the work of God than a leader out of the will of God. We see this demonstrated dramatically in the sins of Abraham, Jacob, Joshua, King Saul, and King David. When Satan succeeds in causing a leader to stumble and fall, he influences the lives of many people and robs God of glory.

Peter rebuked the Lord immediately after he had been blessed by Jesus for his confession of faith. Often it is when we are at a Spiritual high that Satan attacks.

We must learn to walk by faith, no matter what the circumstances are around us or the feelings within us. Both may be deceptive and motivate us to do the wrong thing. Peter

was sure he could die for the Lord, yet he went to sleep in the garden and later denied the Lord three times

Peter had no idea that he was speaking on behalf of Satan. He loved Jesus and yet Jesus tells him that he is speaking for Satan. Not what Jesus actually says...For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

We can love Jesus and may think we are directed by the Spirit, but we might be deceived by the spirits! "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God"

We must pray, walk in the Spirit, and feed on the word of God so that we always have the discernment to detect the devil's counterfeit offers. We need discernment from the Lord, for the enemy is a skillful deceiver. He fooled Peter...He can fool you and me.

Mark 8:34–37 (ESV) 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul?

Life is a precious gift from God, and we can do three things with that gift.

1. We can waste our lives having a "good time" and one day come to the end only to discover we had not really lived and worse, meet Jesus and know that we have forfeited our Souls.
2. Or we can spend our lives, living comfortably like our friends and neighbors but lacking purpose and the blessing of God. We live only to please ourselves. We might leave something behind, but we have not sent anything ahead. We would also meet Jesus and know that we have forfeited our souls.

But hopefully, Our choice must be to invest our lives, to give everything to the Lord, follow Him in everything, and let Him determine the dividends. When we meet Jesus our Souls will be welcomed into eternity. Going home becomes a natural expression of the changing life in us.

This kind of life, a life of abiding and investing ourselves, is called "discipleship." It is what Jesus meant when He said to the disciples and the crowd,

Disciples devote themselves to their relationship with Jesus. They surrender in order to be transformed. They die to their old way of living in order to embrace the new life that God has for them. They die so that they can live.

At another time, Jesus was teaching His disciples. He spoke of three people who seemed interested in following Him and being discipled. Each one however, could not walk away from their old way of living. They wanted to add Jesus to the plans that they had already made for themselves. In one way or another, all three wanted to hold on to their old lives without fully following Jesus. They really just wanted Jesus to follow them.

Luke 9:57–58 (ESV) 57 As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” 58 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

Luke 9:59–60 (ESV) 59 To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” 60 And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

Luke 9:61–62 (ESV) 61 Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” 62 Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

The phrase “me first” shows up twice in this narrative (vv. 59, 61), but “me first” should never be on the lips or in the mind of a true disciple. It must be “Jesus first.” Here’s how Jesus describes a disciple...

Mark 8:34 (ESV) 34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

None of the three men involved in this episode really understood discipleship. The first one wanted assured comfort, but disciples must deny themselves. The second man wanted to wait for his father to die, his father had not yet died. We know that because if his father had just died and was waiting to be buried, he would not be out in public but would be making arrangements. He was really telling Jesus, I will follow you after I get my inheritance. Yet Jesus taught that the son was supposed to take up his cross and die daily! The third man wanted to enjoy a farewell party, something he could look back upon with good memories. But true disciples do not look back; they look ahead and follow Jesus.

Our Lord’s message is clear: every believer is not called into “full-time Christian service,” but every believer is called into full-time Christian living, which is discipleship

It is important to notice the tenses of the verbs in Mark 8:34: we deny ourselves once and for all ; we take up our cross once and for all; we follow Him obediently and never look back.

If like the three would-be disciples, we pamper ourselves and try to save ourselves, we lose our lives and will never have an opportunity to live them again.

Mark 8:35 (ESV) 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.

Many people decide to accept Christ as their Savior, but don't embrace the sacrifice required to be one of His disciples.

They claim to follow Jesus but they are not doing so. They want to hold on to their sinful lifestyles that worship Satan. They have believed a lie that they can continue in a sinful lifestyle and still follow Jesus. People who truly follow Jesus must give up their prior sinful lives, materialism, homosexuality, sexual confusion, drug addiction, heterosexual relationships outside of marriage, pornography, chasing money....Those things come from the old you. You must die to those things, literally to agree with God

and hate them, before you can truly live in Christ. If you refuse to surrender all of your prior life to Jesus....then you will lose your life.

Becoming a Disciple is not just about wanting what God offers....salvation...It is about wanting to become just like Jesus. Disciple comes from the root word that gives us discipline. True followers of Jesus will discipline their lives and surrender each day so that the Holy Spirit can transform them to be just like Jesus. Once we decide to surrender to God's truth and accept Jesus as Lord...Lord...that means He tells us truth...then He will send His helper to give you the power to live a new life separate from the sinful one you have known. When Jesus said, "Come and Follow Me" He was really saying, come and I will transform your heart into mine. We will kill your old self and build a new self...one focused and surrendered to me.

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1 Corinthians 6:9–11 (ESV)

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

As Paul says, we have become a new creation and note who does it.

2 Corinthians 5:16–18 (ESV) 16 Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

We surrender....We discipline our lives to put Him first and then God transforms us to be more like Christ. The more we are willing to surrender....the more we are transformed.

The flesh part of us always told us to do what feels good to us. To allow ourselves to indulge in all that we desire to do. We must die to all that we previously desired...

Our Lord does not tell us to deny this thing or that thing but to deny ourselves. That takes care of everything! He does not give me a crown and make me a celebrity, but He does give me a cross and make me a living sacrifice and a laboring servant

To live for myself and gain the whole world with its wealth, pleasures, and honors is to lose everything! When a famine occurred in Canaan, Abraham disobeyed the Lord and escaped to Egypt, taking his nephew Lot with him.

And that was the beginning of Lot's gaining the world but losing his life. Once he had a taste of Egypt (the world), he started walking by sight and not by faith and measuring everything by Egypt. The result was tragedy for Lot and his family.

John 10:10 (ESV) 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

In order to give us life, He gave His own life on the cross. And now He asks that we give our lives to Him so that others may hear the message of eternal life.

We give ourselves to Jesus for His sake and for the sake of sinners who do not know the gospel. This is the paradox of the victorious and fruitful Christian life: we lose our lives to gain His life and we share our lives that others may know Him. It is for His sake and the sake of the gospel.

Mark 8:38 (ESV) 38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

After our Lord had taught His disciples about the cross, He immediately moved into a lesson about His future glorious kingdom and the glory they would share. In the Christian life, suffering and glory go together. I have often seen a plaque in Christian homes that reads, "No cross, no crown."

Jesus demonstrated that simple statement when He took Peter, James, and John to the Mount of Transfiguration where the Father revealed the Son's glory and the glory of the coming kingdom.

It is interesting to note that Jesus involved these three disciples in the same three experiences: the transfiguration (Mark 9:1–13), the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead (Mark 5:21–43), and our Lord's prayer of agony in the garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32–42).

Notice the pattern of these three events.... They saw the literal spiritual change in Jesus.... Transfigured...transformed into glory....then they saw evidence of overcoming death... raised from the dead....then the prayer of surrender of the will to God's purposes.

When we accept Christ we are reborn spiritually....we share in the resurrection of Christ as our old self is destroyed and we walk in newness of life in the Spirit and then we have the power in us to fully surrender to Christ and to whatever God had called us to do. To live for God we must first die to ourselves.

Peter, prior to receiving the Holy Spirit, was used by Satan to challenge Jesus. But later the Lord told Peter about Peter's future. Peter would suffer for Christ....The apostle Peter embraced the truth that obedient suffering ultimately leads to glory.

Jesus told him that one day he would stretch out his hands and be crucified (John 21:18–19); and when it did happen, Peter knew there was glory awaiting him, just as it awaited Jesus when

He was crucified. Peter has come a long way....by the time he wrote First Peter, he knew that giving up his life for Christ would bring eternal glory.

The believers were under intense persecution and in his letter to them, Peter urged them to lead godly lives so that they might glorify Jesus and bear witness to unbelievers. Dying to yourself can involve suffering.

Our Lord never taught that the Christian life was easy, comfortable, and without dangers. I have heard that kind of preaching from the "health and wealth" evangelists and have rejected it because Jesus taught just the opposite

If we suffer because we have done wrong, we deserve it; but if we suffer for doing good and standing for the right, that is another matter

I once saw a poster that read, "If Jesus is your Lord, then the future is your friend." Our suffering for Christ today means glory with Him in the future. Our Savior's wounds from Calvary are today glorified in heaven! If we have been faithful, we will one day see our own scars transformed into radiance to the glory of God. We must lose our life if we would save it. But if we save it for ourselves, we will lose it.

So how does this apply to us today? I mean we are probably not going to be asked to be a martyr. How do we lose our lives in order to save them.

All of us are born with a sin nature. We spend a good deal of our lives trying to find purpose, peace, and contentment. We try to figure out who we really are and why we are here. Without the Holy Spirit to guide us, we are going to make plans and decisions that don't align with the purpose and plan that God has for our lives.

We pursue what the world tells us to pursue. We do what the world's experts tell us to do to be successful and to find happiness. Satan tells us lies and we chase them thinking that they will bring to us what we are missing.

Prior to knowing Christ the best we can do is to try to sort out this life in a fallen world based on our knowledge and understanding. We actually get very comfortable in our dysfunction. We chase our idols and they get our undivided attention. Power, position, influence, the praise of others, pride, arrogance, selfishness....we all developed a life plan based on what we understood about ourselves.

Often we don't think our lives are based on lies...we just haven't yet found the right pursuit...so we keep searching. Not knowing that it is our very nature that we must change but are powerless to do so.

But then we surrender our lives to Jesus. Notice that we surrender our lives....All of the plans, expectations, and comfort that we have found for ourselves. We give up what we know....to embrace what God promises. It is an act of faith...

We have to die to our way of life, our way of understanding and our way of living in the world. We must admit that we have bought a whole series of lies and that our lives are based on false truths and promises.

Once we surrender to Jesus we are born again. Literally new Spiritual beings. We are born into God's family and given the Holy Spirit who begins to show us what God desires for our lives.

Suddenly our eyes are opened and we see things from God's perspective rather than our own. We begin to surrender our truth to that that the Holy Spirit teaches. As the Spirit guides us and leads us, we discover that we are a completely different person than the one that followed Satan.

What we call spiritual growth and maturity is really our surrender to God's truth and our hate of the world's truth. We faster we surrender to God's agenda for our lives the faster we grow in Christ.

God created, designed and gifted each of us for a purpose that He has for us. Each one of us is a perfectly crafted one of a kind miracle of God. But, we could never understand or live out that purpose without the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit.

In a sense, we are a perfectly designed software program that accomplishes a very specific purpose, but we were not born into the right operating system. We are perfectly crafted to accomplish incredible things, but we must be under the operating system of the Holy Spirit to do so. We cannot operate God's program in Satan's operating system.

So the Paradox of loosing your life to find it means that you must reject everything about your life and surrender to God's plans for your life.

We must give up the life we have known....for the life that Christ promises. To finally live..we must first die. Jesus said that every time we take communion, we proclaim His death and resurrection until He returns. On the night prior to His crucifixion...Jesus held up the bread..this is my body...and He held up the wine...this is my blood....Do this to remember me.

As we take communion today, I want you to process some things with God. Is there anything remaining of my old life that you want me to die to? Anything about the old me that I have refused to surrender? Anything about the new me that I have refused to embrace? Am I investing my life in God's plans or my own? If I must die to live....have I done so? Let's Pray.