

A Life Worth Living

Joe Slater

In 1978 Waylon Jennings had a hit song about the obscure central Texas town of Luckenbach (current population 13). The opening line of the song was: “The only two things in life that make it worth livin’ . . .” Then it proceeded to name those two things. The first was well-tuned guitars (or, to quote the song, “guitars that’s tuned good”). The second I will omit for reasons that are obvious to those familiar with the song.

As fine as well-tuned guitars might be, I submit the song’s writer had no idea what brings real value to life! However, I should credit him with at least realizing that happiness doesn’t result from great riches. One of the lines suggested to his wife that they sell her diamond rings, buy some boots and faded jeans, and go away. Another mentioned the failure of their big house with a four-car garage to bring contentment.

Jesus warned, *“Take heed and beware of all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses”* (Luke 12:15). To illustrate His point, He told the parable of the rich fool (vv. 16-21). That man had so much wealth stored away that he had to build larger facilities to store the current harvest! Does that sound like a problem you’d like to have? If so, think again! The rich fool’s focus on himself brought him nothing but condemnation.

“Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure with trouble” (Proverbs 15:16). The next verse follows up: *“Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted calf with hatred.”*

Fear of the Lord and love: Those aren’t the only two things in life that make it worth living, but I’ll put them up against the two in the country song any day!

Prepared And Ready

"And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire" (Jude 1:22-23).

Just the other day, I finally took a Red Cross first aid course that included CPR, AED, and other critical responses to life and death situations. It was an intense four hours of training, and it will require re-certification every two years. I want to be prepared if a situation arises and make a difference for someone who might die without immediate intervention.

Since this article is about spiritual matters, you know where this is going. The lost or erring Christians have different conditions that demand specific treatment. Just as you wouldn’t give the Heimlich maneuver to a burn victim, you don’t teach the book of Revelation to someone who doesn’t know the gospel. One must know the needs of the unbeliever and erring Christian to bring them to a spiritually healthy state with the Lord.

Speaking of the Heimlich maneuver (abdominal thrusts), it’s used to remove obstacles to provide a clear airway. We must make a clear path in reaching the lost and erring. We must show them our love and concern. Although helping to save a life doesn’t demand that we even know the person, the most effective way to reach others with the gospel is to develop friendships. This is not an underhanded method to reach the lost, but a sincere effort to get acquainted and show the person we really care about them. We must care for the whole person.

I have performed the Heimlich maneuver twice, and it has given me such a blessing to have possibly saved a life. Why don’t we realize that saving souls gives an even greater blessing than saving lives? Daniel writes, *“Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever”*(12:3).

Those who are attentive can spot a person in trouble and in need of intervention. What about those who are lost or erring? Let’s prepare ourselves and look for opportunities to lead others to everlasting life! We might just snatch souls out of the fire.

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)

Things Aren't Always As They Seem

"Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore, Eli took her to be a drunken woman" (I Sam. 1:13 ESV).

Hannah, a godly woman of Israel, was unable to bear children thus she looked to God, in prayer, for a solution. Eli, a high priest, observed Hanna and accused her of drunkenness. Things aren’t always as they seem.

Recently I read the story of a man who was coming home from war. He called his parents, informing them that he was bringing a friend to live with them. He explained that the friend had lost an arm and a leg in battle. The parents objected on the basis that it would be too much of a burden for them. The next day the parents received a call to come and identify the body of a man who had committed suicide. They identified the deceased as their son. The son, by the way, was missing an arm and a leg. Things aren’t always as they seem.

This story gave me goose bumps! It is a story that should give cause for each of us to think more soberly, and seriously, about things going on around us because things aren’t always as they seem.

We are familiar with Paul’s exhortation to examine ourselves as we partake in the Lord’s Supper observance (I Cor. 11:28). But self-examination is not confined to this one event. No indeed. Self-examination is something that should be, to the Christian, an ongoing thing. *“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test”*(II Cor. 13:5). In Lamentations 3:40 we read, *“Let us examine and probe our ways, and let us return to the Lord.”*

We examine ourselves to ensure that we live up to Christian standards set forth by God, which will determine our assessment, and treatment, of others. We must look, soberly and honestly, at each situation that we encounter for things are not always as they seem.

The Psalmist’s exhortation is, *“Examine me, O Jehovah, and prove me; Try my heart and my mind”*(Psalm 26:2 ASV). Let us examine ourselves to ensure that God finds in us pure and acceptable motives and actions because things aren’t always as they seem.

--Roy Crutcher (Mt. Carmel, IL)