

**How to Flourish in a
Crooked and Perverse Generation
John 17:3; Philippians 2:14, 15**

Introduction

The Center for Bible Engagement (www.c4be.org) surveyed 40,000 Christians in 24 countries, from all walks of life, ranging in ages 8 – 80 on the subject of Bible reading frequency. They published their results in 2009 in a report called *The Power of 4*.

They discovered that people who read the Bible four times a week are ...

- **59% less likely to watch pornography**
- **57% less likely to get drunk**
- **74% less likely to gamble**
- **68% less likely to engage in sex outside of marriage**
- **38% less lonely**
- **32% less likely to get angry**
- **407% more likely to memorize Scripture**
- **228% more likely to share their faith with others**

The surveyors reported that Christians who do not read their Bible live lives pretty much the same as non-believers.

They added ...

“Like sheep, we tend to drift away from our Shepherd. Living in a world filled with temptations, disconnection from God’s Word can increase our chances of giving in to those temptations. Without a firm grasp of the Bible, nurtured through daily reading or listening, we weaken our ability to defend the faith we claim, [we are] less confident to share that faith with others, and [we are] more vulnerable to falling prey to false teachings” (Cole & Ovwigho, 2009, p. 6).

Of note to me ... people who read (or listen to) their Bible 4 times a week experience a 60% drop in feelings of spiritual stagnation.

People who possess eternal life are people who want to be in the Word and make time for it. People, in this study who don’t take time to be in the Word four times a week confess they are “too busy.” The excuse puts these folks in a serious possibility they are not regenerate, their priorities are elsewhere. Their entertainment choices, their vocabulary, and the lifestyle is not all that much different than the non-Christian. Regardless of where you see yourself this morning, I’d like you to consider Jesus words in John 17:3.

Read ...

“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3).

- This is a thin slice of Jesus High Priestly Prayer, He prayed with His disciples the night before His crucifixion.
- We see communion between the Father and the Son.
- We get to listen in on Jesus Prayer to the Father ... God talking to God!
- He answers the question of what a person who has eternal life does with his time ... he is hungry to know God.

My goal this morning is to share: **Three insights on what it means to pursue the knowledge of God in a way that enables us to flourish in a morally grungy generation.**

I. Pursuing God is Essential to Eternal Life (John 17:3)

- “Eternal life” means when this life ends; we breathe our last; it continues in the next realm as eternal life or eternal death.
- It is the luxurious gift that costs us nothing!

“Eternal life in the Bible measures quantity and quality. It is not simply life that never ends, but a fullness of life that is unending.”

Note: The Apostle John loved to write about Jesus’ reference to “*eternal life*.” In his writings, he answers five essential questions about it.

A. What is eternal life?

- **It is an ongoing relationship with God from now on into forever.**
- **John 10:10b ... It is “abundant” lavish life ... ‘more than necessary’ ... “*I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*”**

B. Where does eternal life originate? ... God’s only begotten Son

- **John 3:16 ... “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*”**
- This verse answers the next question ...

C. How does one receive eternal life? ... belief, complete trust in Jesus Christ

- **John 17:3 ... “*This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*”**
 - ... “*knowledge*” here refers to information we experience with a person as we study and share different experiences with them.
 - Eternal life is equated with the knowledge of God and the Son.
- **John 3:36a ... “*He who believes in the Son has eternal life*” ... the last half of this verse answers the next question ...**

D. What happens to a person who rejects Jesus Christ? ... God’s wrath abides on him

- **John 3:36b ... “*but ... he who does not obey (believe) the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*”**
- **I John 5:12 ... “*He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*”**

Note: One of the basic pieces of evidence of a person who has eternal life is a person with a desire to know God the Father and the Son! It is more than a Sunday morning pursuit. Those who are preoccupied with the things of this world and no interest in God, do not have eternal life.

E. Can a person be certain he has eternal life? ... yes, absolutely

- **I John 5:13 ...** “*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.*”
- God does not want His family members to live in doubt and uncertainty.

Note: Exhortations to know Christ is repeated by the Apostle Peter ...

- **II Peter 3:18 ...** “*but grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*”

AGCC makes every effort to help people know God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One of the basic classes we offer is taught by Pastor Frank Mascaro: “A Look at the Book” ... Sunday morning, first hour in room 200.

This is basic ... this is where the ability to flourish, the opportunity to thrive in a crooked and perverse generation begins ... now we move to the testimony of the Apostle Paul who helps us put this pursuit of know Christ in the context of living in our present generation.

(so ... I) Pursuing God is essential to eternal life) ...

II. Pursuing God was a Priority to the Apostle Paul (Philippians 3:7-10)

A. Advantages he had felt at one time in his life had now, because of His knowledge of Christ been pushed into the lane of loss! (3:7, 8)

He considered these things as ... “*rubbish*” ... (*skubalon*) in comparison with knowing Christ (8b).

B. Knowing Christ was now most important to him ... “*surpassing value*” (3:8b).

The Greek expression tells us his desire to know Christ was ‘held up and over’ everything else in this world.

Note: To the Colossians he wrote ...

“*Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth*” (Colossians 3:1, 2).

- As a result of our belief and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior.
- As a result of our personal pursuit of the knowledge of the Father and the Son.
- As a result of becoming an inheritor of eternal life.
- We have been identified with Christ in His death burial and resurrection (symbolized in our public testimony of water baptism) ... we have ... “*been raised up with Christ*” (3:1a) ...

What are we to do?

- ... “*keep seeking the things above*” ... we are to ... “*set our minds on the things above, not on the things on the earth.*”
- Why are we to stop setting our minds on earthy things? Answer ... this was in his day ... “*a crooked and perverse generation*” (Philippians 2:15).

Example: I was reminded of this crookedness and perversity when Carolyn told me of a young lady she was ministering to on face time. She was a passionate fan of Taylor Swift. Carolyn looked up the words to this entertainer’s songs and asked the young lady if she knew them. She didn’t but explained she just liked the tunes. When the two of them reviewed the words that were filtering into her subconscious, she stopped listening to this crooked and perverse entertainer. Parents and grandparents who don’t want Satan to have their kids should be encouraged to review the words to the music their loved ones listen to.

This change in thinking was essential in helping Paul understand his place in a warped and morally stubborn generation.

III. Pursuing God Produced a Life for Paul that Enabled Him to Flourish in a World of Putrefaction and Perversion (2:14-16).

- A. He was able to ... put the welfare of others above his own (1:3-11).**
- B. He was able to ... see the sovereign hand of God even in his imprisonment (1:12-20)**
- C. He was able to ... see that death was not the worst thing that could happen to him (1:21-26).**
- D. He was able to ... rejoice in his blessings and his trials (16 references to joy and rejoice in the book).**
- E. He knew how to ... live with little and with much. He found contentment in it all (4:10-13).**
- F. He was able to say ... “follow me as I follow Christ” (3:17; 4:9).**

Conclusion: The expression “*eternal life*” speaks of the values of quantity and quality of life.

- Quantity – it is not bound by time as we know it here on earth ... it is a life that begins with our expression of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
- Quality – Jesus called it an “abundant” life ... exceeding expectation ... ‘more than necessary’

Eternal life is a gift God gives us in response to our faith and trust expressed toward Him that produces an insatiable appetite to know Him. This pursuit of this knowledge sustains us, it keeps us stable in the ups and downs of our Christian sojourn in the midst of our “crooked and perverse generation.”

Life Group Discussion Questions – April 28, 2024

John 17:3 *This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

Philippians 2:14-15 *Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,*

DISCOVER

1. For what reason did you become Christian? Paul didn't just have a reason per se, he had an experience with the Living God. Contrast your response to the first question with Paul's realization that Jesus is God. Read Acts 9:1-19 if needed. From this point forward, what was the mission of Paul? How has your purpose for living changed since being chosen by God and believing in Him?
2. Before Paul could be useful to God, what did he need to learn? Contrast this with your preparation to serve God. What are some of the things you have learned about God since becoming a Christian? What is your primary resource(s) for learning about God? Are there places you should avoid if the goal is the pursuit of God in truth?
3. Colossians 3:1-2 reminds us of the position of Christ and exhorts us to keep our minds on things above. What does it mean, in everyday life, to keep our minds on things above?

EXPLORE

1. Read John 17:3 and John 10:10-11. What is eternal life? What is eternal death? What is it about God that burns in your heart so that you might yearn to know Him more fully? In contrast, the thief comes to only steal and kill and destroy. The right choice seems obvious, so why doesn't everyone believe in God? What is meant by living life abundantly? Looking at Paul, what about his life demonstrated abundant living? In what areas are you living life abundantly?
2. Where does eternal life begin or who does it begin with? Read John 3:16-21. Why can't there be many paths to God? How do you respond to someone that says your beliefs are too exclusive? Read 1 John 4:19. What difference does it make if Jesus loved us first or we love Him first?
3. How does one receive eternal life? What characterizes someone who has complete trust in Jesus? How can a person be certain they have eternal life? Read 1 John 5:13. Do you ever doubt that you have eternal life? How does 1 John 5:13 contradict such uncertainty? Why does God want us to be certain of our relationship with Him? Read Isaiah 26:3-4. What is meant by being steadfast of mind? What good comes from being steadfast of mind?
4. What happens to a person who rejects Jesus Christ? Who do non-believers trust? Read John 3:36 and 1 John 5:12. What is meant by "the wrath of God abides in him"?

EXPERIENCE

1. The pursuit of God was a priority to Paul as written in Philippians 3:7-11. How are you pursuing God? How does your pursuit of God enable you to flourish? What about your life would make a non-believer want to pursue God? What about your life might be considered rubbish? What is the power of His resurrection? How does this power change your life and testimony?

PRAY

Pray... Jesus, You are the way, and the truth, and the life. We want to be a reflection of Your love to a crooked and perverse generation. You are our confidence that we may attain the resurrection from the dead so that eternity with you will be our reality forever and ever. Please come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Life Group Discussion Questions – April 28, 2024

John 17:3 *This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

Philippians 2:14-15 *Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,*

DISCOVER

1. For what reason did you become Christian? Paul didn't just have a reason per se, he had an experience with the Living God. Contrast your response to the first question with Paul's realization that Jesus is God. Read Acts 9:1-19 if needed. From this point forward, what was the mission of Paul? How has your purpose for living changed since being chosen by God and believing in Him?
2. Before Paul could be useful to God, what did he need to learn? Contrast this with your preparation to serve God. What are some of the things you have learned about God since becoming a Christian? What is your primary resource(s) for learning about God? Are there places you should avoid if the goal is the pursuit of God in truth?
3. Colossians 3:1-2 reminds us of the position of Christ and exhorts us to keep our minds on things above. What does it mean, in everyday life, to keep our minds on things above?

EXPLORE

1. Read John 17:3 and John 10:10-11. What is eternal life? What is eternal death? What is it about God that burns in your heart so that you might yearn to know Him more fully? In contrast, the thief comes to only steal and kill and destroy. The right choice seems obvious, so why doesn't everyone believe in God? What is meant by living life abundantly? Looking at Paul, what about his life demonstrated abundant living? In what areas are you living life abundantly?
2. Where does eternal life begin or who does it begin with? Read John 3:16-21. Why can't there be many paths to God? How do you respond to someone that says your beliefs are too exclusive? Read 1 John 4:19. What difference does it make if Jesus loved us first or we love Him first?
3. How does one receive eternal life? What characterizes someone who has complete trust in Jesus? How can a person be certain they have eternal life? Read 1 John 5:13. Do you ever doubt that you have eternal life? How does 1 John 5:13 contradict such uncertainty? Why does God want us to be certain of our relationship with Him? Read Isaiah 26:3-4. What is meant by being steadfast of mind? What good comes from being steadfast of mind?
4. What happens to a person who rejects Jesus Christ? Who do non-believers trust? Read John 3:36 and 1 John 5:12. What is meant by "the wrath of God abides in him"?

EXPERIENCE

1. The pursuit of God was a priority to Paul as written in Philippians 3:7-11. How are you pursuing God? How does your pursuit of God enable you to flourish? What about your life would make a non-believer want to pursue God? What about your life might be considered rubbish? What is the power of His resurrection? How does this power change your life and testimony?

PRAY

Pray... Jesus, You are the way, and the truth, and the life. We want to be a reflection of Your love to a crooked and perverse generation. You are our confidence that we may attain the resurrection from the dead so that eternity with you will be our reality forever and ever. Please come, Lord Jesus. Amen.