

DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE

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Preface

For Christians and Non-Christians

The Bible says, ***“You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body”*** (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). I have written this book to help you taste those words as sweet instead of bitter or boring.

You would not have picked up this book if God were not at work in your life.

“Glorify God in your body.” This is the meaning of your life.

It was not always plain to me that pursuing God’s glory would be virtually the same as pursuing my joy. Now I see that millions of people waste their lives because they think these paths are two and not one.

There is a warning. The path of God-exalting joy will cost you your life. Jesus said, *“Whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.”* In other words, **it is better to lose your life than to waste it.** If you live gladly to make others glad in God, your life will be hard, your risks will be high, and your joy will be full. ***Some die in the service of Christ. That will not be a tragedy. Treasuring life above Christ is a tragedy.***

Remember, you have one life. That’s all. You were made for God. Don’t waste it.

CHAPTER 1

My Search for a Single Passion to Live By

My father was an evangelist.

He had stories of glorious conversions and stories of horrific refusals to believe... followed by tragic deaths.

The story that gripped me more than all the stories of young people who died in car wrecks before they were converted—the story of an old man weeping that he had wasted his life. God awakened in me a fear and a passion not to waste my life.

Another riveting force in my life—a sign that hung in our kitchen:

**Only one life,
Twill soon be past;
Only what's done
For Christ will last.**

The message was clear. You get one pass at life. That's all. Only one. And the lasting measure of that life is Jesus Christ.

What would it mean to live well—not to waste life? What was the opposite of not wasting my life? To be successful in a career? Or “to be maximally happy”? Or... to accomplish something great? Or “to find the deepest meaning and significance”? Or “to help as many people as possible”? Or “to serve Christ to the full”? Or “to glorify God in all I do”? Or was there a point, a purpose, a focus, an essence to life that would fulfill every one of those dreams?

The ethical question “whether something is permissible” faded in relation to the question, “what is the main thing, the essential thing?” **The thought of building a life around minimal morality or minimal significance—a life defined by the question, “What is permissible?”—felt almost disgusting to me. I didn't want a minimal life.** I wanted to understand the main thing about life and pursue it.

“The Times They Are A-Changin’”

*The line it is drawn,
The curse it is cast,
The slow one now
Will later be fast.
As the present now
Will later be past,
The order is
Rapidly fadin'.
And the first one now
Will later be last,
For the times they are a-changin'.*

*How many times must a man look up
Before he can see the sky?
Yes, 'n' how many ears must one man have
Before he can hear people cry?
Yes, 'n' how many deaths will it take till he knows*

*That too many people have died?
The answer, my friend
Is blowing' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind*

What I heard in Dylan's song, there is an Answer. To miss it would mean a wasted life. To find it would mean having a unifying Answer to all my questions.

In 1965 Francis Schaeffer delivered a book, *The God Who Is There*. The Title shows the stunning simplicity of the thesis. God is there. Not *in here*, defined and shaped by my own desires. God is *out there*. Objective. Absolute Reality. **All reality is dependent on God.** There is creation & Creator, nothing more. Creation gets all its meaning and purpose from God.

Stay on the road of objective truth. This will be the way to avoid wasting your life. There is Truth. There is a Point and Purpose and Essence to it all.

C.S. Lewis died the same day as John F. Kennedy in 1963.

Someone introduced me to *Mere Christianity*. I was almost never without a Lewis book near at hand. Without his influence I would not have lived my life with as much joy or usefulness as I have. **He showed me that newness is not virtue and oldness is no vice. Truth and beauty and goodness are not determined by when they exist.** This has freed me from the tyranny of novelty and opened for me the wisdom of the ages.

He was a "romantic rationalist." He combined rationalism and poetry, cool logic and warm feeling, disciplined prose and free imagination. He freed me to think hard and to write poetry, to argue for the resurrection and compose hymns to Christ, **to smash an argument and hug a friend, to demand a definition and use a metaphor.**

He helped me become alive to life. He put my soul on notice that there are daily wonders that will waken worship if I open my eyes.

He has his flaws, some of them serious. But I will never cease to thank God for this remarkable man.

CHAPTER 2 Breakthrough—the Beauty of Christ, My Joy

In 1968 I had no idea what it would mean to be a minister. Being a pastor was as far from my expectations as being a pastor's wife was from Noel's. All I knew was that ultimate Reality had suddenly centered for me on the Word of God. The great Point and Purpose and Essence that I longed to link up with was now connected unbreakably with the Bible. The mandate was clear: *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).*

If there is only one life to live in this world, and if it is not to be wasted, nothing seemed more important to me than finding out what God really meant in the Bible.

Reading *Validity in Interpretation* during my seminary years was like suddenly finding a rock under my feet in the quicksand of contemporary concepts about meaning. Hirsch defended the obvious. He argued, there *does* exist an original meaning that a writer had in his mind when he wrote. And, valid interpretation seeks that intention.

Time Magazine cover story: “Is God Dead?” (October 22, 1965). When God died, (Time hypothesized) the meaning of His texts died. If the basis of objective reality dies, then writing and speaking about objective reality dies. It all hangs together.

The hypocritical emptiness of hermeneutical subjectivism is the two-faced notion that there is no objective meaning in any sentence.

Hermeneutics is the science of how to interpret the Bible. E. D. Hirsch taught me how to read the Bible with what Matthew Arnold called “severe discipline.” He showed me that *the verses of the Bible are not strung pearls but links in a chain.* This meant that, *in each paragraph of Scripture, one should ask how each part related to the other parts in order to say one coherent thing. Then the paragraphs should be related to each other in the same way. And then the chapters, then the books, and so on until the unity of the Bible is found on its own terms.*

Now the question became: What is the Point, the Purpose, the Focus, the Essence of divine Truth?

God's aim in history was to “fully display his glory.” God's aim was that his people “delight in him with all their heart.” The passion of my life has been to understand and live and teach and preach how these two aims of God relate to each other & how they are not two but one.

If I wanted to come to the end of life and not say, “I've wasted it!” I would need to press all the way in, and all the way up, to the ultimate purpose of God and join him in it. If my life was to have a single, all-satisfying, unifying passion, it would have to be God's passion. God's passion was the display of his own glory and the delight of my heart.

Jonathan Edwards came into my life with the most powerful confirmation of this truth I have ever seen outside the Bible. He was a pastor and theologian in New England. **For me he has become the most important dead teacher outside the Bible.**

His life ended from a failed small pox vaccination. He was fifty-four. **His life is inspiring because of his zeal not to waste it, and because of his passion for the supremacy of God.** Consider some of the resolutions he wrote in his early twenties to intensify his life for the glory of God.

- Resolution #5: “Resolved, never to lose one moment of time; but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can.”
- Resolution #6: “Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live.”
- Resolution #17: “Resolved, that I will live so, as I shall wish I had done when I come to die.”
- **Resolution #22: “Resolved, to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness, in the other world, as I possibly can.**

In Resolution #22, Edwards was convinced that being happy in God was the way we glorify him. Delighting in God was not a mere option in life; it was our joyful duty and should be the single passion of our lives. Seeking happiness in God and glorifying God were the same.

Jonathan Edwards said God’s purpose for my life was that I have a passion for God’s glory and that I have a passion for my joy in that glory, and that these two are one passion.

I knew, at last, what a wasted life would be and how to avoid it.

God created me—and you—to live with a single, all-embracing, all transforming passion—namely, a passion to glorify God by enjoying and displaying his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life. **Enjoying and displaying are both crucial. The wasted life is the life without a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples.**

The Bible is crystal-clear: God created us for his glory. (Isaiah 43:6-7) Life is wasted when we do not live for the glory of God. And I mean all of life. Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

We waste our lives when we do not pray and think and dream and plan and work toward magnifying God in all spheres of life.

Many people do not feel loved when they are told that God created them for *his* glory. They feel used. This is understandable given the way love has been distorted in our world. We are taught in a thousand ways that love means increasing someone’s self-esteem... that love is helping someone feel good about themselves.

This is not what the Bible means by the love of God. Love is doing what is best for someone. But making self the object of our highest affections is not best for us. It is a lethal distraction.

Not to show people the all-satisfying God is not to love them.

The really wonderful moments of joy in this world are not the moments of self-satisfaction, but self-forgetfulness. Standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon and contemplating your own greatness is pathological. **We are made for a magnificent joy that comes from outside ourselves.**

The universe is about the greatness of God, not the significance of man. God made man small and the universe big to say something about himself. Namely, that He is infinitely great and powerful and wise and beautiful. **The disproportion between us and the universe is a parable about the disproportion between us and God. The point is not to nullify us but to glorify him.**

Back to what it means to be loved. The idea has been almost totally distorted. *Love has to do with showing a dying soul the life-giving beauty of the glory of God. We show God's glory in a hundred practical ways. That's what Jesus meant when he said, "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).*

To have all else without him is to perish in the end. **If you don't point people to God for everlasting joy, you don't love. You waste your life.**

In John 3:16 God loves us by giving us eternal life at the cost of his Son, Jesus Christ. But what is eternal life? Is it eternal self-esteem?

No Jesus tells us exactly what he meant: *"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent"* (John 17:3). What is eternal life? It is to know God and his Son, Jesus Christ. *All heroes are shadows of Christ.*

Consider 1 Peter 3:18... Why did God send Jesus Christ to die for us? God sent Christ to die so that we could come home to the all-satisfying Father. This is love. *"In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore"* (Psalm 16:11), *love must rescue us from our addiction to self and bring us, changed, into the presence of God.*

Here is the question to test whether you have been sucked into this world's distortion of love: Would you feel more loved by God if he made much of you, or if he liberated you from the bondage of self-regard, so that you enjoy making much of him forever?

Suppose you answer, “I want to be free from self and full of joy in God”. If you respond this way, then you will also have an answer to the fear I mentioned earlier, that you are just being used by God. We see that in creating us from his glory, he is creating us for our highest joy.

He is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.

[Anyone who exalts himself distracts us from God.](#)

The single, all-embracing, all-transforming reason for being = a passion to enjoy and display God’s supremacy in all things for the joy of all peoples.

God created us to live with a single passion to joyfully display his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life. *The wasted life is the life without HIS passion.* God calls us to pray and think and dream and plan and work not to be made much of, but to make much of him in every part of our lives.

Since September 11, 2001 Christ must be explicit in all our God-talk.

It will not do, in this day of pluralism, to talk about the glory of God in vague ways. God without Christ is not God.

Following a no-God—whatever his name or whatever his religion—will be a wasted life.

God-in-Christ is the only true God and the only path to joy.

There is no way to the glory of the Father but through the Son.

Jesus is the litmus test of reality for all persons and all religions. He said it clearly: “*The one who rejects me rejects him who sent me*” (Luke 10:16). *Do other religions know the true God? Here is the test: Do they reject Jesus as the only Savior for sinners who was crucified and raised by God from the dead? If they do, they do not know God in a saving way.*

That is what Jesus meant when he said, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*” (John 14:6). Or when he said, “*Whoever does not honor the*

Son does not honor the Father who sent him” (John 5:23). Or when he said to the Pharisees, “If God were your Father, you would love me” (John 8:42).

It’s what the apostle John meant when he said, “No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also” (1 John 2:23). Or when he said, “Everyone who ...does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God” (2 John 9).

There is no point in romanticizing other religions that reject the deity and saving work of Christ. They do not know God. Those who follow them tragically waste their lives.

If we would embrace the glory of God, we must embrace the Gospel of Christ.

There is no savoring of God’s glory if we do not see it in Christ. This is the only window through which a sinner may see the face of God.

The Bible says that when God illuminates our heart at conversion, he gives “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Life is wasted if we do not grasp the glory of the cross, and cleave to it as the highest price of every pleasure and the deepest comfort in every pain.

CHAPTER 3 **Boasting Only in the Cross,** **The Blazing Center of the Glory of God**

The opposite of wasting your life is living life by a single God-exalting, soul-satisfying passion. (Isaiah 43:7; Psalm 90:14). *Jesus reminds us that he spits lukewarm people out of his mouth (Revelation 3:16).*

Can life really have that much “singleness” of purpose? Can work and leisure and relationships and eating and lovemaking and ministry all really flow from a single passion?

Paul said “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). He is pushing us to see our lives with a single focus, and for the cross to rise to that focus.

You don't have to know a lot of things for your life to make a lasting difference in the world. But you do have to know the things that matter, and then be willing to live for them and die for them. The people that make a durable difference in the world are not the people who have mastered many things, but those who have been mastered by one great thing.

You may not be sure that you want your life to make a difference. Maybe you don't care very much whether you make a lasting difference for the sake of something great. If you could just have a good job with a good wife, or husband, and a couple of good kids and a nice car and long weekends and a few good friends, a fun retirement, and a quick and easy death, and no hell—you would be satisfied. **That is a tragedy in the making... that is a wasted life.**

An American tragedy: How Not to Finish Your One Life.

Early Retirement. He was 59 and she was 51. Now they cruise on their 30 foot trawler, play softball and collect shells. Tragically, this was the dream: Come to the end of your life—your one and only precious, God-given life—and let the last great work of your life, before you give an account to your Creator, be this playing softball and collecting shells. Picture them before Christ at the great day of judgment: “Look, Lord. See my shells.” That is a tragedy. And people today are spending billions of dollars to persuade you to embrace that tragic dream. Don't buy it. Don't waste your life.

Few things, if any, fill me with more longing these months and years than the longing that my children not waste their lives on fatal success.

I plead with you: Desire that your life count for something great! Long for your life to have eternal significance. Want this! Don't coast through life without a passion.

Isaiah 26:8—“Yes, LORD, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and renown are the desire of our hearts” (NIV).

Here is not just a body, but a soul. Not just a soul, but a soul with a passion and a desire. Here is a desire for something infinitely great and beautiful and valuable and satisfying.

The mission statement of my life, “We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ.”

Whatever you do, find the God-centered, Christ-exalting, Bible-saturated passion of your life, and find your way to say it and live for it and die for it. And you will make a difference that lasts. You will not waste your life.

The apostle Paul had a single-minded vision for his life. *“I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God”* (Acts 20:24). One thing mattered: “I will not waste my life I will finish my course and finish it well. I will display the Gospel of the grace of God in all I do. I will run my race to the end.”

Philippians 3:7-8 One thing matters: Know Christ, and gain Christ. Everything is rubbish in comparison to this.

What is the one passion of your life that makes everything else look like rubbish in comparison? Oh, that God would waken in you a single passion what would unleash you, and set you free from small dreams, and send you for the glory of Christ, into all the spheres of secular life and to all the peoples of the earth.

“Life is wasted if we do not grasp the glory of the cross. A crucified God must become our wisdom and our power and our only boast in this world.

God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in hi.

Few verses in the Bible are more radical and sweeping and Christ-exalting than Galatians 6:14: *“Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”* This is a single idea. A single goal for life. A single passion. Only boast in the cross. Only rejoice in the cross of Christ. Paul says, Let this be your single passion and joy and exultation. *May the one thing that you cherish, the one thing that you rejoice in and exult over, be the cross of Jesus Christ.*

Paul means all exultation in anything else should be exultation in the cross.

For redeemed sinners, every good thing—indeed every bad thing that God turns for good—was obtained for us by the cross of Christ. Apart from the death of Christ, sinners get nothing but

judgment. Therefore, everything you enjoy in Christ—is owing to the death of Christ. All your rejoicing should therefore be a rejoicing in the cross where all your blessings were purchased.

One of the reasons we are not as Christ-centered and cross saturated as we should be is that we have not realized that everything good was purchased by the death of Christ for us. **We take life and breath and health and friends and everything for granted. We think it is ours by right. But it is not. We are undeserving of it.**

Besides being creatures with no claim on our Creator, we are *sinner*s. We have ignored him and disobeyed him and failed to love him and trust him. All we deserve from him is judgment. Therefore, every breath we take is a free and undeserved gift to sinners who deserve only judgment.

If you refuse to see God in his gifts, they will turn out not to be gifts but High Court evidence of ingratitude. When we presume upon them and do not cherish God’s grace in them, “Because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself (Romans 2:5).

Now we see that every experience in life is designed to magnify the cross of Christ.

Apart from the cross, there is only judgment—patience and mercy for a season, but then, if spurned, all that mercy only serves to intensify judgment.

The aim of God in the cross is that Christ would be honored. When Paul says in Galatians 6:14, “Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,” he is saying that God’s will is that the cross always be magnified.

This generation has to be taught that these things are so. To say it another way: The source of exultation in the cross of Christ is education about the cross of Christ.

This is my job, yours is the same, to live and speak in such a way that the worth of “Christ crucified” is seen and savored by more and more people. It will be costly for us as it was for him.

If we desire that there be no boasting except in the cross, then we must live near the cross—indeed we must live on the cross. This is what Galatians 6:14 says: *Boasting in the cross happens when you are on the cross. Until our selves are crucified there, our boast will be in ourselves.*

But when were we crucified? The Bible gives the answer in Galatians 2:19-20: *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. An the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”* When

Christ died, we died. The death that he died for us all becomes our death when we are united to Christ by faith (Romans 6:5).

We must learn what happened to us. We must be taught these things. That is why Galatians 2:20 and Galatians 6:14 are in the Bible. God is teaching us what happened to us, so that we can know ourselves, and know his way of working with us.

The “I” who lives in the “I” of faith.

God links you to his Son by faith. When he does, there is a union with the Son of God so that his death becomes your death and his life becomes your life.

How can we become the kind of people who trace all our joy back to joy in Christ and him crucified? Answer: The old self that loves to boast and exult and rejoice in other things died. By faith we are united to Christ. His death becomes the death of our self-exalting life. What lives is a new creature whose single passion is to exalt Christ and his cross.

When you put your trust in Christ, your bondage to the world and its overpowering lure is broken.

The world is no longer our treasure. It’s not the source of our life or our satisfaction or our joy. Christ is.

If I feel glad about safety or health or any good thing, and if these things are things of the world, then am I dead to the world? Yes, because being dead to the world does not mean having no feelings about the world (see 1 John 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:3).

The point is the glory of Christ is the glory above and behind every blessing we enjoy. **His glory is where the quest of our affections must end. Everything else is a pointer—a parable of this beauty.**

Christ is the glory of God. His cross is the center of that glory. By it he bought for us every blessing—temporal and eternal. And we don’t deserve any. Because of Christ’s cross, God’s elect are destined to be sons of God. Because of his cross, the wrath of God is taken away. Because of his cross all guilt is removed, and sins are forgiven, and perfect righteousness is imputed to us, and the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Spirit, and we are being conformed to the image of Christ.

Thus, a cross-centered, cross-exalting, cross-saturated life is a God-glorifying life—the only God-glorifying life. All others are wasted.

CHAPTER 4 Magnifying Christ Through Pain and Death

Living to magnify Christ is costly. This is not surprising. He was crucified. And he calls us to follow him. *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”* (Mark 8:34). *“If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household”* (Matthew 10:25).

Suffering with Jesus is not just the result of magnifying Christ; it is also the means. He is made supreme when we are so satisfied in him that we can “let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also” and suffer for the sake of love. *He loves us. Love does not mean making much of us or making life easy.*

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27). Suffering is God’s design in this sin-soaked world (Romans 8:20). It portrays sin’s horror for the world to see. It punishes sin’s guilt for those who do not believe in Christ. It breaks sin’s power for those who take up their cross and follow Jesus.

Whatever makes us more and more able to enjoy making much of God is a mercy. For there is no greater joy than joy in the greatness of God. If we must suffer to see this, then suffering is mercy. And Christ’s call to take up our cross and join him on the Calvary road is love.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer died at the age of thirty-nine. He was hanged in the concentration camp at Flossenburg, Germany, on April 9, 1945. He had been a pastor and teacher and leader and had participated in the Protestant resistance movement against the Nazis.

The book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, probably the most famous sentence in the book was, “The cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise God-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” *Fleeing from death is the shortest path to a wasted life.*

He did not believe that the faith that justifies could ever leave people unchanged. “The only man,” he said, “who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ.”

A life devoted to making much of Christ is costly. If we do not embrace the path of joy-laden, painful love, we will waste our lives. *If we do not learn the Christ-exalting paradoxes of life, we will squander our days pursuing bubbles that burst.* (2 Corinthians 6:10). The Calvary road is costly and painful, but it is not joyless.

If Christ is not made much of in our lives, they are wasted. *If our life and death do not show the worth and wonder of Jesus, they are wasted.*

What you love determines what you feel shame about. If you love for men to make much of you, you will feel shame when they don't. But if you love for men to make much of Christ, then you will feel shame if he is belittled on your account. (Philippians 3:7-8).

Christ was of infinite value to Paul, and so Paul longed for others to see and savor this value.

Death is a threat to the degree that it frustrates your main goals. Death is fearful to the degree that it threatens to rob you of what you treasure most.

Life and death! They seem like complete opposites—there is a unity, because the same great passion is fulfilled in both.

Philippians 1 verse 23 shows why dying is gain for Paul: “My desire is to depart (that is, to die) and be with Christ, for that is far better.” Death takes us into more intimacy with Christ.

The best is yet to come! And I don't mean a fat pension and a luxury condominium. I mean Christ.

We have learned from Philippians 1, if we suffer or die on the Calvary road of obedience with Christ, the cost of following him is not just a *result* of making much of him, but a *means*. Death makes visible where our treasure is. ***Christ is magnified in my death when I am satisfied with***

him in my dying. **The essence of praising Christ is prizing Christ.**

Christ will be praised in my death, if in my death he is prized above life.

What does Paul mean: “To live is Christ”?

First, it means: My life is dedicated to producing fruit. Second, it means: My life is devoted to producing a fruit that is very necessary for you to have. Third, it means: My life is devoted to increasing your faith and helping it to overflow with joy.

Biblical faith in Jesus must mean that we trust him to give us what we need most - himself. That means that faith itself must include at its essence a treasuring of Christ above all things.

Paul's two aims for his life are in fact one. Verse 20, *to magnify Christ in life*, verse 25, *to promote the progress and joy in the Philippians' faith*.

Paul is saying, “My life is devoted to producing in you that one great experience of the heart by which Christ is magnified—namely, being satisfied in him, joyfully treasuring him above all else.

The life of a Christian includes many deaths. Paul said, *“I die every day!”* (1 Corinthians 15:31). Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross *daily* and follow me” (Luke 9:23). *The dying I have in mind is the dying of comfort and security and reputation and health and family and friends and wealth and homeland.*
Embrace this life of loss for Christ’s sake and count it gain.

The way we honor Christ in death is to treasure Jesus above the gift of life, and the way we honor Christ in life is to treasure Jesus above life’s gifts.

*All of life for the Christian is meant to magnify Christ.
This can happen through pleasure, and it can
happen through pain.*

We are fallen, comfort-loving creatures. We are always on the lookout for ways to justify our self-protecting, self-securing, self-pleasing ways of life.

The greatest joy in God comes from giving his gifts away, not in hoarding them. It is good to work and have... It is better to work and have in order to give.

The world is not impressed when Christians get rich and say thanks to God. They are impressed when God is so satisfying that we give our riches away for Christ’s sake and count it gain

No one ever said they learned their deepest lessons of life, or had their sweetest encounters with God, on the sunny days. *People go deep with God when the drought comes.* Christ aims to be magnified in life most clearly by the way we experience him in our losses. (2 Corinthians 1:8-9). Paul’s suffering was to make radically clear that **God and God alone is the only treasure who lasts.** **When everything in life is stripped away except God, and we trust him more because of it, this is gain, and He is glorified.**

Untold numbers of professing Christians waste their lives trying to escape the cost of love. There is more of God’s glory to be seen and savored through suffering than through self-serving escape. (2 Corinthians 4:16-17). “Momentary” refers to a life time in comparison with eternity.

God designs that tribulations intensify our hope for the glory of God.

In Romans 5, rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope: (verses 3-4). God, in love, will use whatever trials are necessary to intensify our savoring of his glory.

It is not wrong to pray for healing. The Bible does not call for suicide. God decides whether and when the path of obedience will lead to suffering. Satan has his place. He loves to make us miserable and destroy our faith. But God is sovereign over Satan.

question for many Christians. John Bunyan wrote, “There are few rules in this case. The man

himself is best able to judge concerning his present strength, and what weight this or that argument has upon his heart to stand or fly...

But when all is said and done, ***“All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).***

Jesus said to Paul in pain—and to all of us who treasure him more than pain-free living—“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:8). Many professing Christians get angry at this design. Love is not Christ’s making life easy. Love is doing what he must do, at great cost to himself (and often to us), to enable us to enjoy making much of him forever.

What a tragic waste when people turn away from the Calvary road of love and suffering.

All the deepest discoveries of God’s Word, all the most earnest prayers, they are all on the Calvary road when Jesus walks with his people. Take up your cross and follow Jesus. On this road, every other road is wasted.

CHAPTER 5 **Risk Is Right—Better to Lose Your Life** **Than to Waste It**

If the life that magnifies him most is the life of costly love, then life is risk, and risk is right. To run from it is to waste your life.

I define risk very simply, an action that exposes you to the possibility of loss or injury. If you take a risk, you may endanger other people and not just yourself. Their lives may be at stake. Is it loving to endanger others? Is losing life the same as wasting it?

It depends. You can throw your life away in a hundred sinful ways and die as a result. In that case, losing life and wasting it would be the same. **What if not taking a risk will result in loss and injury?** **It may not be loving to choose comfort or security.**

Why is there such a thing as risk? Because there is such a thing as ignorance. **If there were no ignorance there would be no risk.** God can take no risks. He knows the outcome before they happen. (Isaiah 41:23; 42:8-9; 44:6-8; 45:21; 46:8-11; 48:3).

But not so with us. We are not God; we are ignorant. We don't know what will happen tomorrow. God does not tell us.

He says to us in **James 4:13-15**: *you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. You ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."*

You don't know if your heart will stop before your finish reading this page.

Risk is woven into the fabric of our finite lives. We cannot avoid risk even if we want to. **One of my aims is to explode the myth of safety and to somehow deliver you from the enchantment of security. It's a mirage. It doesn't exist.**

Go to the Bible; see that it is right to risk for the cause of Christ, and it is not right to waste your life.

In 2 Samuel 10, verse 11 they pledged to help each other. Verse 12 *"let us be courageous for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may the LORD do what seems good to him"*. These last words mean that Joab had made a strategic decision and he did not know how it would turn out. He had no special revelation from God. He had to make a decision on the basis of sanctified wisdom. He had to risk or run. So, he made his decision, and he handed the results over to God. And this was right.

"If I Perish, I Perish" Queen Esther is another example of courageous risk in the service of love and for the glory of God.

"Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish." (Esther 4:15-16).

“If I perish, I perish.” Esther did not know what the outcome of her act would be. She made her decision on the basis of wisdom and love for her people and trust in God. She made her decision and handed the results over to God.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not bow down.

Nebuchadnezzar threatened them. They answered:

“O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. (Daniel 3: 6-18.

It is right to risk for the cause of God.

The great New Testament risk-taker was the apostle Paul...

“I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).

Paul’s whole life was one stressful risk after another.

Every day he risked his life for the cause of God.

He had two choices: waste his life or live with risk.

Paul made it a point to tell Christians that they would meet unspecified troubles. “...through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). In other words, **the Christian life is a call to risk.**

Jesus had made this clear in **Luke 21:16**, ***“You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relative and friends, some of you they will put to death.”*** **Some will die.** And some will live. **It is the will of God that we be uncertain about how life on this earth will turn out for us. Therefore, it is the will of the Lord that we take risks for the cause of God.**

Life was hard for Jesus, and he said it would be hard for his followers. (John 15:20). Peter warned that mistreatment would be normal. (1 Peter 4:12-14).

It was the Christ-exalting love that the Christians showed in spite of risk that stunned the pagan world. Roman Emperor Julian (A.D. 332-363) wrote:

“Atheism {i.e. Christian faith} has been specially advanced through the loving service rendered to strangers, and through their care for the burial of the dead. It is a scandal there is not a single Jew who is a beggar, and that the godless Galileans care not only for their own poor but for ours as well; while those who belong to us look in vain for the help that we should render them.”

What happens when the people of God try to live their lives in the mirage of safety? The answer is wasted lives. Do you remember the time it happened in Moses’ day?

On the borders of the Promised Land...

Caleb was unable to explode the myth of safety. The people were gripped by the beguiling enchantment of security.

Not even Joshua could explode the myth of safety. The people were drunk in a dream-world of security. The result was thousands of wasted lives and wasted years. Oh, how much is wasted when we do not risk for the cause of God!

Risk is right! There is no promise that every effort for the cause of God will succeed in the short run.

What about you? Are you caught in the enchantment of security, paralyzed from taking any risks for the cause of God?

Risking for the Wrong Reasons:

One danger is that we might become so fixated on self-denial that we are unable to enjoy the proper pleasures of this life. Another danger is that we might be drawn to a life of risk for self-exalting reasons. We might think of risk as a kind of righteousness that makes us acceptable to God.

The strength to risk losing money for the cause of the Gospel is the faith that we have a treasure in the heavens that cannot fail.

In this way risk reflects God’s value, not our valor.

Without Christ, we are all wanting to do our own thing, or wanting to do God’s thing in our way to prove our own ability. The way to pursue risk is to do it “by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:11). The way God supplies his strength is through faith in his promises. Every loss we

risk in order to make much of Christ, God promises to restore a thousand-fold with his all-satisfying fellowship.

Like Jesus, Paul says that the love of Christ for us does not eliminate our suffering. Risk is real. The Christian life is a painful life. Not joyless. But not painless either.

You will have everything you need to do his will and be eternally and supremely happy in him.

God does not promise enough for comfort in this life, BUT He does promise enough so that you can trust him and do his will.

If we starve, he will be our everlasting, life-giving bread.

The bottom-line: our comfort and assurance in all our risk-taking for Christ is that nothing will ever separate us from the love of Christ. (Romans 8:35). No misery that a true Christian ever experiences is evidence that he has been cut off from the love of Christ. **The love of Christ triumphs over all misery.** Romans 8:38-39.

On the far side of every risk—even if it results in death—the love of God triumphs. This is the faith that frees us to risk for the cause of God.

Paul asks *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31).

If you venture some act of obedience that magnifies the supreme value of Jesus Christ and get attacked, the aim of the attacker is to destroy you and cut you off from Christ, and bring you to final ruin without God. You are a conqueror if you defeat this aim and remain in the love of Christ. God has promised that this will happen. Trusting this, we risk.

“Affliction” is one of the attacking enemies. Affliction is made the servant of godliness and humility and love. Satan meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.

Faith in these promises frees us to risk and to find in our own experience that it is better to lose our life than to waste it.

CHAPTER 6
The Goal of Life—Gladly Making Others
Glad in God

It is impossible to make others glad in God if you are an unforgiving person. This wiring—universal in all—must be dismantled.
We must become forgiving people.

I am talking about a spirit, not a list of criteria. Nor am I talking about wimpy grace that can't rebuke or discipline or fight. The question is, do we lean toward mercy? Do we default to grace? Without it we will walk away from need and waste our lives.

The motive for being a forgiving person is that we have been forgiven by God when we did not deserve it. "...God in Christ forgave you" (**Ephesians 4:32**). God's forgiveness gives us God.

BEWARE: There are benefits from forgiveness that a person may love without loving God.

Forgiveness is essentially God's way of removing the great obstacle to our fellowship with him. By canceling our sin and paying for it with the death of his own Son, God opens the way for us to see him and know him and enjoy him forever. **Seeing and savoring Him is the goal of forgiveness.**

Soul-satisfying fellowship with our Father is the aim of the cross.

God is the goal of forgiveness.
He is also the grounds and the means of forgiveness.

Therefore, the motive for being a forgiving person is the joy of being freely and joyfully at home with God.

If we experience forgiveness as the free and undeserved gift of joy in God, we will be carried by this joy, with love, into a world of sin and suffering.

Joy in God overflows in glad-hearted mercy to people. Joy in the God cannot coexist with its own in patience.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne, a Scottish pastor in **1843**, spoke of the mercy and generosity of Christians as the evidence that they were indeed Christians.

I am concerned for the poor but more for you. I know not what Christ will say to you in the great day I fear there are many hearing me who may know well that they are not Christians, because they do not love to give. To give largely and liberally, not grudging at all, requires a new heart; an old heart would rather part with its life-blood than its money. Oh my friends! Enjoy your money; make the most of it; give none away; enjoy it quickly for I can tell you, you will be beggars throughout eternity.

What is the nature and aim of glad-hearted, Christian giving? With as much creativity and sacrifice as necessary—it is to give others everlasting and ever-increasing joy in God.

Living for the glory of God must mean that we live to gladly make others glad in God. Our gladness and our pursuit of their gladness glorifies God. By gladly pursuing the gladness of others in God—even at the cost of our lives—we love them and honor God. This is the opposite of a wasted life.

Of course, we can't make anyone glad in God. Joy in God is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

Joy in God is awakened in the heart when God graciously opens our eyes to see the glory of Christ in the Gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Joy in God is ultimately a gift of God. Paul described his whole ministry as laboring for the joy of others. (2 Corinthians 1:14). Jesus said that his own words were the means God would use to give joy to his disciples: that my *joy* may be in you, (John 15:11). He also said that prayer was a means of joy.

Gladness in God is the goal of all saving work, and the experiential essence of what it means to be saved. Without this joy in God, there would be no salvation.

Gladness in God is a massive reality planned and purchased and produced by God in the lives of his elect for the glory of his name.

CHAPTER 7

Living to Prove He Is More Precious Than Life

To make others glad in God with an everlasting gladness, our lives must show that he is more precious than life. *“Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you”* (Psalm 63:3).

To do this we must make sacrificial life choices rooted in the assurance that magnifying Christ through generosity and mercy is more satisfying than selfishness. If we walk away from risk to keep ourselves safe and solvent, we will waste our lives.

Then to live as though we had all the same values as the world would betray him. How do we use our money and how do we feel about our possessions? I hear the haunting words of Jesus, “Do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things” (Matthew 6:31-32).

If we look like our lives are devoted to getting and maintaining things, we will look like the world, that will not make Christ look great. He will look like a religious side-interest that may be useful for escaping hell in the end, but doesn’t make such difference in how we live and love here. He will not look like an all-satisfying treasure. And that will not make others glad in God.

If we are exiles and refugees on earth (1 Peter 2:11), and if our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), and if nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35), and if his steadfast love is better than life (Psalm 63:3), and if all hardship is working for us an eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17), then we will give to the winds our fears and “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). We will count everything as rubbish in comparison with Christ (Philippians 3:7-8). We will “joyfully accept the plundering of our property” for the sake of unpopular acts of mercy (Hebrews 10:34). We will choose “rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin,” and of Egypt” (Hebrews 11:25-26).

If we lived more like this, the world would be more likely to consider whether Jesus is an all-satisfying Treasure.

Why don't people ask us about our hope? Answer: We look as if we hope in the same things they do. Our lives don't look like they are on the Calvary road.

The perceived credibility of Christ hangs on how we use our money:

Money and lifestyle are not a side issues in the Bible.
“Fifteen percent of everything Christ said relates to this topic—more than his teachings on heaven and hell combined.”

“You lack one thing: go, sell all you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (Mark 10:21).

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God....But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation” (Luke 6:20, 24).

“Any of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).

“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:25).

“One's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).

“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

“Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags ...in the heavens” (Luke 12:33).

“Zacchaeus...said to the Lord, ‘Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor....’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house’” (Luke 19:8-9).

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matthew 13:44).

“[Jesus] saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, ‘Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them’” (Luke 21:2-3).

“But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:20-21).

“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head....Follow me” (Luke 9:58-59).

Over and over Jesus is relentless in his radical call to a war-time lifestyle and a hazardous liberality.

The point is: Jesus loves faith-filled risk for the glory of God.

Jesus’ emphasis on money and possessions is picked up throughout the New Testament. Acts 2:25, 2 Corinthians 8:2; 9:7, James 1:11. It is crucial for the witness of the church.

If we want to make people glad in God, our lives must look as if God, not possessions, is our joy.

“Wartime lifestyle” or “wartime mind-set.” **There is a war going on in the world between Christ and Satan, truth and falsehood, belief and unbelief. There are weapons to be funded and used, these weapons are the Gospel and prayer and self-sacrificing love (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). The stakes of this conflict are eternal and infinite: heaven or hell (Matthew 25:46).**

I need to hear this message again and again, because I drift into a peacetime mind-set. I am wired by nature to love the same toys that the world loves, I start to fit in. Before you know it, I am calling luxuries “needs” and using my money the same way unbelievers do. I begin to forget the war. It is a terrible sickness. And I thank God for those who have forced me again and again toward a wartime mind-set.

We are at war. Both pleasure and pain are laced with poison, ready to kill us with the diseases of pride or despair.

Why Not Speak of a “Simple Lifestyle”?

It is more helpful to think of a wartime lifestyle than a merely simple lifestyle. Simplicity may have a romantic ring that is foreign to the dirty business of mercy in the dangerous places of the world. In wartime, major expenses for complex weapons and troop training are needed. Simplicity may be inwardly directed and may benefit no one else...

Whereas, a wartime lifestyle implies that there is a great and worthy cause for which to spend and be spent (2 Corinthians 12:15).

Being spent may sound bad. It is not. BE-ing spent is life-giving when we are spent to make others glad in God. (Mark 8:35).

America today is a “save yourself” society. Affluent America has virtually invented a whole new set of diseases: obesity, arteriosclerosis, heart disease, strokes, lung cancer, venereal disease, cirrhosis of the liver, drug addition, alcoholism, divorce, battered children, suicide, murder. Our divorce courts, our prisons and our mental institutions are flooded. In saving ourselves we have nearly lost ourselves.

Our society is driven by the suicidal craving to satisfy itself with no joy in Christ and no love for the needy.

For every careless saint who burns himself out and breaks up his family with misdirected zeal, I venture, there are a thousand who coast with the world, treating Jesus like a helpful add-on, but not as an all-satisfying, all-authoritative King in the cause of love.

One of the marks of peacetime mind-set is avoidance-ethic. In wartime we ask what can I do to advance the cause? What can I do to bring the victory? What sacrifice can I make? In peacetime we tend to ask, what can I do to be more comfortable?

This way of life is utterly inadequate to waken people to the beauty of Christ. Avoiding fearful trouble and forbidden behaviors impresses almost no one.

There are many disciplined unbelievers who avoid the same behaviors Christians do. Jesus calls us to something far more radical than that.

People who are content with the avoidance ethic generally ask the wrong question about behavior. They ask, what's wrong with it? This kind of question will rarely yield a lifestyle that commends Christ. It simply results in a list of don'ts.

The better questions to ask about possible behaviors is: How will this help me treasure Christ more? How will it help me know Christ or display Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:31). So, the question is mainly positive, not negative.

Clean Noses and Quality Family Time Is Not Life!

Many lives are wasted by people who believe that the Christian life means simply avoiding badness and providing for the family. This is life for millions of people. Wasted life. We were created for more, far more.

No one will ever want to say to the Lord of the universe five minutes after death, I spent every night playing games and watching clean TV with my family because I loved them so much. I think the Lord will say, you should have done something besides provide for yourself and your family.

Television is one of the greatest life-wasters of the modern age. And, the Internet is running to catch up. Just the ads are enough to sow fertile seeds of greed and lust, no matter what program you're watching. A mind fed daily on TV & the internet diminishes.

Neil Postman - *“America is the world's first culture in jeopardy of amusing itself to death.”*

Biographies are a great antidote to cultural myopia and chronological snobbery. We have become almost incapable of handling any great truth reverently and deeply.

It is one of the defining marks of Our Time that God is now weightless. He has become unimportant. He rests upon the world so inconsequentially as not to be noticeable. Those who assure the pollsters of their belief in God's existence may nonetheless consider him less interesting than television, his commands less authoritative than their appetites for affluence and influence,

and his truth less compelling than the advertiser's sweet fog of flattery and lies. That is weightlessness. It is a condition we have assigned him after having nudged him out to the periphery of our secularized lives....
Weightlessness tells us nothing about God but everything about ourselves, about our condition, about our psychological disposition to exclude God from our reality.

We have lost our ability to see and savor the complexities of truth and the depths of simplicity.

The man who stands before God with his well-kept avoidance ethic and his protest that he did not spend too much time at the office but came home and watched TV with his family will probably not escape the indictment that he wasted his life. **Jesus rebuked his disciples with words that easily apply to this man: "Even sinners work hard, avoid gross sin. What more are you doing than the others?"** (see [Luke 6:32-34](#); [Matthew 5:47](#)).

In fact, in wartime, sinners often rise to remarkable levels of sacrifice for causes that cannot compare with Christ. *The greatest cause in the world is joyfully rescuing people from hell, meeting their earthly needs, making them glad in God, and doing it with a kind, serious pleasure that makes Christ look like the Treasure he is.* No war on earth was ever fought for a greater cause or a greater king.

The Marines fought in World War II for forty-three months. Yet in one month on Iwo Jima, one third of their total deaths occurred. They left behind the Pacific's largest cemeteries: nearly 6,800 graves.

The message someone had chiseled outside the cemetery:

When you go home
Tell them of us and say
For your tomorrow
We gave our today

I am deeply moved by the courage and carnage on Iwo Jima. As I read the pages of this history, everything in my cries out, “O Lord, don’t let me waste my life!” Let me come to the end—and be able to say to a family, a church, a city, and the unreached peoples of the earth, “For your tomorrow, I gave my today.**” Not just for your tomorrow on earth, but for the countless tomorrows.**

As a rainy morning wore into afternoon and the fighting bogged down, the Marines continued to take casualties. Often it was the corpsmen [medics] themselves who died as they tried to preserve life. William Hoopes of Chattanooga was crouching beside a medic named Kelly, who put his head above a protective ridge and placed binoculars to his eyes—just for an instant—to spot a sniper who was peppering his area. In that instant the sniper shot him through the Adam’s apple. Hoopes, a pharmacist’s mate himself, struggled frantically to save his friend. “I took my forceps and reached into his neck to grasp the artery and pinch it off,” Hoopes recalled “His blood was spurting. He had no speech but his eyes were on me. He knew I was trying to save his life. I tried everything in the world. I couldn’t do it. I tried. The blood was so slippery. I couldn’t get the artery. I was trying so hard, and all the while he just looked at me. He looked directly into my face. The last thing he did as the blood spurts became less and less was to pat me on the arm as if to say, “That’s all right.” Then he died.”

I want to be Hoopes and I want to be Kelly. I want to be able to say to suffering and perishing people, “I tried everything in the world....And I want to be able to say to those around me when I die, “It’s all right. To live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

At these moments, when the trifling fog of life clears and I see what I am really on earth to do, I groan over the petty pursuits that waste so many lives—and so much of mine. It is like a multi-layered dream-world of insignificance expanding into nothingness.

I cannot make peace with the petty preoccupations of most American life. Do you want to see what *cool* is? Do you want to see something a thousand times more impressive than a triple double? Listen up about Jacklyn Lucas. He’d fast-talked his way into the Marines at fourteen, fooling the recruits with his muscled physique....Assigned to drive a truck in Hawaii, he had grown frustrated; he wanted to fight. He stowed away on a transport out of Honolulu, surviving on food passed along to him by sympathetic leather-necks on board.

He landed on D-Day [at Iwo Jima] without a rifle. He grabbed one lying on the beach and fought his way inland.

Jack and three comrades were crawling through a trench when eight Japanese sprang in front of them. Jack shot one. Then his rifle jammed. As he struggled with it a grenade landed at his feet. He rammed the grenade into the soft ash.

Immediately, another rolled in. Jack Lucas, seventeen fell on both grenades. “Luke, you’re gonna die.” Later, aboard the hospital ship Samaritan the doctors could scarcely believe it. “Maybe he was too damned young and too damned tough to die,” one said. He endured twenty-one reconstructive operations and became the nation’s youngest Medal of Honor winner—and the only high school freshman to receive it.

As I read that, I thought of all the things that high school kids think is cool. I sat and thought, *O God, who will get in their face and give them something to live for? They waste their days in a trance of insignificance. They don’t have a clue what cool is.*

One more story to clarify what is cool. Ray Dollins, a fighter pilot at Iwo Jima.

The Marine fighter planes were finishing up their low strafing runs. Japanese riddled the plane with flak. The pilot, Major Ray Dollins, tried to gain altitude as he headed out over the ocean so as to avoid a deadly crash into the Marines headed for the beach, but his plane was too badly damaged. “We could see him in the cockpit,” He was trying everything. He was heading straight down for a group of Marines. At the last second he flipped the plane over on its back and aimed it into the water between two waves of tanks. We watched the water exploding in the air.”

Military personnel listening to the flight radio network from the ships could not only see Dollins go down; they could hear his last words into his microphone. A defiant parody.

*Oh what a beautiful morning.
Oh, what a beautiful day,
I’ve got a terrible feeling
Everything’s coming my way.”*

Do not use the word cool to describe true greatness. It is a small word. That’s the point. It’s cheap. And it’s what millions of young people live for. Who pleads with them not to waste their lives? Who loves them enough to show them a life so radical and so real and so costly and Christ-saturated that they feel the emptiness and triviality of their pointless conversations about passing celebrities? Who will waken what lies latent in their souls, untapped—a longing not to waste their lives?

If we would dream and if we would pray, would not God answer? Would he withhold from us a life of joyful love and mercy and sacrifice that magnifies? I plead with you, set your face like flint to join Jesus on the Calvary road. ***“Let us go to him outside the camp and bear the***

reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come” (Hebrews 13:14). When they see our sacrificial love—radiant with joy—will they not say, “Christ is great”?

CHAPTER 8 Making Much of Christ From 8 to 5

It would be a mistake to infer from the call to wartime living in the previous chapter that Christians should quit their jobs and go to “war” to become missionaries or pastors or full-time relief workers. That would be a fundamental misunderstanding of where the war is being fought.

The War Is Not Geographical

The “war” is being fought first along the lines between good and evil in every human heart, especially the hearts of Christians where Christ has staked his claim. The “war” is being fought along the line between sin and righteousness in every family. Between truth and falsehood in every school...between justice and injustice in every legislature...between integrity and corruption in every office...between love and hate in every ethnic group...between pride and humility...between right doctrine and wrong doctrine in every church. It is not a waste to fight the battle for truth and faith and love on any or all of these fronts.

The secular vocations of Christians are a war zone. There are spiritual adversaries to be defeated (that is, evil spirits and sins, not people); and there is beautiful moral high ground to be gained for the glory of God. **You don’t waste your life by where you work, but how and why.**

Secular Is Not Bad, but Strategic

Don’t hear in the phrase “secular vocation” any unspiritual or inferior comparison to “church vocation”.

Jesus’ intention is that his disciples remain in the world (which is what I mean by “secular jobs”), but that they not be “of the world”.

Martin Luther recaptured the biblical teaching of the priesthood of every Christian and blasted the spiritual line between clergy and laity.

It is pure invention that popes, bishops, priests and monks are to be called the “spiritual elite”; princes, lords, artisans and farmers the “temporal elite.” That is indeed a fine bit of lying and hypocrisy....All Christians are truly of the “spiritual elite,” and there is among them no difference at all but that of office. A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and everyone by means of his own work or office much benefit and serve every other, this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, as all the members of the body serve one another.

The Bible makes it plain that God’s will is for his people to be scattered like salt and light among the whole range of secular vocations. Christians living only with Christians and working only with Christians would not accomplish God’s whole purpose in the world. The vast majority of Christians are meant to live in the world and work among unbelievers.

Not everyone should be a missionary or a pastor.

There is to be a partnership between goers and senders.

Stay in Your Job “with God”

The call to be a Christian was not a call to leave your secular vocation. See the clear point of **1 Corinthians 7:17-24**. Paul sums up his teaching there with these words: **“So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God”** (verse 24). Paul had a high view of the providence of God—that God had sovereignly “assigned” or “called” unbelievers to positions in life where their conversion would have significant impact for his glory. When we are converted we should not jump to the conclusion, my job must change.

Therefore, **the burning question for most Christians should be: How can my life count for the glory of God in my secular vocation?** The aim of life is the same, whether in a secular vocation or in a church or mission vocation. Our aim is to joyfully magnify Christ—to make him

look great by all we do. Our aim is to enjoy making much of him by the way we work. The question is, How? **The Bible points to at least six answers:**

1. **We can make much of God in our secular job through the fellowship that we enjoy with Him throughout the day in all our work.** We enjoy God's being there for us as we listen to his voice, and talk to him, and cast all our burdens on him, and experience his guidance and care -1 Corinthians 7:24. **Christians do not just go to work. They go to work 'with God.'**

One way to enjoy God's presence and fellowship is through thankful awareness that your ability to do any work at all, including this work, is owing to his grace. **"He himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything"** (Acts 17:25). **All your skills are God's gift.** To know this can fill you with a sense of continual thankfulness offered up to God in prayer. ***"I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever"*** (Psalm 86:12).

When you add to this the awareness that you depend on God for every future minute of life and for all the help you need, your thankfulness flows over into faith for each upcoming moment. This is faith in future grace expressed in prayer to God with biblical words like, "I trust in you O LORD; I say, 'You are my God'" (Psalm 31:14).

Taking the Promises to Work:

This is the way God speaks to you through the day. He encourages you, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10). He reminds you that the challenges of the afternoon are not too hard for him. He tells you not to be anxious, but to ask him for whatever you need (Philippians 4:6), and says, "Cast all your anxieties on me, for I care for you" (paraphrase of 1 Peter 5:7). And He promises to guide you through the day: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you" (Psalm 32:8).

In this way we fellowship with God, listening to him through his Word and thanking him and praising him and calling on him for all we need. **When we remind ourselves that none of these underserved blessings could be ours apart from the death of Christ in our place, every heartbeat of joy in God becomes a boasting in the cross.**

2. **We make much of Christ in our secular work by the joyful, trusting, God-exalting design of our creativity and industry.**

Ask how human beings differ from beavers and ants... It helps get at the essence of how humans honor God with their work. These creatures are very hard workers and make very intricate and amazing things. So, there must be more to our God-honoring work than such creativity and industry.

What's the difference? Consider the first biblical words about man's creation. "So, God created man in his own image. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and *subdue* it and have *dominion* over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Genesis 1:27-28). We should be busy understanding and shaping and designing and using God's creation in a way that calls attention to his worth and wakens worship.

Work Is Not a Curse; Futility Is:

At the heart of the meaning of work is *creativity*. If you are not God, but like God—that is, if you are human—your work is to take what God has made and shape it and use it to make him look great.

No beaver ever pondered the preciousness and purpose of God and decided for God's sake to make a dam for another beaver and not for himself.

The essence of our work as humans must be that it is done in conscious reliance on God's power, and in conscious quest of God's pattern of excellence, and in deliberate aim to reflect God's glory.

Doing Good Work and Sleeping Well:

When you work like this—no matter what your vocation is—you can have a sweet sense of peace at the end of the day. **God has not created us to be idle.** Jonathan Edwards: *personal piety to the neglect of secular duties is hypocritical.*

*"Oh how good it is to work for God in the daytime,
and at night to lie down under his smiles!"*

True personal piety feeds the purposeful work of secular vocations rather than undermining it. **People who spend their lives mainly in idleness or frivolous leisure are rarely as happy as those who work.**

Unemployment. It is not first an economic problem, though it is that. It is first a theological problem. Human beings are created in the image of God and are endowed

with traits of their Creator that fit them for creative, useful, joyful, God-exalting work. Therefore, extensive idleness (when you have the ability to work) brings down the oppression of guilt and futility.

When we remember that all this God-exalting creativity and all this joy is only possible for undeserving sinners like us because of the death of Christ, every hour of labor becomes a boasting in the cross.

3. We make much of Christ in our secular work when it confirms and enhances the portrait of Christ's glory that people hear in the spoken Gospel.

Our work is not the beautiful woman, but the necklace. The beautiful woman is the Gospel—"the doctrine of God our Savior." One crucial meaning of our secular work is that the way we do it will increase or decrease the attractiveness of the Gospel we profess before unbelievers. The great assumption is that they know we are Christians.

Thinking that our work will glorify God when people do not know we are Christians is like admiring an effective ad on TV that never mentions the product. People may be impressed but won't know what to buy.

If we live and work well, obstacles will be removed. In other words, a crooked Christian car salesman is a blemish on the Gospel and puts a roadblock in the way of seeing the beauty of Christ. And **sloth may be a greater stumbling block than crime.** The biblical mandate is: ***"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men"*** (Colossians 3:23; cf. Ephesians 6:7).

The third way we make much of God in our secular work is by having such high standards of excellence and such integrity and such manifest goodwill that we put no obstacles in the way of the Gospel but rather call attention to the all-satisfying beauty of Christ.

4. We make much of Christ in our secular work by earning enough money to keep us from depending on others, while focusing on the helpfulness of our work rather than financial rewards.

God intended from the beginning that satisfying work would provide for our needs. Before sin entered the world, work would be without futility and frustration. It would unite beautifully with God's abundant provision to meet every need.

Happy Work Before the Fall; Then Sweating and Fretting:

What changed with the entrance of sin into the world was not that man had to work, but that work became hard with the futility and frustration of the fallen creation.

Because you have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, "You Shall not eat of it," cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you Shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground. (Genesis 3:17, 19).

When man and woman chose to be self-reliant and rejected God's fatherly guidance and provision, God subjected them to the very thing they chose: self-reliance. From now on, he says, it you eat, it will be because you toil and sweat. *So, they were driven from the garden of happy work to the ground of anxious toil.*

"Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on...Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:25, 32-33). "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:58). In other words, God does not want his children to be burdened with the frustration and futility and depressing weariness of work.

The mistake they made at Thessalonica, some were quitting their jobs and being idle because they thought that Christ would come very soon. So, Paul wrote to them, *"If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. Such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12).* **Able-bodied people who choose to live in idleness and eat the fruit of another's sweat are in rebellion against God's design.** If we can, we should earn our own living.

Unbelievers regard the lazy dependence of Christians on others as an evidence that our God is not worthy of following.

Do Not Labor for the Food that Perishes:

We make much of God by earning our own living when we focus not on financial profit but on the benefit our product or service brings to society. One of the most striking things Jesus ever said was, *"Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you" (John 6:27).* "The food that perishes" simply means all ordinary food and provision.

Jesus does not mean it is wrong to earn your own living and eat your own bread. **In other words, don't focus on mere material things in your work.** Don't labor merely with a view to the perishable things you can buy with your earnings. **Work with an eye not mainly to your money, but your usefulness. Work with a view to benefiting people with what you make or do.**

Don't labor for the food that perishes. **Labor to love people and honor God.** Think of new ways that your work can bless people.

Jesus said, *"I have food to eat that you do not know about....My food is to do the will of him who sent Me."* And his will is that we treasure him above all else and live like it.

If we simply work to earn a living—if we labor for the bread that perishes—we will waste our lives.

5. We make much of Christ in our secular work by earning money with the desire to use our money to make others glad in God.

As we work, we should dream of how to use our excess money to make others glad in God. ***Our secular work can become a great God-exalting blessing to the world if we aim to take the earnings we don't need and meet the needs of others in the name of Jesus.***

God clearly tells us that we should work to provide the needs of those who can't meet their own needs.

Three passages of Scripture make this plain. In **1 Timothy 5:8** Paul speaks to children and grandchildren regarding the aged widows. In Acts **20:35** Paul refers to his own manual labor. Then in **Ephesians 4:28** Paul doesn't settle for saying, "Don't steal, work!" He says, ***Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.***

6. We make much of Christ in our secular work by treating the web of relationships it creates as a gift of God to be loved by sharing the Gospel and by practical deeds of help.

Speaking the good news of Christ is part of why God put you in your job. He has woven you into the fabric of others' lives so that you will tell them the Gospel.

No nice feelings about you as a good employee will save anyone. People must know the Gospel. *“Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).*

The early church was a “gospel-ing” band of people. They spoke the Gospel... THE Gospel.

Conclusion

Secular work is not a waste when we make much of Christ from 8 to 5. God's will in this age is that his people be scattered like salt and light in all legitimate vocations. Through his scattered saints he spreads a passion for his supremacy. If you work like the world, you will waste your life, no matter how rich you get. But if your work creates a web of redemptive relationships and becomes an adornment for the Gospel of the glory of Christ, your satisfaction will last forever and God will be exalted in your joy.

CHAPTER 9 **The Majesty of Christ In** **Missions and Mercy—A Plea to This Generation**

God is closing in on some of you. He is like the “Hound of Heaven” who means to make you far happier in some dangerous and dirty work. *Missionaries and ministers come from people like you, stunned by the glory of God and stopped in your tracks.*

Sometimes it happens when you are going in exactly the opposite direction.

Pity for People and a Passion for Christ Are One.

If you have pity for perishing people and a passion for the reputation of Christ, you must care about world missions. **If your aim is to love people, you will lay down your life to make them eternally glad in God. And if your aim is to glorify Christ, who is God incarnate, you will also lay down your life to make people eternally happy in God.**

Any good-hearted goal, without the desire to give people eternal joy in God, is condemnation with a kind face. God is only praised where he is prized.

You cannot love man or honor God without doing both.

I simply want to let God tell you, in his own words, about his priorities:

At the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations. (Psalm 22:27-28)

Then there are *Old Testament prayers*:

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy. (Psalm 67:3-4).

Then there are *Old Testament commands*:

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!...Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns." (Psalm 96:3, 10)

Then there is *the great New Testament Commission from the risen Christ*:

Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

Then there is the *apostle Paul's great life of utter dedication to this mission*:

I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, "those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand." (Romans 15:20-21)

Then there is *the magnificent picture of the final outcome of God's purposes in history*:

And they sang a new song, saying, Worthy are you [O Christ] to take a scroll and to open its seals for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”
(Revelation 5:9-10).

A Summary Statement of Faith on Missions:

I have been impelled over the years to think and preach and write about Christ's great global purpose called missions. Our sense of what missions is:

We believe that the commission given by the Lord Jesus to make disciples of all nations is binding on His Church to the end of the age. This task is to proclaim the Gospel to every tribe and tongue and people and nation, baptizing them, teaching them the words and ways of the Lord, and gathering them into churches able to fulfill their Christian calling among their own people. The ultimate aim of world missions is that God would create, by His Word, worshippers who glorify His name through glad-hearted faith and obedience. *Missions exists because worship doesn't. When this age is over,* and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, *missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and the goal of missions.*

This is the big picture. Christ came and died and rose again in order to gather a joyful, countless company for his name from all the peoples of the world. This is what every Christian should dream about. We should love to hear of gospel triumphs as Christ plants his church among peoples held for centuries by alien powers of darkness.

This is God's design in world history—that people from all nations and tribes and languages come to worship and treasure Christ above all things. **There can be no weary resignation, no cowardly retreat, and no merciless contentment among Christ's people while he is disowned among thousands of unreached peoples.**

I urge you in the name of Jesus to wake up, and enlarge your heart, and stretch your mind, and spread your wings. Mount up above your limited life—and see the great and thrilling big picture of God's global purposes for the history of the world that cannot fail.

“I will accomplish all my purpose” (Isaiah 46:10). *“At the name of Jesus every knee [will] bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2:10-11).

As God gives you wings to rise up and see the world the way he sees it, many of you, I pray, will be loosened from your present situation—job, neighborhood, state, nation, plan—and be called to a direct engagement in this great historic, global purpose of God as a goer and not only a sender.

Those of you who stay—the senders—should keep this remarkable fact in mind: Foreign missions is a validation of *all* ministries of mercy at home because it exports them abroad.

The people who stay in the homeland are surrounded by need. We only need eyes to see. This challenge is not separate from the challenge of missions. Showing practical mercy to the poor displays the beauty of Christ at home and makes the exportation of the Christian faith credible. *We are hypocrites to pretend enthusiasm for overseas ministry while neglecting the miseries at home.* Ministries of mercy close at hand validate the authenticity of our distant concerns.

Foreign missions and hometown mercy are linked in the very nature of the Gospel that we are to send to the nations. The heart of the Gospel is this: “Though [Christ] was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

We owe our lives to God’s commitment to missions and mercy.

And he got dirty doing it... In fact he got killed. This merciful suffering is the *purchase* and the *path* of our salvation. *“Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps”* (1 Peter 2:21).

I have never read a better missional-connection than the quote from B.B. Warfield. He answers questions about ministry to the poor by comparing it to Christ’s ministry to us.

Now dear Christians, some of you pray night and day to be branches of the true Vine; you pray to be made all over in the image of Christ. If so, you must be like him in giving...“though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor”...

Objection 1. “My money is my own.” Answer: Christ might have said, “My blood is my own, my life is my own”... then where should we have been?

Objection 2. “The poor are undeserving.” Answer: Christ might have said, “They

are wicked rebels...shall I lay down my life or these? I will give to the good angels.” But no, he left the ninety-nine, and came after the lost. He gave his blood for the undeserving. Objection 3. “the poor may abuse it.” Answer: Christ might have said the same; yea, with far greater truth. Christ knew that thousands would trample his blood under their feet; that most would despise it; that many would make it an excuse for sinning more; yet he gave his own blood. **Oh my dear Christians! If you would be like Christ, give much, give often, give freely, to the vile and poor, the thankless and the undeserving. Christ is glorious and happy and so will you be.** It is not your money I want, but your happiness. Remember his own word, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

There is a wonderful partnership between Christians *being* the merciful church at home and Christians *planting* the merciful church abroad. Neither is a wasted life. The authenticity of each depends much on the authenticity of the other.

J. Campbell White wrote:

Nothing can wholly satisfy the life of Christ within his followers except the adoption of Christ’s purpose toward the world he came to redeem. Fame, pleasure and riches are but husks and ashes in contrast with the boundless and abiding joy of working with God for the fulfillment of his eternal plans.

The men who are putting everything into Christ’s undertaking are getting out of life its sweetest and most priceless rewards.

Laypeople, pastors, churches—all of us who stay behind—will find the “sweetest and most priceless rewards” as we enlarge our hearts to embrace not only the needs close to home, but also the hard and unreached places of the world.

J. Campbell White articulated: **selfishness is suicidal while service of others brings to the soul the supremest possible satisfaction.**

White showed his generation that a passion for missions was not only the way to save the world, but also to save the church:

“The effort to evangelize the world presents the speediest and surest methods of saving the Church. Our material resources are so stupendous that we are in danger of coming to trust in riches rather than in God. “If a man is growing large in wealth, nothing but constant giving can keep him from growing small in soul.” The evangelization of the world is the only enterprise large enough and important enough to provide an adequate outlet for the Church’s wealth.”

We all perish with our wealth if we do not pour ourselves out in ministries of mercy at home and missions among the unreached peoples. All the money needed to send and support an army of self-sacrificing, joy-spreading ambassadors is already in the church. But we are not giving it.

“If members of historically Christian churches in the United States were giving an average of 10% in 2000, there would have been an additional \$139 billion a year going through church channels.” Now add to that the really shocking fact that of the money given to the church, less than 6% goes to foreign missions, and of that amount, about 1% goes to fund breakthroughs to unreached peoples.

We Will Not Know Him Fully Outside His Mission:

For its own soul the church needs to be involved in missions. We will not know God in his full majesty until we know him moving triumphantly among the nations. Nothing enlarges our vision of God's triumphant grace like the scope of his saving work in history. What a story it is! *"I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds"* (Psalm 77:11-12).

The challenges of world evangelization are still very great. We are in a better position to know the scope and nature of the task than ever before. **Patrick Johnstone** writes, "For the first time in history we have a reasonably complete listing of the world's peoples and the extent to which they have been evangelized."

About 1.2-1.4 billion people have never had a chance to hear the Gospel, they live in cultures where the preaching of the Gospel in understandable ways is not accessible. Other analysts estimate 1,645,685,000 unevangelized people. That means 26.5 percent of the world's population live in people groups that do not have indigenous evangelizing churches. About 95 percent of these live in what has been called the 10/40 window.

The 10/40 Window: Central and South Asia and the Middle East are the remaining major areas of challenge. Muslims, Hindus or Buddhists; These are the final unpenetrated bastions of the enemy's hold on the souls of men.

God Issues a Call to This Generation: Listen!

I am praying that God will raise up hundreds of thousands of young people and "finishers" (people finishing one career and ready to pursue a second in Christian ministry). I pray that this divine call will rise in your heart. *Don't run from the call. Pursue it.*

Let your mind dwell on the lostness of perishing individuals, but also on whole people groups that do not have any access to the Gospel.

Frontier missions does what Paul aimed to do: Plant the church where there is now on possibility of ministry. This is the great need of the hour.

The Day of Missions Is Not Over:

There are hundreds of peoples and millions of people where there are no Christian nationals to do same-culture evangelism. A culture must be crossed. **Regarding missions to Muslims Patrick Johnstone says, “Often the best missionaries are the ones who have studied little more than the basics of Islam but have a passion for sharing Christ. In their boldness for Jesus, they plunge into witnessing to Muslims, where an Islamist would fear to go.” But make no mistake. A culture will have to be crossed, and that’s what missions is.**

Missions, not same-culture evangelism by nationals will finish the Great Commissions.

“Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:38), and ask him if you should be one. Expect this prayer to change you. **God often wakens desire, and gives gifts, and opens doors when we are praying and pondering real possibilities and real needs.**

Abraham Kuyper put it: “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’” By faith alone enemies will become happy subjects of an everlasting kingdom of justice and joy. Advancing this cause with Christ is worth your life.

If you want to be most fully satisfied with God as he triumphs in the history of redemption, you can’t go on with business as usual—doing your work, making your money, giving your tithe, eating, sleeping, playing, and going to church. Instead you need to stop and go away for a few days with a Bible and notepad; and pray and think about how your particular time and place in life fits into the great purpose of God to make the nations glad in him. How will you join the great global purpose of God expressed in Psalm 67:4, “Let the nations be glad and sing for joy”?

Many of you should stay where you are in your present job, and simply ponder how you can fit your particular skills and relationships and resources more strategically into the global purpose of your heavenly Father. Many of you are simply not satisfied with what you are doing. As J. Campbell White said, the output of your lives is not satisfying your deepest spiritual ambitions.

If the discontent with your present situation is deep, recurrent, and lasting, and if that discontent grows in Bible-saturated soil, God may be calling you to a new work. God may indeed be loosening your roots in order to transplant you to a place and a ministry where the deep spiritual ambitions of your soul can be satisfied.

God seldom calls us to an easier life, but always calls us to know more of him and drink more deeply of his sustaining grace.

I ask myself, is this the most strategic investment of my life for the sake of God's purpose to make the nations glad in him? I ask my wife, are you sensing any tugs to move closer to the front lines of the unreached peoples?"

And so it is with many of you. Big issues are in the offering. May God help you. May God free you. May God give you a fresh, Christ-exalting vision for your life—whether you go to an unreached people or stay firmly and fruitfully at your present post. May your vision get its meaning from God's great purpose. May the cross of Christ be your only boast, and may you say, with sweet confidence, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

CHAPTER 10
My Prayer—Let None Say in the End,
“I've Wasted It”

Let love flow from your saints, and may it, Lord, be this: that even if it costs our lives, the people will be glad in God. With trembling hands before the throne of God, and utterly dependent on your grace, we lift our voice and make this solemn vow: As God lives, and is all I ever need, I will not waste my life...

through Jesus Christ, **AMEN.**