

# LIVING OUR LIVES SO THAT GOD WILL USE US

BY ZACK M. GUESS

*“If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.” – 2 Timothy 2:21*

**A Word of Warning:** It is not how much we know that pleases God; it is how **obedient** we are to what we do know. During the past 15 or 16 years or so we have had many young people to go through various Boot Camps and Retreats. They have learned much. Many of them have gone on to live outstanding Christian lives. Some have happily married, and are serving God in their homes and churches. Some have children and are bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Very sadly, some have already made shipwreck of their lives. Some have fallen into grievous sins. Some have already wrecked their homes and gone through divorce. **I strongly advise you to listen intently and prayerfully as we study together.**

Let us look together at the following Scriptures: Matt. 7: 24-27; James 1: 22-27; 2: 14-26; Matt. 15: 8.

During this Retreat, while you are in church, and with your parents be sure to prayerfully cultivate a **learner's spirit**. See Proverbs 1:5 “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels...” The Hebrew word translated “hear” in this verse is *shama*. It means, “to hear, listen to, obey.” See also Prov. 1: 24-33; 8: 33; 9; 9; 15: 32. To not listen and to have a disposition to not respect and obey those whom the Lord has placed over you, especially your parents, is to have the spirit of a **rebel**. See 1 Sam. 15: 22, 23.

Satan would like for you to **harden your hearts**. You must not do this. You must **examine** your hearts and you must **soften** them. See Hebrews 3: 8, 15; 4: 7. John Gill has a very enlightening commentary on this hardening of the heart:

There is a natural hardness of the heart; the heart of man is like a stone, destitute of spiritual life, motion, and activity; it is senseless, stupid, impenitent, stubborn, and inflexible, on which no impressions can be made, but by powerful grace: and there is an **acquired, habitual, and voluntary** hardness of heart, to which men arrive by various steps; as entertaining pleasing thoughts of sin; an actual commission of it, with frequency, till it becomes customary, and so habitual; an extenuation or justification of it, and so they become hardened against all reproofs and sermons, and to all afflictions and judgments; are insensible and past feeling, and openly declare for sin, and glory in it: and there is a hardness which God's people are liable to, and should guard against; and which is brought on by a neglect of private and public worship, and by keeping bad company, and through the ill examples of others, and by giving way to lesser sins;

for all sin is of an hardening nature:

This would be a good time to spend a little prayer time before God. Examine your own heart and see if there are actions, words, and attitudes you need to repent of. Our God graciously allows us to **confess** our sins to Him and to **repent** of them. See the gracious promise in 1 John 1:9 “If we \_\_\_\_\_ our sins, he is faithful and just to \_\_\_\_\_ us our sins, and to \_\_\_\_\_ us from all unrighteousness.” For a wonderful prayer of repentance see Psalm 51. Ask God to make you sorry for your sins and to give you a **repentant heart**. Do not hesitate to repent. This is a top priority. In Revelation 3:19 Jesus Christ said “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be \_\_\_\_\_ therefore, and \_\_\_\_\_. The only thing that will really make you truly repent is to have **godly sorrow** for your sins. See 2 Cor. 7: 10, 11.

Let us prayerfully determine to make the following commitment **right now** before God: Psalm 86:11 “Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.” We have here **two prayers** and a **solemn commitment**. Memorize this verse.

**To whom are you accountable?** Modern man likes to think that he is **autonomous**. That means \_\_\_\_\_. However, each human being owes obedience to God because He is the Creator. The child of God owes **double allegiance** to God because He is also our \_\_\_\_\_. Look at 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20. Let us also memorize these two verses.

The **primary duty** for each child of God is to do what Jesus said in Matthew 6:33 “But seek ye **first** the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Let us also memorize this verse. This means that no matter whatever we do in life, we must always put God first. This will **drastically affect** every area of our lives. This will include:

1. Your relationship with your parents: See Eph. 6: 1-3; Col. 3: 20; Ex. 20: 12; Prov. 1: 8; 6: 20; 13: 1; 15: 5, 20; 17: 25; 20: 20; 23: 22, 24, 25; 30: 11, 17. It is **impossible** to please God and be disobedient to parents. Your parents should have much more influence on you than your friends do. Being disobedient to parents is so horrible that God listed this sin in a terrible category of other sins. See Rom. 1: 29-31; 2 Tim. 3: 1-5.

Your parents are not perfect and they will make mistakes but you must still submit yourselves to them. Jesus Christ was perfect and Joseph and Mary were not. However He set the example for all children. See Luke 2: 51.

Having the proper relationship with your parents also includes caring for them when they are old. See Matt. 15: 1-6; 1 Tim. 5: 3, 4. The word translated “nephews” here means \_\_\_\_\_. The word “requite” means \_\_\_\_\_. What do you think this has reference to in this context?

2. What kind of career you pursue. What are some careers that would greatly hinder you from seriously serving God? Have you **really prayed** about what God would have you to do? Is your **primary consideration** making a lot of money? Consider 1 Tim. 6: 9-11; Prov. 28:20 For the girls look at Titus 2: 5.
3. How you use your money. First, we must remember that it is God Who enables us to get any money. See Deut. 8: 17, 18. See these other Scriptures which give us some of the ways in which God says we should spend our money: Luke 12: 16-21. What do you think the expression “rich toward God” means? 1 Tim. 6: 17-19; Luke 16: 11. 1 Tim. 5: 8. The Lord says much about our helping those who are truly in need→Deut. 15: 7; Ps. 41: 1; Prov. 19: 17; Gal. 2: 10. How would you balance the teaching of the following two passages- James 5: 1-5 and 1 Tim. 6: 17?

Read the following Scriptures and see if you can tell what is under consideration: Phil. 1: 5; 4: 10-19; Heb. 13: 16. The word translated “fellowship” here means\_\_\_\_\_. “Preoccupation with or emphasis on material objects, comforts, and considerations, as opposed to spiritual or intellectual values” is called\_\_\_\_\_.

Look at Luke 12: 15; Eph. 5: 3; Col. 3: 5. The word “covetousness” is *pleonexia* (pleonexia), and means “greedy desire to have more, covetousness, avarice.”

See 1 Cor. 7: 31. I like what John Gill says about this verse→”Such as have a large affluence of the things of this world, should use them in a moderate and temperate manner; should not squander them away extravagantly, or spend them on their lusts, and use them intemperately, which is to abuse them...”

4. What kind of **employee** you will be. There are many Scriptures that pertain to this. Some of them are: Eph. 6: 5-8; Col. 3: 22; 1 Tim. 6:1, 2; Tit. 2: 9, 10; 1 Pet 2: 18. Some of the **good qualities** here that God expects of Christian employees are **obedience, faithfulness, respect, desire to please, and patience under difficult employers and in difficult circumstances.**
5. What kind of **citizen** you will be. You will be **law-abiding**. Matt. 17: 24-27; See Acts 23: 5; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2: 17; Jude 8. You will be **prayerful**. See 1 Tim. 2: 1-3.
6. Whom you will choose to marry. You will welcome **parental input**. (Ex. 20: 12). You will certainly not marry an unbeliever→2 Cor. 6: 14, 15. You will marry someone that you are like-minded with in spiritual matters, and with whom you can serve the Lord→1 Pet. 3: 7.
7. After you are married how you will live in the married state. **Husbands** will be governed by the principles taught in the following Scriptures: 1 Pet. 3: 7; Eph. 5: 25-33; Col. 3: 19; Ruth 1: 9. This last Scripture is very beautiful and describes the atmosphere that a husband should provide for his wife in their home. The Hebrew word translated “rest” here is used 21 times in the Old Testament and is variously translated “rest, resting place, comfortable, ease, quiet, still.” A husband should so order his home and behave himself so that the home is a true **haven** and a **refuge** for his wife. The primary word that the husband should remember as his role in marriage is **LOVE**. This is not primarily a

feeling. This is a determined act of his will. Love is not optional. This is a command of God. To not love one's wife is to disobey God.

**Wives** will be governed by the principles taught in these Scriptures→Eph. 5: 22-24, 33. The words translated “submit” and “subject” are from the same Greek word. It is ~*upota,ssw* (hupotasso). It means “to arrange under, to subordinate; to subject one's self, obey.” It was originally a “Greek military term meaning ‘to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader’. In non-military use, it was ‘a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden’”. The word translated “reverence” carries the idea of treating with respect. Remember that these are commands of God. They are not optional for one who obeys the commands of God. Other Scriptures which speak to the role of the wife are Col. 3: 18; 1 Pet. 3: 1-6. The **virtuous woman** of Proverbs 31 was a good wife. She was **oriented toward her husband** instead of being **self-centered**. It is said of her in Proverbs 31:11, 12 “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.”

Both partners will be committed to the **permanence** of the **marriage relationship**. The only thing that will separate them is death. See Matt. 19: 4-6.

8. How you behave yourself concerning **sexual morality** both before and after marriage.

**\*Remember this**→In the entire history of the human race, from the beginning of time until the end of time- it has never been right **even one time and no matter what the circumstances** to engage in any sexual activity outside of marriage! \* You cannot be guided by feelings and emotions in such matters. You must be guided by the Word of God. Sometimes our emotions are extremely strong and if we follow them we will be deceived.

The Bible demands that we keep our **bodies** and our **minds** clean and pure about such things. Let us look at some Scriptures→Matt. 5: 28. This forbids **pornography** in all its forms. This includes **magazines, movies, TV, videos, the Internet**, and any and all other forms. This also means that we must not be in places of temptation, but must flee them→Gen. 39: 12; 1 Cor. 6: 18; 2 Tim 2: 22; Prov. 4: 15; 1 John 2: 16.

Even our **words** and **thoughts** should be pure→Eph. 4: 29; Ps. 19: 14.

Christian young men and young women should be very careful to behave with great purity of mind and behavior toward each other→1 Tim 5: 2. John Gill says the following about the expression “all purity”-“in such manner as to preserve chastity in **looks, in words, and actions.**”

It is absolutely necessary that Christians wear **modest clothes**. This is true of both sexes but it is especially true of women. See 1 Tim. 2: 9; Prov. 7: 10; Rom. 12: 1, 2; 1 Thess. 5: 22.

9. What kind of music you will listen to. This is a very important subject. The songs we

listen to must have the proper **words**. The **sound** (including the beat, is also very important). It is very enlightening to know what is the **purpose** of the composers, their background, ideology, and lifestyle. What **effects** do certain kinds of music have on you? Anytime you do anything **behind your parents' back**, including the music you listen to, is always very wrong.

10. What kinds of friends you will have. Here again, you must **welcome parental involvement!** Look at the following Scriptures→ Ex. 23: 2; Ps. 1: 1; Prov. 4: 14; 13: 20; 22: 24; 24: 1; 28: 7. 1 Cor. 5: 9-11. See especially→ 1 Corinthians 15:33 “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” The word translated “communications” here means “companionships.” The word translated “manners” means here “morals, character.”
11. What you will read and look at. We have already studied this as far as sexual morality is concerned. However, there are other areas in which we need to be careful as to what we read and place before our eyes. Remember that **ideas have consequences!** We are transformed into what we should be by the renewing of our minds. See Rom. 12: 1, 2. The one book that we should read from every day is the \_\_\_\_\_. Do you have a **habit** of reading the Bible **each day**? Yes \_\_\_\_\_. No \_\_\_\_\_. If you have one tell us about it. If you do not you need to put some thought into developing it **right now**.

Look at the importance of God’s Word: It is our spiritual **food**→Matt. 4: 4; 1 Pet; 2: 2; Job 23: 2. It is our **light**→Ps; 119: 105. It is our **cleansing agent**→Ps. 119: 9; John 15: 3; Eph. 5: 26. It is our **sword**→Eph. 6: 17; 2 Cor. 10: 4, 5. See how Jesus used this sword in Matt. 4: 1-11. See how powerful the Word of God was in Acts 19: 20.

If you are serious about pleasing God you must make **determined commitment** to be much in His word. Here are some suggestions: Read a chapter of Proverbs each day for a year. Read the chapter that corresponds with the day of the month. In addition read the Bible through in a year. Figure out how many chapters or pages a day will get the job done. I would suggest **underlining** words, or phrases that particularly strike your attention.

You must also commit to **study** God’s word→1 Tim. 2: 15. There are several ways to do this. You can study by \_\_\_\_\_. You can also study by \_\_\_\_\_. There are many helps you can use to help you study your Bibles. Your pastor would be glad to help you in this. Your parents would also. I will make a few suggestions→Study Bibles-concordances- Bible handbooks- Bible dictionaries-Bible encyclopedias-commentaries- maps and atlases-books on Bible doctrine or systematic theology-books on different subjects-word study books such as *An Expository of New Testament Words* by W. E. Vine. There is also much **computer software** available for Bible study. One of my favorites it the *Online Bible*.

What are some things that you have found useful in your Bible study?

You must also commit to **memorize** God’s word→Deut. 11: 18; Ps. 119: 11; Col. 3: 16. You can memorize verses, chapters, or entire books of the Bible. Always carry a Bible or

verses written on cards with you. Do some thinking and **purpose** to memorize certain portions the rest of this year.

After you have memorized God's word you must **meditate** on it→Joshua 1: 8; Ps. 1: 2; 77: 12; 119: 15, 148; 1 Tim. 4: 15. Meditate means "to engage in thought or contemplation; to think deeply and continuously; reflect; ponder; muse." One dictionary definition is particularly meaningful. It is that meditation is "solemn reflection on sacred matters as a devotional act."

After all this you must commit to **obey** God's word→Heb. 2: 1-3. We have already discussed this. Having a mental knowledge of the Word of God is not enough. We must also obey it. In fact, it is **self-deception** to go to church and read your Bible and think that you are doing pretty well, when you are not obeying what you know→James 1: 22-27.

We must also remember that **partial obedience** or **half-hearted obedience** is not obedience at all as far as God is concerned. To be genuine obedience it must be-

\_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and  
\_\_\_\_\_.

12. We will also be committed to a regular prayer life. The first thing a person does when he or she is born again is to pray→Acts 9: 11; Prov. 15: 8. Our prayers are often **spontaneous**→Matt. 14: 30. Sometimes we may not be aware that we are actually praying. We may just be groaning in our souls→Rom. 8: 26, 27. However, we ought to develop a deliberate, regular prayer life→Acts 3: 1; Dan. 6: 10; Ps. 5: 3; 55: 17; 141: 2.

We can **learn** to pray. Let us have the attitude the apostles expressed in Luke 11:1 "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, \_\_\_\_\_ us to pray, as John also \_\_\_\_\_ his disciples. There are many kinds of prayer. **Praise and thanksgiving** is one type→Heb. 13: 15; Ps. 71: 8. **Confession** is a very important branch of prayer→Ps. 51. **Intercession** on behalf of others is very necessary→Col. 4: 12, 13.

One way to learn to pray is to look at prayers and instruction about prayer in the Bible. Look at the Lord's teaching in Matt. 6: 9-15 and Luke 11: 1-13. Look at the prayer of Daniel in Daniel 9. Watch Abraham intercede with God in Gen.18: 22-33. Examine the prayers of Paul in Phil. 1: 9-11; Eph. 1: 15-20; 3: 14-21.

Our church **song books** are filled with prayers that we can make our own.

Many of our songs are just filled with praise. For example, *My God, How Great Thou Art*. What are some other praise songs? Some of our songs are great to sing when we feel the weight of our sins and feel the need to confess. For example, *Show Pity Lord, Oh Lord Forgive*. Can you think of some others like this? Some songs we should sing before we go to God in prayer to encourage our hearts. A good example of this would be *Sweet Hour of Prayer*. What are some others? I recommend that you commit many of these songs to memory.

One song that would be very good to **start each day with** is *Awake, My Soul and With the Sun*.

13. We will commit ourselves to developing and maintaining a **Biblical World View**. God's children are not to **think** and **act** like the unregenerate world does→Rom. 12: 2; Col. 3: 2; Tit. 2: 12; James 4: 4; Eph. 2: 2; 2 Tim. 4: 10; 1 John 2: 15, 16.

We are to be **salt** and **light** to the world→Matt. 5: 16.

God's people must be wise to avoid being contaminated with worldly ideas. They must get their directions from God's Word and not from those around them (mass media, prevailing community standards, peers, state schools, etc.). Instead, God's people must be like "the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." (1 Chron. 12: 32).

Let us examine a few issues and see if we can find **Biblical answers**.

How did the world come into existence?

What is right or wrong about the practice of homosexuality?

What kinds of "rights" do children have in relation to their parents?

Is abortion right or wrong? Doesn't a woman have the right to do as she pleases with her own body?

Is capital punishment right or wrong?

Is it "child abuse" if a parent disciplines his children with the rod?

Should unmarried couples living together have the same kinds of recognition as married couples?

If a person is terminally ill with a very painful disease does he or she have the "right" to commit suicide?

Should animals have the same "rights" as humans?

**Very Important Question:** Will you commit to God's viewpoints even though they are vastly different from the world's? Will you try to think and live God's way, even though many people will think that you are peculiar and maybe a fanatic? Yes \_\_\_\_\_.

No \_\_\_\_\_. See **Isaiah 55: 8, 9**.