

# *Lessons on the Normal Christian Life*

## *Lesson 1*

### **God's Eternal Purpose and Economy & Regeneration**

*Scripture reading:* Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7-9; Eph. 3:8-11; 1:5, 9-11; 2 Pet. 1:3-4;

2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12; John 3:15-16; 1 Pet. 1:23;

John 3:3-8; 1:12-13; Jer. 13:23; Rom. 10:9-10, 13

- Gen 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.
- Gen 1:27 And God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
- Gen 2:7 Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.
- Gen 2:8 And Jehovah God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there He put the man whom He had formed.
- Gen 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel
- Eph 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,
- Eph 3:10 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church,
- Eph 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord,
- Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,
- Eph 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,
- Eph 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;
- Eph 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,
- 2 Pet 1:3 Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and virtue,
- 2 Pet 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.
- 2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.
- 1 Thes 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
- John 3:15 That everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life.
- John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.
- 1 Pet 1:23 Having been regenerated not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God.
- John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
- John 3:4 Nicodemus said to Him, How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?
- John 3:5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot

- enter into the kingdom of God.
- John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
- John 3:7 Do not marvel that I said to you, You must be born anew.
- John 3:8 The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from and where it goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.
- John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name,
- John 1:13 Who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- Jer 13:23 Can the Cushite change his skin, / Or the leopard his spots? / Then you also may be able to do good, / Who are accustomed to do evil.
- Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;
- Rom 10:10 For with the heart there is believing unto righteousness, and with the mouth there is confession unto salvation.
- Rom 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

## I. God's eternal purpose and economy:

- A. God's eternal purpose is to make man in His image, so that man can express Him, and give man His dominion, to represent Him in order to deal with His enemy—Gen. 1:26-27:
- Gen 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.
- Gen 1:27 And God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
1. Image—to express God—this is a matter of life inwardly—John 1:18; 2 Pet. 1:3-4.
 

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

2 Pet 1:3 Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and virtue,

2 Pet 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.
  2. Dominion—to represent God, exercising His authority—this is also a matter of life inwardly—1 John 4:4.
 

1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children; and you have overcome them because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.
- B. God's eternal purpose can only be accomplished by His economy, His plan, His household arrangement, which is to dispense Himself into His believers as life and everything so that they can be built up to be the Body of Christ—Gen. 2:9; Eph. 3:8-11; John 10:10b.
- Gen 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel
- Eph 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,
- Eph 3:10 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church,
- Eph 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord,
- John 10:10b ... I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.
- C. God created man as a three-part vessel for His purpose and economy, that is, that man may be able to receive His dispensing, contain Him and express Him—Gen. 2:7; Rom. 9:23; 2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12:
- Gen 2:7 Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.
- Rom 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which

- He had before prepared unto glory,
- 2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.
- 1 Thes 5:23 And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
1. The body—our physical part to contact the material world.
  2. The soul—our psychological part (which includes mind, emotion and will) to contact the psychological world.
  3. The spirit—our inmost part to contact God—Zech. 12:1; Job 32:8; John 4:24.
 

Zech 12:1 The burden of the word of Jehovah concerning Israel. Thus declares Jehovah, who stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him,

Job 32:8 But there is a spirit in man, / And the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.

## II. Regeneration:

- A. Regeneration is the center of God's complete salvation, the beginning of God's salvation in its organic aspect, and our first experience of God's dispensing in His economy—1 Pet. 1:23:
- 1 Pet 1:23 Having been regenerated not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God.
1. The goal of God's love toward us is to give us the eternal life which is God Himself—John 3:16.
 

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.
  2. God's good pleasure is to be one with man and make man the same as He is in life and nature, but not in His Godhead—Eph. 1:5, 9; Rev. 22:17.
 

Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Eph 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Rev 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills take the water of life freely.
- B. The meaning of regeneration is:
1. That in addition to man's natural life, he receives a new life, the life of God, which is God Himself—John 3:15.
 

John 3:15 That everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life.
  2. Being born anew—John 3:3.
 

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
  3. Being born of God to become children of God—God-men—John 1:12-13.
 

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name,

John 1:13 Who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
  4. Being born of the Spirit—John 3:3-8.
 

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

John 3:4 Nicodemus said to Him, How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

John 3:7 Do not marvel that I said to you, You must be born anew.  
John 3:8 The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from and where it goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

C. The need for regeneration is due to the fact that:

1. Man cannot change himself—Jer. 13:23.  
Jer 13:23 Can the Cushite change his skin, / Or the leopard his spots? / Then you also may be able to do good, / Who are accustomed to do evil.
2. Man cannot see the kingdom of God—John 3:3; 1 Cor. 2:14.  
John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.  
1 Cor 2:14 But a soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually.
3. Man cannot enter into the kingdom of God—John 3:5.  
John 3:5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
4. Human life is only a created life and is, therefore, weak and incapable of overcoming sin and death, and cannot fulfill God's eternal purpose.

D. The way to be regenerated:

1. Through Christ's death and resurrection—John 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:3.  
John 3:15 That everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life.  
1 Pet 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
2. Through the Word of life—1 Pet. 1:23.  
1 Pet 1:23 Having been regenerated not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God.
3. Through the Spirit's working—John 16:8.  
John 16:8 And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and concerning righteousness and concerning judgment:
4. Through man's repentance and believing into (receiving) the Lord Jesus Christ—  
John 1:12-13; Rom. 10:9-10, 13.  
John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name,  
John 1:13 Who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.  
Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;  
Rom 10:10 For with the heart there is believing unto righteousness, and with the mouth there is confession unto salvation.  
Rom 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

E. The riches gained through regeneration are:

1. The life of God (John 3:36), which includes:  
John 3:36 He who believes into the Son has eternal life; but he who disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him.
  - a) The nature of God—2 Pet. 1:3-4.  
2 Pet 1:3 Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and virtue,  
2 Pet 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.
  - b) The power of resurrection—Eph. 1:19-20.  
Eph 1:19 And what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the operation of the might of His strength,  
Eph 1:20 Which He caused to operate in Christ in raising Him from the dead and

- seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies,
- c) The expression of God—Eph. 4:32; 5:8-9.
    - Eph 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ also forgave you.
    - Eph 5:8 For you were once darkness but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light
    - Eph 5:9 (For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),
  - d) The fullness of God—Col. 2:9-10.
    - Col 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,
    - Col 2:10 And you have been made full in Him, who is the Head of all rule and authority.
2. The law of life—Rom. 8:2; Heb. 7:16; 8:10.
    - Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
    - Heb 7:16 Who has been appointed not according to the law of a fleshly commandment but according to the power of an indestructible life.
    - Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will impart My laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will inscribe them; and I will be God to them, and they will be a people to Me.
  3. The Triune God with His attributes:
    - a) The Father is in us—Eph. 4:6; 1 John 4:15.
      - Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
      - 1 John 4:15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.
    - b) The Son is in us—2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27.
      - 2 Cor 13:5 Test yourselves whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Or do you not realize about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are disapproved?
      - Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
      - Col 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,
    - c) The Spirit is in us—Rom. 8:9-11; John 14:16-17.
      - Rom 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.
      - Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
      - Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.
      - John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever,
      - John 14:17 Even the Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him; but you know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you.
  4. A new heart—Ezek. 36:26.
    - Ezek 36:26 I will also give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.
  5. A new spirit—Ezek. 36:26.
    - Ezek 36:26 I will also give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

**Hymns:** 1325, 538, 499

<p>Hymn 538</p> <p>1 It is God's intent and pleasure To have Christ revealed in me, Nothing outward as religion, But His Christ within to be.</p> <p><i>Chorus</i></p> <p>It is God's intent and pleasure That His Christ be wrought in me; Nothing outwardly performing, But His Christ my all to be.</p> <p>2 It is God's intent and pleasure That His Christ may live in me; Nothing as an outward practise, But Christ working inwardly.</p> <p>3 It is God's intent and pleasure That His Christ be formed in me; Not the outward forms to follow, But Christ growing inwardly.</p> <p>4 It is God's intent and pleasure That His Christ make home in me; Not just outwardly to serve Him, But Christ dwelling inwardly.</p> <p>5 It is God's intent and pleasure That His Christ my hope may be; It is not objective glory, But 'tis Christ subjectively.</p> <p>6 It is God's intent and pleasure That His Christ be all in me; Nothing outwardly possessing, But His Christ eternally.</p>	<p>Hymn 499</p> <p>1 Oh, what a life! Oh, what a peace! The Christ who's all within me lives. With Him I have been crucified; This glorious fact to me He gives. Now it's no longer I that live, But Christ the Lord within me lives.</p> <p>2 Oh, what a joy! Oh, what a rest! Christ now is being formed in me. His very nature and life divine In my whole being inwrought shall be. All that I am came to an end, And all of Christ is all to me.</p> <p>3 Oh, what a thought! Oh, what a boast! Christ shall in me be magnified. In nothing shall I be ashamed, For He in all shall be applied. In woe or blessing, death or life, Through me shall Christ be testified.</p> <p>4 Oh, what a prize! Oh, what a gain! Christ is the goal toward which I press. Nothing I treasure, nor aught desire, But Christ of all-inclusiveness. My hope, my glory, and my crown Is Christ, the One of peerlessness. (Repeat the last two lines of each stanza)</p>
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**Questions:**

1. What is God's eternal purpose and economy?
2. How can God's eternal purpose be accomplished?
3. Describe the tripartite man who was created according to God's purpose and economy.
4. How is regeneration related with God's full salvation, God's dispensing, and our experience?
5. What is the meaning of regeneration?
6. Why does man need to be regenerated?
7. How can man be regenerated?
8. What do man receive after regeneration?

**References:** "The Knowledge of Life", Messages 1-4, "The Experience of Life", Message 1