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WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?
By Forman Lincicome

Author of
A Lot in Sodom
Behold The Man
The Three D's of the Sanctified

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I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME

to
my four children,
Thalia, Ruth, Elinor and Eldon,
whose lives have brightened life's pathway,
whose salvation, education and
character constitute the most cherished
ambitions and most earnest
prayers of my heart.

* * * * *

FOREWORD

"What is it all about, anyhow?"

This half-slang question expresses a too prevalent mood concerning life -- a mood not alone of bewilderment but of bafflement and boredom. It is the inning of the cynic. Disillusionment, often falsely so-called, has led many to despair. They read no noble meanings in the thing called life. And when they come to the end of it, often these days, by the hand of self-murder, they feel very much as a distinguished Frenchman expressed it when passing, "Let down the curtain, the farce is ended."

On every hand one witnesses the desperate need of a fresh summons to face life with faith and with that sense of meaning and mission which is born of faith. At bottom it is a choice between faith and futility. What the author of this excellent, stimulating address has done is to give us an appraisal of life that is fitted to all the facts, spiritual as well as intellectual and biological, and which, for this very reason, "drives toughness into our fiber" and challenges us to believe that after all the "chief end of man" is to "glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

Paul S. Rees

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INTRODUCTION

This generation has made a mess of life -- who will deny it? It has built for time on the foundation of selfish pleasure with inflammable materials, and the conflagration is already dying into ashes.

We look to today's youth for tomorrow's hope. The new generation must rediscover the sturdy virtues of the ages and adjust thereto this age! But how difficult the task!

There are those in growing numbers who, in the collapse of worlds -- economic, moral, political, religions -- are asking with a new seriousness, "What is life?"

The writer of the following message is indeed well qualified to guide the quest of these honest searchers. His years of experience in the public ministry, his contacts with life in its varied cultural levels and geographical settings, his wide ministry to youth in high school and college, his own serene sanity of life-outlook, and above all his grip upon the Eternal are his credentials for outlining to youth the making of a life. May God richly bless the message of his pen through these pages as He has blessed the same message from his lips across the broad stretches of fair America.

Leslie Ray Marston, Ph.D.
President, Greenville College,
Greenville, Ill.

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James 4:14 "For what is your life."

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Part 1 YOUR LIFE IS A DIMENSION

The complete life has four dimensions; namely, length, breadth, depth and height.

1. The first dimension is length. Ordinarily one must live long in order to accomplish much. Time enters into every man's account as one of the great blessings of life.

To accomplish much one must start early and continue long. Daniel entered King's College at sixteen and was still prime minister at eighty. Some people will have to live long in order to live much, for they have shortened this life by being too slow to begin. The false notion that youth is the time for careless living and the sowing of wild oats has influenced many a person to postpone the beginning of sane living until so late that not much time is left for constructive service.

The foundation of longevity is made or marred by the time we are twenty years of age. Many of us have wrecked our health by poor habits, and especially poor habits of eating. Some of us may not be afraid to die, but we should be ashamed to die.

Length is the first dimension, and too often it is the only dimension in some people's lives. It is said of Methuselah that he lived 969 years, begat sons and daughters, and died. That is all that is said of him. His was a life of one dimension, namely, length. What will be said of you when you die?

2. The second dimension of a complete life is breadth. Some one has said that one's life is as broad as his love, sympathy and service.

Sympathy is love at work. A man without sympathy is a man without love. You will not have to search long to find some one less fortunate than you are. There are many upon whom we can bestow our love and service. There is the man of genius who is poor; we can pay for his dinner. There is the man who is frail in body; we can carry his luggage or shine his shoes. There is the man bereft of loved ones; "We can pray for him. There is the man of lonely heart; we can lead him to Christ. I am in some way a debtor to every one I meet, and there is surely some way in which I can pay the interest on that debt.

3. The complete life has a third dimension, namely, depth. Your life will be as deep as your convictions. Not many people in this day of expediency, policy, and compromise have convictions. There is no lack of opinions. Opinions are as numerous as the sands of the sea, and many of them are about as worthless. There is no lack of beliefs. But there is a big difference between having a belief and having a conviction. A belief is what a man holds, while a conviction is what holds the man.

Everybody recognizes the difference between a man who is governed by a conviction and who is governed by the opinions of the crowd. A man without convictions is fickle and shallow; he follows the trend of the mob. What the mob thinks he thinks; what the mob does he does; where the mob goes he goes. He has no controversies because he has no convictions. He assents to everything because he believes nothing.

4. The complete life has height also. Your life will be as high as the ideals you seek. The person with high ideals can't live on a low level. Any level he reaches will be too low for him, for his ideals cause him to continually seek higher levels.

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Part 2

YOUR LIFE IS AN OPPORTUNITY

Your life is an opportunity to do things. Things to be done may be classified and put into four groups

1. Easy things.
2. Hard things.
3. Impossible things.
4. Things worth while.

The greatest drag on human society is that such a large number of people choose to do the easy thing. This is why the lowlands are so crowded, while the hilltop population is so scarce.

Because the majority of the people choose to do the easy thing it puts burdens on others too grievous to be borne. Life would be very different if there could be an evening-up in bearing life's responsibilities. The great trouble is that the "take-it-easy" crowd is in the majority.

You will find them in every walk of life. They are in the office, in the schoolroom, the factory, the pulpit, the home and the church. Many of them are just marking time. They get no promotions. They are satisfied with a "C" grade. Wherever they are they are a burden, because the thing they ought to do is laid on the shoulders of some one else. This accounts for the breakdown of so many people. They are carrying a double load -- their own and the other fellow's.

Now we come to the second group of things to be done -- "hard things." There are great crowds of people who shun the hard things. They are like the water which trickles down the hillside. It always follows the path of least resistance. It goes around obstacles which confront it. If it meets something that completely bars its progress, it stops and then it stagnates.

A large portion of the race is living according to this principle: If a thing is hard to do, that is sufficient reason for not doing it. Jeroboam decides it is too hard to go up to Jerusalem to worship God, so he makes a golden calf for the people to worship. He will make religion easy and thereby make it popular. But it never makes a popular appeal to say that a thing is easy. Jesus knew this that is why He never talked about easy paths. He said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself."

Every way that is worth taking is a hard way. There is no work worth doing that is easy. Henry Ward Beecher tells of a young man who wanted to come to New York City and wanted Beecher to get him an easy job. Mr. Beecher wrote back to him and told him that there was only one place that he could think of where the people had it easy, and that was in the cemetery. "Outside of that place I know of no easy job."

But there are those who choose to do the hard thing. They are the producers of our country. Fortunately, we have a goodly number of this class, and they are doing a large share of the world's work. They are the hope of the country.

The third group of things to be done is "impossible things." William Crawford tells that while he was on a trip he saw a beautiful flower away up on the side of a stone wall. His guide asked him if he would like to have it. Mr. Crawford said, "Would you be allowed to pluck it?" The guide said, "I think the law of the unclimbable wall would permit it," and up he went and plucked it and gave it to Crawford. The law of the "unclimbable wall" meant for the guide that not another soldier in the place could do what he did. For them it was the impossible thing.

The apostle Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." The word "can't" was not in Paul's vocabulary. What a man does in this world depends more or less upon what he thinks he can do.

The poet puts it in the following words:

"If you think you are beaten, you are;
If you think you dare not, you don't;
If you'd like to win, but think you can't,
It is almost certain you won't.

If you think you will lose, you've lost
For out of the world we find
Success begins with a fellow's will:
It is all in the state of the mind.

Somebody scoffed, 'Oh, you'll never do that;
At least no one has ever done it.'
But he pulled off his hat, and took off his coat,
And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.

With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,
Without ever doubting or quit it,
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it."

They said Christopher Columbus couldn't do it, but he did it. They said Graham Bell couldn't do it, but he did it. They said Marconi couldn't do it, but he did it. They said 'Lindy' couldn't do it, but he did it.

Now we come to the last group of things to be done, "things worth while." If we are to do only things worth while we will need to drop some things and embrace others. I will call attention to three things we will need to drop and three things we should embrace.

Let us drop the things we can not take into the eternal life with us. The first thing is pretense. Eternity is not good for shams. Whatever we really are let us be. It is little short of criminal to pretend to be what we are not. Holy writ declares, "For if a man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Nobody admires a man who rides around in a Packard while his butcher and baker and candlestick maker go unpaid. [This observation surely dates itself! -- DVM] It is hypocritical to represent ourselves to be any richer, any better, or any smarter than we really are.

Be yourself and let there be no make-believe. Let us take the advice of the old darkey given in his poem:

"Don't be what you isn't;
Jes' be what you is,
If you is not what you am.
Then you is not what you is.
If you are jes' a little tadpole,
Don't try to be a frog.
If you are jes' the tail,
Don't try to wag the dog.
You can always pass the plate,
If you can't exhort and preach.
If you're jes' a little pebble,
Don't try to be the beach.
Don't be what you ain't;
Jes' be what you is."

Another thing we should drop is "worry."

There is no virtue in worry. It weakens the soul for its daily combat. It upsets the whole nervous system. It dissipates our energy. It freezes our fighting blood. Worry will make you unhappy and make those about you unhappy. It helps to make life futile as well as fretful, unfruitful as well as unhappy, and sends those who indulge in it to premature graves. Worry is largely a mental disease, and since it is it can be cured by keeping your mind in proper channels. No human intellect can estimate the unutterable havoc and ruin wrought by worry. It has even forced genius to do the work of mediocrity, it has caused more failures, more broken hearts, more blasted hopes, than any other one cause since the dawn of the world.

No man can utilize his normal power who dissipates his nervous energy in useless anxiety. There is not a single redeeming feature about worry. It is always, everywhere, an unmitigated curse.

Another thing to drop, is "self-seeking."

The richest experiences in life never come to those who try to sin through selfishness. If you live for others the world will be just a little darker when your light goes out, and the world will be just a little colder when your warm, loving heart has ceased to beat. So many are never

missed after they are gone because they lived such selfish lives. No one was lightened by the radiance of their lives or warmed or cheered by the fire of their friendships. Don't live like that. Put your life in italics and do more when you die than to leave a tombstone at your head and an obituary in the daily paper to remind the world that you have been here.

Let us call your attention to three things to take hold of:

The first is work. Decide on life's work first, and then ask yourself two questions regarding it: Is it legitimate? Is it vital? By legitimate I mean, does it conflict with any known duty? By vital I mean, is it of eternal moment either in strengthening my own character or inspiring others?

The most durable things in life can't be given to us. They must be earned by hard work. James and John came to Jesus and asked through their mother that they be given the chief seats or places in the kingdom. Jesus answered and said, "They are not mine to give." He said, "If you ever get those places it will not be because of any personal favoritism, but because they are earned through faithful service." So with us, if we get the best things we must earn them. Earn them by hard work. A full price must be paid for the chief seats.

Lay hold on happiness. Most everybody is in pursuit of happiness, but most people are seeking it blunderingly, going to the wrong source. Some have hoped to find it in social distinction; others have sought for it in political prominence, while others have tried to find it in wealth. But those who have tried to find it in money all tell the same story. They tell us that the first half of their life was spent in trying to get money from the other fellow, and that they spent the last half of their life trying to keep the other fellow from getting the money away from them, and that they found peace in neither half.

The road to happiness is the same today as given by Jesus 1900 years ago in His Sermon on the Mount. In the Beatitudes He lays down the foundation of happiness. In this description of the happy man given by Jesus we learn that happiness is not born of what we have or fail to have, but rather in what we are.

Most people think the happy man is the man who achieves outward success, who makes a fortune, who has a summer palace by the sea, or the one who has won the applause of his fellow men, or has become the darling of society.

Don't think that happiness depends on outward circumstances, for it doesn't. It depends upon inward harmony and is only possible to an evenly balanced and properly adjusted soul. Happiness does not depend on the kind of clothes one wears or the kind of house a man lives in, but rather on what kind of a man lives in the house.

Let me give you a rather unusual description of a happy man in the language of another:

"The happy man is born in the city of regeneration; in the parish of repentance unto life; educated in the school of obedience; works at the trade of diligence; does many jobs of self-denial; owns a large estate in the county of Christian contentment wears the plain garments of humility; breakfasts every morning on spiritual prayer and sups every evening on the same, and has meat to

eat the world knows not of; has gospel submission in his conduct; due order in his affections; sound peace in his conscience; satisfying love in his soul; real divinity in his breast; true humanity in his heart; the Redeemer's yoke on his neck; a crown of glory on his head, and the whole world under his feet."

Lay hold on success. The world has a vulgar idea of success. Its idea of success is having the highest rating in Bradstreet's.

Pick up most any magazine and read in big letters, "Be a Success!" and right under it is a man seated in a Packard with the statement, "He makes \$10,000 a year." He is supposed to be a success because he rides in a Packard, while the man who is keeping books in the office and is paid \$150 a month is supposed to be a failure. Society is shot through and through with this materialistic miasma. Ancient Israel had nothing on modern America in bowing down to the golden calf of material success. We scorn the Hindu for worshipping the sacred cow but is it any worse to worship a sacred cow than it is to worship a golden calf?

People are water-logged by consideration of the present for the reason that most people live by sense rather than by faith. Sense always prefers the present to the future.

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Part 3 YOUR LIFE IS A PROBLEM

There are three great sovereign life verbs which have much to do with solving life's problems: the verb to have, the verb to do, and the verb to be. So life's problems may be classified and put into three groups: The Problem of Having, The Problem of Doing, The Problem of Being.

The problem of having comes first and fills a very important place in solving life's problems. The desire to have is inborn; it is legitimate; man is a constitutional seeker.

It is right that we should have some things. It is right that we should have wisdom. Note, I did not say knowledge. Knowledge is one thing and wisdom is another. Knowledge is the mere accumulation of facts, while wisdom is the ability to properly utilize the facts. One could be so intelligent that he could sneeze in Latin, cough in Greek, and dream in Hebrew, and yet not be wise.

It is right that we should have a reasonable amount of earthly possessions. But there is certainly something greater in life for us all than to be merely able to conjugate the verb to have.

Estimated from the standpoint of the verb to have, the apostles were indeed insignificant, for they had little or nothing. The verb to have has to do with only one phase of life, namely the industrial phase. It has to do with making a living rather than making a life. It is one thing to make a living and another thing to make a life.

There are plenty of people in our great world who are making a good living who are making a mighty poor life. Making a living is the small, time-serving, dwarfed, paralyzed man's object which touches only the crust of all existence. Dust, earth and ashes may be the composition of an existence, but it is not the composition of a life. Making a living depends on temporal circumstances, while making a life depends upon eternal principles.

Paul said that for him to live was to have the highest rating on Bradstreet. No, he didn't. He said, "For me live is Christ"; and no man reaches the summit of life until he can say the same.

Now comes the problem of doing, and it has a big place in the solving of life's problems. God calls for service "By their fruits ye shall know them." The divine emphasis is not on creeds but on deeds. Religion is more than a message to be heard; it is a deed to be done. It is more than something to be paraded; it is something to be performed. What the world needs is service. Its hurts are not healed by our theories. It was the acts of the apostles which saved the world and not their dogmas.

We must not live on the mean basis of appropriation -- always getting and never giving. We were not put here to amass but to disburse; not put here to absorb, but to enrich; not put here to get, but to give. We must be importers of spiritual blessing as well as exporters of spiritual good.

The business of life is service. The ideal life which the world has known is portrayed in five short words "He went about doing good." It is not surprising that the great Gladstone never wearied of saying, "One example is worth a thousand arguments."

It is by service that we vindicate our faith in every realm. Faith is more than a dogma; it is a passion. Great believers are always great doers.

The third problem consists in being. This problem has to do with what we are. What you have is important; what you do is more important; but what you are is most important.

Earth may ask, "What have you?" Heaven may ask, "What did you?" But God will ask, "What are you?" The world's big word is "get"; the church's big word is "do"; but God's big word is "be." God cares more for what you are than for what you do.

"Character before wealth" was the motto of Amos Lawrence, who had inscribed on his pocketbook, "For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" It was Horace Greeley who said, "Fame is a vapor; popularity is an accident; riches take wings and fly away; and those who bless you today may curse you tomorrow. There is only one thing that endures namely, character, for character is based upon conscience, and conscience is based upon Christianity."

It was Daniel Webster who said, "You can work upon marble, but it will perish; upon brass, but time will efface it; rear temples, but they will crumble in the dust; but if you build a character, you build something that will stand and brighten forever. Men may destroy your reputation, floods take away your property, and fire consume your wealth; but you must commit moral suicide before your character dies. So invest in yourself and you will never be poor."

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Part 4

YOUR LIFE IS A FIT OR A MISFIT

Every one of us has been designed to fill a certain place in life. If we find that place we will be happy and labor at a great advantage. But finding that place is where the rub comes.

Choosing a career is an important step in your life, for it deals with the initial crisis in your life. If we make a mistake here we have made one that will cost us the price of the best and biggest success. Many people do not choose their job. Some drift into it, some have theirs thrown at them; others inherit their job: while others fall into theirs and stay there because they do not have strength enough to swim out.

Some don't seem to know whether God wants them to sweep a crossing or run a hack -- whether He wants them to be a college professor or an auctioneer.

Roger Babson, America's greatest statistician, thinks that not ten in a hundred have found their right place in life. If this is true, the world is full of misfits. A misfit always labors at a disadvantage, always has a sense of dislocation and failure, and is never at ease. Eighty per cent of the inefficiency in all walks of life can be attributed to being a misfit. It is as impossible for some people to succeed in the thing they are doing as it would be for a tomcat to preach or play a piano.

There is many a lawyer starving for want of clients, many a doctor with patients under tombstones, and many a preacher preaching to a woodpile, who would have been a great success in some other capacity.

Daniel Webster's father was a farmer. He evidently wanted to make a farmer out of Daniel, but Daniel would have been a poor fit on the farm. One day the father took Daniel out to teach him how to cut grass with an old-fashioned scythe. Each of them took a scythe and started cutting. In a few minutes Daniel turned to his father and said, "Father, this scythe doesn't hang to suit me." His father said, "Give it to me and I will fix it. He adjusted the blade a little and then handed it back to Daniel, and then they started cutting again. In a few minutes Daniel said, "Father, this scythe doesn't hang to suit me yet." Then his father said, "Well, Daniel, hang it to suit yourself," and Daniel went and hung it on the limb of a peach tree. "Now," he said, "it hangs to suit me."

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Part 5

YOUR LIFE IS A MOVEMENT

The law of life is progress or degeneracy. We are incapable of permanence. We are going forward or backward, upward or downward. We can not stand still. So one of the first questions for us to settle, especially young people, is the question of direction. Which way am I going? Am I going forward or backward? If you decide to go forward [and upward] you will find yourself

confronted with difficulties, for everything that goes up has to be pushed. If you decide to go downward that will be easy, for everything that goes downward will go of itself. Gravitation is all on the side of downwardness.

There are no stationary periods in life physically, intellectually or spiritually. We must go forward or backward intellectually. Yes, but some one says, "I am a college graduate. You don't expect me to continue to advance."

Why not? Graduation is not an ending; it is only a good beginning. You can not hope to secure an education in four short years. All you can hope to secure in so short a time is a good beginning, due to the fact that an education is not an acquirement -- it is an acquiring.

It is no mistaken notion that your graduation day has been called your commencement day. Some of you are facing your commencement day. Let us hope that you will be big enough to face a real commencement day. May it be a commencement of growth and advancement intellectually.

For you not to continue to grow is to bring yourself under the just contempt and scorn of those who do grow. A midget in body can be turned into a financial account in a dime museum; but a midget in morals and intellect is a carbuncle on the body politic. Aspire to grow, and I think it would be all right for me to say, aspire to grow big.

This makes me think of a dream a wife had. At the breakfast table she was telling her husband the dream. She told him she was Coming down Broadway and saw thrown on a screen in big letters, "Husbands for sale!" She told him there were some beauties for \$20,000 and some nice ones for \$15,000. He said to her, "Did you see any there that looked like me?" She said, "Plenty of them. They were done up in bundles like asparagus and were selling three bunches for a dime."

Where are no stationary positions spiritually. Religion doesn't give us any fixed state above which we can not rise nor below which we can not fall. All life is subject to evaporation, decay and death, and all life will die unless it is fed.

St. Paul has said, "Leave the principles of the doctrine and go on to perfection." Leave it as the mathematician leaves his axioms and proceeds to the construction of his demonstration. Leave it as the architect leaves the foundation and proceeds to the erection of the superstructure.

Some one says it is all right to exhort young converts to advance and grow, "But I have been sanctified, and sanctification is the Christian's goal." Let us not think that sanctification is the Christian's goal, that it is the stopping place in grace. There is no ne plus ultra in Christian experience; there is always more beyond.

Sanctification is not graduation; it is only a full matriculation -- the entrance upon a deeper, broader, higher, fuller and more victorious life. To suppose that sanctification is graduation is to confuse the foundation of character with the formation of character. It is to confuse the perfection of character with the development of character. It is to confuse moral purity with Christian maturity. We must ever keep in mind that purity and maturity are two facts distinct in Christian experience. Purity is all obtainment, while maturity is an attainment. Purity is an acquisition, while

maturity is an accumulation. Purity is moral cleanness, while maturity is moral stature. Purity is a crisis, while maturity is a process.

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Part 6

YOUR LIFE IS AN INVESTMENT

Since we have only one life to live and it is so exceedingly brief, our great concern should be how we shall invest it.

Life may be invested in one of three ways.

You can invest it as the miser. The miser spends his time in planning how he can hoard his money, his possessions and his gifts. One may not only be a miser with his money, but with his education, his social gifts and his talents. Of what value to the world is the life of a miser? The man who lives thus is as a fruitless tree that cumbereth the ground.

One can invest his life as the prodigal waste it. It is said that the prodigal wasted his substance. More than money is included in "substance." Time is included in the thing he wasted. Time is the world's greatest factor and also the world's greatest waste. There is nothing that God has put in our hands so valuable, and yet there is nothing with which we are more profligate. Time -- what is it? Stroughton puts it pungently and forcibly this way: "Time is life's freightage whereby some trade and make a fortune while others waste it in extravagance. Time is life's book from which some extract wondrous wisdom, while others let it lie uncovered and die fools. Time is life's tree from which some gather precious fruit, while others lie under its shade and die of hunger. Time is life's ladder whereby some raise themselves to honor and renown, while others let themselves down into shame and degradation."

There are two or three serious things about time. One is that it can not be recovered when once lost. You can lose your health and by proper means regain it; you can lose your knowledge and by intense application and concentration get it back; you can lose your money and by economy and frugality restore it. But of all who ever lived no one has ever recovered one hour of lost time.

A billion-dollar corporation with all its wealth can not buy back one second of yesterday's time. Hence you need not advertise "Lost, yesterday, somewhere between sunrise and sunset, two golden hours, each set with sixty diamond minutes." The past is not yours to improve or modify. The past is a finished product. The present is the raw material out of which you can make a better product.

How shall I invest my life? Surely not as the miser who hoards what he has, nor as the prodigal who wastes it. Invest your life in unselfish service. The trite business of every life, whether it be endowed with five talents or two talents or one talent, is wholehearted service. What shall be the sphere of my service? I will call your attention to three of them:

Home. The home is the ultimate basis of society. Our homes are just so many streams pouring themselves into the current of our social, political and religious life.

The home, when it is what it should be, is the most adequate picture of heaven on earth to be found. It takes more than lumber, nails, mortar and bricks to make a home. These might make a house, but not a home, even though there be \$50,000 worth of it. A mansion is not a home any more than a hut is a hell.

Marriage does not make a home. It used to be said after marriage, "They lived happily ever after." But now they say, "How long will it be before they are divorced?"

Even children can not make a home. They sometimes complicate home problems and break up a home.

If we are going to build a home we will have to put three or four things in it. We will have to put love in it, we will have to put sympathy in it, we will have to put mother in it, we will have to put religion in it.

First of all we will have to put religion in it. The greatest need of America is Christian homes. Religion in the home is vital to the progress of Christianity, for as the home goes the church goes, and as the church goes the state goes, and as the state goes the nation goes.

Religion in the home is vital to the social progress of the nation, for if the family goes to pieces there is nothing to take its place in the preserving of our social gains and preparing our boys and girls for noble lives. We can no more build a great civilization without religion in the home than we can build skyscrapers on shifting sand.

One of the greatest enemies of the home is a lack of home religion. We can't build a real home outside of religion and the church. The place for father and mother and the children, if they are to be fortified against the enemy, is inside the walls of the church worshipping God. It is the only fortification that has not been torn down.

We need more old-fashioned homes, homes where the family altar has not been torn down. There is not another interest on earth equal to the family altar. Family prayers build walls of protection about the children; and yet I would be safe in saying that the vast majority of so-called Christian homes do not have a family altar.

There are children right in your city who have never heard their parents pray. God pity the child who comes into a home where no one ever prays. You ask me what is the greatest menace to the boyhood and girlhood of our day, and I will not tell you it is the dance, the movie, the gambling place. [There was no TV when this was written. -- DVM] I will tell you it is the scarcity of Christian fathers and Christian mothers.

The responsibility of saving the souls of the children rests with the fathers. You fathers can not get away from the fact that you are the head of the home. To be a father of children brings a responsibility far greater than words can tell. But you say to me, "I am not a Christian." That does

not excuse you from becoming a Christian, and if you are not a Christian father then your guilt is all the greater. It is the duty of every father to say with one of old, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Invest your service in the greatest institution of America, namely, the church. The church is the oldest and largest organization in existence. Every citizen of this country is under obligation to the church, for every one of us alike, whether sinner or saint, whether in the church, or out, has become an heir of Christianity.

All the blessings of civilization such as we enjoy are the by-products of what the church stands for. Every semi-religious organization has its foundation principles in Christianity, and every institution which exercises any lifting power received its inspiration from the church. The man or woman, whether young or old, rich or poor, who does not stand by the church is a traitor to his country.

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Part 7

YOUR LIFE IS A PROBATION

A probation implies three things namely, time, choice, and destiny. Time is divided into periods: the past, the present, and the future. The past is a memory, the present is a moment, and the future is an uncertainty.

There are many things we could say about time, but the most serious thing we can say is that it is so exceedingly brief. The sum total of human activity is crowded into three score and ten years, and when you stop to consider that we spend one-third of that time in sleep and another third in infancy and preparation for life's work it leaves a very small remainder of time for the real accomplishments in life.

This is what makes a watch-night service so very solemn. Methuselah, who climbed a thousand years, could never have appreciated a watch-night meeting, for time is no factor to a man who can live a thousand years. But when we can live so short a time as we do it is rather solemn when another year passes by.

The second thing implied in your probation is choice. There are three big factors in the making of a man: heredity, environment, and choice; but choice is by far the greatest of the three.

The law of choice is inexorable. We can no more change it than we can change the sun in its course. There are some things we can evade, some things we can treat with indifference, and some things we can be neutral upon; but when it comes to the matter of choice there is no middle ground. Choose we must. The nature of the choice is left to us. There are two lives and two deaths and two destinies set before us, and we choose for ourselves, one or the other.

A choice is a momentous thing, for a choice results in an action, an action results in a habit, a habit results in a character, and a character results in a destiny. It is our choices rather than our

environment which fix our character and settle our destiny. Some would tell us that we are creatures of environment, but it is not so. We are creatures of our own will, and we are what we are because we will to be. Every man lives from the heart out. "As a man thinketh, so is he." We sink or soar according to the choices we make, and not because of our environment.

Destiny is also implied in probation. Whatever your destiny is you carry it without. It is said of Judas that "he went to his own place." According to these words it was his before he went there, and that place was perdition. The same could have been said of Stephen. Heaven was his before he went there.

Heaven isn't something that is without us; it is something within us. Heaven must enter you before you can ever enter heaven. Heaven is more than a place; it is a condition. And it is the condition that makes heaven above or heaven below.

Another thing can be said about destiny, and that is that every one of us settles our own destiny. There is nothing arbitrary about God's dealings with us. He depicts the horrors of hell and describes the blessedness of heaven; but He does not choose for us nor does He force us to choose.

Every one of us settles his own destiny. I do not believe in the doctrine of election -- that some are born foreordained to eternal life and some are foreordained to eternal death. If at last you make your bed in hell you will not get rid of the fact that the unfathomable gulf which separates you from light, love, God and heaven was fixed by your own self-will. For everybody who goes to the lost world goes on his own feet, in his own shoes, by his own choice, against the will of a broken-hearted God.

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Part 8 YOUR LIFE IS AN INFLUENCE

Influence is the most potent quality that accompanies life. Influence is some thing we all exert. Some of us exert more influence than others. Some of us are like lodestones which draw, while others are like loads of stone that have to be drawn.

Everybody exerts a twofold influence -- the conscious influence and the unconscious. We do our greatest work, either for good or for bad, with our unconscious influence, for we accomplish more in what we are than by what we do. Every one of us is a chain of which we are the first link. We are hooked on to some one else. If you are going toward perdition you are consciously or unconsciously taking some one with you. If you are on your way to heaven you are intentionally or unintentionally taking some one with you. Every one of us is a fountain head for one of two forces. That force is lifting those about us or it is lowering them. Somebody is bound to be fed by your fullness or to be starved by your emptiness. Somebody is bound to be uplifted by your righteousness or to be contaminated by your unrighteousness.

For there is no such thing as a negative influence. Everybody is positive in the place he occupies. You are making the world better or you are making the world worse by the life you live. You must be a blessing or a blight. You can not be a blank. There are no moral blanks. There are no neutral characters.

What kind of an influence are you exerting? Is it bad? A bad influence is like letting go a black-winged bat which will go on cursing, blighting and damning the race until the end of time; and when the gates of doom are opened it will dart through and curse you all along the craggy coasts of dark damnation.

We all ought to exert a good influence. A good influence is like loosing a white-winged dove which will be the messenger of love and good-will to all centuries to come, and after you are dead and gone it will live on to bless the world, and out yonder in the realms of glory it will come to you and make you glad.

To exert a destructive influence is the most terrible sin one can commit. If the life of your influence is impure you ought to do one of two things. You either ought to withdraw yourself from society and your friends and live all the rest of your life alone, or else you ought to hurry to the fountain of purification and have your soul made pure lest the foul radiations that flow from your heart be imbibed by those who walk by your side and be the means of helping to form their diameters and to settle their destinies.

For there is one thing sure, that is, for you to exist is for you to do two things, and you can't help yourself. One is to radiate, the other is to be the recipient of radiations.

What are you radiating? There is one very serious thing about influence -- yes, your influence -- and that is, it is indestructible. What you have once put into motion you can never stop. Every person lives three lives. There is the life you live up to the grave; and the life you will live beyond the grave, in the great eternity; and the life of your influence that will live on down here after time has worn your name from your tombstone you will continue to live. What is said of Abel will be said of you: "He being dead yet speaketh." We are speaking, whether dead or alive. Cain is still speaking in his jealous passion. Judas is still speaking in his betrayal. Dorcas is still speaking in her alms deeds. Abel is still speaking in his faith. O influence! how solemn. O influence! how awful. O influence! how momentous.

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Part 9

YOUR LIFE IS A FAILURE OR A SUCCESS

If your life is a success in the highest and biggest sense, at least four elements must figure in it, and for a lack of one or more of these elements many have not succeeded as they should.

Preparation is the first one. Equipment is a determining factor in life. Never did an age demand a more elaborate preparation in order to succeed. Competition is so keen. No matter what you decide to prepare yourself for, there are plenty of others going to do the same thing. Carlyle

was right when he said, "The race of life has become so intense that the runners are treading upon each other's heels, and woe be to him who stops to tie his shoestrings."

Nobody prepares for life's work by four easy lessons through the mail. Moses was eighty years getting ready to do a forty years' job. You can grow a pumpkin in one summer -- with the accent on the "punk," or you can grow a mushroom over night -- with the accent on the "mush."

Ever keep in mind that your preparation is not to fit you to get more out of life it is to qualify you to put more into life. It is not to prepare you to do others, but rather to do for others.

Too many think of an education as a passport to class and caste, a path to respectability. They regard it is an easy means to an easy life, a method of escaping the hard, humble toil. For them it simply means in the end an upholstered chair, soft hands, short hours, and unsoiled linen, an education urged or sought from such a motive is a calamity to the individual and a curse to civilization.

Concentration is another of the essentials to success. Aim is indispensable. You are hitting at something or nothing, or else drifting. The person who has no definite object is going nowhere. He is just drifting That is why he never arrives.

Life with a host of people is as if they were in the woods with a gun, but could not tell whether they were going to kill a moose or a woodchuck. While you are aiming let me advise you to aim high, for it is no harder on your gun to knock the feathers out of an eagle than to knock the fur off a skunk. [This comparison does not fit well in 1997. Now, to shoot an eagle could land you in jail. -- DVM]

Decide on what you are to do in life, then amass your energies. There is such a thing as a physical and an intellectual dissipation. By spreading what gray matter we have over too wide a territory we make little or no impression upon anything. Strength is like gunpowder -- to be effectual it must be concentrated.

Many people have failed and will fail because of their monopolizing ambition. They are grasping at too many of the world's prizes and getting none of them. Adam Clarke said, "The old adage, 'Too many irons in the fire,' conveys an abominable lie. Keep them all going, poker, tongs, and all"; but all are not Adam Clarkes. Experience teaches us that the man who has too many irons in the fire at once finds one of two things taking place. He finds them cooling faster than he can use them, or he burns his fingers in trying to manage them.

The day of universal knowledge has passed. Men used to aspire to know everything; but let me say to you, young people, have the courage to be ignorant of many things that you may avoid the calamity of being ignorant of all things.

Perspiration comes next in order if we are to succeed in a big way. You won't get very far in the race of life without an expenditure of energy. There is no way to eliminate hard work from success. Good luck never promoted anybody. It takes hard work to get a raise in your salary, to get on the honor roll, and to carry off a scholarship.

Success never comes anywhere of its own accord. It has to be fetched, and usually it has to be brought in by the nape of the neck. So if you are expecting to wait for success I would advise you to sit down while you wait.

It is an unfailing law that a full price must be paid for supreme achievements. There never was a harvest of results gathered in this world without a heavy sowing of sweat and labor somewhere.

Everything preaches to me of the sheer impossibility of getting something for nothing. In the long run the magnitude of the harvest will correspond to the liberality of our sowing. It is a law running right through life that we can't sow sparingly and reap bountifully.

It is fundamentally true that the best things in life do not come to us as an accident. Fish do not leap from the lakes into our frying pans; nor do loaves drop from heaven all ready made; nor do the clay banks and forests form themselves into palatial dwellings; nor do the mines automatically give up their treasure; nor does salvation come into our hearts by lifting our hands.

Determination is the next essential. Buxton said, "The longer I live the more certain I am that the greatest difference between men small and great is not in the difference in the size of their bodies but in their determination." Nothing can be substituted for determination. Talent can not take its place; education and genius can't take its place; all things combined can not take its place. Determination will be needed.

Give a man a real determination and you can't keep him from success. If you put stumbling-blocks in his way he will make stepping-stones out of them to lift himself a little higher. If you take away her eyesight, she will give to the world ten thousand of the most beautiful songs it ever sang. If you put him in a Bedford jail for twelve years, he will write the immortal "Pilgrim's Progress"; and if you put him in a log cabin he will split rails all the way to the White House.

If a determined man comes to a mountain he says, "I must climb it." If he comes to a sea, he says, "I must sail it." If to a desert, he says, "I must cross it." If he comes to a hard problem he says, "I must solve it." If he starts after a college degree he says, "I will have it."

It takes determination and plenty of it to stay on the job. Most anybody can begin a thing; good beginnings are easy. Some people's lives are made up of beginnings. They never finished anything they ever started. Their lives have been made up of starts and fits, and some of them have had about forty fits to every one start. Some of us ought to go to the postage stamp and consider its worth, for it sticks to one thing until it gets there.

Now we come to the last element necessary to a successful life, namely, "salvation." If we have all the others I have mentioned and do not have this one we have not been a success. True success does not consist in what we have but rather in what we are, and must be viewed in the light of another world. Every one of us was made for two worlds; and only as we live with the background of another world in our thinking can we fulfill God's purpose for us in this world.

The man who lives for only one world at a time has dissipated one-half of his heritage. The man who does not live for two worlds at a time has committed suicide for both worlds. A one-world man is an inevitable failure.

For what is your life? Your life is a dimension, an opportunity, a problem, a fit or misfit, a movement, an investment, a probation, an influence, and a failure or a success.

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THE END