

A person is shown from the back, with their arms raised in a gesture of praise or prayer. They are standing against a vast, dramatic sky filled with large, billowing clouds. The lighting is warm and golden, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall mood is one of hope, faith, and spiritual uplift.

A Life Worth Living

Rev. Michael Duncan

A Life Worth Living

Rev. Michael Duncan

A Life Worth Living

Copyright © 2014 by Michael Duncan

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise – without the prior written permission of the author.

All Scripture quotations and paraphrases are from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 Biblica. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

ISBN-13: 978-1494979409

ISBN-10: 1494979403

Dedication

This little book is dedicated to my wife and family – those who have walked with me through the hardships and trials and have found that life is worth living.

I also dedicate this book to those men who have gone before me, pastors who have helped shape and form my life in the service of Christ.

I dedicate this book to you the reader, who by faith and endurance, have found life worth living because they have found it in Christ Jesus.

And, ultimately, this book is dedicated to my Lord Jesus Christ who has given me life – and that to the full.

A Life Worth Living

Chapter One

Beyond the View of Men

There is a life that God wants you to know, a life that is richer, more vibrant and real than, perhaps, you have ever known. He wants you to experience a life worth living.

For many, this means a life filled with the “stuff” of the world. Power, prosperity and prestige call out like the song of the siren, drawing many into believing that if they could simply obtain such paraphernalia, they would experience real living. But God has called the Christian to a life that is higher than that.

But for some, one of the most pervasive, and potentially destructive, mentalities in the life is a “survival” mindset rather than a supernatural awareness and pursuit of life. Many grasp an attitude of futility instead of faith and predetermine the best they can do is to “get by.” In God’s Scriptures, however, there is an explosive, electrifying “aliveness” that accompanies the faithful of God. That is the life that God wants you to experience.

Consider what was said of the Lord Jesus in John 1:4, *“In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.”* It is the life of Christ Jesus that truly illuminates the life of men, bringing mankind into the fullness of life that God has purposed for all people. However, only those who are willing to follow the Lord Jesus – the light of men – will find that rich and purposeful life.

Have you ever encountered someone you would say is “fully alive?” There is a sense in which that person is beyond the reach of fear and doubt. They thrive in difficulty and are humble in prosperity. Adversity has no means of conquering them for they seem to live above such trivial matters that tend to plague the remainder of the human race. They may be poor or rich, slave or free, honored or persecuted. Such things are of little consequence for they embrace their life with the full knowledge that they live with a higher purpose.

For the person who is truly alive the workings of temporal circumstances are merely the vehicle of motion that propels them to the greater reality, which is the eternal reality. They seem to understand life as Paul did when he said:

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal. ~ 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

To explore what it means to have a life worth living, the text of discovery is from the gospel of John:

***The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy;
I have come that they may have life, and have
it to the full. ~ John 10:10***

In this little book, you will discover two personalities, and their purposes, that will impact your life. The question will be: will you find yourself cowering from the one or rushing to the other. The choices you make will, ultimately, determine the life you live.

God wants to give you life—a full, rich, powerful and vibrant life. If you already know and have come to faith in the Lord Jesus, step out and live for Him. What are you waiting for? If you don't yet understand what God wants you to have: read on. These truths will impact your life. And, like standing on a mountain peak, you will have the view you need to find a life worth living.

* * *

Thoughts to Ponder

Jeremiah 2:13 says, “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”

There are many worldly sources that seem to offer a life worth living but are empty of real life. Power, prestige, possessions and a host of other things are only broken cisterns that cannot truly offer life. Do you have anything that you think gives your life meaning but only is an empty source? Jesus is the spring of living water – go to Him and let Him give you real life.

Chapter Two

The Person of the Thief

“The thief comes...”

There are many different truths that can be discovered in this brief text and I want to show you a couple of them.

First of all, this is not some arbitrary person, some non-specific character who enters the picture of your life. This is *“THE”* thief, not just *“A”* thief. There is specificity to this thief, one specific personality watching for an opportunity to steal the very thing that God Himself has given you. There is one thief—the same one that deceived mankind out of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), the same one that tested the patriarch Job (Job 1) and the one who vainly tried to destroy the Lord Jesus through temptation (Matthew 4). This is the adversary that Peter spoke of when he said, *“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”* (1 Peter 5:8b).

Secondly, consider the nature of a thief. Thieves are usually plotting and scheming to determine the best course of action to take in order to rob someone of their treasures.

No thief announces his presence. They wait, hoping for an opportunity to strike when no one is aware. Satan is no different. In his effort to undercut Jesus, it was said of the devil that he waited “*until an opportune time*” (Luke 4:13). But that’s the nature of a thief. A thief comes when you least expect it, when your guard is down, and when you have stunted your capability to overcome. Thus, Jesus warns us to “*watch and pray*” (Matthew 26:41) so that we will not fall into temptation.

Finally, you need to see that the thief actually comes. This might seem like an obvious point, for how else could a thief rob someone except that he shows up? However, to fully comprehend this idea, you need to understand that the thief *always* comes. It is a perpetual, never ending effort on the part of the thief. There is never a time when the enemy of God is not lurking about waiting for you to drop your guard and give him an opportunity to enter in and rob you of the fullness of Jesus Christ and the life that He gives.

Consider what is said in Matthew:

But if the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ~ Matthew 24:43

Though Jesus was referring to His own return – instructing the disciples to be ready for that day – the principle applies to this discussion, for you must be aware that at any moment the destroying thief might surprise you. Before he murdered his brother, God warned Cain, “*Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must*

master it” (Genesis 4:7b). It is no different now. Sin is always around, temptations abound and the enemy of your soul is continually on the prowl.

Now this thief may come in many ways. Paul said that the devil masquerades as an angel of light and his servants as servants of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). Jude warns the church with these words, “*For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you*” (Jude 1:4a). King David lamented in Psalm 55:

If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God. ~ Psalm 55:12-14

As I stated, the thief is always on the prowl. You never know what form he might take – from a snake in a garden to a companion who betrays with a kiss. Anything or anyone who tries to steal away the life that God would give you is a thief – an enemy against your soul.

If you are to experience the life worth living you must be aware of the one who is trying to rob you of that life—the thief. In the next chapter, we will explore the three aspects of what this thief is trying to do: steal, kill and destroy.

* * *

Thoughts to Ponder

Luke 4:13 states, “When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him [Jesus] until an opportune time.”

There are those in your life who will tempt you away from your pure devotion to Christ Jesus. They are thieves, attempting to strip you of the life that God would have you live. Consider all that is in your life – from false friends to personal choices – and identify anything that would rob you of your life in Christ. Can you identify any thieves in your life right now? Knowing that the thief is always watching for an opportune time, you must guard your heart and cling to Christ Jesus.

Chapter Three

The Purpose of the Thief

“...Only to steal, kill, and destroy.”

Thieves do not break into a person's home to leave behind a treasure or blessing. They come into your home to rob you of the treasures of your life, to deprive you of the things that are necessary to function and leave you with a sense of panic and fear. If you ever had your home burglarized, you know what this feels like. The growth of the “protection” industries is a direct result of the sense of fear that comes from being robbed. Whether from identity theft, credit card or personal property theft, there are hosts of agencies created to try and minimize the risk and alleviate the fear.

As we saw in chapter one, the thief may come into your life in various forms. But what about this thief, what does he do? There are three things the enemy of God will try to accomplish: steal, kill and destroy.

First, this thief comes in to steal. Jesus is the gate for the sheep and the Good Shepherd. And, using the analogy

of the sheep and the gate, Jesus identifies the thief as one who is trying to steal the sheep from the pasture of God. It would seem then, that the thief's desire is to remove the sheep from the Shepherd and His flock. That is exactly what the enemy of God wants to do with you. He wants to take you from your devoted relationship with Christ and remove you from the church of God.

The subtle deception of the thief is such that he will take you from the Shepherd and from the flock of God and you will think that this is exactly what you should do. He brings into question the veracity of God's word with statements like: "Did God really say" (Genesis 3:1). He will trick you into believing that the church is filled with hypocrites so that you should never gather with them. He might bring someone into your life that leads you to compromise your faith and abandon your pure devotion to Jesus (2 Corinthians 11:3). The thief wants to steal—and you're the target of his theft.

Then, if he cannot steal your life away from the Shepherd, he will kill it. That is, he will kill all that there is about Christ in you to nullify the life that God would have you live. He will tempt you and draw you into sin through some uncovered chink in your spiritual armor. Consider the words of James:

But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death. ~ James 1:14-15

He will poison your soul one drop of temptation at a time. And if you give in and fall into sin, that sin will give birth to death.

But if he cannot steal you or kill you, he will try to destroy you. He will assault you with doubts and challenge your faith in Christ. You may find those you considered friends to come against you. Even the apostle Paul faced his detractors who tried to cause him harm:

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. ~
Philippians 1:15-17

And, as Jesus said, your enemy may be in your very household (Matthew 10:36).

The entire purpose of the thief is to eliminate the life of Christ in you either through deception or direct persecution. If you are caught off guard, the thief will come.

Before we move on, ask yourself if you've been robbed. Have you abandoned your once vibrant belief in Christ? Have you left the church because of some sin in your life or trouble in the church – or even something as simple as a personality conflict? Have you forsaken the good road of faith and now walk along the streets of self?

In the next couple of chapters, we are going to look at one of the greatest promises given to mankind – the promise of a life worth living.

* * *

Promo Copy

Thoughts to Ponder

2 Corinthians 11:3 warns, “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to God.”

It is important that you watch out for people and circumstances that will attempt to steal you from your devotion to Christ. If you were to evaluate all that is in your life, is there anything that is trying to steal, kill or destroy your walk with Christ?

Chapter Four

The Person of the Lord

“I have come...”

The first thing that must be seen is the great divine “I.” No amount of discussion could ever plumb the depths of the riches of Jesus Christ and I won’t try to do so here. There are, however, some revelations of Christ Jesus that should be mentioned. God spoke to Moses and said: “I Am” (Exodus 3:14). Jesus declared Himself to be the same “I Am” (John 8:58). In Jesus Christ all of the fullness of God dwells in bodily form (Colossians 2:9). Jesus, Himself, declared: *“I am the way, the truth and the life,”* (John 14:6a). Paul said in Romans:

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of
God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. ~
Romans 6:23

What more can be said about a life worth living than that Jesus came to restore what the thief has taken. He came to give eternal life to all who believe. Because it is a gift, it is free to all who receive it.

The very nature of the thief is the antithesis of the nature of Jesus Christ. The thief comes to steal; Jesus has come to give. The thief comes to kill; Jesus has come to make alive. The thief comes to destroy; Jesus has come to build. I hope you begin to see how precious the life of Christ is. He is the One, the only One, who can truly restore life and make it worth living.

In John 10:11 Jesus refers to Himself as the Good Shepherd and that He lays down His life for His sheep. The nature of a shepherd is such that his entire life is given for the care and deliverance of the sheep.

David was a shepherd before he became king of Israel. He understood the nature and dedication of a shepherd so he understood the nature and dedication of *the* Shepherd. Can you read the 23rd Psalm and yet not be absolutely devoted to the Shepherd? Consider the first line, "*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.*" The very nature of God is to be the Shepherd of His people. For those who know Him, they also know how very great and precious are His promises (see 2 Peter 1:4).

Read the entire text of Psalm 23 and you will begin to understand the love that God has given in Christ Jesus to shepherd His people. If you run to the arms of the Good Shepherd you will find your life fulfilled in Him.

The second thing to see is the fact that Jesus "has come." Now you need a bit of Greek to help understand this phrase. This is in what is called the "aorist indicative." This means that the coming of Jesus Christ is completed in the past with the results continuing on for all time. If that's

too much, just think of it this way: Jesus came and did what He needed to do to give you life, and that promise and power still continues today.

Be certain that the fulfillment of the coming of Jesus as the Shepherd of your soul is complete. All you have to do now is to go to Him who has come. The work of Jesus is not just complete in the past. He is the Shepherd then and now—His work transcends time. The book of Hebrews says, “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*” (Hebrews 13:8).

Jesus is not like shifting sand that each generation has to reshape and build again and again as if He were unable to withstand the onslaught of time and circumstances. Jesus is the rock of salvation. He stands firm as the bulwark of hope and security for all who trust in Him. Praise God that His work is finished and complete and that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever!

* * *

Thoughts to Ponder

1 John 5:12 says, “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

Do you have the Son of God? Jesus Christ has come – and He has come for the great purpose of providing life to all who believe. Examine yourself and, if you have never done so, invite Jesus Christ into your life and yield yourself to Him.

Promo Copy

Chapter Five

The Purpose of the Lord

“...that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

The purpose of the thief is to steal, kill and destroy. The purpose of the Lord is to grant life and that to the full measure of living.

Before you came to know Christ Jesus as Lord you didn't have a life worth living for you didn't have life at all. Jesus is the only one born in this world who was born with life. Yes, people are living in the physical. Humanity works and breathes, eats and sleeps. But these are just the function of the machine of the human body. Jesus came to give abundant life.

You must understand that life, in the sight of God, is something that is eternal and transcends that which is temporary. In Matthew 6:25 Jesus asked, *“Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?”* God knows that you have physical needs, and He will meet them in accordance with His word. However, He

wants to give you something that is far greater than mere existence. He wants to give you life!

Consider the disciples. When Jesus found them, they were all experiencing a normal human existence. Each had a job or a career they were pursuing. If you had asked them if they enjoyed life, some would have said yes. When Jesus saw them, He saw them as God does—dead in their trespasses and sins. Their life had no eternal significance and no Divine mandate. What a statement Jesus made to Peter, “*Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*” (Matthew 4:19)!

Before Jesus came, they knew no purpose beyond themselves; they were just “getting by.” Jesus came into their lives and gave them something they never knew: a life worth living. He came to give them life, and that to the full.

Consider some other ways of describing the full life: *more abundant, over and above, extraordinary, exceedingly great, greater, pre-eminent, exceptional, and in full quantity*. Are these the words that you use when you are describing the life that you’re living? Do you use these words to describe your life only when the circumstances have turned in your favor? Paul said, “*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain*” (Philippians 1:21). Is this the view you take of life? It is the best view to have if you want a life worth living.

For many Christians, the life that they have in Christ is far less than what it could be. Ask yourself: What does it take to gain this life worth living? Simple: you have to follow Jesus in all your ways. Forsake the idea that you are

living unto yourself. Give yourself over to Jesus Christ by the volitional act of your will and allow Him to give you His life in exchange.

Jesus challenged you to make every effort to: *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the way and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it”* (Matthew 7:13-14). To have the life worth living is to walk the narrow road with Jesus Christ.

Consider the words of the Apostle Paul:

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. ~ Colossians 3:10-12

Look at what comes in a life that is found in Christ: worth, fruitfulness, growth in knowledge, strength in the power of God, endurance, patience and joyful thankfulness. It is an abundance of life that is promised to you – a life that is truly worth living!

* * *

Thoughts to Ponder

Psalm 84:7 declares, “They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.”

The life that God has called you to, the life that He has promised to give all who faithfully follow Him, is a life that is abundant and full. Is this how you define your life? What words would you use to describe the life you live? Do you see your life from God’s perspective or from yours?

Promo Copy

Chapter Six

A Life Within Reach

Jesus has come and is even now offering you a life worth living: a life filled with purpose and destiny, with eternal significance rather than temporary satisfaction. Does the thief come and the thing you do is hide under the covers of your comfortable life? Paul instructs Timothy:

Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may truly take hold of the life that is truly life. ~ 1 Timothy 6:18-19

Have you taken hold of that life – the life that is truly life? Though I cannot remember where I heard this, and I would give credit to whomever said this first, but there is a saying that needs repeating: Jesus did not come into the world just to make bad people good, but to give dead people life. He wants you to be fully alive! He offers that life to you if you are willing to take it.

It is so much easier to live on the banks of fallen humanity, to watch the adventure, to see the ships sail past and never set sail for yourself. However, those who know the complete satisfaction of a full and meaningful life are those who will cast off from shore and venture into the oceans of God's will. Make this the moment that you come alive and grasp a life worth living.

* * *

Promo Copy

Thoughts to Ponder

John 6:63, “The Spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”

Listen to Jesus – His word will lead you to eternal life and to a meaningful, vibrant and abundant life even now. For all the efforts of “the flesh” – that is, human ingenuity and power – there is no real life. If you want to have a life worth living, then you must live according to His word. Are you willing to?

Promo Copy

I hope you enjoyed and were inspired by this little book. Watch for other titles from Michael Duncan, available at most online retailers. For more information about the author, go to:

<http://www.michael-duncan.net>