

701 Do You Know Where You are Going?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

According to Dr. Ed Mathews, Bill Snell was a successful businessman. He owned and operated a large furniture store. Bill was president of a civic club and a member of the school board. He was a devoted husband and father. Bill was especially close to his young son Jerry. They were constant companions. Sometimes Jerry “worked” with his dad at the furniture store. The boy was called “Mr. Jerry” by many of the customers. Mrs. Gibson said Jerry’s smile sold more furniture than all his dad’s good words. There was one place, however, to which Bill and his son never went together. Mr. Snell did not accompany his wife and family to worship. He stayed home because he claimed he was too busy. Jerry often asked him to go, but his father never went. Jerry, however, loved to go to Sunday school. He liked his teacher. He was among the most attentive students in his class. On a particular Lord’s day (that is Sunday, the first day of the week), the teacher asked Jerry, “When you get to heaven, what are you going to do first?” Without hesitation Jerry replied, “I’m not going to heaven! I’m going with my dad. We go everywhere together.”

Later, the Sunday school teacher told Mr. Snell about Jerry’s remark. Bill said, “That’s just like him. He always wants to be with me—to go where I go.” “Where are you going?” the teacher gently asked. “Where are you taking Jerry?” Bill never answered. He knew the answer but was ashamed to say it. Nevertheless, the question kept ringing in his ears, “Where are you going?” Happily for Bill and for his family, he soon changed his life and became a Christian. He actually became a safe companion for his precious son Jerry. From that day forward, they truly went everywhere together. The question, “Where are you going?” however, is still one we all have to answer. We are all going somewhere. We may be getting closer to God, or we may be moving further away from Him, but we are going somewhere. It is important to know that we won’t likely go alone. There will be others going with us. If we choose to live an immoral life, we will likely lead others to live sinfully as well. If we choose to live in obedience to God, we will always influence others to serve God like we do. Where, my friend, are you going?

Peter spoke of some things we must add to our lives, if we expect to please God. In 2 Peter 1:5-11, Peter gives us some apostolic instruction about what we should do once we have escaped the defilements of the world. He said, “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.” As you listen to Peter you can see that growth is step by step: faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. Taking these steps means growth and productivity. But if we forget how God saved us, we can possibly stumble. As long as we are practicing these things, however, we will never stumble. God wants to bless his people and give them an abundant entrance into his heavenly kingdom.

Each step is important. Peter assumed that those to whom he wrote had some faith, but we can always build up our faith in God. Paul said in Romans 10:17, “faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” The more we read and study God’s word, the more faith we will have in those times when we need it. Reading and studying will build you up and give you confidence in God. When John wrote his gospel, he explained in John 20:30-31, “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” Faith leads to life, and the word of God leads to faith. We can also build our faith by living out the word of Christ. Jesus made a bold challenge in John 7:16-17, “My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself.” The more one lives the Christian life, the more knows that God is real and that Jesus is teaching His will. When you compare the life of a Christian with the life of unbelievers, it is clear which comes from God and which does not. This builds our faith in Christ and in his promises. We can have confidence in God by living the Christian life.

Faith will lead also to virtue or moral excellence. This word virtue points to a way of life that excels the morals of the world. It is attractive because of its purity and goodness. You’ll remember that Paul said in Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” The Christian is not to live like everyone else but live a holy life that demonstrates how good and perfect God’s will is. When a Christian lives like Jesus lived, he spreads goodness to everyone. Loving others, kindness, purity in word and in behavior is needed in our world today. We don’t have to go the way the world goes or think the way the world thinks. We can rise above it to live pure lives that please God. John said in 1 John 2:15-17, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.” A person can have moral excellence when he sets his heart on things above where Christ is rather than here on earth where worldliness can lead him astray.

To our moral excellence we add knowledge, knowledge of God and his will. Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 9:23-24, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD. Knowing the Lord is one of the most important tasks of life. I am amazed at how many people know sports, know movies, know politics, and know science but don’t know the Lord. Paul said, “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship

of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” Knowing Christ was the most important thing in the world to Paul; knowing Christ led to every real blessing he had and would find in heaven. I hope you know the Lord.

To knowledge we add self-control, the ability to say no to our desires when we need to. We live in such a self-indulgent world. Self-control would be a blessing to all of us. Jesus gave us an amazing example of self-control when he prayed in the presence of those who were nailing His hands and feet to a cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Peter says of Jesus in 1 Peter 2:23 that “while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously.” Jesus didn’t call twelve legions of angels (72,000 of them) down to be rescued from the cross. He bore the cross for you and me. We need that kind of self-control. To self-control we add perseverance or patience. Patience is the ability to take a great deal of punishment from evil people or circumstances without losing your temper, without becoming irritated and angry, or without taking vengeance. It includes the capacity to bear pain or trials without complaint, the ability to forbear under severe provocation, and the self-control that keeps one from acting rashly even though suffering opposition or adversity. Jesus showed that ability to do God’s will without compromising his character. He was calm and bore his cross. We too need to bear our crosses without complaint, to love and entrust our souls to God.

To perseverance we add godliness. Godliness means that one has such a respect and reverence for God, that he lives his life in holiness or piety. Peter said in 1 Peter 1:13-16, “Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” We must live lives that show we belong to God, not the world. That holy living starts with a relationship with God that takes Him and His word seriously. My friend, do the people who know you realize that you take your love for God seriously?

To godliness we add brotherly kindness. Brotherly kindness is a measure of maturity. It is easy to love some folks and hard to love others. It is a challenge to love everyone, to set aside selfishness for the sake of others. Loving our brothers and sisters is a telling mark of what it means to be a Christian. Jesus said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Brotherly kindness clearly leads to the last virtue, love. God’s kind of love is one that is willing to sacrifice it all for the best interests of others. It is willing to give and forgive. It bears all things,

believes all, hopes all things, and endures all things. We understand love, because God is love.

John said in 1 John 4:7-11, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” We understand love, because God and Christ first loved us. God taught us to love, and it is impossible to think about living the Christian life without loving others and serving them. Love means loyalty to God. We are to love Him with all our hearts, all our souls, all our strength, and all our minds (Mark 12:29). I pray that you do love Him like that and are serving Him every day. I hope assembling with the church is important to you. If you haven’t been in a while, perhaps today is a good day to go. My friend, where are you going to?

Peter said this about these Christian virtues: “For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind *or* short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you” (2 Peter 1:8-11). Each of us will either go into that kingdom, or we will be left to go to another place outside the love or the blessing of God, a place of outer darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth. There is nothing in your future that is more important than entering into God’s eternal kingdom. You can miss everything else and still miss nothing if you enter God’s kingdom. You can have the world at your feet; but if you miss heaven, you have missed everything—you have missed what God has prepared for you. You are deciding by your life where you are going. If you live in rebellion to God, you can’t expect that God will reward you. God is gracious, but He is also just and righteous. However, if you love God and obey Him, His grace will provide an entrance into that eternal kingdom. You can obey the Lord by trusting in Him and in His Word, the Bible. Faith is essential to please God (Hebrews 11:6). You must also repent of your sins, changing your heart and your life. Leave the old world of sin and embrace the Christian life. After confessing your faith, be baptized into Christ. One is baptized into the death and blood of Christ by being buried in water and by rising to walk to newness of life. This is the gospel of Jesus, and when you obey it, He will wash you clean from every sin, add you to His church, and make you a child of God. I pray that you won’t wait another day to become God’s child. God is preparing a place for you in heaven. Make your calling and election sure. Don’t live in doubt about your salvation. You have only one soul and one opportunity to prepare. My friend, do you know where you’re going? Come to Christ.

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