

CA 22 TFP1 LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

FOSTER: If someone asked you, “What is the meaning of life?” What would your answer be? Have you thought about what gives life, purpose and meaning?

Is it about having loving relationships? Is living a life that helps others the main purpose? Is grabbing everything you can grab and doing everything you can do the way to live? Is having all of your material needs met the purpose?

Welcome to Champions Arise. I’m Foster Braun and I am joined by Kent Darcie. Dr. John Tolson and Larry Kreider, who co-authored “The Four Priorities”, believe that getting the correct answer to the question “what is the meaning of life?” should be a top priority because life is too short to get it wrong. We agree, so stay with us as we explore this question today on Champions Arise.

Music Theme out

FOSTER: Kent the question, “What is the meaning of life” sounds very profound and almost unknowable. Does anyone really know the answer to the meaning of life?

KENT: If you **remove** God as a factor, I would say no. It seems like the great philosophers have been trying to answer that question for thousands of years. I find it interesting that the question is even asked anymore.

FOSTER: What do you mean?

KENT: We live in in a world of satellite dishes. Instant information. In most of the western world, we have instant gratification of our needs. In theory, we should have everything, or at least access to everything we want. But in spite of all that, the human heart still cries out to know what the real purpose of life is.

FOSTER: That God-shaped whole people talk about.

KENT: Yes. And we see this, even in Jesus’ time. I think of the rich young rule. He comes up to Jesus and basically says, “I’ve kept all the rules, what else do I need to do?” There was a hole there that he recognized.

A more interesting example is Nicodemus. Nicodemus was one of the Jewish religious leaders.

Here was a guy who knew the Ten Commandments, and did his very best to live by them.

For him, the purpose of life was to please God by doing the right things. Obeying the rules. And yet, secretly at night, Nicodemus comes to Jesus and basically says, what am I missing? What else do I need to do?

FOSTER: And Jesus’ answer caught Nicodemus totally off guard, didn’t it?

KENT: oh yeah. Jesus basically said it’s not about what you’ve done Nicodemus. It’s about me. Here is part of what Jesus said to Nicodemus. This is from John chapter 3.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not

condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” [ESV]

FOSTER: With Jesus, and Christianity, it’s about the relationship with Christ, not the rules.

KENT: Exactly, and that separates Christianity from all of the other world religions. Buddha pointed to his teachings, not his life. Islam is defined by the Quran, not the life of its leader per se. Other world religions require their followers to live according to a specific philosophy or a particular standard, or a list of guidelines. In contrast, the foundation of Christianity is a relationship between us and God.

Jesus didn’t say this is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus said, “I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

FOSTER: So you’re saying the purpose of life is to walk with Christ. To live a Christian Life.

KENT: Yes. That is what gives us purpose in life. John Tolson, who we mentioned earlier, says the goal of the Christian life “is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.” In other words to have Christ as the focus of every part of our lives.

FOSTER: And in a moment I want to look at how we do that. But if you just joined us, this is Champions Arise. I’m Foster Braun and I’m with Kent Darcie. We’ve discussed the purpose of life, which is to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ, and now I want to look at some specific ways we can do that.

So Kent, with all we have going on in our lives, how does the Christian life fit in?

KENT: I want to look at four things that will strengthen our ability to live a Christian life. And you touched on the first one in your question. You asked, as men, with all our responsibilities and things to do, how do we live a Christian life? I think if we aren’t careful, we believe we have our life, and then we add Christianity to it. When actually, our life is being in Christ. Jesus said, “*If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take his cross daily, and follow me.*”

It’s not about us. It’s about Christ. And as we grow closer and closer to Him, we become less and less interested in getting what we want.

FOSTER: And God knows what’s best for us anyway. But I want to dig a little deeper on this. You said that Christianity is not about a list of things to do. It’s about a relationship with Jesus Christ. We hear phrases like, being “in the Image of Christ” or “in Christ” or “abiding in Christ,” but in practical terms, what does that look like?

KENT: Abiding in Christ is crucial if we want a thriving Christian life. And I think a good example for us is a potted plant. A plant needs sunlight, but it also has to have roots that are in good soil. When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord, imagine that we are a plant and God grabs us and pulls us out of our pot—which has soil that is full of selfishness—and has no nutrients, and places us in a pot that is filled with the soil of Jesus Christ—which is full of the best character qualities and contains the perfect quantity of nutrients for us.

FOSTER: So ideally we’ll grow into a beautiful plant with the fragrance of Christ.

KENT: Yes, by growing, (or abiding) in Christ we will have the aroma of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 6.

So the first step in living the Christian life, is denying ourselves and developing a deep relationship with God and allowing Him to do the work in our lives.

FOSTER: That's a critical foundation to have. What is the second step in walking the Christian life?

KENT: The second step is to have an active and regular prayer life. This helps with developing a deep relationship with God. We're going to look at this in more detail in a couple programs, but in the first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote, "Pray without ceasing."

And Jesus set the example for this. Jesus abided in God and we have numerous examples of Jesus praying. In fact we see in the book of Matthew the disciples wanting to learn how to pray like Him. And Jesus used the Lord's Prayer (the Our Father) as an example.

FOSTER: What I find amazing about prayer, is God wants to hear from us. **We** think we're busy! He has the whole universe and beyond to deal with and yet, when I pray, God's eyes and ears are on me. I'm glad we're going to look at prayer again in more detail. So what is the third step for living a Christian life?

KENT: The third step is reading God's word regularly. When Jesus was tempted by Satan, He overcame temptation by praying and speaking the Word of God. Taking time to read and study the Bible is very important to living the Christian life. Jesus said, "*If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*" [John 8:31-32]

FOSTER: There's that word "abide" again.

KENT: Yes, "if you abide in my word". Abide is "to dwell with", "to wait on", "to continue with." That is what we need to do with God's word. To be in it regularly. To dwell in it. Jesus said, "*If you abide in my word, you will **know** the truth, and the **truth** will set you free.*" It is very important to know what God's definition of a Christian life is.

FOSTER: Too often it seems like religiousness squeezes out God's desire for a Christian life.

KENT: You know, James wrote about that very thing. In James chapter 1 verse 27, it says, "*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*"

FOSTER: Is it even possible to live a Christian life if you don't read and study the Bible?

KENT: Not where it's available. Some of our Christian brothers and sisters in persecuted countries might only have one page of the Bible and they're getting God's word from programs like this. But for most of the people listening to us, the answer is no. In fact, the Reverend Billy Graham addressed your question.

He said *“I don't care who you are. You cannot live a victorious life if you neglect Bible reading and Bible study. Every time a person comes to me and says ‘I'm not getting my prayers answered, I have no victory in my life, I have no joy in my life, I don't have peace in my life,’ I asked them one question, ‘Are you reading your Bible daily and studying your Bible? Usually the answer is ‘No, or not very much.’*

So reading the Bible daily, is very important. If you are new to this. Start reading in the New Testament. Begin with the book of Mathew. Trust me. Once you start, you won't be able to put it down.

FOSTER: That's so true. And what is the fourth step for living a Christian life.

KENT: The fourth step is being disciplined. The Christian life is a disciplined life. We need to discipline our minds—watching what we put into them. We need to discipline our bodies—watching how we take care of them and how we use them. There is also the discipline of attending a regular Christian worship service.

You'll hear people say “I'm a member of the great universal church. So I don't need to be a member of any local church.” My thought is thats like saying “Yes I'm on the soccer team, but I don't go to any of the practices. And on game day I may go to the game, or I may just listen to it on the radio, or watch it on my computer.

FOSTER: It sounds ridiculous when you put it that way. Yet I know people that think that way.

KENT: And again, if you know the word of God, you'd know that the Apostle Paul wrote in Hebrews 10:24-25

*“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, **as some people do**, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.” [NLT]*

That is an example of denying ourselves and living for Christ. Because when we meet regularly with fellow believers, God can use us to minister to others.

FOSTER: What a privilege to be used by God. But Kent, we need to finish up. So please review the key points we covered today.

KENT: Sure, We started by looking at what the meaning of life is. And we found that the purpose of life is to walk with Christ—to live a Christian Life. And that starts by accepting Christ as our Lord and Savior. As Christians, the way we deepen our relationship with God is by denying ourselves, praying daily, **and** reading God's word (the Bible) regularly as well. Living the Christian life also requires discipline, because growing in our faith doesn't just happen by itself. And part of that discipline is meeting regularly with other believers. That way, God can use the body of Christ to minister to each other.

FOSTER: Thanks Kent. Living the Christian life is not always easy, in fact it can be hard, but with God's help, we can live a live that honors Him and draws others to Jesus Christ in the process.

Program Close

FOSTER: Thank you for listening to Champions Arise where men are equipped and strengthened to meet their God-given potential. Today we discussed some steps that can help us to live a Christian life. This program was based on Lesson 3 in the book "The Four Priorities," by Dr. John Tolson and Larry Kreider. You can learn more about this book and listen to any of the programs in this series at our website championsarise.org. I'm Foster Braun with Kent Darcie. Thank you for listening to Champions Arise. May God mold you into the man He knows you can be.

Music Theme out

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