

INTRODUCTION

People send me humorous emails all the time—and I appreciate it! Recently I received a list of questions and answers from children’s science exams:

Q: Name the four seasons.

A: Salt, pepper, mustard and vinegar.

Q: Explain one of the processes by which water can be made safe to drink.

A: Flirtation makes water safe to drink because it removes large pollutants like grit, sand, dead sheep and canoeists.

Q: How can you delay milk turning sour?

A: Keep it in the cow.

Q: What causes the tides in the oceans?

A: The tides are a fight between the Earth and the Moon. All water tends to flow towards the moon, because there is no water on the moon, and nature hates a vacuum. I forget where the sun joins in this fight.

Q: What happens to your body as you age?

A: When you get old, so do your bowels and you get intercontinental.

Q: What happens to a boy when he reaches puberty?

A: He says good-bye to his boyhood and looks forward to his adultery.

Q: What is the fibula?

A: A small lie.

Q: What does the word “benign” mean?

A: Benign is what you will be after you be eight.

Q: Give the meaning of the term “Caesarean Section.”

A: The Caesarean Section is a district in Rome.

Q: How are the main parts of the body categorized?

A: The body is consisted into three parts: The brainium, the borax and the abdominal cavity. The brainium contains the brain; the borax contains the heart and lungs, and the abdominal cavity contains the five bowels A, E, I, O, and U.

The wonderful book of Colossians contains the answers to a lot of life’s most important questions. The first chapter answers the question: Who is Jesus Christ? We discovered Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the Creator, and the One who holds all things together. In Him all the fullness of God dwells. We also uncovered the greatest mystery of the ages: Christ in you—the hope of glory.

The second chapter answers the question: What has Jesus done for us? We saw that Jesus redeemed us from our sinful condition. At the cross, God nailed all our sin and shame—and He nailed all the legalistic Old Testament regulations. We have been set free to enjoy the benefits of God’s amazing grace. Over the past month, we’ve been exposing the dangerous grace robbers that steal away the impact of God’s grace.

As we come to the third chapter of Colossians, we reach a turning point. The first two chapters were all about what we believe. Now the emphasis changes to how we behave. The last two chapters of Colossians address this important question: Based upon who Jesus is and what He has done for me, how should I live? So, this message is entitled, “Ready, Set...LIVE!” Let’s read the answer to that question beginning in Colossians 3:1-4:

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

If I could summarize this message in one sentence it would be this thought: We aren’t in heaven yet, but it’s possible to enjoy a little bit of heaven right here and now!

Forest Lawn Cemetery in Glendale, California has been called “Disneyland for the Dead,” because many of the early Hollywood stars are buried there. Tourists take trips through the cemetery to view the ornate and unusual monuments. One wealthy Hollywood producer was buried sitting in his Cadillac with a cigar glued in his mouth. As the car was lowered into the grave, one of the attendants was heard to say, “Man, that’s really living!”

No, that’s not living—that’s death. You may make a good living, but you may not really be living according to the Bible’s definition of life. The Bible says, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life.” (John 3:36) Are you really living—or are you merely existing? I want to take the four letters in the word “LIVE” and share with you how you can *really* live!

1. LOOK AT LIFE FROM A HIGHER PERSPECTIVE!

The Bible says “Christ is seated at the right hand of God...God raised us up and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.” (Colossians 3:1; Ephesians 2:6) Where is Jesus at this moment? Spiritually speaking, He is right here with us. He promised, “Where two or three are gathered together, there I am with them.” (Matthew 18:20) Jesus is here in the Person of the Holy Spirit. But, literally speaking, Jesus has ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God.—that represents His victory and authority. Where are you right now? Physically speaking, you are here, seated, listening to me. But spiritually speaking, the Bible says we have been raised and we are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms.

Because of that, you can look at things differently. You may be thinking, “Yes, when I get to heaven then I’ll see things differently.” This isn’t referring to going to heaven someday; it tells

us we are seated with Christ *right now*.

Heaven is a real place, and all true Christians will spend eternity there with Jesus. But you don't have to go through a cemetery to experience heaven. There are two worlds. One is this world we can experience with our five senses. But superimposed on this world is another world—a whole different dimension of life. If that is a little confusing, let me use a simple illustration to clarify it.

Right now as I'm speaking to you, there are all kinds of scenes and sounds in this room. Can you see it? There's a fight going on between cowboys and Indians. Did you see it? An Indian just got shot and fell off his horse. There's a soccer game, and there's a baseball game. And there's also a politician being interviewed, and there's a voice giving the weather forecast. Before you think I'm completely insane, I hope you understand I'm talking about television and radio waves. They are present in this building, and the only reason we can't experience them is because we don't have a television or a radio to tune them in.

Do you have any trouble believing that? Of course not. But if Abraham Lincoln was here and I told him about an invisible world of radio and television waves, he would think I was really nuts! Even so, some people think we're crazy for believing in things we can't see.

We're still in the world, but we should be looking at things from the perspective of above where Jesus is seated with the Father. Have you ever noticed when you're up high, things seem smaller? I heard about a nervous flier on an airplane. He finally got up enough courage to glance out the window and he said to the person beside him, “It is true what they say, people look like ants from up here.” His seatmate said, “Those ARE ants, we haven't taken off yet!”

Things look a lot different when you're up high. I've traveled the globe enough to know our planet is scooped out and piled up with valleys and mountains. I've seen the Grand Canyon in Arizona and the Great Rift Valley in Africa. I've seen Mt. McKinley in Alaska and the Alps in Europe. But when you look at our world from outer space, the surface appears completely smooth. We know there are deep valleys and high mountains, but when you back away few thousand miles, it appears as smooth as a billiard ball. Life is the same way. Up close, the challenges of life may appear to be unclimbable or uncrossable, but when you look at problems from the perspective of being seated with Jesus in the heavenly realms, those problems don't seem nearly as big and scary.

Through the years I've often asked people, “How are you doing?” A common answer I receive is, “I'm doing all right under the circumstances.” Have you ever said that? Well, because of who you are in Jesus, you shouldn't be living UNDER the circumstances. Circumstances are the like mattress on your bed. If I asked you how you slept last night and you said, “I slept pretty good under the mattress” I'd say, “What in the world are you doing trying to sleep UNDER your mattress? You'll suffocate under there.” You are not supposed to under your mattress or under you circumstances, you should be resting on top of them! Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, and things look a lot different from there.

One of the greatest Bible teachers I ever knew was Ron Dunn. He went to be with the Lord a few

years ago. I received a letter once from him and for the closing he wrote, “Keep looking down” with Ephesians 2:6 beside it. That’s good advice since we should look at things from a higher perspective!

2. INVEST YOUR HEART AND MIND IN HEAVENLY VALUES!

The Bible says, “Set your hearts on things above...Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” (Colossians 1:1-2) The word “set” means to synchronize, to make two things agree. We’re to synchronize our affections and our thinking with heaven.

It’s like setting your clock. If you want it to tell the correct time you have to set it using a true standard. I heard a funny story about a man who walked to a factory every morning. One of his jobs was to blow the factory whistle at exactly 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Each morning, he walked by a furniture store and paused and set his watch to reflect the time displayed by an old grandfather clock in the window. Then he would blow the factory whistle based upon that time. He did it for years, and one day he finally met the owner of the furniture store. The man from the factory introduced himself and said, “By the way, how does that that grandfather clock keep such good time?” The owner said, “Oh, I set it every day by the factory whistle.”

There is a standard for all time zones around the world and it’s called GMT, which stands for Greenwich Mean Time. GMT is kept at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich England. If you want your clock to be correct, you must set it match that time and take into account which time zone you’re in.

That’s what the Bible means when it says we should SET our hearts and minds on things above. We have a perfect standard in Jesus Christ. D. L. Moody once said, “Some people are so heavenly minded they are of no earthly good.” That may sound true, but I don’t know that I’ve ever met someone like that. The opposite of is true for many of us: We’re so earthly-minded we are of no heavenly good.

You know what I mean when I describe someone whose “mind is in the gutter.” That means they are always thinking wicked, evil thoughts. Setting your mind on things above is just the opposite. It means to think about goodness, grace, and glory. You make a conscious choice to focus on the things of God rather than the things of this world. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:18 says, “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen (earthly) is temporary, but what is unseen (heavenly) is eternal.”

In one sense, nobody is truly an atheist. Everyone believes in some kind of god, because a god is that person or thing to which you give ultimate allegiance. You can easily discover WHO or WHAT is your God by taking a 3-T Test: **1. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE MOST?** What is it that consumes your thoughts most of the time? If you think about yourself mostly, and your main goal in life is “looking out for #1” then you’ve made yourself you own little god. Proverbs 23:7 says, “As a man THINKS in heart, so is he.” In other words, you generally become what you think about the most. **2. WHAT DO YOU TALK ABOUT THE MOST?** Hang around a person for awhile and just listen to them. It won’t take you long to discover who

or what their god really is. Jesus said, “out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.” (Matthew 12:34) **3. WHERE DO YOU INVEST YOUR TREASURE?** What is it that you have no reservation in spending money? Is there something you do, or someone you know that when it comes to cost you think, “money is no object.” The Bible says if you invest your treasure in earthly things, the possibility exists that you’ll lose your investment. But Jesus said, “Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:20-21)

When your God is Jesus Christ, your heart and mind will be set on Him. You will find yourself thinking about the things of heaven; talking about the things of heaven; and investing your treasure in the things of heaven.

Heaven isn’t a place. It’s a person—it’s Jesus. Imagine one of our brave soldiers serving in Iraq. He is stationed there, but he has a sweetheart back home. Imagine him receiving a letter from his sweetheart. After he reads the letter he looks up and you can tell his heart and mind are thousands of miles away. That’s how we should be living. We’re still here in the battleground, but our Savior has given us a love letter, called the Bible, and our hearts and minds should be directed toward Him.

3. VISUALIZE YOUR LIFE COMPLETELY SECURE WITH CHRIST!

The Bible says, “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” (Colossians 1:3)

There are two images here we should visualize. First, “you died.” That doesn’t mean you died physically, it means we have died to the old person we were before Jesus made us alive. Dead people aren’t interested in the things of this world.

A pastor in California writes about two sisters in L.A. who grew up in the party/drugs/drinking culture of Southern California. But they heard the good news and both became sincere followers of Jesus. After they were saved, they received a written invitation to a party where there would be plenty of cocaine. The invitation had a “RSVP” so they wrote back: “We are sorry that we will be unable to attend because we both recently died.” When you are in Christ, you are dead to the old way of living.

The second image is our lives being hidden with Christ. That doesn’t mean we can’t be found—it carries the idea of being safely hidden away. It means we are protected. You may recall during the debates for the Presidential election in 2000, Al Gore kept talking about taking Social Security and putting it in a lockbox and putting that lockbox away in a safe place. Well, that’s what Jesus has done for His followers. He has taken their lives and put it in a lockbox of His love, and it is safe there. Many people own safe deposit boxes in which they place valuables. Our lives are hidden with Christ in God, and He provides more safety and security than any safe deposit box on earth!

Dr. A.T. Robertson was the most renowned Greek scholar Baptists have ever had. In commenting on this picture he wrote: “So here we are in Christ who is in God, and no burglar,

not even Satan himself can separate us from the love of God in Christ.”

When I was young, I recall singing a beautiful hymn based on 2 Timothy 1:12. It went this way: “For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able; To keep that which I’ve committed unto Him against that day.” Yes, I believe once a person is truly saved, they are always saved. I also believe that the faith that fizzles before the finish was faulty from the first. The security of my salvation is *not* dependent upon what I am able to do. The security of my salvation is based upon what He is able to do—and He is able to keep that which I’ve committed to Him. Jesus is the keeper of our hearts and we are safe in Him. We are doubly safe because not only are we *with* Christ, we are *in* God.

So how do we live? Look at life from a new perspective. Invest your heart and mind in heavenly values. Visualize your life completely secure in Christ. And finally,

4. EXPECT TO SEE JESUS APPEARING IN GLORY!

“When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” (Colossians 1:4) This is speaking of the Second Coming of Christ. Some people think history is simply lurching forward as a series of coincidental, unconnected events. They look at all the disasters and wars and can’t see any rhyme or reason in it. Other people see history as a cycle of repeating events, and they believe “what goes around comes around.” But the followers of Jesus understand history is “His story” and God is moving this world toward a climactic event which is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

When I was in Washington D.C. a few weeks ago, I read these words inscribed in the reading room of the Library of Congress. It is a quotation from Tennyson’s poem “In Memoriam.” It says, “One God, one law, and one far off divine event to which the whole creation moves.”

Our world is moving toward a divine event in which God will turn to Jesus and say, “Enough is enough. Go, Son, go claim your glory.” It seems history is moving faster toward this event. The two nations mentioned most in the Bible are (1) Israel and (2) Iraq (Babylon in the Bible). Which two nations seem to be dominating the news scene for the past few years? Sometimes you see signs advertising some singer or star. The sign will say: APPEARING SOON. That’s what we should be thinking about Jesus—He will be appearing soon! Titus 2:13 says we should be “looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ.”

And when Jesus returns, we will share in His glory. In I John 3:2 we read, “Now we are children of God, and what we WILL BE has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

A pastor told me about a friend of his who has a charming, precocious four-year-old daughter. She is always saying the cutest things. Late one night, a terrible storm blew into their town. Rain was pelting down as the lightning flashed and the thunder crashed. The noise of the storm woke everyone and the father went into his daughter’s bedroom to see if she was afraid. To his surprise

he saw her standing up at her window with her nose pressed to the glass and her arms spread out. The father screamed, "What in the world are you doing?" She turned around and said, "I'm smiling. I think God is trying to take my picture!" And indeed, God has already taken your picture. The good news is He doesn't see you as you once were, or even as you are right now. He has an image of you that reveals what you **SHALL** be when you appear with Jesus in glory. God loves you so much that if He had a refrigerator, your picture would be attached with a magnet!

CONCLUSION

Someone told me recently they observed me for awhile and discovered I have a habit of flashing two thumbs up to people. I didn't really realize how much I did that, but now that I think about it, I often look at someone in the choir who just sang and I'll give them the old "thumbs up." I think that's a good sign for Christians.

Some of the college football teams have their own hand signs. We're all familiar with "Hook 'em Horns," "Gig 'em Aggies" or "the claw" for Baylor. Texas Tech flashes pistols, and TCU has a hand sign for the horned frogs (which I never would have recognized if someone hadn't told me!).

We need something like that! I mean our Catholic friends can genuflect, but we don't have a sign to make. I would like to suggest we make two thumbs up the sign for evangelical believers. Not only does it mean "good job" or "everything is okay" it also points us in the right direction. It reminds us how to live: **LOOK** at thing from a new perspective; Invest your heart and mind in heavenly values; Visualize your life safely hidden with Christ; and Expect to see Jesus appearing soon. Are you really living? "Ready, Set...Live!"

OUTLINE

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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes