

# LIVING REAL LIFE

1 TIMOTHY 6:19

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PREFACE

## ORIGINS & OBJECTIVES

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### AN ORIGIN STORY

I graduated high school with the reputation as the religious weirdo who didn't drink, smoke, or swear. I was heading off to Bible college and the running joke was that I was most likely to become a priest. Even my church friends assumed I was heading to Bible college to become a pastor. I did grow up in a Christian home where both my parents served faithfully in the church, and I am so thankful for their example. I myself enjoyed helping as a Sunday School teacher since I was fourteen. But no, I didn't want to be a pastor. In fact, I had been working for a number of years already in the graphics department of our local newspaper and I was passionate about a career in graphic design.

No, my simple desire was to dedicate a year of my life to the study of God's Word. I recognized that I would never have this opportunity once I got entrenched in any career path dictated by a university degree and the sunk cost fallacy of student loans, a mortgage, a monthly car payment, getting married, and starting a family.

I am so thankful for this decision because while attending Bible college, during a week of prayer and fasting, I was hit with the reality that I didn't truly love Jesus. I remember that moment and my visceral reaction to this realization had me shaking in disbelief. "Whoa! No. I love Jesus... I'm attending Bible college for crying out loud!"

But no. What I realized in the solitude of that moment was that I loved a lot about being a Christian, but I didn't actually know the loveliness of the One whom I sang about each Sunday in church. I didn't actually enjoy the One from whom rivers of living water flow. My identity was at best built around Christian culture, but not Christ himself. I had made a profession of faith as a young boy, and I understood the Gospel. I was baptized as a public declaration of my faith as a 10 year old. But here I was almost twenty years old, faced with the sober realization that I was not LIVING REAL LIFE. By the most meaningful metric, I was a fraud.

This study is the challenge I wish I was given as a teenager. This study is twenty years of learning how to find my IDENTITY in CHRIST, how to foster a deep LOVE for CHRIST, and how to not settle for anything less than the JOY that is found with CHRIST. For this reason, this study is for parents, youth leaders, and pastors who believe the only source of this kind of transformation in the lives of our youth is God's Word and His Spirit.

## REAL OBJECTIVES

On the surface, there's very little need to convince the youth of today the benefits of LIVING REAL LIFE. We live in a society that highly values the "authentic self" and we do not need much convincing that real life is the best life.

But if we dig a little deeper we find that we all avoid reality and engage in self deception and imaginary living. The culture of our day provides countless distractions to pretend away that which we don't like. It has never been easier to believe the lie that we are happier if we ignore reality. And so, with the odds stacked against our youth, we start with the assertion that God desires that we break free from fake living, and so our most basic OBJECTIVE is to answer the question, "*How is real life lived?*"

To answer this question, it may stand to reason that this study is one of rules and adherence to those rules. Certainly there is a right way and a wrong way to live, one that leads to reality and another that leads to delusion. But at the onset it is important to understand that this study is not a formulaic checklist of do's and don'ts. No, in fact, Paul addresses this very issue in Romans 7 verse 6 when he writes, "*... we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.*" This is to say, LIVING REAL LIFE is not a set of rules to follow, as a contractual agreement with God who then is obligated to bless you with the best life. That is not what this study is about. In fact, the youth of this generation need to know that LIVING REAL LIFE is not ultimately about what they get out of it.

No, rather, the purpose of this study is so youth can know whether or not they are in fact LIVING REAL LIFE. Many think they are, but actually aren't. I wasn't for quite some time. God's Word defines where REAL LIFE is lived, and so this study depends entirely on His Word. When we live within those boundaries there is so much variety in its practical outworking.

Even within these boundaries it can be easy to forget that LIVING REAL LIFE is utterly dependent on the Work of God. When this is forgotten, even these boundaries themselves can become another kind of law, a law that is powerless to lead your teenagers to the real life that God has for them. For that reason, please take a moment to prayerfully commit to a dependency on Him for this work in their lives. This is seen in the words of Jesus when He said, "*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all.*" (John 6:63)

## A VISION FOR THIS GENERATION

As we address the most pressing needs of this generation in this study, I am reminded that Jesus "*... had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless...*" (Matthew 9:36b) Oh, how accurately His observation describes the youth of today. They are inundated with the inauthentic and fake living of this world. Harassed on every front, in a world that rewards false living. Helpless in the relentless barrage of lies, succumbing to many of them, settling for what

little the lies offer, and even believing that there isn't more that can be expected, experienced, or enjoyed from this life anyway.

This compromise and resignation thoroughly describes a society that settles for less than LIVING REAL LIFE. The word of the Lord to Jeremiah seems all too relevant when He says, *"...they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water."* (Jeremiah 2:13) Even those who have been raised in the church their whole life can scoop with their hands the muddy sludge of broken cisterns, put it to their mouth, and confidently assert, "This is all there is. This is fine." I should know. This was my struggle as a youth, on into my mid-twenties.

As I reflect on my journey from youth to adult I recognize that the world is different than it was thirty years ago. But these matters of the heart, matters that either bring us closer to LIVING REAL LIFE or further away, are independent from the culture of the day. These are the timeless principles revealed in God's Word that are not subject to popular opinion, societal trends, or technological advancements.

As I matured, I began to experience the call of God's Word to set my affections on that which is most worthy to be LOVED, find my satisfaction in that which brings the highest JOYS, and fix my mind on the greatest truths to build my IDENTITY around. And as I did this, the closer I was to living in reality and the abundant life Christ offers there (John 10:10). And it was only then when I began to understand what "love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength" (Mark 12:30) really means.

All that to say, LIVING REAL LIFE is fundamentally premised on the conviction that there is nothing more JOYFUL, more LOVELY, or more IDENTITY defining than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is only as we grow in these directions, that we can experience the most authentic and genuine life, a life that is IN Christ, a life that is WITH Christ, and a life that is lived FOR Christ.

And so, if there is anything that can be accomplished in the lives of your youth, if there were anything you can do to equip the youth of this generation, it would be to see them grow in their IDENTITY in CHRIST, their LOVE for CHRIST, and their JOY with CHRIST. And so, these are the OBJECTIVES of this LIVING REAL LIFE study.

## **A FRAMEWORK FOR STUDYING SCRIPTURE**

What I hope becomes clear is that IDENTITY in CHRIST, LOVE for CHRIST, and JOY with CHRIST is not simply a framework to impose upon God's Word, but the very purpose of God's Word. The ultimate purpose of Scripture is to glorify God and His Son Jesus Christ, but one cannot live a life that glorifies God without also achieving these three OBJECTIVES. They are inseparable because beholding His glory always has that effect in our lives. It is irresistible glory

that enables us to LIVE REAL LIFE with stronger IDENTITY in CHRIST, greater LOVE for CHRIST, and deeper JOY with CHRIST. And it is only when we LIVE REAL LIFE that we accurately reflect the glory we have beheld.

The Westminster Catechism declares, *"The chief end of man is to glorify God **and** enjoy Him forever"*. In his book *Desiring God*, John Piper suggests the following revision, *"The chief end of man is to glorify God **by** enjoying Him forever."* That is to say, when our IDENTITY is in Christ, when our LOVE is for Christ, and our JOY is in being with Christ, God is most glorified. This is our chief end, our most important OBJECTIVE in life, and the evidence of LIVING REAL LIFE.

In this way, all Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16) is given to ultimately transform our IDENTITY, to define our LOVE, and to elicit our JOY, all to the glory of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Therefore, when we study Scripture with this framework we can ask ourselves, "In what ways do these verses propel me towards a deeper and more JOYFUL walk with Christ?" or, "How do these verses instruct my IDENTITY in Christ?" or, "In what ways do these verses compel my greater obedience of LOVE?" This is a framework that can be faithfully applied to any passage in Scripture.

This is another important OBJECTIVE of the LIVING REAL LIFE study, to equip your teenagers with the tools to study Scripture with a primary focus on its outworking effects in their lives. This is to capture Paul's appeal in Romans twelve when he writes, *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."* (Romans 12:2) The study of God's Word finds its full effect when we approach it with the desire to be transformed in our IDENTITY, LOVE, and JOY.

Before you get tired of hearing about IDENTITY in CHRIST, LOVE for CHRIST, and JOY with CHRIST, please do not reduce this framework to that of pedantic over simplification, or a worse yet, an eisegetical gimmick. No, this is literally the will of God for your youth. This framework reminds us of what Scripture has been given for, what youth should prioritize in their study of God's Word, and what youth can expect from LIVING REAL LIFE, specifically their growth, development, and maturity in Christ.

## **A GOSPEL DRIVEN FRAMEWORK**

If LIVING REAL LIFE can only occur within the boundaries of an IDENTITY in CHRIST, a LOVE for CHRIST and a JOY with CHRIST, then fundamentally this is a study of the GOSPEL. It is only the saving power of the GOSPEL that can locate anyone within these boundaries, where the truly abundant life in Christ can be experienced.

For this reason, we pray this study meets your youth wherever they are in their faith journey, ministering to their deepest needs. This is for youth who have been raised in the church their whole life but are not quite sure if they are LIVING REAL LIFE. This is for youth who have never considered themselves a follower of Jesus Christ. This is especially for youth who have come to the horrible realization they do not LOVE Christ, do not experience JOY in spending time with Christ, or do not find their IDENTITY rooted in Christ.

This LIVING REAL LIFE study examines the book of 1 Timothy with this framework as a GOSPEL introduction to faith in Christ. Paul's relationship with Timothy in this book is the heart's desire of every parent and youth leader: to mentor and bring up the next generation into maturity in Christ. For that reason, the first ten lessons are fundamentally GOSPEL oriented, and culminate in Paul's assessment, *"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost."* (1 Timothy 1:15) The subsequent lessons examine the life of the believer whose IDENTITY is in Christ, whose LOVE is for Christ, and whose JOY is with Christ.

In this LIVING REAL LIFE study we will unpack 1 Timothy through this lens. You will find that every verse in this letter to Timothy describes a REALITY that Paul was calling Timothy to LIVE. He actually explained why he wrote the letter stating, *"so that you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth."* (1 Timothy 3:15) While specifically relating to the LIFE of a local church, broadly the principles for church life apply to each of us, especially to a young person making that momentous transition from child to adulthood.

And so, for the youth in our lives, where do they start in their journey towards LIVING REAL LIFE?

It starts with a FOUNDATION.

