

# LIVING REAL LIFE

1 TIMOTHY 6:19

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## CHAPTER 1 FOUNDATIONS

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*Store up treasure for yourselves as a good foundation for the future, so that you may take hold of that which is real life. 1 TIMOTHY 6:19*

### THE MISINFORMATION AGE

To LIVE REAL LIFE is to evaluate reality, make informed decisions, and live accordingly. Unfortunately, this has never been more difficult. In simpler times, one would read the news and make what would seem like very rational decisions. There's a war in Europe? Enlist in the military. There's a polio epidemic? Get your children vaccinated. There's a hole in the ozone? Buy that new safer product.

Fast forward one-hundred years and I can't count the number of times I've heard the lament, "You can't really know what is true". I sat across from an individual, a well meaning Christian brother in the Lord, who in the course of a lengthy debate, finally concluded with those words. He had been confronted with facts that contradicted his understanding of reality. While he admitted those facts could change his opinion on the matter, he refused to accept them on the basis of that which is fundamentally destructive to the Christian message, that we can't actually know what is true.

Sure, we are called to be skeptical truth seekers, but endless skepticism does not lead to soundness of mind. The question, "How do you know that is true?" is a perfectly valid question when you are seeking evidence. But it is not a "good faith" question to be hurled when the evidence has been provided and you simply don't have anything left to say. Every believer should avoid this, because it ends the conversation and furthers the notion that we can't actually know what is true. It dishonors the very faculties that God has given us, our ability to reason, and rationalize. But mostly it diminishes the role of God's Word, as it provides an absolute reference point on which we can calibrate our minds.

But this is in fact how the world thinks. This is the world our youth are growing up into. We live in a world where facts no longer exist and everything is reduced to that of opinion. Our slice of a shared, agreed-upon reality has grown so incredibly thin that as a society we've arrived at a place where no progress can be made in conversations of REALITY.

Tragically it is the internet and social media that have completely transitioned us from the Information Age to the Misinformation Age. Who would have guessed that the avalanche of data that we have at our fingertips would prove to be our undoing? These technologies have demonstrated that disinformation and misinformation travel faster and further than the truth, and yet our ability to discern and investigate “truth claims” has not kept pace. We are falling behind because we are too busy and too susceptible to believing that which we want to believe. It is the untrustworthiness of the human heart (Jeremiah 17:9) that gradually slides our world into one that fully believes lies, delusions (2 Thessalonians 2:11), and deceptions (Colossians 2:8).

This is the world that our youth are growing up into. A world that trains them to be, “double minded and unstable in all their ways” (James 1:8). And so we must provide our youth with the tools to navigate REALITY, the tools God has given us to KNOW the answers to life’s most nagging questions.

## **A REALITY CHECK**

Who am I? What is reality? What is true?

These are the questions that begin to percolate in the teenage heart and mind as they make the jump from child to adult. It is the answers to these questions that form the basis for their identity and purpose in life. In these formative years of life, to struggle with matters of faith, belief, and identity, must be welcomed. As parents and church leaders we must receive these questions as part of a healthy process, rather than an inconvenient contrarian streak or rebellious phase. If this describes a youth you know, as parents and youth leaders, we must affirm them in their questions. These questions are in fact a good sign that they want certainty and won’t settle for less than LIVING REAL LIFE.

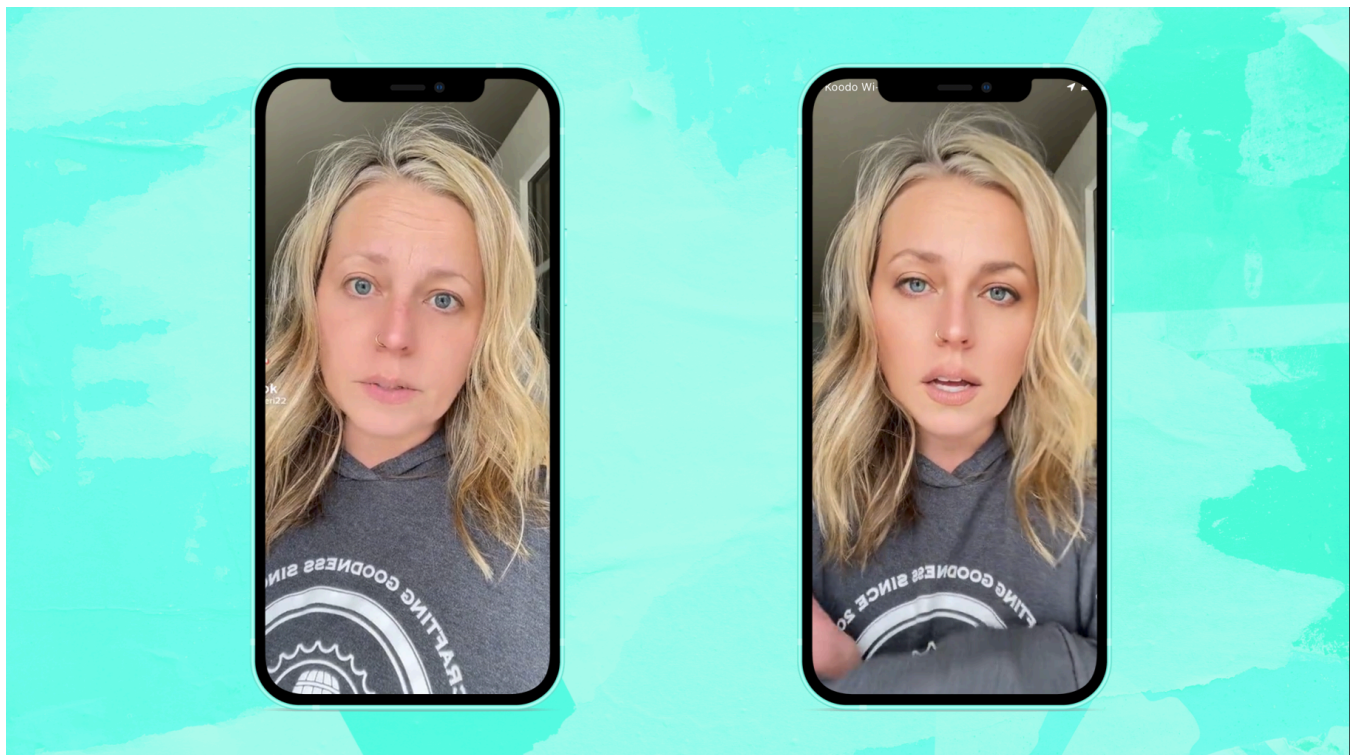
We live in a world where many confidently assert that REAL LIFE is a myth, that there is no possible way to prove one reality over another, let alone with any degree of certainty. These are the ones that ironically claim that absolutely no one can claim to know reality, a glaring contradiction of postmodern relativistic thinking. But, for a youth to recognize this absurdity indicates that they are hungry to know the truth. The mission of every parent and youth leader is to inspire youth with the value and worth of seeking and finding the TRUTH (Jeremiah 29:13). The starting point of our journey is to accept that LIVING REAL LIFE requires seeking, and seeking requires effort, but it leads to freedom (John 8:31-32).

LIVING REAL LIFE is the Biblical response to these questions. It is our goal to demonstrate that grasping REALITY is not only possible but it is God's desire. In fact, anything less is missing out on God's best.

## PLAYING PRETEND

Unfortunately, grasping reality is difficult because we like to play pretend, preferring to live in a fantasy than the harshness of the REAL world. We simply do not enjoy looking intently at reality because in many ways it only makes us feel uncomfortable. But the expression says it rightly, sometimes "the truth hurts". We don't like that, and we live in a society that does its best to hide from the harsh realities of this life.

As the current generation of youth make the transition from child to adult, they are faced with unprecedented obstacles in knowing what is real. They have grown up with a device in their hand and a curated reality before their eyes, artificially generated by an ever present app filter retouching your appearance, or masking it entirely. In fact, the filters have gotten so good that the visual cues that once indicated digital manipulation are no longer detectable. Digital manipulation has been blatantly obvious for decades and this tethered our minds to reality, assuring our brains that what we are looking at wasn't real. But these "tells" are now all but gone. Even in video formats, the filters apply flawless wrinkle-free skin, enlarged eyes, sculpted facial features, and perfect complexions, to your moving and interactive appearance effortlessly without hiccup or glitch.



As a result, many youth refuse to use their camera without these filters, and over time completely forget, or become completely disgusted with their actual appearance. Consider this young woman's experience, told in her own words,

*Next thing I knew I was only taking selfies using the Snapchat camera. When I'd use the Phone camera, with no flowers or googly eyes obscuring my actual face, I'd think to myself, 'You look hideous.' So I just stopped using it altogether. — Ruth Faj ([Is Snapchat Making Us Forget What We Look Like?](#))*

In today's connected world, self worth is calculated in likes and followers. Identity is defined by avatars, online achievements, and the memes we share. Reality is defined by unattributed, unsourced, unverified posts, photo manipulations, and AI generated content.

And so in spite of the technological and scientific advances of the modern era, we are no closer to grasping REALITY, but in fact further from it. LIVING REAL LIFE has never been more difficult.

## **TAKE HOLD OF REALITY**

The theme verse of LIVING REAL LIFE is found in 1 Timothy 6:19 where we are challenged to *"take hold of that which is real life"*. God wants us to know that which is truly life, REAL LIFE. Jesus calls it the *"abundant life"* (John 10:10), and He specifically came so that we could experience it. But we need to TAKE HOLD of it. We need to grab it.

But grasping reality requires effort because the human heart is inclined to live in a world of pretend. This is captured in Jeremiah 17:9 when the prophet writes *"the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"*

And in a make-believe world where everything revolves around a desperately sick human heart, the definition of REALITY takes many unfortunate turns, resulting in the most self-destructive life mottos:

- Follow your heart
- Be true to yourself
- Believe in yourself
- Live your truth
- Do whatever makes you happy

And so you are inundated and overwhelmed with fake living. Social media is where fake life is rewarded with all the “likes” and “subscribers”. As long as it feels authentic it doesn’t matter that lies hide behind Instagram and TikTok filters, where no one is comfortable with the faces or bodies that God gave them. It’s a life of pretend and role-play, where you are tempted to live vicariously through influencers and their YouTube channels and video games, engaging in worlds that do not represent reality and never could. Living this fake life provides nothing of substance for the present and does not equip you for the FUTURE – in this life or the life beyond. It’s a life without any ability to maintain meaningful or lasting relationships, a life that simply ricochets from one delusion to the next as each one is exposed for the fraud that it is.

So, how do we TAKE HOLD of REAL LIFE if we can’t trust our own hearts or lean on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6)?

It is true that God has given us our senses to observe from creation that He exists and therefore we are “*without excuse*” (Romans 1:20, Psalm 19:1). Similarly, God has created an orderly universe complete with physical laws that the entire creation obeys and we observe these to be true. Gravity, for example, exists relative to mass, and in this way gravity functions on earth just as it does in the deep darkness of space, predictable and in compliance with the laws God established. Jesus Himself commanded the universe into being (Colossians 1:16), and He continues to command the precision we see in its laws, all adhered to by the smallest particles all the way to the largest galaxies, by the “*word of His power*” (Hebrews 1:3). These laws are acting in obedience to His Word. Jesus Himself is what HOLDS REALITY together (Colossians 1:17).

Similarly, all humans are subject to God’s moral laws and we must obey them. But in this case God does not force us to, as He does with every atom of creation. No, to LIVE REAL LIFE we must TAKE HOLD of it.

But how?

Well, this is the very purpose of this LIVING REAL LIFE study.

In this journey, while difficult and fraught with many challenges, a promise is given to those who seek “*with all their heart*” (Jeremiah 29:13b) that “*if we seek we will find*” (Jeremiah 29:13a).

The mystery of TAKING HOLD of REALITY is summed up in the question, how can hearts that are desperately wicked, seek after God with *"all their heart"*? A question with eternal consequences. A correctly answered question that equips our youth with, as Paul puts it, a *"good foundation for the future"* with an eternal future that depends on it.

The answer is found in a heart that is transformed by the TRUTH of His Word, a TRUTH that proves to be the only GOOD FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE.

## **A GOOD FOUNDATION**

The decisions youth make today build a FOUNDATION for the FUTURE with implications ten, twenty, thirty years from now... on into eternity.

In these teenage years, youth begin to feel this pressure to make decisions about their FUTURE? What highschool courses to select? What career to choose? What university or post secondary education to attend? What jobs to pursue? Who to consider for marriage?

And this is exactly what Paul is getting at when he says, *"store up treasure for yourselves as a good foundation for the future, so that you may take hold of that which is real life"*. If you read the previous verses of chapter six, you'll see he is directly contrasting worldly treasures with that which is eternal.

And it is only after you lay a GOOD FOUNDATION can you truly LIVE REAL LIFE. That is to say, without a GOOD FOUNDATION, we will not have a good grasp, or be able to TAKE HOLD, of reality or have hope for the FUTURE. Everything depends on the FOUNDATION.

Insightfully, Paul provides us the substance of this FOUNDATION, it's a FOUNDATION made of TREASURE.

## **STORE UP THIS TREASURE**

The first words in 1 Timothy 6:19 command us to "store up" this TREASURE. The word translated "store up" is in fact the Greek word "thesauros" which means "storehouse" or "treasure." This is a word that was originally used to refer to a repository of wealth, knowledge, or information, as a treasury. Over time, it evolved to specifically denote a list of synonyms and related words. This is where we get the English word thesaurus.

Jesus describes a TREASURE that when discovered the finder sells *"all they have"* so they can buy the field where the treasure was buried in order to take ownership of it. (Matthew 13:44-46) This is a treasure that is not only worth STORING, but it is worth all that we have to possess all that we can find. It is an invaluable TREASURE where no hesitation, no counting the cost, is necessary. It is self-evidently worth every cent.

## **THE TREASURE OF GOD'S WORD**

The idea of STORING TREASURE is captured in Psalm 119:11, when David writes, *"I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."* And once again see the connection between a TREASURE that provides a FOUNDATION, one that is stable and unshakable in the face of the temptation to sin.

The very FOUNDATION is poured by the Word of God, essential in *"teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness"* so that we *"may be complete, equipped for every good work."* (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

## **THE TREASURE IS ALIVE**

But this is where many give up, or lose interest, as the process of STORING this TREASURE requires effort, digging, researching, cross-referencing, reading, meditating, and studying God's Word. All essential to STORING and building this FOUNDATION of TREASURE. But this is not simply treating God's Word as an academic exercise, an item on your checklist, or yearly Bible reading plan. No God's Word is *"living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."* (Hebrews 4:12) And because God's Word is ALIVE, it is life-giving, providing insights into the very mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:16), *"refreshes the soul"* (Psalm 19:7) and it is neither a chore nor a burden to plumb its depths.

## **THE TREASURE IS ETERNAL**

A FOUNDATION that is not built with durable, long-lasting materials, is only temporary. Like shifting sand it is an unreliable FOUNDATION because it is always changing. This is seen in how our hearts that John Calvin describes as, *"idol making factories"*. We seek to fill an ETERNAL longing with these temporary and passing pleasures. The world does its best to market and advertise the passing pleasures of sin, the allure of immediate gratification, ascribing great worth to things that simply breakdown, rust and decay.

LIVING REAL LIFE is to see the "treasures" of this world for what they truly are, obsolete and insignificant, and that only with Christ as our TREASURE, can we truly LIVE REAL LIFE. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 6:21 that *"where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* And so, your generation of youth is lost to worthless obsessions of the heart and fixations of the mind is precisely what's at stake.

In contrast, Jesus Himself urged the gathered crowds to STORE UP heavenly TREASURE with these well known words,

*"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* (Matthew 6:19-21)

And so, LIVING REAL LIFE is to TREASURE that which is ETERNAL, to build a FOUNDATION that is ETERNAL. Building upon this FOUNDATION is to LIVE REAL LIFE with an ETERNAL perspective. Paul describes the effects of building on the FOUNDATION using *"wood, hay, and stubble"* the worthless materials, contrasted with the *"gold, silver, and jewels"* (1 Corinthians 3:12) which survive the fire and have ETERNAL value. LIVING REAL LIFE aims to build upon the FOUNDATION of Christ, His Work and His Word, with that which is ETERNAL.

So we understand that the TREASURE is God's Word, but not just God's written Word, but indeed the TREASURE is the LIVING and ETERNAL (John 1:1-3) Word that *"became flesh"* (John 1:1,14). This is Christ Himself.

## **THE TREASURE IS CHRIST**

As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:11, there is no other FOUNDATION that can be laid other than Jesus Christ. The essential work of Christ on the cross and the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit in all who believe, is the only FOUNDATION upon which you can build a life that Jesus describes in John 10:10 as the *"abundant life"*, an experience that is truly LIVING REAL LIFE.

Without this FOUNDATION, nothing of value, nothing of enduring quality, stability, certainty or ETERNAL significance can be built. Without this FOUNDATION, even the Word of God itself can not be understood, and the very *"message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing"* (1 Corinthians 1:18). There is a blindness that prevents those who are lost from seeing the truth. This is the *"god of this world that blinds the minds of unbelievers"* that Paul refers to (2 Corinthians 4:4a). A life without real TREASURE, is a life without a real FOUNDATION, and a life without a FUTURE.

Instead, LIVING REAL LIFE is to know the TREASURE of Christ and cherish it within us like jars of clay, *"earthen vessels"* (2 Corinthians 4:7). Weak as we are, fragile and breakable that we may be, the reality of *"Christ in us"* (Colossians 1:27) proves that the power is of God, and not ourselves. It is when the light of the glory of Jesus shines in our hearts, that we are transformed, made new, to become vessels of honor, *"temples of the Holy God"* (1 Corinthians 6:19). This precious TREASURE is Christ Himself, the One who takes up residence and *"dwells in your heart"* (Ephesians 3:17a), and His love will *"root us and establish us"* (Ephesians 3:17b). There is no greater FOUNDATION than the TREASURE of Jesus.

And so, to *"take hold of that which is real life"* the old foundation must be done away with, and an entirely new FOUNDATION poured. As we build on this FOUNDATION, something REAL begins to take shape. And as you'll see in the next chapter, all of this occurs within three dimensions, with coordinates defining our IDENTITY, our LOVE, and our JOY.

# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

## TREASURE

**What "TREASURES" are you tempted to value the most in your life, to think a lot about?**

*Possible Answers: good grades, popularity, material things, clothing, video game experience points or game inventory rare items, success, etc...*

**Is Jesus your TREASURE? If so, in what ways does your life demonstrate His value?**

*Possible Answers: priorities, He has your attention, He has your affection, He occupies your thoughts, a desire to give with generosity, a desire to serve, a desire to share with others about Jesus, etc...*

## FOUNDATION

**What FOUNDATION do you feel pressure to build your life upon?**

*Possible Answers: education/career, finances/savings/security, relationships/marriage, popularity/following, pleasure/amusement, etc...*

**Is Jesus your FOUNDATION for the FUTURE? If so, in what ways does your life demonstrate the stability and durability He provides?**

*Possible Answers: peace, patience, not rash with decision making but wisdom, contentment (ie. Philippians 4:11-12), unshakable confidence, emotional stability, joy (not simply happiness).*

**What is the real FUTURE for the one who puts their trust in Jesus?**

*Possible Answers: heavenly kingdom (Hebrews 11:16), new perfect sin free bodies (1 Corinthians 15:42-44), seeing Jesus face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12)*

## REAL LIFE

**In what ways are you tempted to live the fake life?**

*Possible Answers: makeup, clothes, the way you talk (slang, swearing), the things you say or do to fit in, photo filters, hide behind an avatar or Memoji, hide behind a fake identity on social media, hide behind a talent or a skill.*

**Is Jesus your real LIFE? If so, how is LIVING REAL LIFE better and easier than anything the world can offer?**

*Possible Answers: not having to be a man pleaser (Galatians 1:10) and meet the standard and judgment of men but the freedom to live a life that pleases God, not having to strive for temporal treasures that moth and rust destroy and the*

*frustrations of that elusive pursuit, not having to hide behind a fake representation of who you know you truly are but instead embrace the reality of being a weak, broken and sinful creature of God whom He dearly loves, understands and is near to the broken hearted.*

## **CONCLUSION**

**How does a FOUNDATION of real TREASURE ensure you LIVE REAL LIFE, the abundant life (John 10:10)?**

*Possible Answers: When your heart is treasuring the wrong things, you are constantly chasing lies, and settling for that which is fake. This level of compromise is what results in a wasted life. The foundation that you build on determines how true and durable the resulting structure is. A fake and unstable foundation produces a crooked and easily collapsed structure. A structure that doesn't survive the storms of this life.*

**In your journey towards LIVING REAL LIFE, as you make Jesus your greatest TREASURE and only FOUNDATION, what are some prayer requests of your heart?**

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