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Life Lessons, What Keeps Me Going for God - Part 2



By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #330 ~

The most important thing in the world is knowing God and His love and then loving Him and living for Him. But what does this look like? Why is this so important? How does this happen? This post is Part 2 of *"Life Lessons"*, the lessons and principles God has been teaching me over the past 52 years about how I can know Him and keep living for Him. Last time we looked at these lessons: 1. God is first and foremost, 2. Getting with God, 3. Knowing God, 4. The church, 5. My wife, 6. Close friends, 7. Learning from others, 8. Humility, 9. God's sovereignty, 10. Knowing God's love. Let's continue —

11. *"**Your word** is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"* (Ps. 119:105). God's word has been foundational – I wouldn't have successfully made it in the Christian life without it. Every day, I look forward to getting time with God and learning from His word (Ps. 42:1-2, 119:92-94). God's word has told me who I am in Christ. It has told me

how to love God and love people. It has given me direction. It has encouraged me when I am discouraged. It has helped me stay away from bad people. It has given me hope – it tells me what will happen in these end-times and in the kingdom age to come. Matt. 4:4

Three words sum up the nature, the essence of God's word. There are **truths** I've believed, like *"God is holy"*, *"God is good"*, and the *"Gospel, that Jesus alone takes away my sins"*. There are **commands** that must be obeyed, that tell me what God wants me to do, commands like *"love God"*, *"trust in the Lord",* and *"pray for one another"*. God's commands have been absolutely essential, for they have helped me do what's right, and to stay on track for God (Ps. 119:47-48a). There are **promises** based on God's truths, and they must be believed. Here are some of my favorites: Ps. 23:6, Ps. 32:8, Ps. 85:12, Matt. 6:33, Heb. 10:37

12. *"You shall **love the Lord your God** with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength"* (Mk. 12:30). This is the great commandment, the most important commandment. God is my Creator, Lord, Savior, and King, and He alone deserves to be worshiped, to be greatly and wholeheartedly loved. Loving God is what I should do, and what I have done, but not by any means perfectly. And it's by God's grace that I have learned to love Him more and more.

How have I loved God? By praising Him, thanking Him, singing to Him, and rejoicing in Him (Ps. 18:1). I have loved God by not loving idols, by not loving worldly things (1 Jn. 2:15). I have loved God by loving people (Jn. 15:12). I have loved God by obeying Him – and if I'm not obeying God, then I'm not loving Him (Jn. 14:21). And His perfect and continual love has motivated me to love Him. 1 John 4:19

13. *"This is my commandment, that you **love one another**, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends"* (Jn. 15:13). I've loved God by loving people. And

I've learned that I can have a *"good time with God"* in the morning, but if I don't love people, I'm a noisy gong or a clanging symbol (1 Cor. 13:1-3). I'm not talking about *phileo* love, which can be a component of our love, but *agape* love, a giving and sacrificial love (Eph. 5:1-2). To love people has meant being humble, thinking of others as more important than myself, thinking about what others are going through, of listening to them as they talk about their concerns, relationships, trials, work, etc. Phil. 2:3-4

Loving people has meant loving them with humility, compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and devotion (1 Cor. 13:4-8, Col. 3:13-14). It has meant loving those who don't love me and those who are hard to love. It has meant having fellowship with believers and encouraging them. It has meant sharing God's word with people and praying for them, two important ways to love them (Eph. 4:14). It has meant initiating with the saved and the lost – I don't wait for them to call me, I reach out to them.

14. *"Brethren,* ***pray for us****"* (1 Thess. 5:25). One of the best things a person can do for others is to pray for them, and I've learned to ask people to pray for me. Ex. 17:8-13 talks of Joshua defeating the Amalekites, and it's because Moses was asking God for the victory, and because Aaron and Hur lifted up Moses' tiring arms. Marsha and my children have faithfully prayed for me, and a few others have also consistently been praying for me, specifically at key times and in teaching God's word. Eph. 6:19-20

15. *"****Trust in Him*** *at all times."* Ps. 62:8. Before God saved me, I was fearful and anxious. But God has helped me to trust Him, to depend on Him, to have faith in Him – and it's knowing His character that has helped me to trust Him and then experience His peace. *"Those who know Your name will put their trust in You"* (Ps. 9:10). Eph. 2:8-9 says it was by faith that I was saved. Heb. 11:6 says by faith I have believed God wants to bless me and therefore seek Him. John 11:40 says that by faith I have seen God's glory. Mark 11:22-24

Having faith means I'm not living the Christian life by how I feel, by my emotions. *"Walk by faith, not by sight*" (2 Cor. 5:7). There are times when I don't feel like doing what God wants me to do, but I've learned to obey Him whether I feel like it or not. Jesus didn't feel like dying for our sins, but He trusted His Father and did what He wanted Him to do. Luke 22:42

"For a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:6-7). Like all of us, I've had trials – family, relational, church, health, financial, etc. They have been difficult, and some extremely so. But they are necessary for God's purposes, and for my faith, which is more *"precious than gold."* And faith is necessary to have hope, to believe that trials are worth it, to know that I'll be glorified at the *"revelation of Christ,"* that I'll see and be with Christ, and praise Him like never before. Rev. 7:9-12

16. *"Like the holy One who called you,* ***be holy*** *yourselves also in all your behavior."* (1 Pet. 1:15). God is perfectly holy, and He wants me to be holy. I've learned to recognize specific sins in my thoughts, words, and actions, sins like fear, anger, jealousy, pride, and selfishness. I've had to resist the devil, to say no to temptation and sin. I've learned that to be holy, I need God's word and prayer. *"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your word"* (Ps. 119:9). And if I sin, and I've sinned a lot through the years, I've learned to confess my sins and freshly receive God's forgiveness, and quickly get up from my sin and keep on living for God. Ps. 51:10-19, Pr. 24:16

I've learned that I must be holy to obey God and do His work. 2 Tim. 2:21 talks of being a *"vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work."* And actively working for God helps me stay holy, for it's when I'm lazy and just sitting around that I more easily succumb to temptation and sin. Most importantly, I know that I need to be holy to have a close walk, an intimate relationship with God. Heb.

12:14

17. *“Life and death is in **the power of the tongue**, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”* (Prov. 18:21). I’ve learned about righteous, fruitful speech. I’ve learned to have good speech, to speak for God, to talk rightly, and to teach His word. A carpenter builds with his hands, and I’ve learned to build people with my speech. By God’s grace I can speak in a godly way and make a real difference in a person’s life. Prov. 10:13, 14, 18, 20, 21, 31, 32

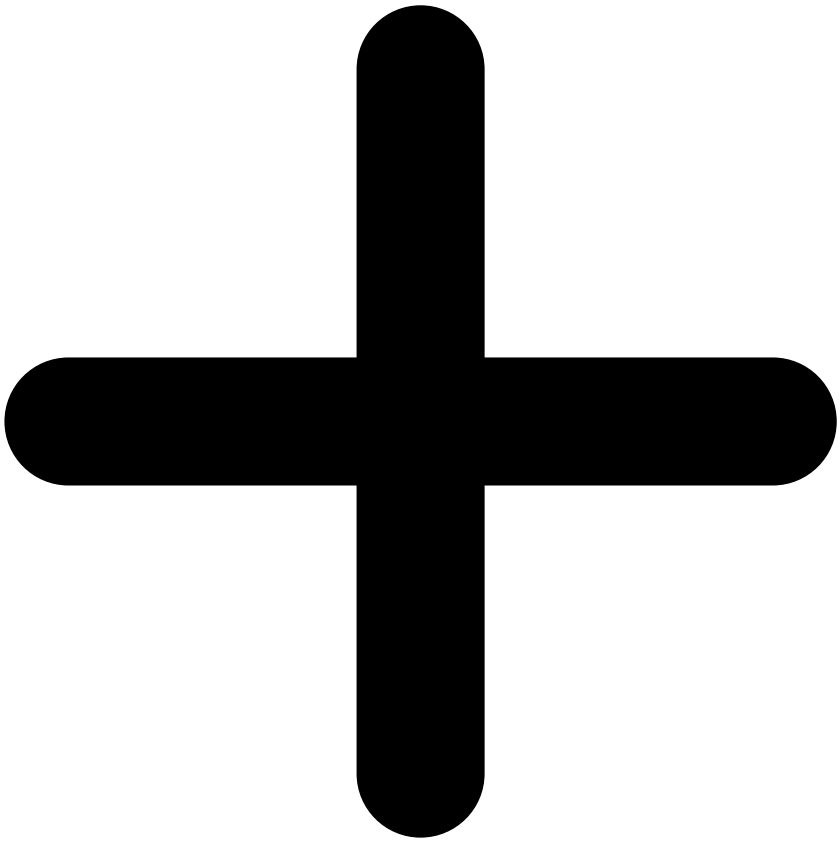
I’ve learned that my speech is not neutral, that I affect people by what I say, and that negative words can really hurt a person. I’ve learned the importance of having positive, kind, patient, and encouraging speech (Eph, 4:15), and of having precise and timely speech – saying the right words at the right time and in the right way (Pr. 25:11). I’ve learned the importance of not saying everything that’s on my mind, of holding my tongue. Pr. 21:23

I’ve learned that I need to listen to people, and then I know what to say (Jms. 1:19). I’ve learned the importance of not talking too much, of not dominating a conversation. Eph. 4:29 has been a challenging and necessary verse – *“Let no unwholesome speech come from your mouth but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”*

I am so thankful that God saved me, and has loved me, blessed me, protected me, and been teaching me valuable life lessons. We need them for the entirety of our lives, and especially now that we are in the end-times and can see that Christ is coming soon. “*Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I shall observe it to the end”* (Ps. 119:33). *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations… teaching them to observe all that I commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matt. 28:19-20). *“He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* 1

Cor. 1:8

P.S. I am continuing to stress the importance of knowing how we should live for God in these end-times. That is, we must know what God is going to do, but also know what we are to do. Here's a key article about your conduct and role in these days leading up to Christ's coming – *"The Excellent End-Times' Worker."*



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