

# The Ideal Christian Life - Part 2

by William MacDonald

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*The ideal Christian life begins with a crisis experience and involves a daily process of rededication, trusting God to guide and direct, and accepting God's will in all circumstances.*

**Duration:** 34:37

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of having a vision and being ready to fully surrender to the Lord. He emphasizes that life is meaningless unless one is willing to give everything to God. The speaker also mentions that secular ideals and standards eventually lose their value when one has encountered Christ. He highlights the need for a crisis experience, where one realizes that they don't know what's best for their life and fully submit to God's will. The sermon concludes by assuring that God will guide and never let down those who trust in Him.

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## Transcript

2 Corinthians 5, verses 14 and 15. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then we're all dead. That he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.

Two or three weeks ago I was reading a book by a man named James Stewart, and I came across a paragraph in that book that was worth the price of the whole book, and I'm going to read it to you tonight. He said, Once any man has looked into Christ's eyes and felt the magnetism of his way of life, he's never going to be satisfied with the secular ideals and standards that may have seemed adequate before Christ came. Christ has spoiled him for anything else.

The old standards of values have become cinders, ashes, dust. Thank God for that. I'm going to read it again, because it's so good.

Once any man has looked into Christ's eyes and felt the magnetism of his way of life, he's never going to be content with the secular ideals and standards that may have seemed adequate before Christ came. Christ has spoiled him for anything else. The old standards of values have become cinders, ashes, dust.

Thank God for that. In the evangelical world, we hear a lot about victorious living. We hear a lot about total commitment, about absolute surrender, about consecration.

The Spirit fills life. Sometimes I think it all gets very complicated, and tonight I would like to just try to un-complicate the Christian life for you. Perhaps I should say the ideal Christian life, because that's really what I'm thinking of.

Where does the ideal Christian life begin? I would like to suggest to you tonight that it begins with a crisis experience, such as James Stewart has just described. It begins with a crisis experience, such as Troy sang in the solo tonight. Not what I wish to be.

Not where I wish to go. Who am I to choose my way? The Lord shall choose for me. His better far I know.

How does this happen to a person? What is it that brings a person to the point where he's ready to get down before the Lord and really say that from the heart? Well, in a sense, he's seen a vision. The poet said, I have seen a vision, and for self I cannot live. Life is worse than worthless, unless all I give.

I must confess to you, those four little simple lines have meant a lot to me in my life. I have seen a vision, and for self I cannot live. Life is worse than worthless, unless all I give.

There comes a time when a man's secular ideals and standards become cinders, ashes, and dust. It's a great revelation in life when we reach the point that we don't know what's best for us in life. I look back in my early life, and I had it all planned out.

I thought I knew what was best. The trouble was, I didn't know some of the wonderful options the Lord had. And His way is really best.

The man sees a vision. His secular ideals and standards become cinders, ashes, and dust. He realizes the Lord knows best.

And then he turns his life over to the Lord. He's already done it for salvation. Now he does it for service.

I suppose both of those things should happen at the time of conversion, but they don't for many of us. We might as well be honest. We might as well be realistic.

We trust Christ for the eternal salvation of our souls, but we hold on to the reins of our life. But there comes a time, and really it's a work of the Holy Spirit of God, just as much as conversion. I really believe that.

It's just as much a work of the Holy Spirit of God when Bill McDonald or anybody else comes to that place when he says, it's the only reasonable, sensible, sane, rational thing I can do. And that's what Paul says in Romans 12, verses 1 and 2, which is your reasonable service. There's nothing more reasonable.

If he died for me, the least I can do is live for him. There's something quite inconsistent about trusting the Lord Jesus for the eternal salvation of my soul and not being willing to trust him to control my life down here. It's not quite sincere, is it? We can do that.

We can trust him to save us eternally, but we don't dare let go and trust him to manage our lives down here. And yet, the mercies of God demand it. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present, your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable

service.

But the mercies of God, it's inconsistent with his love to us that we should love him so little, better not the love of all, better to be cold than to be lukewarm. Great day in a person's life when this experience takes place, when for the first time in his life he gets down on his knees and says, Lord Jesus, anywhere, anytime, anything. I'd like to share with you some illustrations of that.

Years ago at Moody Bible Institute, there was a girl, and she had this experience in her dormitory room, and she wrote this in her Bible. Her name was Betty Scott. She said, I give myself, my life, my all, utterly to thee, to be thine forever.

I hand over to thy keeping all of my friendships, my love. All the people whom I love are to take second place in my heart. Fill me and seal me with thy Holy Spirit.

Work out thy whole will in my life at any cost, now and forever. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. Betty Scott had that crisis experience in her dormitory room, Moody Bible Institute.

She went out from the Institute, married John Stamm. You can read the story of how God accepted that sacrifice in the book called The Triumph of John and Betty Stamm. And I want to tell you something.

Betty Scott Stamm would never have made history for God if she hadn't had that crisis experience in her life. William Borden of the famous Borden dairy family, probably heir to millions if he had wanted it, attended Yale, I think it was 1909. And he had this experience and he wrote this, Lord Jesus, I take hands off as far as my life is concerned.

I put thee on the throne in my heart. Change, cleanse, use me as thou shalt choose. I take the full power of thy Holy Spirit.

I thank thee. And William Borden went out and made history for God. You read about it in the book Borden of Yale.

And more people have gone to the mission field through that book than if Borden had lived to be a hundred. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the Prince of Preachers, he had that experience. He said in that day when I surrendered myself to my Savior, I gave him my body, my soul, my spirit.

I gave him all I had and all I ever would have for time and for eternity. I gave him all my talents, my powers, my faculties, my eyes, my ears, my limbs, my emotions, my judgment, my whole manhood, and all that could come from it. And A.T. Pearson said years later of all the mind that God gave him, he made the very most.

What happens when a person has this experience? A lot of people think in terms of emotion. They think, oh, the bells will ring, the lights will go on, they'll get nervous shivers in their system. It may be that.

It may not be that at all. It may be just a quiet assurance of having done what was the right thing to do. There's a sense at a time like that of giving up what a person has ceased to love.

Poor is our sacrifice whose eyes are lighted from above. We offer what we cannot keep, what we have ceased to love. But I want to tell you when anybody does come and present his life to the Lord Jesus like that, he's offering what he couldn't keep anyway and what he has ceased to love.

Jim Elliott said it well, didn't he? He said he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. There's a sense of losing one's life for Christ's sake and the gospel. And that's good because he said he that loveth his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life for my sake and the gospel shall find it.

It's funny. People are different. Some people are afraid if they'll do this that the next day God will call them to the mission field and all they can think of is scorpions, snakes, and spiders.

It's true. The reason a lot of people don't present themselves to the Lord in a forever sacrifice is they're afraid he'll call them to the mission field. Well, he may.

So it's the greatest thing that could happen. He may not. I was in Ireland recently in January at the World Focus Conference and there was another speaker there named David Shepherd.

And he said that after he had been saved two weeks, he wondered at the slowness of omnipotence. Here he was, saved two weeks, and he wasn't in Africa. He wanted to go.

It was really beautiful. He said, I couldn't understand the slowness of omnipotence that I wasn't out in Africa since I was already saved for two weeks. So that's what the Lord has to put up with.

Some of us who are afraid to go and some of us who can't get there fast enough. Well, the ideal Christian life, I really believe it begins there. Of course, it begins with conversion, doesn't it? When we come and trust Christ for salvation.

But it goes on and then we come to that place in our lives when all of our secular ideals and standards go out the window and we say, Lord Jesus, here I am. Use me the way you want to use me. Is that the end? No, that's only the beginning.

You say, what is there after that? I want to make it as simple as possible. That crisis experience is then followed by a daily process. You mean, what do you mean by that? Well, I mean that it isn't enough just to do that once.

I come and I lay my body on the altar of sacrifice for the Lord on February 17th. February 18th, I look and the wretched thing has crawled off the altar. And I have to come tomorrow morning.

I have to come every day of my life and say, Lord Jesus, I rededicate my life to you for the next 24 hour period. And I do that. Can you do that? That's not too hard, is it? I said, I want to uncomplicate the Christian life.

I think this is it. This is it. This is where the rubber meets the road.

Get down on your knees. At the beginning of the day. And say, Lord Jesus, I turn my life over to you for the next 24 hour period.

Live your life through me. I want your will for my life this day. Not a week.

A day. Live in day-tight compartment. Right? Somebody said, life by the inch is a cinch.

Life by the yard is hard. God doesn't reveal the blueprint for a month ahead. Just live today.

And I think God wants us to do that. I think he wants me to come every morning of life and just turn my life over to him. Rededicate myself to him for that day.

I think the poet said it very well when she wrote, I want my life so cleared of self that my dear Lord may come and set up his own furnishings and make my heart his home. And since I know what this requires, each morning while it's still, I slip into that secret room and leave with him my will. He always takes it graciously, presenting me with his.

I'm ready then to meet the day and any task there is. And this is how my Lord controls my interest, my ill. Because we meet at break of day for an exchange of will.

Get it? Can you do that? You should do that. Do that tomorrow morning. Say, Lord Jesus, here I am.

I come and give you my will for today and I take your will for my life. I say sometimes I think we complicate it too much with some of our theological language. Talking about absolute surrender and total commitment and all that.

Is that all there is to it? No, that's not all there is to it. It's taken for granted that I'm going to spend time in the Word of God each day. It's taken for granted that I'm going to read the Word of God and study the Word of God and memorize the Word of God and obey the Word of God.

It's taken for granted that I'm going to spend time in prayer every day. It's how I'm going to keep close to the Lord. But then having done that, I go forth and carry on my work, whatever the work may be.

And any honorable work can be done to the glory of God. A person can be just as much in the will of God doing janitorial work in a building as he can be up here at this pulpit. And I believe that after I come into His presence and accept His will for that day and give Him my will for that day, I go forth and I do whatever my hand finds to do.

Any honorable work. Honorable work. I like that little motto that Mrs. Billy Graham has over her sink.

It says, Divine service is conducted here three times daily. She's got it. Can you wash dishes to the glory of God? Of course you can.

Divine service is conducted here three times daily. Now, people think, Oh, that's wonderful. Everything will be a mountaintop experience if I do this.

Everything will be moonlight and roses. Everything will be Gloria in excelsis. Everything will be cloud number nine.

No, no. Probably going to be routine, mundane, hard work. Probably.

That's the way my life has been. It's wonderful. I love it.

But I don't want to create the impression here that if you do this that there won't be any problems and that everything will glow. Not necessarily. Most of my life has been hard work.

Ofentimes lonely hours done to the glory of God. Routine. I often think of the Lord Jesus in Nazareth, in the carpenter shop till he was 30.

Making yolks. Not very glamorous, was it? Somebody has beautifully said that if Jesus, if there had been a son, he was there for those and he could have said to the father, Father, a world perishing and here I am making yolks. It's all part of the will of God for him, wasn't it? Then at the age of 30, God said, alright,

come forth now.

In three and a half years, he became the redeemer, the savior of the world. God knows what he's about. God trains, always runs on schedule.

Always do. All we have to do is our part. Turn over control to him and he'll take care of the rest.

I like to emphasize this. Do the work that your hands find to do. Somebody says, kill yourself with work, then pray yourself alive again.

That's it. Kill yourself with work, then pray yourself alive again. You say, what next? Well, and I think this is important.

Maybe it's one of the most important things that I'm going to say tonight. First of all, you have that crisis experience where the first time in your life, you say it from your heart, you turn your life over to the Lord for whatever he has. Morning by morning, you rededicate your life.

You come to him for an exchange of wills. You go forth and do whatever work you find to do, whatever your regular work is. You kill yourself with work and pray yourself alive again.

Then, and I think this is beautiful, then you accept whatever happens during the day as being the will of God for you. This has been so helpful to me. You set a flat tire out on the interstate.

Yes, a flat tire out on the interstate. Look, I committed my life to the Lord at the beginning of the day. I accept what comes during the day as part of his will for me.

Well, how can a flat tire be part of his will? Because there might be somebody that needs to hear the gospel that will hear it as a result of that flat tire. Some very extraordinary things happen in life. And at the time, it might be hard to see that it's the will of God.

But I believe it is. By faith, I accept what happens during, not my own stupidity. I don't accept that.

Not my own sin. I'm not talking about that. But whatever comes into my life during that day, I accept it as part of the will of God for my life.

You say, do you ever get discouraged? Well, let me just put it this way. I go along and sometimes it seems very routine. Sometimes it seems very humdrum.

Sometimes it seems very predictable. And you think, I think I'll give up. And just then, when you think that, the minute you think that, the Lord knows just how to drop a little handful of purpose.

He does. I found this too in life. He knows how to drop a little encouragement into your way.

You think, oh, I think I'll go along a little longer. That's the way it works. And yet having said that, let me tell you that if you live this life, God will give you indications along the way that you are walking in His will.

There'll be little signposts along the way that'll say, well, you're really walking in the center of my will. You say, what do you mean? Well, there's a sense in which the gears of life will mesh. Some days, you know, they don't.

When I'm walking in my own will, they don't mesh. But it's a wonderful thing to see the gears of life meshing. It's a wonderful thing to see things happening in life that wouldn't happen according to the laws of chance or probability.

Will those things happen in your life? You say, I'm still in touch with the Lord. It's a wonderful thing to see your service sparkling with the supernatural. And you do when you live this life.

Your service sparkles with the supernatural. It's not that you become conceited. It's that you stand back and say, it's the Lord.

Had to be the Lord. Couldn't have been me. Not only that, there'll be a sense in which you'll realize you're radioactive with the Holy Spirit of God.

Radioactive with the Holy Spirit of God. And you'll know that God is working in and through you. I'm going to tell the full story that I didn't tell this morning because of lack of time.

But some years ago, a young fellow who had been overseas with OM came to visit me in my apartment in Oak Park, Illinois. And he discussed a very difficult problem with me. His name was Greg Livingston.

And I said to him, Greg, you're leaving here and you're going to another city in the Midwest and there's an elder in that city who ought to know what you told me today. And I'm going to give you his name and address and when you go to that city, you go and talk to that elder. And then it was then that I said to Greg, Greg, what makes you tick anyway? I said, here you are, you have your graduate degree from Wheaton and you go and you throw your life away overseas with a bunch of nobodies.

What makes you tick anyway? And he knew I was just trying to draw him out. And that's when he said this, Mr. McDonald, I see that it's very hard to live a life of faith in the United States. You have to put yourself in a position where you have to trust God, where if God fails you, you're sunk.

And if you do that, there'll be a power in your life and when you touch other lives, something will happen for God. Well, Greg went on to this other city in the Midwest and then he went out to Los Angeles and he had two weeks of meetings in Los Angeles. And when he was out there, I got a letter from him and he said, Brother McDonald, he said, I went to that Midwestern city, he said, time just got away from me.

He said, I had conferences, I had appointments, he said, I had meetings and I didn't have a chance to go to see that elder. He said, God knows I was willing and God knows I'm still willing. But he said, I didn't have a chance to go to see him.

And then Greg got on a Greyhound bus to drive back, to go back to Midland Park, New Jersey. And when he got on that bus in Los Angeles, it was fairly empty, but you know, the bus stops along the way and takes on more and more passengers. And the bus started to fill up until they got to Riverside.

And when they got to Riverside, there was one empty seat on the bus, the seat beside Greg Livingston. So he bowed his head and said, Lord Jesus, lead on some young person that I can speak to you, speak to for you. And he lifted up his arm and an older man was getting on board.

And the older man came and of course sat right next to him. And Greg said, Lord, young or old, I have my duty to do you. So he began to speak to the man about the Lord.

And the man said to him, well that's a funny thing, you should speak to me about the Lord. He said, I happen to be a born again Christian. Greg said, yes you are.

He said, my name is Greg Livingston. The man said, my name is, he gave the name of that elder from the Midwest Assembly. You believe that? It happened.

It happened. How did that ever happen? Well that man has, that man and his wife have a daughter married in Phoenix, Arizona. And they wanted to visit her.

So they got a drive away car in the Midwest. And they drove to Phoenix. He dropped off his wife, but he had to deliver the car in Riverside, California.

So he drove on from Phoenix alone to Riverside, dropped off the car, delivered the car in Riverside, got on a Greyhound bus to come back to Phoenix and sat beside Greg Livingston. Now, when you think of the number of Greyhound buses in the United States, the number of stops they make, the number of seats on the bus, the number of days in the year and hours of the day, wasn't it a coincidence that that man sat next to Greg Livingston? Mr. McDonald, I see it very hard to live a life of faith in the United States. You have to put yourself in a position where you have to trust God, where if God fails you, you're sunk.

And if you do that, there will be a power in your life. And when you touch other lives, something will happen for God. God will arrange the seats on a Greyhound bus for you.

That's what I mean about your service sparkling with the supernatural, about your service being radioactive with the Holy Spirit of God. The wonderful thing is I talked about it to Greg Livingston a little while ago. I asked permission to use it in the book and he couldn't even remember it.

It didn't make him conceited at all. He couldn't even remember it. But that elder remembered it.

He said to me three months later, he said, Bill, nothing in my Christian life has ever spoken to me as loudly as that, that God is interested enough in us that he would bring us together on a Greyhound bus. He said those miles to Phoenix, Arizona were absolutely marvelous as we talked about the things of the Lord. You say, what next? What next? The plan of your life will emerge step by step, day by day.

And if the time comes when there's a crisis, when there's a crossroads and you have to make a decision, the Lord will never let you down to show you exactly what he wants you to do. Think about that. Come to the Lord at the beginning of the day.

Turn over your life to him for that day. Anybody can do this. It's just a matter of the will.

Exchange your will. Give him your will. Take his will.

Go about your daily task. Accept whatever happens. That's the spirit-filled life.

Accept whatever happens that day as being part of God's will for you. Be willing to endure. Be willing to be patient and to wait.

And the whole plan of your life will emerge step by step. That's the way God does it. When I was in the Navy, and I'm really going back a long time now, but when I was in the Navy, they had a terrible problem up in Alaska.

A lot of our planes would take off from a field and they'd get up airborne and then the fog would come in and just suck in the field. And the fog came to stay. And that poor pilot would be up there surfing around trying to land.

He couldn't land. And you know what they had to do? They had to fly around until their gasoline was gone, until their fuel was gone, and then just radio in goodbye and crash. That happened a lot.

And so the Navy had to work on that and they did work on it. And by the 1970s, they had devised a system where they could bring in a plane, like on an aircraft carrier, bring in a plane on an aircraft carrier. Imagine.

From the control tower, they would tell the pilot how to line up, you know, with the carrier. And they would tell him to come down at a certain angle. And you know what? They'd tell him then, take your hands off the control.

They'd turn it over to the computer. And the ship would be lurching, you know, and moving like this and this way. And the computer would move the plane in sync with the movement of the carrier so that at the moment of touchdown, if the carrier was this way, the plane would be that way too.

But the key was, when the man in the control tower said, take your hands off the control, the only time they ever had crashes was when the pilot didn't take his hands off the control. And I think that's what the Lord is saying to us, isn't he? Saying, take your hands off the control. Let me run your life.

I can do a better job of it than you can do. I believe that. Years ago when they were building one of the great bridges in New York, the architect was severely injured right at the very outset.

And during most of the time when the bridge was a building, the architect was in the hospital. But by the time the bridge was completed and the day of dedication had come, he was well enough and they were able to put him in a stretcher and they took him out and put him along the bank of the river there so he could see. And he brought his blueprints along and he unrolled the blueprints and he looked at the bridge and he said, it's just exactly according to plan.

I think the day is going to come when you and I are going to stand before the Lord and he's going to unroll the blueprint. Here's the blueprint and here's the way your life and my life work. Wouldn't it be nice if he could say, it's just according to plan.

That's what he wants. And we can do it. We can do it.

Just by this uncomplicated method of turning our lives over to him. Accepting whatever comes in our lives and renewing that vow day by day. We're going to bow our heads and after we pray, Troy is going to come and lead us in a closing hymn.

But as we bow our heads, I'm going to suggest a little prayer that maybe says what we said tonight. And if you feel you can, you make this prayer your own. The way you make it your own, you can express it by saying, Amen at the end.

So we pray, Lord Jesus, I have already turned my life over to you for salvation. Now I turn it over to you for service. I give up all my own plans and ambitions and accept your will for my life.

This means anywhere, anytime, anything. I give you my soul, my life, my all. You have bled and died for me.

Henceforth, I will live for thee, O Christ. Thy bleeding hands and feet, thy sacrifice for me. Each wound, each tear demands my life, a sacrifice for me.

How can I do less than give thee my best and live for you completely after all you've done for me? Father, we just commend this simple message to you. We pray that we might make it real in our lives. We pray, Lord, that each one of us, day by day, might come before you and make a complete rededication of our lives to you and see you working out that wonderful will, good, acceptable, and perfect will in our lives.

We ask it in Jesus' name and for his glory. Amen. Thank you, Hembrooks, and turn with me to number 385, please.

Number 385, the third verse. Oh, we never can know what the Lord will bestow of the blessings for which we have prayed till our body and soul He doth fully control and our all on the altar is laid. Who can tell all the love He will send from above and how happy our hearts will be made of the fellowship sweet we will share at His feet when our all on the altar is laid.

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