

ONE

LIFE

you only live once

“You only live once...”

How should we respond to the truth that we only get one shot at life?

One approach is hedonism. You only live once, therefore maximise selfish pleasure and sensual experience. Frank Sinatra, who seemed to have given this approach a good go, famously said: *“You only live once, and the way I live, once is enough.”*

OK. We all know that’s not the answer the minister is after. God is anti-pleasure and “anti” any kind of experience that might amount to fun, right? Actually, when faced with a world of hedonistic sinners, God’s response was not to just demand a path of ascetic self-denial.

So, what does God’s Word say about the typical hedonistic “YOLO” lifestyle?

It’s never really fulfilling

The author of Ecclesiastes (probably King Solomon) was someone who, as the saying goes, “sucked the marrow out of life”: *“I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house...I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well—the delights of the heart of man...I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure....”*

Yet after all this he concludes: *“when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.”* (Ecclesiastes 2:4–11 NIV)

It’s just stupid to deny God’s hold on your life.

Jesus told a parable about a greedy farmer who, after a very successful season in life, said to himself: *“You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”* (Luke 12:19). But that very night (v20), the God who gave him his life in the first place “demands it back”, and calls him a “fool” for ignoring his mortality and accountability to Him.

In another parable (Matt 25:14-30) Jesus tells of a Master who, before departing on a long journey, entrusts “talents” (a form of currency) to three different servants. When he returns he finds that the first two servants have worked and invested and risked and, ultimately, grown his wealth. They are commended as “good and faithful” servants and rewarded with even more. But the third servant who did nothing to grow the Master’s wealth is called “wicked and slothful” and condemned to hell!

Those passages paint a pretty bleak picture! If we get this wrong, we face the prospect of reaching the end of our one life in complete disillusionment (like the guy in Ecclesiastes).

Worse than that, we face the prospect of reaching the next life faced with a God who condemns us as foolish and/or wicked! (like the guys in the parables).

What's the solution?

The first thing is to realise just how much our loving and gracious God has done to help people avoid making these very mistakes. He has *"set eternity in the hearts of people"* (Eccl 3:11) so that we all intrinsically know and feel that there is more to life than just the material.

He also raised his Son from the dead, giving him a glorious, eternal resurrection body so that we can know for sure that this world is **not** all there is. The Apostle Paul says: *"If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'*" (1 Cor 15:32). If it weren't for the resurrection of Jesus, the typical "YOLO" way of life would actually make perfect sense. But Jesus' resurrection proved there is more than just the one life on this side of the grave. He opened the way to eternal life for us all. We can know that, in Christ, the next million, billion, trillion years are secure. That puts a different perspective on how we spend the next thirty, forty, fifty.

The second thing is to take a closer look at those parables and realise that the best way to live life **now**, is in a living, active relationship with this loving and gracious God.

- The greedy farmer's fundamental mistake was that he was *"not rich toward God"* during his life (Luke 12:21).
- The "wicked" third servant had the kind of detached fear of his Master which paralysed him into a life of no risk and no effort: *"'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'*" (Matt 25:24-25). He was more concerned about living a safe life than growing his Master's glory.

But our Master sent his one and only Son into this world so that selfish hedonists, like you and me, can be forgiven. In that context of love and security he calls on us to live lives for the growth of his glory. This will mean risk and sacrifice and stress and suffering...but, ultimately: great purpose, real fulfillment and eternal reward.

Over the coming six weeks in our "One Life" series, we'll be exploring in more detail what it looks like to live this one life for the glory of God. The studies in this book will help us all go deeper into God's Word – discussing it and applying it so that, by the Holy Spirit we are transformed into the likeness of Jesus....the man who lived the perfect one life.

Murray Anderson

Study 1 – One Life: Don't waste it (1 Peter 1:1, 17; 2:11-12)

Discuss... If we only live once...

What does a wasted life look like?



Investigate

Read 1 Peter 1:1-4, 13-17; 2:11-12...

1. Notice, Christians are called "*strangers and aliens*" in this world...
 - Why are they described like Abraham (Gen. 23:4) and the Exiles (Neh. 1:9; Psalm 147:2; Jer. 29:4-15)? (cf. **Heb. 11:13**)
 - Why do they have this new identity? (1:1-3)
 - Where is their real home? (1:4; cf. 5:4, 10; 2 Pet. 3:13)
 - How should they understand their lives now?
2. Look at 1:13-17 and 2:11-12... How should their new identity and destiny impact how they live now?
3. How is Jesus' life the ultimate example of living as a stranger/exile in this world? (cf. 2:21-23; 4:1-2)



Think

There are a number of places elsewhere in the Bible where we are warned against wasting the life that God has given...

1. How does Jesus warn us not to waste our lives now?

- Look at Matthew 6:19-21, 33
 - Matthew 25:14-30
2. You notice the focus on living “good lives” in this present world as strangers (2:11-12). Read this excerpt of C.S. Lewis on “Hope” and discuss why setting our hope on heaven motivates living a good life now...

“If you read history you will find that the Christian who did the most for the present world were those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle-Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this” - (C.S. Lewis)



Apply

“How worthy is heaven that your life should be wholly spent as a journey towards it – to what better purpose can you spend your life? How can you better use your strength, use your means, and spend your days, than in travelling the road that leads to the everlasting enjoyment of God?” – Jonathan Edwards

1. According to the Bible, what should be the main priority of your life?
2. What are some of the dangers (false hopes) that might draw your focus away from your true identity and hope in Jesus?
3. How does this pilgrim life to heaven change...
 - a) How you view your present life in the Deep South?
 - b) The use of your temporary resources (time, strength, wealth, location)?
 - c) What are some of the things which tend to distract you from this?

Study 2 – One Life: Multiply it (1 Peter 2:9-12; 3:13-16)

Discuss... If we only have one life...

Why call other people to live for Jesus as well? (multiply yourself)



Investigate

Read 1 Peter 2:9-12...

1. How does Peter describe their new identity in Jesus (v. 9)?
2. Why did God give them this new identity (v. 9)? What is their purpose or mission? (cf. vv. 11-12 as well)
3. Why will they want to live out this mission or purpose (vv. 9-10)? What did they experience (cf. 1:2; 2 Cor. 4:6)?
4. Apart from declaring, how should they live out their Christian witness? (vv. 11-12)

Read 1 Peter 3:13-16...

1. When they fulfill witness about Jesus, what should they expect (vv. 9, 13-14, 16-17; cf. 2:20)?
 - How does this correspond to Jesus? (cf. 2:21-23)
2. Why should we not be intimidated by this (v. 14)? (cf. 3:9, 12)
3. How should they witness about their hope in Jesus to unbelievers (vv. 15-16)?



Think

There are so many places elsewhere in the Bible where we are called to “multiply ourselves”: reach new people to become worshipers of Jesus Christ...

1. How does Jesus words in Matthew 5:13-16 affirm this?
2. How does Jesus’ commission in Matthew 28:18-20 affirm this?



Apply

“The glory of God, and, as our only means to glorifying him, the salvation of souls, is the real business of life” – C.S. Lewis

1. What do you find intimidating about sharing your Faith in Jesus?
2. How does our identity and future hope in Christ nullify your fears?
3. How are you actively witnessing to the glory of God in Jesus (multiplying yourself: reaching more to become worshipers of Jesus)?
 - By how you live?
 - Having intentional conversations (ever been asked or started a conversation about your faith? How does this passage help you?)
 - Be alert to opportunities to invite people to a) Sundays, b) Youth, c) LIFE etc. (share examples in how you have done this)

On the 27th of October Jon Morrison will be doing an evangelism workshop. It will be a light breakfast with training on evangelism, followed by doing street evangelism with a summer series survey for next year. If you are interested, please contact Jon Morrison at the Office or email (jon@stpetersfishhoek.org.za)

Study 3 – One Life: Transform it (1 Peter 1:13-2:3)

Discuss... Have you experienced this? Share with one another...

“The Bible is a remarkable fountain: the more one draws and drinks of it, the more it stimulates thirst” – Martin Luther (16th Century)



Investigate

Read 1 Peter 1:13-2:3...

Considering what God has done for them (choosing them, sanctifying them and redeeming them unto a new life and hope: 1:2-12); they are called to live for that hope alone (1:13)...

1. Look at 1:13-2:3, see how and why they need to transform their lives...

How should their lives transform?	Why should their lives transform?
1:13-15 (cf. 4:2-3)	1:17-21
1:22 & 2:1	1:23-25
2:2	2:3



Think

There are many places elsewhere in the Bible where we are called to transform our lives:

1. How does Peter’s command to become like God (holy) correspond with Romans 8:28-29?
2. How does Peter’s command to grow in your salvation by craving God’s Word (spiritual milk) correspond with 2 Timothy 3:16-17?

3. According to 2 Cor. 3:18, what happens when we expose ourselves to God's Word by the Spirit?



Apply

“People do not drift toward Holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated.” – D.A. Carson

1. How should the cost of Jesus' sacrifice motivate our pursuit of being like our Father?
2. How should the empowerment of the new life of the Spirit motivate our pursuit of being like our Father?
3. Given the above 2 points...what are some areas in your life which you know need to be transformed?

God has revealed His holiness and love through His Word (the Bible)...

- In what ways can you continue to grow in your experience of God's goodness and transform? (think individually and as a church family)
- Do you dedicate time daily to know God through His Word? If yes, share how you do it. If no, consider how you can begin to do so
- Has anyone in the group possibly used the **readscripture.org** app? If so, share how you have experienced using it in your personal Bible reading.
- Do you possibly read Christian Books to help in your understanding of the Bible? Share how this has helped (maybe even mention a particular book) (Remember once a month we will have the **CBD Bookable**. There is also **christianaudio.com** for those who commute)

Try and dedicate enough time every day for personal Bible reading and prayer (spending time with God your Father), and make being with God's people (Sundays and weekdays) a priority. When we get back together in January, share with one another how you have grown and transformed in your Faith and Life.

Study 4 – One Life: Sacrifice and Share it (1 Peter 4:7-11)

What do you think? If we only have one life...

Do all Christians have gifts (abilities for service)? If so, why did God give them?



Investigate

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11...

1. What does the Apostle Peter want God's people to always keep in mind? (v. 7)
 - What does this phrase refer to? (cf. James 5:7-8)
2. What follows is a series of commands that relate to "the end"... (vv. 7-11)
 - How should they respond to "the end" (v. 7; cf. 1:13)
 - How should they relate to one another? Why is this essential? (v. 8, cf. 1 Cor. 13:4-7)
 - How will that impact how they use their possessions? (v. 9).
3. From the general, Peter moves to the more specific in vv. 10-11...
 - How should we understand "gifts" generally? (v. 10)
 - What two broad categories of gifts does Peter highlight in v. 11?
 - What is the purpose (end) of all this? Why does God want us to do this (vv. 11b)



Think

There are many places elsewhere in the Bible where we are called to serve:

1. How does Romans 12:1-13 & 13:11-14 agree with 1 Peter 4:7-11 regarding how the “end”, “love” and God’s “glory” should impact life now?
2. How has “hospitality” been used in the advance of the Gospel? How was Paul & others able to do missions and plant churches (cf. Acts 16:15; Romans 16:3-5)?



Apply

“The imminence of the end should function as a stimulus to action in this world. The knowledge that believers are sojourners and exiles, whose time is short, should galvanize them to make their lives count now” – T.R. Schreiner

1. Speaking gifts all relate to God’s Word (cf. Eph. 4:11-12)...
 - Have you ever considered taking up a speaking position in a) Youth, b) Sunday School or c) Fellowship Groups? If so, are you willing to be trained & assessed in these areas?
 - How does this passage challenged you to strongly consider this?
2. Practical ministry gifts can be giving meals (Acts 6:2), visiting people (2 Tim. 1:18), financial support (Romans 15:25; 2 Cor. 8:19-20) or just general service in whatever way (Heb. 6:10)...
 - What practical skills has God gifted you? How are you using it for the building up of believers and the extension of His Kingdom?
 - How are you using what God has given you to advance the Gospel? (Home, Time, Health, Possessions, Money etc.)
 - How has this passage challenged you to use what God has gifted you with?

Study 5 – One Life: Enjoy it (1 Peter 1:3-9; 4:13)

If we only have this one life...

How can we find joy in it when there is so much suffering?



Investigate

Read 1 Peter 1:3-9...

1. What has God the Father done for us in Jesus? (vv. 3-5)
2. How has this “hope” impacted the churches Peter was writing to? (v. 6)
3. Why are they suffering or experiencing trials? (v. 7) (cf. 4:13)
4. What is the result of the genuineness of their faith in Christ? (vv.7, 8-9)



Think

There are a number of places elsewhere in the Bible where we are called to rejoice in God in this one life...

1. How do the words of Peter correspond to Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:11-12? (cf. Acts 5:41)
2. How does our passage correspond with Romans 8:11, 16-18?



Apply

Read these quotes and discuss them with the questions below...

"This seems a cheerful world, Donatus, when I view it from this fair garden, under the shadow of these vines. But if I climbed some great mountain and looked out over the wide lands, you know very well what I would see - brigands on the high roads, pirates on the seas; in the amphitheaters men murdered to please applauding crowds; under all roofs misery and selfishness. It is really a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world. Yet in the midst of it I have found a quiet and holy people. They have discovered a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasures of this sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They have overcome the world. These people, Donatus, are the Christians -- and I am one of them". - Cyprian's letter to Donatus (3rd Century)

"God is the fuel that our souls were designed to run on. So the greater the submission to the true King, the greater the pleasure. Rather than thinking of ourselves as an embattled political minority or persecuted underdogs, Christians should be so overflowing with the joy of our salvation that we feel the privilege of singing his praises to those who do not know him." Timothy Keller (21st Century)

1. In the light of 1 Peter, why can both Cyprian and Timothy Keller write this?
2. How do these passages counter the modern idea that joy is only found in pursuing pleasure and experiencing personal freedom?
3. Where is joy truly found in this One Life?
4. How are you cultivating a deeper joy in and love for Jesus? What means has God given us to find joy in Him?

