

The Way to Life

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[0 : 00] Do you want to live a life of victory, of triumph, of success? Do you want to succeed in your job, in your personal goals?

Do you want your life to radiate success so you can say, I am victorious. I have triumphed over adversity. It sounds a bit much.

It sounds kind of like I'm selling vitamins or life coaching. But there's something to it, isn't there? Maybe your heart skipped a beat.

Yes, I do want that. We all want to be successful. We want to see victories. We want to see triumph in our lives. Surely we all want these things.

We want the things that we turn our hands to to succeed. We want to work hard and we want to win. We want to beat the opposition at work. We want to win the new client. We want to get the promotion.

[1 : 04] Imagine that feeling of success when all of your debts are paid off. Can you imagine that feeling? That feeling of sweet victory when we win and someone else is defeated.

That feeling of a pat on the back that says you are worthwhile. What you are doing is valuable. Maybe you're not like that personally.

Maybe you are seeking a successful and triumphant life through other means. Maybe it's through kids. Maybe it's through a sports team. You know, many of our kids get pushed to succeed because we never did as children.

And so we encourage them to study harder, practice, become successful so I can bask in your success. Maybe it's the sports team. We feel like life is worthwhile when our team triumphs. My team beat your team. And so therefore I feel better about myself. My favorite contestant on My Kitchen Rules beat your favorite contestant on My Kitchen Rules.

[2 : 11] And therefore I am more successful than you. Life can be tough. But these little victories, these triumphs, these moments, whether it's our kids or My Kitchen Rules or our sports team, they give us a short-term boost of value.

But then worry, stress, anxiety sets in again. Our emotions go up and down based on external things.

One week the sports team wins and we're feeling great. Then they lose and we're down in the dumps. Life has no meaning. Is it possible that we are chasing victory and triumph in the wrong places?

Are we seeking triumph in things that don't last and don't matter? Not that long ago, my emotions would regularly go up and down based upon the success of a sports team.

I love cricket. I'm sorry if you don't love cricket. And I've now come to realize that, mainly because our cricket team is very bad, it's helped me realize that I can't place all of my hope and trust in that cricket team.

[3 : 29] For many of us, we follow God. But we add to Christianity a desire for success in our lives to bring us joy and happiness.

Yes, Jesus defeated death and sin, but while I'm waiting for Him to return, I need other victories to ease the pain of anxiety and loss and failures.

Today, as Steve has mentioned, we're starting a new series on the triumphant life. This is not going to be nine weeks on how to live your best life now. But it's a series that's going to take us through Easter, the death of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, as we see Him triumph over death and sin, as He offers us His victory.

We'll see what this triumphant life that Jesus has to offer us is. And we come depending on Him. Now, we're going to be spending the next nine weeks, as I mentioned, looking at Jesus' last

moments.

And as we start this week, we're in chapter 14, in the middle of the book of John. Strange place to start, but it does make sense for us. Jesus is meeting with His disciples just before He is crucified. [4 : 53] And He warns them that He's just about to leave. Not only that, but He tells His disciples, one of you is going to betray me. And so He sends out Judas Iscariot to go and betray Him.

Now, with Judas gone, Jesus, with His disciples, in the moments before He's crucified, sits with them, and they are concerned. They are worried.

They're worried about their future, what's going to happen. And so Peter asks, Lord, where are you going? Jesus responds, you can't follow me, but you will later.

But Peter, he's indignant. No, no, no. I'm going to go wherever you go. And so this leads Jesus to calm their worries, their fears, and their troubled hearts.

So we're going to be in John chapter 14. Please have your Bibles open. Have the Bible app open on your phone. It will be on the screen as well. We're going to start in chapter 14, verse 1.

[5 : 53] Jesus said, Do not let your hearts be troubled. Now, at first, this might seem like an offhanded thing to say.

Just calm down. You're going crazy. Everything is fine. Because I know that never works when I try and say that to anyone. But Jesus says, Do not let your hearts be troubled.

And then He unpacks it. Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in Me. Believe in God. And believe in Me.

God and Me, we're doing the same work. And Jesus goes on to describe what being with the Father, what their future with Jesus will look like.

It's like a house that has many rooms. And so Jesus is going to say, Don't be troubled. I have a place for you. He's going to prepare a place for these disciples.

[6 : 49] It's not that Jesus has to go and do what I would do if I was preparing a place for you, which would be to clean things. Jesus isn't going to sweep out the house. He's not going to turn down the beds, place a chocolate on the pillow.

Jesus has to make a way open to the house. Jesus is going so that the Father's house is open. And it's the Father's house.

He's going to depart so that we can be in God's house as a father. It's not that we're going to God's house as slaves, living in the tiny bedroom off to the side.

It's not the slaves' quarters. But this is the Father's house as His children. And it's likely here that Jesus is using palace imagery.

It's a description that conjures up images of rulers at the time who their houses were built, and then they would have many extensions. They would have a son grow up, and then the son would add rooms to the father's house.

[7 : 52] And then a son would add other rooms, and then other rooms, and the house would just grow and spread out. But it was all connected to one central room. This image that Jesus is using, it's a deeply family-oriented image.

It's a heavenly one that Jesus uses, one that surpasses even the rulers' palaces. It's one of close community, of everyone having relationship and close connection with God, the Father Himself.

And then Jesus shifts the language a little bit in verse 3. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am.

It's no longer a house. It's, I'm going to take you to be with me. It goes from being a location to a relationship. It's not just about heaven as a place, but it's a relationship with Jesus Himself.

Jesus says to the disciples, you're worried because I'm leaving, but don't let your hearts be troubled. I've got a place prepared for you. And it's close to God Himself.

[9 : 08] Now, this passage from John 14 is one of the most common passages read at funerals. I've spoken on this passage a number of times. It's likely that you've heard this.

And it's because it speaks to our very souls. A loved one has departed, and our hearts are troubled. This passage doesn't take away the pain or loss of a loved one, but it focuses our hope.

It takes all the worry that we have and places it in the hands of Jesus. It's a wonderful reminder of what Jesus' death and resurrection has done. He has made it so that we can be in the Father's house.

It's a comfort, even though Jesus is about to depart, that there is an eternal home with God. Now, while we are still living, our homes, our houses, are often a big stressor in Sydney.

I'm sure I could do a quick poll of this room, and it would be a stressor for, you know, 90%. The stats say that it is one of the biggest stressors.

[10:21] Where am I going to live? Can I pay the rent to be in the right suburb that I want? Because that's the school, that's in the catchment for the school I want to send my kids to. And if you manage to buy a house, well, there's mortgage stress.

Interest rates are low at the moment, but who knows what's going to happen in the future. Having a triumphant and victorious life is so often based on external things. How many bedrooms does our house have?

How many bathrooms? What's the square footage of your house? And it's even easy for Christians to buy into that view of success. I'm valuable.

I'm successful because I live in a house in the right suburb. I'll be valuable and I'll be successful when I buy that house, when I can live there. But the reality for all those who follow Jesus is it's that our victory, our triumph, isn't found in our location or the amount of bricks that we own stacked on each other, but in who owns the house.

We are valuable not because of the things we own, but because of the price that Jesus has paid. So we could come to the Father's house.

[11:40] This is not anything that we can boast in, but the location of the best home is given to us. But the disciples were still troubled.

Thomas asks in verse 5, Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way? He's likely worried that Jesus was departing to a place that he didn't have a map for.

He needed a location so he could plug it into his Google Maps so that he could... You know, it's not a location. You can't search for my Father's house in the app.

It doesn't come up. He doesn't know where Jesus is going, and so he doesn't know the way. And so Jesus replies, verse 6, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. Jesus himself is the way to God. And he is the truth of God.

[12:41] He's the truth of God because he reveals what Jesus is like. He does only what God tells him to do. He is God made flesh.

And he's life. He has life in himself. And it's only because Jesus is both the truth of God, God made flesh, and the life of God, that he can be the way to God.

And this means that he's the only way to the Father. We can often be tempted to think that all religions are the same, they all have value, but it cannot be true that all paths lead to God.

And we can often think, look, as long as you believe in something, that is fine, it is good that you just believe in something, but Jesus is clear. There is only one way to the Father, and that's him, it's Jesus.

Jesus. Again, if we took another poll, but not inside the church, if we went outside the church and took a poll, do you believe in God? The majority of people would say, yes, I believe in God of some kind.

[13:54] But if we asked, do you believe in Jesus, the stats would be much lower. For Jesus, he is the only way to God.

He is not just one amidst a number, he is the only way to God. Because God is not just some vague, mystical spirit. Jesus is God made flesh.

He is the unknowable made known. And so Jesus says, don't let your hearts be troubled. You don't know where you're going, that's okay, because you know me, and I am the way that you are going. Jesus is about to go and be crucified, to purchase our forgiveness and become the way to the Father, to make the way open, but he also makes it certain.

So don't let your hearts be troubled, believe in me, because I am the only way to the Father. So often, I see articles on the internet, on websites like BuzzFeed, I don't know if you know of BuzzFeed, but they often have headlines like, 10 steps to a healthier life.

[15:06] You know, you won't believe step six. You know, four tricks to crush your life goals. Have you seen these kinds of things? Have you clicked on them and gone, I kind of have to see what step six is now, you know, you really hooked me in.

I love these things. Maybe you do too, because they make, they make anything seem possible. You know, 10 steps to get to the moon. Do you know what, it's only 10 simple steps.

Just because number nine is getting a rocket, you know, it makes anything seem possible. But the way to the Father is far more than that.

It is every step in a life of total obedience. It is millions and millions of steps. And that's what Jesus offers.

He took every step in perfect obedience to God. And he says, I have won that victory. I have that triumph. I have that goal, that life of total obedience and I offer it to you.

[16:12] But it's not even five steps for us. It is just one step. Don't let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God.

Believe also in me because I am the way. It's not as catchy a headline as 10 steps to whatever it is. But that is our guide to living the triumphant life.

That is the one step. Believing in Jesus. Believing in God because he is the way. The disciples are still wrestling with this.

They're still trying to understand what it means that Jesus is going and they're not going to know where he's going. And so now it's Philip's turn to ask a question. Look, just show us the Father. It will be so much easier if you just show us God. We won't worry, just show us God. And so Jesus responds, maybe out of frustration, maybe out of surprise that they're still asking this.

[17:15] And so have a look with me at verse 9. Jesus answered, Don't you know me, Philip? Even after I have been with you for such a long time, anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

Don't be troubled, you have seen God. You've seen me. You just haven't recognized me. The disciples don't fully understand and grasp yet that Jesus is God himself.

Jesus says, I'm in him. I do his work. He's in me. Don't you believe that? Now this, to me, is still the most startling part in the whole Bible.

The whole Bible. That the man who goes and dies on the cross is himself God. And he is the one who reveals that God is the Father and he loves us and cares for us.

Jesus is not just a man. He cannot just be an agent of God, someone sent by God. He is definitively God himself.

[18:31] And so Jesus says, Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in me because you have, if you've seen me, you've seen God. And the disciples, they would come to understand this later, after his resurrection.

They would come to realize how complete and how wonderful Jesus' triumph was. Now you might be thinking, well this is great. These comforts are wonderful.

I love that my eternal destination is so certain that I have a home with God and that Jesus is God himself. This is great. This is lovely. But it's so far away waiting for Jesus.

It's good that the future home is guaranteed. The way to Jesus is not my own strength. It's not the steps that I do. It's Jesus' strength. But do you know what? My life is in turmoil now.

I'm struggling with addictions. I'm chasing the wrong victories. I don't know what's best for my life. I don't know what's best for my kids, my job, my career. My health is failing.

[19:40] I can't stand my job. I'm lonely. It would just be so much easier if Jesus came back now. What does Jesus do for troubled hearts now?

What is Jesus going to do for his disciples because he was about to leave them? Jesus says, don't be troubled. I'm going to send someone.

verse 16. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever.

The spirit of truth. I'm going to send you the advocate. Now, I don't, I'm not in the legal world if you hadn't noticed. Advocate is a legal word and I wasn't really across it so I contacted a lawyer this week because advocate is a legal term and my special lawyer friend told me what an advocate is in legal terms.

Let me read. An advocate is someone who acts on behalf of another to protect and or advance their interests and includes notions of being a mouthpiece for someone in assisting, defending or pleading their case in a court of law, representing someone who is weaker or in a vulnerable position, representing someone who is not able to adequately or effectively speak on behalf of themselves.

[21:07] Generally speaking, if someone was not in a vulnerable, weaker position or had an ability to effectively speak for themselves, they would not really require an advocate.

But as the majority of the public do not understand the intricacies of the law or possess the skill to articulate their case in the context of the law, they require an advocate.

You can see why this is such a helpful word for us to understand the work of the Holy Spirit. He's going to speak on your behalf.

He's the Spirit of truth and He will reveal truth to you. He understands the situation when you don't and He makes us see the truth.

Disciples, you want to see God? God, the Spirit of truth will help you realize that you have seen Him. These disciples and us, we are in a weak and vulnerable position.

[22 : 09] Jesus is going. It seems that it's going to be even worse, but the Holy Spirit will stand with them. We do not understand the intricacies of God.

The Spirit does. And He reveals God to us. The disciples were troubled that Jesus was leaving, but they wouldn't be alone.

Verse 18, I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me.

Because I live, you also will live. You won't be alone. I will be with you in spirit. This is an amazing comfort.

Not only that, but the Holy Spirit was going to bring them into this relationship with God. It's the love of God. Verse 21, whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.

[23 : 10] The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them. You will be brought into my family, into the unique love of God that he has for his son and the spirit, that unique triune love that God has, he is going to share that with all of us.

It's being adopted into a new family with the same comforts, the same language of love. My father-in-law works for Qantas.

Alyssa and her siblings used to be able to get, I believe, if this is correct, my darling wife, used to be able to get discounted travel. Free flights, even better, but not anymore.

She took the slight step down of not being able to get free flights to become a Barnett. Amen? No, that's fine. She left the family that could get free flights, left those privileges.

Now I get to be in that family too, but there are privileges to families. The disciples here get invited into the close personal love that God had in the Trinity.

[24 : 31] The father loved the son, the son loved the spirit, they each loved each other perfectly. It's an awesome love. And this love gets spread out and invited for all who would believe and not have their hearts troubled.

The disciples were anxious and worried that Jesus was leaving. They didn't know where he was going, they didn't know how to follow him, and they wanted some glimpse of God, and Jesus said, don't be troubled.

Don't have a heart of fear. I might be going, but it is for your benefit. It will be so much better if I leave, because the Holy Spirit is coming so that you can understand the truth that I am God.

I am going to prepare a place for you to secure your home. I am sending someone to guide you and walk with you, walk beside you. You will not be alone.

The disciples, they were in a really unique place where they knew Jesus face to face, but they would have something better. For us, it is a different kind of worry than Jesus leaving.

[25 : 50] We are still anxious, we are still worried and troubled in our hearts. We are not sure when Jesus is going to come back. And we are anxious and worried about life as we wait.

There is sickness, we still need to work, we still need to raise kids, we still need to study hard, we are still worried about housing. It is Sydney after all. Jesus speaks to us and says the comfort is the same for us now.

Jesus has gone, he has prepared a place and he is waiting to bring us to him. Paul reflects on this in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, he says, thanks be to God, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus gives us the victory, he offers us his triumph. He speaks to us and says, I offer you a triumphant life, not because you've earned it, not because you deserve it, not because it's some short-term triumph that will last for a moment and be gone, but it is the best triumph, the best victory.

Jesus has won the battle over death and sin into the love of God and he offers us God's spirit which will guide us and be with us now and he offers this to us.

[27 : 20] Imagine an Olympian, can someone give me a really hard Olympic field? Anybody got an idea? Water polo. Okay, we're going to go with water polo.

Anybody think of something harder than water polo? I think drowning would be pretty tough in water polo personally. Let's imagine water polo. This person has trained all of their life to become the best and their goal is to win the Olympics.

Day and night they've thought about nothing else. They've sacrificed everything and they have become the very best. They're an expert in water polo.

And finally the Olympics come and the four year cycle comes around we're all watching it at 3am in the morning wherever it is and this person finally wins.

They win gold. Here we go I've got a gold medal here. It's not Olympic gold medal don't worry I didn't earn this. And they're about to take the step up onto the podium to win the gold medal that they have rightly earned.

[28 : 33] They have worked hard for. And instead they step down off the podium and they walk over and offer it to you.

I'm just going to place it right there. There you go. Good job Adam. You worked hard for that. This doesn't make any sense. I cannot imagine any Olympian doing that.

Stepping down the thing that they have fought for and worked for and sacrificed everything for. To not step up onto the podium but actually to step down and invite somebody else to take the prize and to get the victory and to go off and have the victory lap.

That doesn't make any sense. That would not happen. And yet this is what Jesus has done for us. His triumph was not won for him alone.

We are his prize. The victory is for us. And he hands us this prize. We can shun the efforts on the cross.

[29 : 38] We can chase our own triumphs that will never satisfy. We can live in ignorance of the prize that Jesus has won for us on the cross.

Or we can live now with a triumphant life won for us by Jesus. Let me pray. Heavenly Father, we chase short-lived selfish victories that are truly not wins.

Lord, we are in awe of the victory that Jesus has won, that he has followed every step in a life of obedience to you.

Lord, it does not make sense to us that he would offer us this victory and triumph, but we thank you so much that you have given us this gift, this place in your home with this triumph.

Lord, help us not to chase things that do not satisfy. Help us to fix our eyes on the goal of being with you.

[30 : 55] And Father, we thank you that as we wait, as we live here on this earth, thank you that you have filled us with your spirit, that you offer us the advocate, not just to comfort us, but so that we can know you, that we can have Jesus revealed.

And we pray all this in your son's name for your glory. Amen.