

# Lesson 7

## The Abundant Life

One of the criticisms of Christianity is that the focus is on the future which is why we sing “in the sweet by and by” and “I have a mansion just over the hilltop...and some day yonder”. Does Christianity have anything for the here and now? In the Gospel of **John 10:10** we read, “...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” This speaks to not only eternal life in the future but this life we now live.

### THE NATURE OF MAN

Humankind was created in the image of God. As such we are created in three parts, spirit, soul and body (**I Thessalonians 5:23**). Therefore, when we speak to how the Gospel is the answer for the whole person, we are speaking to how this abundant life gives the answer for all three parts i.e. Spirit, Soul, and Body.

### OUR SPIRIT

We have a human spirit which is where we communicate with God, it is our God consciousness. This was referred to in our first lesson, “**That was the light which gives light to every man coming into the world.**” (**John 1:9**). The problem with the human spirit is that it is dead (separated from God) in trespasses and sins (**Ephesians 2:1**). This is why in Romans 1 where we read of how God has manifest Himself in man, still man has not glorified God but rather has worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator (**Romans 1:21-25**). This then creates a void inside of all people which sends them looking for something spiritual to fill that void.

Here is where the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ has the answer as He said, “**Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**” (**Matthew 11:28-29**). It is only through faith in Christ that we find fulfillment for that void. In the Bible it refers to being born again and being made alive in Christ.

In John 3 our Lord taught the Pharisee Nicodemus that just as a man is born the first time physically, he must now be born again spiritually, “**That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**” (**John 3:6**).

In **Ephesians 2:5** we read, “**even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),**” Before faith in Christ our spirit was separated from God but now as a result of faith in Christ His Spirit has come to live within us, “**...He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you....The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,**” (**Romans 8:11,16**).

This gives us the connection with God that was missing before. Even more than that this is an intimate relationship with the almighty God. We are born into the family of God and are His children. Even more than that we are called the sons of God which is a position of responsibility, just as a son is expected to carry out the family business (**Romans 8:14-17**). This relationship provides us with access to the Father (**Romans 5:1-2**) and gives purpose and meaning to our lives (**Philippians 3:13-14**).

## OUR SOUL

The simplest way to look at what we mean by the soul is that it is the person inside the body. It is that which sees out of the eyes, hears out of the ears, smells out of the nose, taste with the mouth and feels with the hands. There are those who argue that these are all functions of the human brain and therefore can be controlled by manipulating the brain with medication etc. It is true that the body and the soul are interconnected as well as the spirit. However feelings, emotions and personality go beyond just brain waves. We have been created in the image of God and as such we are a being inside of our body that is much more complex than any other of God's creation.

Psychology is the study of the psych or more simply put of the mental functions and behaviors of people. One of the problems of this field of study is that no two people are the same. The way in which this kind of study is done is to experiment with a group of people to see how they will respond, then try to determine what is usual or ordinary. The problem is that the same group of people may react different each time to the same stimulus. We as human beings cannot be depended upon to act the same way under the same conditions and we certainly cannot be expected to act the same way as a group of other people. So we are constantly left with the question of what is usual or ordinary. So how can Christianity offer a solution to the many complex and varied problems that people have within their soul.

Just as our Spirit craves for a relationship with God so our Soul longs for consistency, for something we can depend upon in the midst of everything and everyone that is constantly changing. We long for an anchor that we can

have to keep us in place emotionally. The Bible responds to this need with an anchor of the soul, **“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil” (Hebrews 6:19)**. When we discover that no one can be trusted, we learn that God never changes and never lies. Relationships fail us, circumstances created by others or by our poor choices can cause us frustration and despair but there is one who sticks closer than a brother **(Proverbs 18:24)**.

The Church, as defined in the Bible, is a place of community, family and friends which meets the basic need of our soul as God has created us to live in community. There are many places in Scripture where this is referred to but especially in **I Corinthians 12**. First, we see that we have all been made one body in Christ, **“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” (vs 12)**. The chapter goes on to teach how the many members are different and have different functions within the body but this does not diminish or enhance the position of any member as all are needed and valued. Biblical Christianity is the only religion that provides this kind of unity, common purpose and support. This is why in Christianity, one can travel anywhere in the world and find a friend, a brother or sister in Christ.

Our place in the body of Christ and our ministry gives us a purpose for living, a goal for which to strive. We are not people who live out our lives in aimless desperation, but we live a life of abundance in serving our Lord and serving others.

## OUR BODY

Then the most obvious component of who we are is our body. The human race comes in bodies of many different shapes, sizes, colors and characteristics. Though the spiritual is the most important component, the Lord Jesus also cared for physical needs as well. He healed the sick and made sure that those who followed Him to listen to His teaching were fed. When John the Baptist sent an inquiry as to whether He was the Christ, the Lord gave an answer which summarized His healing ministry, **“The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” (Matthew 11:5).** As a result Christians have taken the lead in medical research and the building of care facilities and hospitals.

In Biblical Christianity, the human body is seen as the temple of the Holy Spirit, **“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (I Corinthians 6:19).** As such Christians have always been concerned about the care of our bodies. For example, most Christians do not condone the use of drugs (including tobacco) and alcohol (in excess) that will do damage to the body. Physical well being is very important because our body is interconnected with our soul and spirit. Therefore, a sick, undernourished or abused body will impact how we behave emotionally and how well we respond to spiritual things.

Studies have shown that a believer who is exercising their faith will heal faster after a major surgery than those who are not believers. A believer who is active in their local church has a larger support group, which in turn aides in the healing and recovery process. The reason goes back to the fact that our Spirit, Soul and Body are interconnected. A Spirit that has been made alive by the Holy Spirit will generate a positive attitude in the Soul which will promote healing and wellness in the Body. We see again, how Christianity has the answer to real problems for real people in a real world.

**Questions for Review:**

1. In what way is Christianity more than just a fire escape from hell?
2. What is the threefold nature of man and what verse in Scripture do we use to support our answer?
3. What is the human spirit?
4. What is wrong with the human spirit?
5. What is the solution to this problem and why is it important to our daily life?
6. What is the human soul?
7. What is wrong with the human soul?
8. What is the solution to this problem and how does it lead to an abundant life?
9. Why is it important for our human bodies to be kept healthy?
10. In what way does having the Holy Spirit within us help to heal our body and recover from sickness or injury?
11. How does the Spirit, Soul and Body of a believer interact to make for an abundant life?