

# The Good Life: Character, Community, Courage

*The Lord is good and glad to teach the proper path to all who go astray; he will teach the ways that are right and best to those who humbly turn to him. And when we obey him, every path he guides us on is fragrant with his loving-kindness and his truth.* (Psalm 25:8-10)

*Jesus says, Let me teach you; for I am gentle and humble, and you shall find rest for your souls.* (Matt. 11)

God has a good and pleasant way of life for us. God invites us to come to Him to learn how to really live. He wants to walk with us while we learn how to have a new **character** formed in us. God wants to build new **communities** of people around us who will show us how to live and will support us as we choose for new behaviours. God wants to teach us how to pray and have **courage** to rely on Him to come through for us when we are challenged and tempted in the daily struggles.

What keeps us from this new and pleasant way of life?

- Often we are filled with **our own sadness and guilt**. We believe there is little or no hope for us. We've struggled for a long time. We feel like we've tried and nothing has worked for us. When we attempted a new life we felt lonely and afraid.
- Sometimes it's **our own ideas** of what we think will make life work for us that keep us from receiving a new and satisfying way of life from God.
- **Pride** is a very destructive barrier. It tells us to take the credit for our successes and blame others, including God, for our failures. Pride robs us because it won't let us admit we have a problem.
- **Failure to take responsibility** for ourselves keeps us from reaching out for new life. Some hurt or hatred seems to make positive steps impossible. Certain tasks that will help us get better are someone else's responsibility.

- We obey God in many ways but **keep one or two things** in our lives even though we know God says they are **sinful and destructive**.
- We are impatient and **want magic now** instead of God's careful process of developing character in us.

All these things block God from giving us the life we long for. If we really want a gentle and pleasant life, it is necessary to come to God with a humble heart, admitting our responsibility, and seeking change.

A prayer to God: *Yet though you are so great, you respect the humble, but proud people must keep their distance. Though I am surrounded by troubles, you will bring me safely through them. You will clench your fist against my angry enemies! Your power will save me. The Lord will work out his plans for my life -- for your lovingkindness, Lord, continues forever* (Adapted from Psalm 138)

Are we willing to acknowledge that we don't have enough knowledge and enough power to give ourselves a good life? Until we see a need for a new way, we'll continue with life as we know it today. It takes humility to come to God and ask for something new. As we experience God's greatness, we sense our own smallness. When we encounter God's wholeness, we realize our own incompleteness. A gentle new life comes quietly to those who draw close to the Lord.

## Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. How does God describe a good life?
2. What keeps me from God's way of life?
3. Developing character, building community, trusting with courage -- which of these is most difficult for me? How am I building in each of these areas?
4. When do I believe that God has a new way of doing things (a new way of life) for me? When do I doubt that and do things my own way?