

Introduction

This book is being written for prisoners so that they will know what is available on the website www.hopeforeveryone.com for their spouses, children, parents, brothers and sisters, ex-convicts, parolees, victims of crime, prison guards and wardens and any other interested persons. Hopefully, this will enable prisoners to pray at certain times with those they love who will be able to pray with them with the help of the website.

The book will also enable prisoners to make known to their visitors the existence of the website.

This should enable prisoners to help their spouses, children, parents, brothers and sisters, and the families of prisoners to help prisoners to follow Christ and strengthen the bonds of love in their families.

All plants and trees grow and develop and become fruitful by changing radically during the different seasons of the year. Spring is the season for the seed to be planted, to take root, and to begin to grow. Summer is the season for it to begin to be fruitful. Autumn is the season for it to show signs of aging and dying. Winter is the season for plants and most trees to die.

In the case of the trees, the next season of spring gives them back greater life and beauty than they had before they died during the previous winter. Life and a death leading to more perfect, more beautiful and happier life are experienced in a similar way by those who follow Christ faithfully.

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die;” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2)

There are different seasons of life. The beginning of human life comes at conception. We begin to live, learn and grow while in the womb. This could be considered the first season of life. To live well in any season of life, we must be always preparing and ready to move on to the next season.

While in prison, an inmate must always be preparing for a good life after release from prison; and be ready to live a good Christian life in the world when allowed to do so.

What must underlie all studies, preparation for work and family life is living well and being as well prepared as possible to meet the Lord Jesus Christ face-to-face when our journey of Faith in this desert world comes to an end.

*“Jesus answered them, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, **unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.** Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their*

life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant will be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.’” (John 12:23-26)

We must be mature and serious followers of Christ **committed to what is most worthy of our love** to gain the happiness and peace that we yearn for. God is more worthy of our love than anything or anyone he created. The first and greatest commandment which, when lived, produces the most happiness, security and peace for those who follow it is:

*“Jesus answered, ‘The **first** is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’” (Mark 12:29-30)*

In order to live the second commandment and please the Lord we love, we must live the first commandment.

*“The **second** is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:31)*

If we try to live **an uncommitted, irresponsible life** selfishly only seeking pleasure of the moment; then we foolishly believe food, drink or sex, fun, entertainment, acquisition of money and possessions leads to happiness, security and peace. If this is **the godless way we live our lives**, we will always be filled with **false hopes, frustration and a life devoid of purpose, meaning and fulfillment**.

Everything created by God contributes in some way to the goodness and beauty of the world and glorifies its creator. This is especially true of every human person created in the image of God. Humans are created by God out of love and find great happiness and peace for themselves and others when they give the love given to them by God to others.

Every person created by God **is created for a purpose** and **is needed by others** for them to live the life of merciful love and truth which produces the peaceful, happy and loving relationships that delight and glorify God.

Those, who even to themselves, seem useless and burdensome to others are always needed by the most fortunate (the gifted, talented, wealthy, etc.) if they are to live the fruitful, meaningful lives God intended for them to enjoy by using their gifts and talents charitably. In fact, the more useless and burdensome the unborn, the prisoners, the elderly and badly handicapped, the dying, the mentally ill, the retarded and the illiterate seem to be, to themselves as well as to others, the

more God will reward those who show them merciful love with the most deep-rooted, enduring happiness, security and peace.

In showing **merciful love** for the most needy and helpless, we grow in our love relationship with Jesus Christ who is God; and begin, even in this life, to share in the treasures of heaven.

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did to me.’” (Matthew 25:31-40)

Two things are necessary for us to possess God in Jesus Christ and see him working in our lives. 1) **Humility**, being truthful about ourselves and what we are capable of doing, is needed so that we never lose sight of our need for other people and most of all for God at all times and in all situations of life. 2) **Charity**, especially in the form of **compassionate mercy love**, must be shown to our neighbor in order for Jesus Christ to live in us and to be seen to be working in our lives.

The **main work of life** for us is to become more like Jesus Christ and change the world for the better in our homes, our schools, our workplaces, our cities, our country and our world. The more we work at this the more **our lives have purpose** and contribute most effectively to our own happiness and peace and to a better world everywhere.

*“Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because **apart from me you can do nothing.**” (John 15:4-5)*