

SECRETS *of the* FUTURE

The Secret to Success | Part 24



THE SECRET TO SUCCESS

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In the Louvre Museum in Paris stands an impressive basalt stele called “The Code of Hammurabi”. This four tonne slab of stone was created in 1780BC by the ruler of Babylon and features the King in ceremonial dress before the sun god Shamash. A list of 282 rules (minus the unlucky number 13) is inscribed beneath the sun god, outlining the code of conduct for the city of Babylon. These laws were a code of living for the Babylonians. They covered issues such as business transactions, marriage relationships and penalties for lying.



Law number 153 states, “If a woman had brought about the death of her husband because of another man, they shall impale that woman on stakes”. Law 229 was the original building insurance policy – any builder who failed to construct a house properly would be put to death!

Religious life for the Babylonians revolved around sacrifices and prayers to their gods. Each person had their own personal god who protected them from devils and evil spirits. The Babylonians would place their god

in a prominent place in the home. They would light fires, offer banquets, wear dedicated jewellery and recite ritual prayers in a form of worship. Ancient writings (particularly from their wisdom literature) demonstrate a feeling of disillusionment among the worshippers: Is this religion working? I try hard all day to serve my god but what does it really do for me?

Many Christians today are like the Babylonians of old – wondering if their worship means anything. Churches put great efforts into gaining new members, only to lose them within months or even weeks out the “back door”. A new Christian tries to be “good” but when they fail, discouragement sets in and they give up. No-one wants to feel like a “hypocrite”, so despondent new Christians leave a religion that all seems too hard for them.

Is there a secret to success that enables Christians to live a happy and effective Christian life? What does it mean to be a Christian and how do you live in a way that enables you to grow spiritually? What do you do when you are tempted or feel discouraged? How can you protect yourself from the influences of secular life? And how can you ensure your Christian experience involves “living life to the full”?

This study guide reveals the keys to Christian living. You will see what a Christian is and also how a Christian should live. This will be a very practical study that will help you experience a living relationship with Jesus.



Q1

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

1 John 5:12 - *He who has the _____ has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life*

.....

The average person in the street will tell you that a Christian is someone who “does good works”. But there is a difference between what a Christian is and what a Christian does. A Christian has accepted the free gift of salvation and has a living relationship with Jesus. As part of God’s family, Christians become “children of God” – to be loved, nurtured and empowered (1 John 3:1).

Q2

WHAT IS THE ONLY TRUE MOTIVATION FOR BEING A CHRISTIAN?

2 Corinthians 5:14 - *For the _____ of _____ compels us ...*

.....

The apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians is sharing his own experience. This great evangelist encountered all sorts of suffering and was ultimately killed for his faith. Paul told the Corinthians that he couldn’t help himself. He had seen the love of Christ! It compelled him to give his whole energy to living for his new found love!

The presence of the *Spirit*

Q3

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN?

John 6:63 - *It is the Spirit who gives _____; the flesh profits nothing ...*

.....

Without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the life of a Christian is powerless. The Holy Spirit does not just modify your old life. He transforms us into a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The Holy Spirit shows us the love of Jesus, convicts us of sin, leads us into truth and empowers us with spiritual gifts. It is the Holy Spirit that changes our hearts and enables us to produce the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

If you really want to successfully live the Christian life, then ask for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit every day. God is more willing to provide you with His presence than you could ever imagine (Luke 11:13).





Q4

WHAT DID JESUS SAY WAS THE SECRET TO SUCCESS IN LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?

John 15:4 - *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you _____ in Me*

.....

There is only one way to live the Christian life. Stay connected to Jesus. It is easy to try and become your own “vine” – to be self-sufficient and “good” without the presence and power of God. Jesus wants to be your forever Friend. He wants you to come to Him and stay with Him. He is the vine and you are the branch through whom He produces His fruit.

Like any relationship, the key to living as friends is effective communication. When you come to Jesus and accept His love, He will enable you to stay connected to Him. He does this through the avenues of Bible study (God communicates with you), prayer (you communicate with God) and sharing the gospel (God communicates through you).

Q5

WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL BENEFITS OF REGULARLY STUDYING THE BIBLE?

Romans 10:17 - *So then _____ comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*

.....

The Bible is God's love letter to you and is a vital ingredient in living the Christian life. It not only outlines historical events, it also shows you the love of God. As you see the way God leads and loves His people, even in the most difficult times, your faith in Him grows.

Studying the Bible has many other benefits. The power of the Word changes your heart (1 Peter 1:23). It shows you God's will (Psalms 119:105). It enables you to overcome temptation (Matthew 4:4). The Bible also shows you the best picture of Jesus (John 5:39,40).

Q6

WHAT IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO STUDY AND UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

John 7:17 - *If anyone wills to ____ His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine ...*

.....



The key to understanding the Scripture is to have a heart that is willing to put into action the things that you learn. The purpose of Bible study is not to “prove yourself right” or simply learn intellectual facts. The Bible is there to show you God and empower you with a new life!

The keys to effective Bible study include: praying for the Holy Spirit, a humble attitude, commitment to spend quality time, and a comparison of Scripture with Scripture so the Bible explains itself.

Next time you read the Bible ask these questions: What is God saying to the people at the time of writing? What is God saying to me today? What does this passage tell me about myself? What does this passage tell me about God?

Q7

HOW IMPORTANT WAS PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF JESUS?

Luke 6:12 - *Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all _____ in prayer to God*

The prayer life of Jesus was the most important factor in maintaining a vital connection with His Father. Jesus sometimes prayed all night or woke up before sunrise to spend quality time in prayer. He loved the private, personal talking and sharing with His heavenly Father. Jesus asked His Father to guide Him and empower Him. He would share His feelings and ask for the presence of the Spirit.

If Jesus (who was perfect) focused His life on prayer, how much more do we (who are very much imperfect) need prayer in our life today.



Prayer the vital connection

Q8

WHAT DID JESUS SAY WAS VITAL TO EXPERIENCING POWERFUL PRAYER?

Matthew 6:6,7 - *But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain _____ as the heathen do*

.....

Jesus rebuked the religious leaders for their formal, insincere and repetitive prayers. True prayer is not difficult. Just open your heart to God as you would to a friend. God wants you to be open and honest with Him – sharing the love, gratitude, needs and concerns of your heart.

Q9

WHY IS SHARING THE GOSPEL AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?

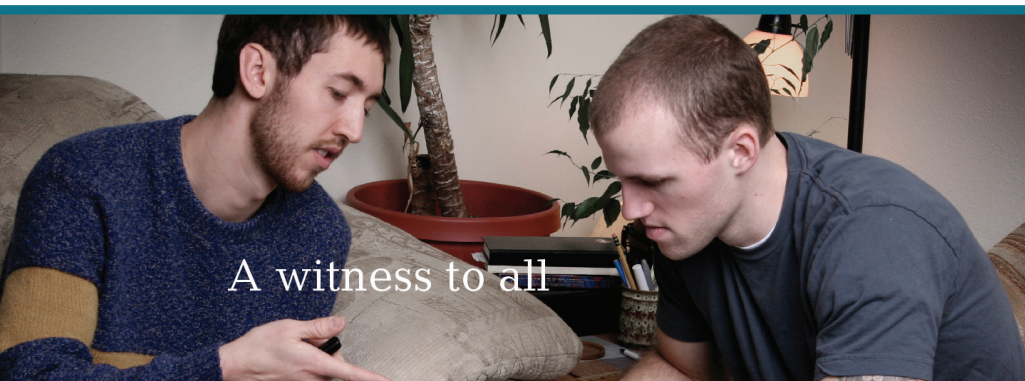
Matthew 24:14 - *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the _____ will come*

.....



Many people today are searching for purpose in life. The Christian mission is clear – share the gospel! This is not just a mission for paid ministers of the gospel. All of us have the privilege and opportunity to introduce and lead people to Christ.

There are many benefits to active involvement in sharing the gospel. God could save people without you, but He knows that working through you will enhance your relationship with Him. The focus of life will move away from self, to helping other people. As you see the love and power of God working in the lives of others you will grow in your faith and love for Him.



A witness to all

Q10

HOW SHOULD A CHRISTIAN LIVE IN TERMS OF CHARACTER AND CONDUCT?

1 Peter 1:15 - *But as He who called you is holy, you also be _____ in all your conduct*

.....

God calls the Christian to live a holy life. This is a life of purity and obedience to God's Commandments. God wants you to learn to love Jesus and hate the sin that hurts Him and destroys you. The reason why God

makes this call is not so you can become “good enough” to deserve heaven – a holy life shows other people what God is like. You bring honour to God by allowing Him to live out His love and obedience through you.

Q11 WHAT SPIRITUAL ADVICE DID PAUL GIVE TO THE CHRISTIANS IN ROME?

Romans 12:2 - *And do not be _____ to this _____, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

.....

Have you ever heard the phrase, “when in Rome do as the Romans do”? Well the apostle Paul said to the Christians in Rome, “when in Rome don’t do as the Romans do!” With all the secular pressures around you (especially in the large cities) make sure you don’t become secular yourself. One Bible translation says, “don’t let the world squeeze you into its mould.”

Christians are different! They stand for unique principles and values. The Christian lifestyle is based on the Bible and will not always be popular.

Martin Luther King said,

“We are called to be people of conviction, not conformity; of moral nobility, not social respectability. We are commanded to live differently and according to a higher loyalty.”



The “world” is simply the values, principles and actions of secular society. To shun this “world” means to make certain that your way of thinking and your behaviour reflects the Word of God, instead of chasing the meaningless attractions of popular culture.

Q12

WHAT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE “WORLD” SHOULD THE CHRISTIAN AVOID?

1 John 2:15,16 - *Do not love the world or the things in the world ... For all that is in the world – the lust of the _____, the lust of the _____, and the _____ of life – is not of the Father but is of the world*

.....

The average person sees over 1,000 commercials every day, enticing us to buy what we don't have and often do what we shouldn't do! Jesus warned against the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this world (Mark 4:19). The secular influences of the world often revolve around sex, money and power.

The world encourages you to accumulate as much wealth as you possibly can, even at the expense of others – money will make you happy. On the other hand, Jesus said, that someone's “life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15). Christians should live simply, be generous and help others.

The world influences relationships – sex outside marriage, multiple partners or same sex partners. The world says “if it feels good do it!” Christian relationships are for life. God designed marriage as one husband and one wife forever.

The world says that your career, power and position become the measure of life success. As a result you should work until you drop – and don't mind

putting others down as you climb the corporate ladder. To the Christian, work is a ministry to help other people, and make a difference in the world.

Q13

WHAT SORT OF THINGS SHOULD OCCUPY THE MINDS OF CHRISTIANS?

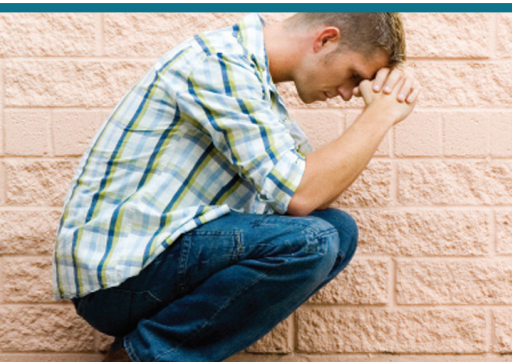
Philippians 4:8 *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any _____ and if there is anything _____ – meditate on these things*

You have two forces working within you. The Holy Spirit is convicting you of sin and offering you power to live the Christian life. The devil works through your sinful nature to entice and allure you into believing his deceptions. The devil wants you to think that sin is the better choice in life. A Christian protects the mind and emotions to ensure they can honour God and live a holy life. You may have heard the saying,

"You may not be what you think you are, but what you think, you are!"



The Christian thinks about positive things, sees the best in people, loves to encourage and support. The avenues of the mind are protected. The devil will do all he can to place in front of us television, magazines, music and internet information that leads us away from God. It is no wonder the Bible is emphatic regarding the importance of negating the avenues of communication from the devil.



Q14

WHAT SORT OF CHRISTIANS RECEIVE THE GRACE OF GOD?

James 4:6 - *But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the _____"*

.....

God cannot help someone who is proud and self-sufficient. When you realise your need of Christ, and admit that you are a sinner, God will give you all the grace you need. A humble Christian not only sees their own need, but also lives a life of service for others.

God gives grace to empower you to live a holy life. A life that impacts every part of your experience including, but not limited to, your finances, relationships, and even how you present yourself.

Q15

WHAT ARE THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT?

2 Corinthians 9:7 - *So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a _____ giver*

Malachi 3:8 - *Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, "In what way have we robbed You?" In _____ and _____*

.....

God owns the world and everything in it – including money! As such, the Christian is a steward of God's money here on earth. God wants you to earn your living and then spend money wisely without being stingy. God does not want you to be involved in wasting your time and money on gambling. The Bible says the love of money is a "root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). The devil will do all he can to develop a lust for money-making instead of a love for God.

An important financial principle is to return tithe to God. A tithe (which literally means "tenth") is that portion of our income that He asks us to return to Him. This is not a gift; it is God's money that is used by the church to pay for ministry.

God also wants us to give regular offerings. There is no specific amount that He asks for – He just wants to make sure we give our offerings with a cheerful heart (2 Corinthians 9:7). Tithes are a test of our honesty while offerings are a test of our generosity.



Q16

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO RELATIONSHIPS, MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY?

Hebrews 13:4 - *Marriage is _____ among all ...*

Genesis 2:24 - *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become _____ flesh*

.....

Christianity revolves around relationships – God with us and us with others. God has designed us to love and be loved. We were made to experience lifelong love and it is in the home that true Christianity is demonstrated. It is a tragedy when Christians are “perfect” at church but “devils” at home! The home should be representative of heaven; a place where friends and family just love to be. God wants families to spend quality time together – having fun and learning about Jesus in practical ways.

Q17

WHAT ARE THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN DRESS?

1 Timothy 2:9,10 - *... in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in _____ apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or _____ or _____ or costly clothing, but ...with good works*

Hosea 2:13 - *“I will punish her for the days of the Baals to which she burned incense. She decked herself with her _____ and _____, and went after her lovers; but Me she forgot,” says the LORD*

.....

For both men and women it is vital that Christians represent the life and attitude of Jesus. Jesus wants you to dress in a modest and simple manner, not spending thousands of dollars on all the latest fashions. The Christian focuses on inward beauty and living a Christ-like life.

It is interesting to note that God saw the wearing of jewellery as an outward sign of rebellion and following the “world”. A visit to the ancient museums of the world will show you the great importance placed on jewellery among the pagan nations. There are hundreds of pieces of gold earrings, necklaces and bracelets that have been discovered and are now displayed in all their splendour.

Q18

WITH ALL THE TRAPS OF THE WORLD AROUND US, HOW CAN A CHRISTIAN OVERCOME TEMPTATION?

James 4:7 *Therefore submit to God. _____ the devil and he will flee from you*

.....

As a Christian you have all the power in the universe to overcome temptation and sin. If you submit your life to God and choose to say “no” to the devil, God will give you supernatural power for victory. God has so much power and influence that the devil will run for his life!



WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER ABOUT LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?

Jeremiah 31:3 - *The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an _____ love; therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you"*

.....

God loves you with an everlasting love. It is not dependent on your goodness or even how much you love Him. God has called you and He enables you to effectively live the Christian life. If you spiritually fall, you don't need to be discouraged. Jesus is already waiting to accept you back. The loving Jesus will treat you just as if you have never sinned! Look to Jesus and live in His love. He will enable you to become an empowered Christian – loving God, loving people and loving life!

Three Points to Remember:

- The only way to live as a Christian is to stay connected to Jesus
- The keys to growth are Bible study, prayer and sharing the gospel
- God loves you with an everlasting love

The Story:

A man found a small white dog whimpering by the side of the road. The dog was clearly in pain with a broken leg. The man took the dog home, put a splint on the leg and nursed him back to health. The little pup grew to love the man during this period and hobbled his way around the house, following his new master. They played together, and each day the dog (now named Jetta) would be looking for his master to come home from work.

Then, suddenly, Jetta disappeared. The man was quite upset and felt as if the dog did not appreciate what he had done for him. But the man's feelings soon changed. The next day Jetta was at the back door of the house, wagging his little tail. But this time Jetta was not alone. Sitting beside Jetta was another small dog. And that other dog also had a broken leg. Jetta had brought the lame puppy to his master so it also could be healed.

How do you think this story illustrates growth in the Christian life?

Relational questions:

1. Do you think the Christian life is easy or difficult? Why?
2. Why do you think your lifestyle is important, even though you are not saved by your works?
3. What have you found is the most effective way to maintain a vital connection with God?

Your response:

Now that you have completed the Secrets of Prophecy series would you like to reconfirm your decision to accept Jesus Christ and follow Him completely in your life? _____



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