

# PLANNING YOUR LIFE GOD'S WAY

Practical Help from the Bible for Making Decisions

TIMOTHY W. BERREY

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## About *Planning Your Life God's Way*

“*Planning Your Life God's Way* renewed our devotion to know the ways of God in a personal, practical way. This refreshing material overcomes mechanical aspects of the ‘traditional’ approach, while affirming the individual will of God. You will appreciate biblical insights throughout and a timely emphasis on responsible obedience to Scripture.”

**Thomas Overmiller**, Pastor, Faith Baptist Church (Queens, New York)

“Every Christian that is serious about exalting Jesus Christ is committed to knowing and doing God's will. *Planning Your Life God's Way* points believers to the timeless truths in the Bible that prepares him to do God's will in life's major decisions, as well as in the everyday mundane tasks. This is a must-read for any Christian who is passionate about glorifying God with their life.”

**Robbie Asuncion**, Pastor, Lighthouse Bible Believers Church (Parañaque, Philippines)

“When Dr. Berrey presented this material at our church, he offered clear, God-centered and Bible-focused instruction on pursuing God's will that was helpful to any earnest follower of Christ.”

**Thad Berrey**, Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church (Hampton, Georgia)

“As I studied the material in Dr. Berrey's book, I was helped in doing God's will for my life, even though I have been studying God's Word and seeking to follow God's will for the past 40 years. Every believer would be helped by this book. It is full of practical wisdom formed by biblical truth regarding one of life's most essential issues: discerning and doing God's will.”

**Phil Kamibayashiyama**, Director, Bob Jones Memorial Bible College (Quezon City, Philippines)

“Discerning God's will is the often puzzling—but necessary—task all Christians face. In *Planning Your Life God's Way*, Tim Berrey combines sound exegesis, biblical principles, and practical advice to help God's people from any walk of life in discerning and doing the will of God. If you are not sure of God's will for your life, reading *Planning Your Life God's Way* may be God's will for you.”

**Jared Garcia**, Academic Director, Pines City Bible Baptist College (Baguio, Philippines)

“*Planning Your Life God's Way* challenged us that we should make God's will for our life as our goal because we are created in Christ Jesus unto every good work . . . . God is sovereign but we are responsible to seek and do of His good pleasure. In doing God's perfect, acceptable will, we find true blessedness and contentment.”

**Tang Tuck Keong**, Senior Pastor, Jesus Saves Mission International (Singapore)



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# DEDICATION

To my Christian brethren in Singapore,  
gracious first listeners  
December, 2014



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The good brethren of Jesus Saves Mission (Singapore) were the first to provide a venue to field-test this material as a series. Other opportunities to deliver the lectures (either in part or in whole) and further tweak the material followed at Bob Jones Memorial Bible College (Quezon City), Lighthouse Bible Believers Church (Parañaque), Pines City Baptist Church (Baguio), Chinese Fundamental Baptist Institute (Hong Kong), Faith Baptist Church (Queens, NY), and Calvary Baptist Church (Hampton, GA). It developed from there—my wife deserves the lion-share of the credit, humanly—into the product you now hold in your hand.

Susan Pritt, my mother-in-law, and Sarah Jackson, product editor, both worked hard to remove my errors in grammar and presentation. Frank Jones kindly agreed to serve as a theological sounding board, for which I am sincerely grateful. Paul Silas Julian, my student assistant, performed the thankless and tedious task of checking the accuracy of my verse references.

That this book still has defects is unfortunately a certainty (and no fault of theirs). I agree with Sir William M. Ramsay, the late New Testament

scholar, who complained in one of his books (*The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*) that its deficiencies would rise up before him when it was too late.

On a different note, I have cited many different authors or persons in this book. Please do not consider my citation of them a full endorsement of all their beliefs or ministries. Every author or person that I have cited—and, in fact, everything that I myself have written in this book—must be held to the biblical maxim: *Test all things; hold fast what is good* (1 Thess. 5:21).

## PREFACE

God is your Creator. You are not just a freak accident of evolution. You exist not simply because your mother wanted a baby. Or because your father wanted to try again for a boy. God desired your existence. That is why you came into this world, and that is why you continue in it. *You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created* (Rev. 4:11).

If God desires you to exist, then it follows naturally that your existence has a purpose. If God is sovereign, wise, all-powerful, and good, as the Bible depicts Him, then He does nothing randomly, illogically, or by accident.

For you particularly, who have been transformed by His grace through regeneration, it can be said that *everything works together for good* (Rom. 8:28). You have been *created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand* for you to walk in them (Eph. 2:10). A certain sense of destiny haunts you. Something in you testifies that God has *fearfully and wonderfully made you* (Psa. 139:14). This is why you sometimes plunge into despondency: your current life does not match up with what you know you were created to be.

You stand at a crossroads. You can take your one life and let discouragement, sin, distraction, relationships, or any number of other things flush it into the realm of the insignificant. Or you can get to work planning your life God's way.



## INTRODUCTION— A LIFE WELL PLANNED

*So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12)*

**R**obert Dick Wilson (1856-1930) was twenty-five years old when he decided his life's work would be to defend the accuracy of the Old Testament. In accordance with that decision, he laid out his life's plan. Estimating that he would attain the age of seventy, and thus had another forty-five years ahead of him, he divided those forty-five years into three fifteen-year segments.

The **first fifteen years** he would learn every language in any way connected to the study of the Old Testament—languages such as Hebrew, biblical Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Syriac, Babylonian, Persian, Arabic, and Coptic. Language learning came easy to him. When a typhoid-like illness at age thirteen delayed his studies for two years, he “amused himself” (his words) by learning French. He spent one school vacation teaching himself German (scoring a one hundred percent when later tested on the subject); another, learning Spanish. He taught himself Italian, and then taught second-year Italian as an instructor. He

collected languages the way some people collect stamps, and by the time he was done he was fluent in dozens of languages.<sup>1</sup>

The **next fifteen years** he would study the text of the Old Testament. He analyzed every consonant (over one million of them) in the Hebrew Old Testament, cross-examining them with the ancient Old Testament translations, such as the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, and the Syriac Peshitta.

He then determined that he would spend his **last fifteen years** sifting through the higher critical attacks on the Old Testament, rebutting them, and documenting the results of his years of research.

This was the life plan he laid out, and he stuck to it. Making the book of Daniel a focus because of critical notions against its historicity, Wilson published *Studies in the Book of Daniel* in 1916. He followed that in 1922 with *Is the Higher Criticism Scholarly?*, in which he rains down withering blows upon the assertions of those who attack the veracity of the Old Testament.

What is so helpful about Wilson's example?

First of all, he set himself a goal to which he would devote his life: to become a veritable one-man Department of Defense on behalf of the Old Testament. That goal was strategic. He took into consideration his unusual ability with languages and focused it on what he believed he could contribute to the kingdom of God. He could have harnessed his enviable language skills, put them out to work in the field of international diplomacy or business, and made a name for himself. Instead, he laid them on the altar of kingdom service.

Second, Wilson realized that in order to reach his goal, he had to have a concrete, measurable, relevant, and achievable plan. He saw that without a plan he would never reach his goal. He had only one life, and that one life must be budgeted. His goal—his life's priority—determined his forty-five-year life budget. His plan was concrete—learning Old Testament languages, for example. It was measurable—

*every* language in any way related to the Old Testament. It was relevant—how else can one defend the Old Testament if you are not an expert in all of its varied literature? And for him, even if not for us, it was achievable.

Third, Wilson streamlined his life. His father had wanted him to preach. Wilson himself enjoyed evangelistic work and had actually done so with some success; but he realized he could not both pastor and master the Old Testament in the way he desired. He did not allow himself to get sidetracked. *This one thing I do* did not hang in calligraphy on his office wall. It was branded with a hot iron onto his will and lived out with perseverance, diligence, zeal, and consecration.

Fourth, Wilson labored to see his plan brought to fruition and his goal realized. In the end, he could read any language even remotely associated with the Old Testament. He could reference any primary source a critical scholar might quote. He had scrutinized every consonant of the Old Testament. He could answer with authority any attack on the Old Testament.

Remember his goal of finishing his life's work by seventy years of age? Wilson authored a number of works, but arguably his greatest masterpiece, *The Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament*, was published in 1926, the very year he turned seventy. He accomplished his life's plan with remarkable precision.

Robert Dick Wilson exemplifies planning one's life God's way. Neither my life nor your life will look exactly like Robert Dick Wilson's; but when I look at his life, the word that comes to my mind is *blessed*, in the Old Testament sense of "Oh, to be envied."<sup>2</sup>

I envy a man who took such a realistic look at life. He openly acknowledged what so many people choose to blindly deny: that we have only a few useful years before our life will end in death. *So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom* (Psa. 90:12). He also realized that although one person cannot do everything, he can accomplish *something* if he will focus his energy on that one thing.



I envy a man who took such a clear look at himself and who he was. He realized that his life's unique contribution to the kingdom of God would surely flow out of the unique gifting, background, and circumstances that comprised being Robert Dick Wilson. *I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well* (Psa. 139:14).

I envy a man who laid his remarkable gifting at the feet of Jesus his Savior and asked, *What shall I do, Lord?* (Acts 22:10).

I envy a man who disciplined himself to sweat through his life's plan and who actually achieved the goal he set for himself, crossing the finish line that he had designated forty-five years earlier. *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith* (2 Tim. 4:7).

Don't you envy a man like that? Wouldn't you like to look back with satisfaction on a life well planned?

Here is the good news: your life can be just as enviable and fragrant with purpose as Robert Dick Wilson's. After all, the same God that ordered his steps will also order yours, if you will allow Him! *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and He delights in his way* (Psa. 37:23).

... You must, however, begin where Wilson began—by correctly answering life's "first question."



## ANSWER LIFE'S FIRST QUESTION

*Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men (Mark 1:17)*

In 1995, a Tampa surgeon made the news because he accidentally amputated the wrong leg of a patient. Everything told him he was cutting off the correct leg: the operating room blackboard, the operating room schedule, the hospital computer system, even the leg that had been sterilized and readied for the surgery. In the middle of the operation, too late to reverse the damage, the sobs of a nurse reviewing the patient's file alerted him to the fact that he was working on the wrong leg.<sup>3</sup>

Can you imagine making a mistake about something so serious? And yet, many people do. They actually make a mistake about their own life! They get their central mission in life wrong. Everything around them tells them they are doing the right thing: their friends, their colleagues, their relatives, their culture, even their instincts. But somehow, in the middle of a life lived for the wrong mission, they realize (almost too late) that they are pursuing the wrong thing. We all need to pause and ask ourselves, "Am I getting my mission right?"

What is your mission in life? The resolution to that query demands correctly answering a question that is logically prior. In fact, it is a question that I believe is one of life's most fundamental questions.<sup>4</sup>

## **WHO IS JESUS?**

One day when my daughter was very young, we were riding home together. From her seat in the back of the car, her childish voice suddenly piped up and asked, "Daddy, what is Jesus?" As a two- or three-year-old, she had just stumbled upon life's chief question: "Who is Jesus?"

A good place to begin in answering that question is to read the Gospel of Mark. Mark takes his readers on a fast-paced journey through the earthly life and ministry of Jesus Christ. But it is his opening line that both startles and rivets the reader:

*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God* (Mark 1:1).

In one short statement, Mark answers the most fundamental question, the question upon which hangs all of life's questions. Every man or woman must embrace the inescapable fact of who Jesus is—or face the harsh consequences.

When we affirm Jesus to be the Son of God, we are in no way implying some kind of conjugal relationship of the Father that resulted in a son. (This is a very common Muslim misunderstanding.) Instead, we are commenting on Jesus' nature and His relationship to the Father.

To affirm Jesus as the Son of God is to make a statement about His uniqueness. John 3:16, perhaps the best-known verse in the Bible, says as much when it refers to Jesus as the "only begotten Son."

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life* (John 3:16).

Unfortunately, the word "begotten" may conjure up in our minds a physical birth. Nothing could be further from the truth. "Begotten"

(*monogenes*) literally means one of a kind or unique—“the only one of its kind or class.”<sup>5</sup>

Believers in Jesus understand that they also are children of God—and rightly so—but in a far different sense than Jesus is. In fact, the expression “the Son of God,” when the Greek word “son” is in the singular, occurs thirty-eight times in the New Testament and *always* refers to Jesus.<sup>6</sup> We could say it this way: God has many children, but He has only one Son!

Thus, to refer to Jesus as the Son of God is to affirm that He possesses the same divine nature as His Father. We get caught sometimes in squabbles with those from other religious persuasions, and we perhaps wish that the New Testament would state more clearly His full deity. Actually, it does! And in more ways than it is our purpose here to articulate.<sup>7</sup> But to call Him **the** Son of God is one of those ways. Just as my son is no less human than I am, so Jesus is no less God than His Father.

Mark does not leave you without proof of his assertion. His whole book essentially backs up his declaration, but his opening preface cannonades it at heart-stopping velocity.

Jesus, Mark's preface affirms, had a forerunner named John the Baptist (Mark 1:2-8). John's presence reiterates Jesus' uniqueness. Hundreds of years before Jesus' birth, the Old Testament predicted a Voice who would prepare the way for the Messiah through his preaching and teaching (Isa. 40:3).<sup>8</sup> We cannot exaggerate the importance of John's role as this Voice. Not that Jesus relied primarily on John's human witness to His veracity; He did not (John 5:34). Nonetheless, John's witness played a role in many believing on Jesus and is part of what distinguishes Jesus from so many religious imposters who have committed the fatal error of announcing themselves. They made great claims for themselves—an angel met them in a forest, or they saw a vision in a cave—but no one else was with them when these phenomena occurred. No independent verification exists. No

forerunner announced their coming hundreds of years before it happened, and the Father definitely did not bear witness to their claims. In fact, in a few cases, these leaders relied on their followers to convince them of their alleged prophetic status. Not so with Jesus!

Mark's preface goes on to relate that an audible voice from heaven acknowledged and authenticated Jesus at the time of His baptism (1:9-11). John baptized multitudes of people, and the Galilean who came forward for baptism that day may have seemed like one of many. But John knew such was not the case. Other bystanders present on the occasion likely came away that day with the same conclusion. As Jesus came up out of the water, having submitted to the baptism of John, the Father audibly identified Jesus as *My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (v. 11). In addition, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus—again in front of all onlookers—in the form of a dove. (One is struck by the pains taken to ensure that this occasion was audible and visible to all present.)

The Father's words imply an intimate (“beloved”) relationship that clearly predates what took place in the Jordan River that day. They take us into eternity past before the Word took on human flesh in the man, Christ Jesus (John 1:1, 14). They remind us that the Son came to earth from heaven, where He had enjoyed the unending companionship of His Father.

*No one has ascended to heaven but He who **came down from heaven**, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven* (John 3:13).

Well-known Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias assumes, for the sake of argument, that Mohammad really did visit heaven on one occasion.<sup>9</sup> He then counters by considering the claims of Jesus. Jesus did not boast that He was permitted, on merely one occasion, to visit heaven. Rather, Jesus claimed that He came from Heaven. And the Father's audible voice—to which all present that day could bear witness—authenticates Jesus' claim.

Mark, however, is still not done with his cannonade. He takes us still deeper into the identity of Jesus' person and the purpose of His coming when he speaks of Jesus' being driven into the wilderness and then tempted by Satan (vv. 12-13). Mark does not elaborate on Jesus' temptation, as the Gospels of Matthew and Luke do, but he tells us enough to suggest the stark loneliness of the event (the wild beasts were His only companions) and to imply His victory over Satan (why else would God have sent angels to minister to Him?).

This head-on, forty-day collision with Satan is another striking evidence to the unparalleled uniqueness of Jesus. Our Savior withstood all of Satan's broadsides, something no other person, from Adam to the present, had ever done. In fact, Jesus is the "last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45), who came to rescue us from the plight into which we fell because of the first Adam.

To put it more bluntly, Jesus is the promised "Seed of the woman" who alone can crush the head of the serpent and deliver us from his clutches (Gen. 3:15). He is exactly what John the Baptist said He is: *The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world* (John 1:29). Jesus' uniqueness as the Son of God includes His winning for us a spectacular and much-needed battle over the sin that is literally killing each one of us. No religious deceiver has ever been able to do that or to come anywhere near to matching Jesus' words: *I don't have much more time to talk to you, because the ruler of this world approaches. **He has no power over me*** (John 14:30, NLT).

The great Egyptian pharaoh, Thutmose III (1479-1425 BC), once made the astonishing statement, "The god of heaven is my father. I am his son. He has begotten me, and commanded me to sit on his throne." His words sound almost like some that Jesus said. How could someone assess whether his claims were valid? Try this: his mummy is still with us. Thutmose claimed to be the son of God but he could not conquer death, the sting of sin (1 Cor. 15:56). He died, like every commoner in Egypt.

Jesus, on the other hand, conquered Satan, bore our sins as the Lamb of God, and then proved by His resurrection from the dead the validity of His claim to be the Son of God (Rom. 1:4).

*Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:3-4).*

## **JESUS AND YOUR LIFE'S MISSION**

Now, what does this discussion about Jesus as the unique Son of God have to do with planning your life God's way or getting your mission right in life?

Everything!

The truth that Jesus is the unique Son of God carries with it a startling implication: there is no other great teacher or religious figure to whom we must listen or before whom we must bow. Affirming Jesus as THE Son of God narrows down all our religious options to one.

*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).*

Jesus' unique status as God's Son demands a response. Only one response is logical, and it is the one that Jesus Himself urged upon those who would listen to Him:

*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. **Repent, and believe in the gospel** (Mark 1:15).*

Well-known author and former atheist Lee Strobel came to see this after a lengthy investigation into the claims of Jesus. He initially undertook the investigation in order to debunk his wife's newfound Christian faith. But when he locked himself in his office on November 8, 1981, after twenty-one months of research, the evidence in Christ's favor overwhelmed him. It would actually take more faith to remain an atheist, he realized, than to believe in Jesus.

The only sensible response was to bow the knee to the claims of Jesus and embrace Him as Lord and Savior. John's Gospel summarizes it this way:

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13).*

The crucial first step in getting right one's mission in life is becoming, through saving faith in Jesus, a child of God. The privileged status of becoming a child of God is not something you deserve nor something you earn as a product of your religious fervor. It is something that Jesus gives instantaneously to those who welcome Him in all of His glory as the unique Son of God, and believe in Him and the redemptive work He came to accomplish. The kind of faith we are describing is, to be blunt, both a human response and a divine miracle, as the juxtaposition of John 1:12-13 demonstrates. Verse 12 is the response demanded in order for you to become a child of God. Verse 13 reminds us that accompanying your response was the miracle of regeneration, as God birthed you into His family.

That miraculous—yet volitional—response of faith then launches you on a journey of discipleship in which you follow Jesus. To those early disciples who believed on Him, Jesus issued the following command: *Follow Me ... (1:17)*. His command still rings true for all His genuine disciples.

In fact, to speak of a disciple *following* is essentially redundant. Inherent in the word disciple is the idea of someone who is both a pupil and a follower. That is, he (or she) submits to the teaching of another, as their pupil, and then adheres to that teaching by following it himself. To not follow Him forfeits *de facto* the label disciple (Luke 14:27). In fact, any other response is absurd and unworthy of Him.

*And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me (Matt. 10:38).*



Those who follow Him then find themselves being transformed by Him. Jesus transforms them in a number of ways, but Mark's Gospel hones in on the one that will refocus their life's mission: *I will make you fishers of men* (1:17).

Jesus was setting before them the task that would dominate the rest of their lives. They were to follow Him, as His true disciples, and make disciples to Him of all others around them. No longer was their life to be wrapped up in fishing; they may have occasionally fished again vocationally, but it was no longer their life pursuit.

This radical mission—of being a disciple of Jesus and making disciples to Jesus—was not just for Jesus' first disciples. The Great Commission makes clear that it is obligatory for all Jesus' disciples.

*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matt. 28:18-20).

Every believer, as a follower of Jesus, is to make disciples of all those around him or her. They are to do so in every nation, in every age, in the power of the Spirit sent from heaven, with the conscious presence of Jesus aiding and urging them onward. If they get distracted from this by work, by a relationship, by wealth, or by anything else, they fail to get their mission right.

Getting distracted is easy to do, especially in an increasingly secular and materialistic world. I am convinced that we do not even realize how materialistic we are or how focused we are on this life's treasures, pleasures, and ideals. Too many of Jesus' disciples are content with carrying His name with them to the grave and living what many consider to be a "normal Christian life": church attendance (unless it conflicts with another priority), moderate obedience to God's Word, and pursuit of everything else that culture offers that is not flagrantly unbiblical.

This, however, is far from the “normal Christian life” lived out in the book of Acts. The early church had a very noisy faith. When it came to proclaiming forgiveness in the name of Jesus and calling all men to be His disciples, they could not be shut up. They had to declare it, and even when persecution landed them in far-flung places, they merely continued to shout their faith in a different location (Acts 8:4).

Getting your mission right will alter your view of everything: your talents, your time, your money, your relationships, your college education, your career, your marriage, your children, and your free time. Viewed correctly, all of these are simply Christ's gifts, stewarded by you, to bring Him the glory He deserves as you live and proclaim Him.

Think of it this way: you can die penniless or wife-less or childless or education-less, but you cannot leave this world disciple-less. You must follow Jesus, and you must be a fisher of men—or you have failed in getting your mission in life right. You have lived short of what Jesus' uniqueness as the Son of God deserves. You have robbed Him of the worship that He is due.

As you assess your life's objectives or ambitions, as you make daily decisions, as you anticipate what lies down the road for you, you absolutely must prioritize the mission of *following Jesus and bringing men and women to become followers of Him*. It should be one of the primary grids by which you assess the purchases you make, the hobbies you acquire, the places you live, the entertainment you choose, the relationships you build, and the jobs you hold.

Does that mean everyone should be in full-time vocational Christian service? Absolutely not! In fact, nowhere does the New Testament even hint at that. Most of the early church leaders probably worked a regular job. Perhaps one of the modern church's greatest failures has been the propagation of the idea that truly committed Christians go into full-time Christian service and the rest just work secular jobs. Fatal in that mindset is the implicit suggestion that those in full-time

Christian service are the ones who make disciples, as if those in secular careers are somehow not obligated to do so. That is not what Jesus intended at all! What He intended was that all of His disciples be involved in disciple making.

Does that mean everyone's life will look exactly the same? Of course not! Take two Williams, for example. Both believers. Both wanting their lives to count for Christ. Both Englishmen. Both born in the month of August. Both living and dying within a year or two of the other. However, Jesus' call to William Carey (1761-1834), the "father of modern missions," to follow Him looked a lot different than His call to William Wilberforce (1759-1833), the tireless abolitionist. Both, however, exhibited the transformation that following Jesus brings.

### **TIME FOR SELF-EVALUATION**

Let me close this chapter with a seven-point checklist to use as a way of assessing whether you have successfully answered "Life's First Question." I composed this list to summarize the teaching of Mark's Gospel (all unspecified references are to his book) and to impress upon my own heart his clarion call for discipleship. Do you genuinely embrace all seven of these propositions? Are you living them?

- (1) Everything about Jesus' life and ministry gives adequate witness to the truth of His claim to be uniquely the Son of God (1:1, 11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 14:61; 15:39).
- (2) Although He was the Son of God, He became man and compassionately poured Himself into serving wayward and needy mankind, helplessly ensnared as we are in the consequences of our evil actions (1:41; 2:17; 5:1-17; 6:34; 8:2).
- (3) His ultimate act of service for mankind was to die on the cross as a ransom for them; that is, His shed blood paid the penalty demanded by God's offended justice because of our violations of God's laws (10:45; 14:24).

- (4) God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day, clearly proclaiming that Jesus was the Son of God and that His death had fully satisfied God's offended justice (16:6; Rom. 1:4; 4:25).
- (5) God offers eternal life to all those who will repent and believe this good news—that in Jesus God's kingdom has drawn near, and through Jesus all of God's promises of salvation are being fulfilled (1:15; 16:16). At the core of this good news ("gospel") is Jesus' death as a substitute payment for human sin, His burial, and His resurrection from the dead on the third day (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; 1 Cor. 15:3-4).
- (6) Those who believe become Jesus' disciples, identifying themselves publicly with Him through water baptism and following Him (1:17; 16:16).
- (7) In addition, Jesus' disciples live under the exciting obligation to preach this good news about Jesus to the entire world and call all mankind to become His disciples (16:15, 20).

... In answering life's first question, you have bowed the knee to Jesus as the Son of God; now get off your knees—or, better, stay there—and discover who He created you to be and why.