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A JOURNEY IN LIFE



PART 1: FINDING LIFE

BOOKLET 1: What is most important in life

Lim Liong

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Front Cover photograph: A White-bellied Sea Eagle flying past directly in front of me, a short distance away, making its own journey in life. What kind of journey do we make in life?

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A JOURNEY IN LIFE

Dear reader,

This booklet is not for sale. It is made available as a gift to all who want to read it. If it helps to bring long-lasting meaning to your life, it has fulfilled its purpose.

It is written for those who are seeking for meaning and quality in life and who are willing to spend time and effort to find out so as to live in that way.

It is not a storybook or a form of entertainment. (If this is what you are looking for, please do not proceed further.) A spirit of humility, honesty and sincerity is necessary if what is shared in these pages is to reach the heart and bear fruit for long-term benefit.

This booklet is part of the book, *A Journey in Life*, which is written in three parts.

In Part 1, we look at how we can find moral and spiritual life and begin the journey of discovery and growth. This part is written in

simpler English so that children too may join in this journey at an early age. However, they may need some guidance from parents or adults, especially in thinking through the deeper issues of life that are looked into. This part is written in the form of a series of **booklets**.

In Part 2, we consider the struggles, difficulties, pains and disappointments as well as the sense of fulfilment in the process of growing up morally and spiritually. The issues considered include overcoming the temptations of this world, the attacks of the evil one and the wrongful desires of the self-centred life. This part is presented in several **volumes**.

In Part 3, we ponder over the infinite potential of moral and spiritual excellence when the heart is pure and we see *God* in His transcendent glory. As we freely partake of the divine nature and deepen in the fellowship of the sufferings of *Christ*, we transcend the petty self-considerations and the vanity of this world and are conformed to the image of *Christ*. This part is transmitted through various **compositions**.

PART 1. FINDING LIFE

In our childhood, many of us have sung:

**“Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are?”**

Have you ever wondered about what life means to you?

Have you ever looked at people and things around you...

or **have you ever looked up into the skies...**



...and wondered...



...what life is all about?

In PART 1, we seek to find out the answers to questions about life.

What is life?

What is death? What happens when I die?

What is the most important thing in life and what must I do to have it?

Why is it so easy to do what is not good and so hard to do the right things?

Can I live a truly meaningful life of lasting value and a life that will not come to an end?

BOOKLET 1

What is most important in life

Chapter 1: Thinking about life

There was once a little boy who was about five years old. He had not yet started going to school and he spent most of his time at home.

One day, he felt very sad. He was thinking about something and he could not find good answers to his questions. He was sitting on the floor in his mother's room. He wanted to know how he would live his life and what would happen to him. He had heard some people say, "Our lives are fated", that is, our lives are already fixed and what will happen will happen. What we decide, how we choose would not change what would happen to us. This troubled him.

He asked himself the question, "If I choose to go to the kitchen, is it because it is already fixed that it will happen?" Then he thought, "No, I will be smart and choose not to go to

the kitchen!” Soon after that, he thought, “But maybe it is already planned that I would think about going to the kitchen and then choose not to go to the kitchen.” He felt very upset when he thought about this. If every thing that he were to do were already planned and fixed, what then would be the meaning of his choice? How could he know if this was true or not? Could he really choose and decide how he would live his life or was it all planned for him and already set and could not be changed?

I was that little boy many years ago and I was very unhappy because I could not find meaningful answers to my questions. Since that time, I have thought about these and other questions about life and I am not sad anymore. I am very joyful because I have found good answers to my questions and life is very meaningful now. I will try to share with you what I have learnt.

You may also be asking questions about life and you too may be troubled because you have not found satisfying answers to these questions. Even if you are young, you can learn

about the meaning of life and prepare for the time ahead of you. If you are growing up and active and busy, do not think that there will always be enough time to find out later because we do not know how long we will live.

If you are already old, it is important to find out now and prepare for life after death. In this book, we can learn together so that we can live well and find true meaning in our hearts.

What do you think?

What question was the little boy thinking about which made him unhappy?

Would you also be troubled if you could not find the answer to such a question?

Do you think that answers to such a question and other questions about life will help you to live a better life?

We need to learn, wisely to think

Otherwise, the boat of our life will sink.

Chapter 2: What kind of life?

There was once a teacher who was sick. There was cancer in her body. Some part of her body was not normal and was growing very quickly and would not stop. This made her body sick and she might not live long. She wanted to know what would happen if she were to die. She asked her students to write a composition with the title, "How I will spend my time if I have a few months left to live."

She said to her students, "There are people who talk about eternal life, everlasting life, and they want to live forever. I think that would be very boring, so I don't want to live forever." She thought that living forever would mean going on and on, just doing things in this world, and this would become very boring if it went on and on forever.

Would you want to live forever if all that you can do in life is just to play and work, eat and rest, doing things in this world over and over again?

Playing every day?



Eating when hungry?



Resting when tired?



When I was in Primary School, I had a friend who said to me one day, “I have already enjoyed myself in everything that I have wanted to enjoy. There is nothing left for me to enjoy.”

Even when he was so young, he had seen that life would be boring and empty if all that we do is to go on and on doing the things in this world. This is so even when we try to find enjoyment from the things of this world.

Our time on earth will come to an end. Have you thought about death and what would

happen after you die? What happens when people you love pass away? Where will they be? Will you see them again? Have you thought about life and what you really want?

Some people spend most of their time playing or working, and they think that enjoying themselves or earning money now, is more important. They may have the idea that they can think more about life and death later in life.

We do not know what will happen tomorrow. Some people die when they are very young. If they do not learn to live well now, they will not be ready to die.

Some people live until they are very old. When they become worried about death, they may not know how to find the answers to their questions. They may also be growing blind and becoming deaf. They may be frightened and lonely and afraid to die.

Some people feel happy because they are doing many things that they like. When things change suddenly and they are about to die,

they may be very fearful.

Deep in our hearts, all of us want to find meaning in life. How do we do that? We usually live by what we like. We do the things that we find enjoyable and we feel happy.

We think so much about ourselves, how we can be great, how we can do many things in this world. We want to be clever and we want to be cleverer than other people. We want to be famous and we want people to like us. We want to do things that people will like. We want people to think about us and praise us. We want money and what it can buy because we think we will be happy then. We want to have power and we enjoy people listening to us and doing what we tell them to do.

When we do all this, we may feel very happy and we want more of it. Yet, deep in our hearts we know something is missing but we do not want to think about it. We are not truly peaceful deep inside but we still carry on.

Some day, when something important to

us goes wrong and we cannot get what we want, we may begin to see the emptiness in our lives. With deep sadness, we may say, "Emptiness, all this is emptiness!"

There was once a king who tried, by his wisdom, to understand life in this world. He tried to find meaning in what he did. He was rich and powerful and he sought to enjoy himself in the things in this world.

He gathered many things for himself. He had many servants. Whatever he liked, he took for himself. He was very clever and people praised him. After all he did, he said, "Emptiness of emptiness! All is emptiness." This is what happened to King Solomon who was a king in Israel and he was the son of King David. You can read this in the Bible in the book of Ecclesiastes chapters 1 and 2.

If all we are seeking for is like that of this king, we will also find life to be empty. We will be living as if we are only eating the leftovers of life, from a rubbish bin that contains nothing of great value.

Are we eating from a bin that contains
nothing of great value?



If you know only this kind of life of emptiness, you may also say like that teacher, "I do not want to live forever." That lady was my teacher in 1965 or 1966 and when she told us about her cancer, she looked sad and thoughtful. I felt very sorry for her.

In my composition, I wrote that if I had only a few months left to live, I would spend my time to seek to understand and to live a life that would have lasting meaning. I knew

something about eternal life and I knew that it was not just being alive in this body. There is much meaning in eternal life. It is only when there is true meaning in life that it is worthwhile to live forever and to keep on growing in that meaning.

Since then, I have spent time to learn more about this eternal life and to seek to live in that way. Eternal life is meant to last for eternity but we do not have to wait till we die to receive it. We may receive it now while we are still living in this body. Eternal life is a life of deep meaning in our hearts and it brings meaning to everything that we do. How we live now will also affect how we will be after we die and leave this body. I will try to share with you some of the things that I have learnt about eternal life. With God's help, we may find deep and long-lasting meaning in life, now and after we die.

There was once a young man who heard about eternal life and he wanted very much to have this life. He was a rich man and he had tried hard to do the right things in life. One

day, he came to the Lord Jesus and asked Him what he had to do that he might have eternal life. (We will learn more about who the Lord Jesus is as we go on in this book.)

He knew that the Lord Jesus could tell him how to find eternal life. He said that he had kept the commandments of God since young. However, when the Lord Jesus told him to sell all that he had and to give to the poor and then to come and follow Him, the young man became very sad. He was rich and he did not want to give up his riches even though the Lord Jesus explained that he would have meaningful treasure in Heaven if he were to do what He told him to do.

The rich man went away very sad. He did not find the eternal life that he wanted so much to have. He was not willing to say goodbye to his riches so as to learn from the Lord Jesus how to receive eternal life. His riches had captured his heart. What happened to this rich man is written in the Bible in the book of Matthew chapter 19, verses 16 to 30.

The meaning of what happened to the rich man can also happen to us although we may not be rich. We may also be gripped by the things of this world and be unwilling to give ourselves fully for that which is truly precious and valuable in life. We may long for the freedom in our hearts to be what we ought to be and yet find ourselves captured by the things that we like so much.

There are many things in this world that can hold you and grip you such that you become a slave to these things. You want these things so much that you are no longer free to do the things that you should do. You find then that in your heart you are not free, to be what you know you should be. You become like a prisoner in your own heart and like a bird living inside a cage.

Have you ever felt like a prisoner who cannot live a life of freedom? Have you ever longed to be free in your heart, to be what you ought to be, to be good and to find love and joy and peace?

Have you ever wished that you could fly.
...in your heart to be free...
...to be what you ought to be...



...and to rise up high...
...like an eagle in the sky?

What would you be willing to give up if you can have eternal life? Many people want to have this life but they also want to cling tightly to the things of this world and all its enjoyment.

If we want to have this life, there must be a change in our heart. The Lord Jesus says

that if you cling on to your life in this world, you will lose your life but if you give up your life according to His teaching, you will find that eternal life. This is a difficult matter and it will take time to grow in understanding the meaning of His words. If you want to understand more, you could think over what He said in the Bible in the book of Mark chapter 8, verses 34 to 38.

Something to think about

The teacher thought that it would be boring to live forever because she had not received eternal life. She did not know that life could be very meaningful.

Do you feel sad for the king who said, "All is emptiness"? Why did he say that?

Do you know why the rich man went away, sad in his heart? Are you like him in some ways?

In life eternal is true happiness

Without it, life is but emptiness.

Chapter 3: Why we need eternal life

What is eternal life and why should we seek for it? Many of us think that what is important in life is what we have in this world and what we are able to do with our own power. When we think like this and spend our time to chase after these things, we find that there is emptiness in our hearts. No matter what we do and what we get, we cannot take away that emptiness. It is like eating and eating and still being very hungry. It is like drinking and drinking and still being very thirsty. We are never fully satisfied because the things in this world in themselves cannot bring meaning to our hearts.

When we live for the things in this world, we cannot find true meaning in life. This is because deep meaning in life can come to us only when our heart has become good and right. When at times we are kind to other people, there is joy in our heart. This is not the same kind as the happiness we may feel when we get many things we like in a selfish way.

Most of the time, we think about our own lives and what we like. We do not think much about what is good for others, what is helpful to them. Sometimes, we try to be kind and good and yet we carry on living for ourselves. Why is this so?

We all know that it is easier to do the things that we like. We also know that many of the things we like are not good for our hearts or for others but we still want to have them. Why do we often quarrel and fight with others? It is usually because we want to get something for ourselves and others also want that thing for themselves.

It is easier to think first about what we want for ourselves than to care for what is good for others. When we choose to live in that way, we become like that in our heart as we grow older. It becomes a habit, a way of life for us. After that, we find that it becomes more and more "natural" for us to live in that way. It becomes more and more difficult to change for the better.

If we want to be good in our heart, we must learn to choose what is right and not just what we like. It is not easy to live this way. We must want it very much and we must choose it even when it is difficult. The rich man deeply respected and trusted the Lord Jesus. He understood that it was the right thing to follow what the Lord Jesus told him to do but he found it very hard to do so. He liked his riches very much and it was his way of life. He chose the easier way, to hold on to his riches and he then went away, sad in his heart.

It does not mean that it is always wrong to be rich or to have things in this world. What is wrong is that we cling on to our riches even when our riches stop us from doing what is right. We should always be willing to give up our riches for what is helpful, what is good and what is right. If we are not willing to do that, we become slaves to our riches. In our heart we become prisoners to our selfish ways.

The Lord Jesus knew that the riches had captured the heart of that rich man and He

wanted to help him to be free. He wanted to help him to learn to choose to let go of his riches. If he gave them to the poor, his heart could be free to receive eternal life from God.

You may think that you are not like that rich man because you are not rich. Each one of us may be like that rich man in many other ways.

When, as children, we quarrel and fight and are not willing to share, it is the same way of life. Young people and adults do that too!

**Do we quarrel and fight to get our own way
Like these two birds I saw one day?**



When, as young people, we are not willing to help other students because we want to be cleverer than others and to be praised, we are doing the same thing as that rich man. Children and adults may also selfishly seek to be praised.

When, as adults, we are not willing to say “sorry” because we do not want people to know that we have done wrong, are we not like that rich man too? We are clinging on to our “face”, our name, what people think of us and we are not willing to give that up so as to do what is right. Children and young people also do that.

When we live in this way, we may get our own way but it is not the right way. We will find then that life is empty in our heart even though we may enjoy it for a while.

Sometimes, we see that we should be good and we try very hard to do the right things. We know that it is not easy but we want to be kind and helpful to others. We want to be honest and not to tell lies. Soon

after that, we find that we still do the things we know we should not. We try again and again and we still fail. Why do we keep failing?

We all know that we came into being at a point in time. We did not make ourselves. We did not create ourselves. We did not come into this world by our own power. We are also not able to become good in character by ourselves, by our own ability.

God created us. He has made us such that we can know Him and be like Him in our hearts. We can now choose whether we want to be good, like Him, or we want to disobey Him and go our own way. It is easy to choose to go our own way and live whatever way we like. We may enjoy going our own way and yet we find a deep emptiness in our hearts. If we want to change, to be good, we may also try to do so by ourselves and that is why we fail.

The Lord Jesus tells us that we do not have life in ourselves. This means that unless we come to God, we do not have eternal life, the life of God. This life can help us to become

good in our character, if we want to do what is right, and we trust Him and obey Him.

In some ways, we are like the moon.



The moon cannot shine by itself. It needs the light from the sun to shine on it before it will give light in the dark. We need spiritual light and life from God. Otherwise, our lives will be dark.

In other ways, we are not like the moon. For example, the moon only reflects the light from the sun. The light bounces off the moon and it does not become part of the moon. For

us, God wants to give His life to us such that it becomes part of our lives. From our hearts we can then give out spiritual light and life as we depend on God.

We will not be able to be truly good until we come to God for His life. The Lord Jesus says that He is the “bread of life”, “the living bread”, because He can give us eternal life if we are truly sorry for the way we have lived and we want Him to help us to change. If we trust Him, He will give His own life, the life of God, to us so that we can become good. In our hearts we will then find true meaning in life.

We need to come to God and ask for His forgiveness for all the wrong that we have done. Even if you have done very bad things in life, God is willing to forgive you if you now want to change your ways and follow Him. You must no longer want to go your own way but now choose to follow God’s way. When you trust in the Lord Jesus and choose to follow Him, you can then “eat” of this “living bread” and His life becomes part of your life. You will begin to know eternal life in your heart.

We can have eternal life while we are still living in this body while on earth because we can receive God's life now, through the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus explains this in the Bible in the book of John chapter 6, verses 26 to 58. He says, "I am the bread of life; the one who comes to Me will not hunger and the one who believes in Me will never thirst." When we humbly and honestly invite Him into our hearts, our lives will no longer be empty but be filled with meaning. This life is meant to continue to grow and blossom in eternity.

What do you want in life?

God, who made you, has given you the choice, whether you want to be good, like Him, or you want your own selfish way of life. You must choose which way you want to live. No one else can choose this for you.

What happens to your heart if you choose a selfish way of life?

What happens if you choose to be good, like God?

If you want to be good, do you find that you fail again and again even though you try very hard? God is glad to help you if you ask Him.

In what way are we like the moon? In what way are we not like the moon? Do you think these realities are important and meaningful?

What do you think eternal life means? How can you receive eternal life in your heart? What will happen when you have eternal life?

With God's help, you can clearly see

What you choose now is what you will be.

If you want to know more about how you could find life, you could go on to read:

PART 1. BOOKLET 2: Wanting life

P.S.

If you have not yet received God's forgiveness and you have now decided to come to God for forgiveness, you could pray to Him. You could tell Him you are sorry you went your own way and now you want to follow Him and His ways and ask Him to forgive you for all the wrong things you have done. You could thank Him for the eternal life that He offers you through the Lord Jesus and receive Him into your heart. The Lord Jesus died for our sake, bearing the punishment that we deserve because of our wrongdoing, making it possible for us to be forgiven and to receive the life of God now.

In order to deepen your walk with God, it is important to read the Bible and pray to God regularly. It is also helpful for you to learn from other Christians with good character, who deeply love God. You could also take some time, prayerfully, to look for a suitable Christian congregation that is faithful to God, where the Bible is carefully taught and applied to daily life. Look for one where you can be helped to know the Lord Jesus more personally each day, relate meaningfully with others and grow in the quality of your character.

If you have difficulty getting information on the availability of this and other booklets on this subject, *A Journey in Life*; for enquiries, you could write to the following address:

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Please write your postal address (and contact number if you wish).

As each new day begins to dawn...



...what is it that you look forward to in life?

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