

**McLean Bible Church**

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**UNITED BY HOPE – Part 3**

**Four Steps to a Full Life**

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open to 1 Peter, near the end of the Bible. I’m loving walking through this book and can’t wait for you to hear God’s Word in the next few minutes.

I want to call us to seek God’s face together in light of all that’s happening in our country, to come together as His people, as one before Him in prayer. In fact, let’s start now. Will you pray with me?

O God, we say together with one voice before You now that we need Your mercy in our country. We pray for Your help in so many ways. God, we pray for our President, his wife and others who have COVID. We pray for their healing and recovery. We pray, O God, that You would draw them to Yourself and Your love and Your mercy. We pray that You would give all those in the White House, the Senate, the House of Representatives and the courts wisdom to lead our country well. We pray for leaders who fear You, who lead with wisdom according to Your Word. We pray for the spread of the gospel—Your grace—among leaders in our country. We pray for their humility and integrity, for justice, mercy, truth and love to mark those who lead us now, and those who will lead us in the future.

Even as we pray this for our leaders, Jesus, we praise You alone as the perfect Leader, as the only Leader Who is worthy of all our hope, all our trust and all our allegiance. Jesus, You are the Leader our nation needs. So we pray for spiritual awakening, for softening of hearts across our city, across our country, that we might turn to You. As Your church, we unite together around You alone. We pray and commit ourselves to work together as Your body, Your bride, for the spread of Your fame in our neighborhoods here in Metro Washington, DC, in our nation and in all nations—however and wherever You lead us.

God, we pray that You would lead and guide us as Your church in this election to glorify You and to honor everyone. First Peter 2:17 says to honor everyone with our thoughts, attitudes, speech and actions. Even now, over the next few minutes, we ask You to soften our hearts. Speak to our hearts by the power of Your Spirit, so that we might experience life to the fullest, to Your glory and for our good. Hear our prayers and answer, we pray, especially over these next few days leading up to the election. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

All right, let’s hear from God. Many of you are memorizing 1 Peter 1 and if you’re following in the Bible Reading Plan, you have memorized through verse seven today. We’re actually going to start where we left off last week in verse 13, so we’re not going to requote those initial verses today. Instead, we’re going to begin by reading these words from God. So I want to invite all of you, whether you’re in this room or at home, if you’re alone or with a group of people, let’s read God’s Word out loud together, beginning with 1 Peter 1:13:

13Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” 17And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, 18knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 20He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 21who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

22Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24for

“All flesh is like grass  
    and all its glory like the flower of grass.  
The grass withers,  
    and the flower falls,  
25but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

If you are taking notes, here’s one truth I want you to take away from what we just read: **Life is futile apart from knowing and enjoying God as Father.** This is not something I’m making up; this is in what we just read and what God is saying to us right now. I want to show you that, then I want us to think about what a significant, bold, even potentially offensive statement this is.

First, we see this in God’s Word in verse 17. The Bible says to Christians, *“If you call on God as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile…”* Remember, Christians are foreigners in this country or any country. That’s the team we’re on: Elect Exiles. Verse 18:*“…knowing that you were ransomed…”*—saved from. Now we would expect the next word to be “sin” or “judgment” or “death.” But verse 18 says you were ransomed from *“…the futile ways inherited from your forefathers.”*

Huh? Do you see this truth here? Christian, you have been ransomed—saved—from futility, from futile ways. That’s a strong word. You’ve been saved from pointless, meaningless ways that were passed on to you by your forefathers. You used to live pointless, meaningless, futile lives, but now you’ve been ransomed from that. You’ve been saved from futility by Whom? By God, Who is your Father.

Three times in 1 Peter 1, God is referred to as Father. Christians are referred to as those who are born again (verse three). It’s the same language in verse 23: *“Since you have been born again...”* And in verse 14, which we just read, Christians are called *“obedient children.”* A Christian is a child of God, someone who knows God as Father.

I’ve shared on multiple occasions now this quote from J.I. Packer in his excellent book that I always highly recommend, Knowing God. Packer writes, “What is a Christian? “The richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God as Father.” If you want to know how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child and having God as his Father.”

If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayer and his whole outlook on life, it means he does not understand Christianity very well at all. Everything that Christ taught, everything that is distinctively Christian, is summed up in the knowledge of the fatherhood of God. “Father” is the Christian name for God. This truth is evident in 1 Peter: life is futile apart from knowing and enjoying God as Father.

Now, let’s think about how significant and even potentially offensive this statement is. First, the offense. What I’m saying, based on the Bible, is that your life is and will be ultimately futile, meaningless, pointless if you live it apart from knowing and enjoying God as Father. Just let that land on every one of our ears and every one of our hearts. Think about non-Christian friends and family members who are listening right now. If this is true, then your life right now is futile. If you do not come to know and enjoy God as Father, then your life will ultimately be futile, pointless. You will have missed the whole point. What I want to show you today is that God does not want you to live and die like that. God wants you, right where you are, to live and die with fullness and meaning for what matters most in eternity.

That leads to the significance of this statement. If I were to turn it around and state it more positively, I would put this truth this way. Life is full, in the deepest possible meaning of that word—abundant, meaningful, full of purpose—only when you know and enjoy God as Father. In the next few minutes, I want to show you four steps to full life based on God’s Word, all revolving around knowing and enjoying Him as Father each and every day of your life. That’s what I believe God is after in this text. Just let this soak in. The God of the universe wants you to experience life to the fullest, to experience abundant, meaningful life, life that gets the point.

Who among us doesn’t want that? Who among us, when choosing between a futile life and a full life, would say, “I’m going to go with futile”? A meaningful life or a meaningless life? “I’d like to be meaningless.” At the end of your life, do you want to look back and say, “I got the point,” or “I totally missed the point”? Nobody says, “I want to get to the end and look back and think, man, I’m so glad I wasted it.”

According to 1 Peter, that’s what God wants to save you from. So how? Four steps to full life. I didn’t just pull these out of a hat. There are four clear commands from God in this text and these steps flow directly from these commands. It’s worth writing these down, remembering them and then putting them into practice.

I’ll show you one more thing before we get into the four steps. This whole passage starts with the word “therefore.” Whenever we see that in the Bible, we know that’s referring to what came before. So in light of what’s just been said, do these four things. These four steps hinge on what we read and we saw last week in 1 Peter 1:3-12. That’s why I’m going to pull out this rope one more time, just to remind us of what we talked about last week. If you did not get to listen or watch last week, I would encourage you to, not because it was an amazing sermon, but because it was an amazing text.

We talked about our life being like this rope, which extends forever in that direction—eternity past—and forever in this direction representing eternity future. This short blue part on the rope represents your life and my life right now. We talked last week about how we hold on to hope amidst temptations to lose trust and hope and faith in God in the middle of this. You do that by looking back at God’s love for you from before time even began. Look back at all those who served you by pointing you to hope in God. Look back to the cross and the resurrection of Jesus, Who died for you and rose from the dead to guarantee your inheritance forever in heaven. This leads us to look forward to the inheritance that’s waiting for us in eternity, the glory that will be given to all who hope and trust in God.

This past week, Heather and I were talking through a challenge and how we’re tempted in this world to say, “The grass seems greener on the other side when it’s actually not.” But then we started thinking, “Wait a second. The grass actually is greener on that side. It’s perfectly green.” I have good news for you. On the other side of this life, grass is totally green forever.

So look back, look forward, then look up—not just at angels and people who have gone before us who are cheering us on and encouraging us to hope and trust in God’s Word because He’s worth it, but look up at the God Who promises to guard and guide you all the way to the end. Peter says, *“Therefore…”—*in light of all that—we can know how to live in the blue part of this rope. That’s what verses 13 through 25 are going to tell us. How do we experience life to the fullest here? How do you make this count? Verse 13 says, “*Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

**1. Hope in God.**

The first step to a full life is to hope in God. Set your hope fully on the grace of God. Then verse 21 says, *“…your faith and hope are in God…”*

Hope in God—that’s an interesting command, isn’t it? Hope is a desire, an emotion, a feeling. So how do you command somebody to feel a certain way? “Feel this emotion. Do it.” “Uh, okay. I’ll try. How do I do that?”

God actually tells us how to hope here in verse 13. He says, *“…preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded…”* God is telling us here that there are things you and I can and need to do in our minds in order to cultivate hope in our hearts. This is so important. According to God, hope is not some passive emotion you can’t control. “I just don’t have hope and don’t know how to get it!” No, there’s a way to get it, to experience it. It’s not something you either have or you don’t. No, you can control, cultivate and create hope in your heart by disciplining your mind and thoughts, by not letting your mind be ruled by thoughts that are contrary to hope in God.

Then be sober-minded. A drunk person is disoriented, right? They’re not thinking straight. God is saying, “Guard your mind from disoriented thinking that pulls you away from hope in Me.” We talked about this in Philippians 4, in the battle with anxiety and all kinds of other battles we have in our minds. In a message on Jesus and anxiety a couple months ago, we walked through the STOP acrostic. When you are tempted to worry, when you’re tempted to be anxious—and today I’ll add, when you’re tempted to feel hopeless—STOP. Let’s remember what these letters stand for.

**S—Seek God in prayer about everything.** Philippians 4:6, *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”* This is how to hope in God. Seek God in prayer about everything. Lift up all the things that cause you to feel hopeless.

**T—Trust God through prayers of Thanksgiving.** *“With thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”* Thank God for all we saw last week—His love for you from before the foundation of the world, His promises to you about the future, His power that will guard and guide you to the end. Trust God through prayers of Thanksgiving

**O—Open your mind to that which comes from God.** This is what we’re seeing here in 1 Peter 1:13. The way Philippians 4:8 put it was, *“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”* This is simple, but I’m not saying it’s easy. Our minds are a battlefield, but the instruction God is giving us in this battle is simple: think about what you’re thinking about.

If you spend all your time thinking about what’s going on in this world—various things that are going wrong or have gone wrong or might go wrong—if you fill your mind with these things, you are going to feel hopeless, anxious, discouraged. But if you set your mind on Who God is, how He loves you and the promises of God to you, do you know what starts to happen? Hope starts to rise. Hope in God.

So guard your mind. Don’t spend so many hours looking at a screen, just immersing yourself in the stuff of this world, expecting hope to rise in your heart. Don’t do it. No, immerse your mind in God, His Word, the wonder of Who He is and what He has said to you, then hope will start to rise. Do you see how important your mind is? Even back in 1 Peter 1:14 we read, *“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.”* These are passions and emotions that are driven by a lack of knowledge. What’s going on in your mind?

Peter is saying, “You used to live with emotions that were driven by a mind that was immersed in this world. You didn’t know what you know now. You didn’t know Who God is and the hope that’s found in Him. But now you know Him and His Word. So don’t forget. Fix your mind on God—His grace, His promises, His love for you. Keep opening your mind to that which comes from God.”

Then back to our acrostic. **P—Practice the Word of God**. In other words, live your live according to what God’s Word says, not according to the ways of this world. Don’t live according to the futility and hopelessness of this world; live on a higher plane. Live with hope in God.

So the first step to a full life is to hope in God. The way you generate this hope in your heart is by filling your mind with the love, promises, truth and the wonder of God and His Word, from eternity past to eternity future. It’s not just steps you take in your mind and heart. Verse 13 says you’re preparing your mind for action. So what’s the action?

**2. Be holy like God.**

*“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”* He’s quoting from God’s Word to His people centuries before. So here’s the second step to a full life. First, hope in God. Second, be holy like God.

Now, there are actually many, many sermons on just this phrase. For the sake of time today, I’m just going to ask you to think with me about the phrase, “Like father, like son.” That statement can be a really good thing if a father is a really good father, right? If a father is known for his integrity, then somebody observes his son’s life and says, “Like father, like son.” That’s a good thing for that son. But it’s not a good thing when a father is evil. Maybe the father is known for being prideful and selfish, lacking integrity. Someone might observe his son’s life and say, “Like father, like son.” That’s not a good thing for that son.

So, here’s the picture of God—the perfect Father. For God to be holy means God is perfect in all His ways. He is perfectly loving, perfectly just, perfectly merciful, perfectly wise, perfectly faithful, perfectly good...we could go on and on. If that’s the case, then don’t you and I want it to be said of us, “Like Father, like son/daughter”? We want to be holy—why? Because we want to be like our Father. We want to be loving, just, merciful, kind, wise and faithful, don’t we? Who of us thinks, “I want to be hateful and unjust; I want to be a fool; I want to be evil”? No, we want to reflect the character of God. Certainly as Christians we want this.

I think about my own life. I want my wife and kids to see the character of God in me. I want you to see the character of God in me. I want people around me who are spiritually lost, on a road that leads to eternal suffering, to see the character of God in me.

We should want to reflect the character of God. Don’t you want that in your life? And not just for the sake of others, but for the sake of yourself. Think about it. God created you. God designed you. God knows what is best for you, in your heart and your mind and your life—far better than you do. So it makes sense that if you actually want the most out of life, if you want to live the good life, then you’ll live like the One Who is perfectly good. The holy life equals the good life. The holy life equals the abundant life, the full life.

Again, this is remarkably simple. I’m not saying it’s easy, but don’t make this more complicated than it is. Do you want to live a full life? Then live the life your Creator, Who loves you and made you, has designed you to be. Be holy like God. To be like God is the best way to be.

**3. Be fearful of God.**

Then in this third step to a full life is where things get really interesting, even baffling. Verses 17-19 say, *“And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.”* Whoa, what a statement! You’ve got to see what this means.

So the third step to a full life is to be fearful of God. Now, as soon as I say that, you might start to think, “I thought I was not supposed to be afraid.” Throughout Scripture we read, “Don’t fear. Don’t fear. Don’t be afraid.” How can you hope in God if you’re afraid of God? How can you live in hope and fear at the same time? When you ask this, the answer is awesome. Think about this with me. It is right and good to fear someone when you love someone. Let me say that one more time. It is right and good to fear someone when you love someone.

The simplest illustration I can think of is my dad, who is in heaven right now and who I miss constantly. There are so many days, particularly recently, when I would love to call him up and ask for wisdom. I loved my dad so much that I feared disobeying or dishonoring him. Not because of what he would do to me, although I knew he would show appropriate discipline to me, but even more so because my disobedience would be saying that I don’t honor him, despite his love for me.

Here’s another example. I love my wife Heather so much that I fear, I dread, doing anything that would dishonor her or her love for me. In light of the way she loves me and how much I love her, I don’t even want to think about doing something that would show her that she is not precious or that her love is not valuable to me. I dread that.

That’s the sense of fear we’re seeing here in our relationship with God. In one sense, yes, there’s a fear of God as Judge before Whom we will one day stand to give an account for all our deeds. There’s a whole other sermon there on what the day of judgment involves. To be clear, all who are in Jesus do not fear the ultimate judgment of being separated from God’s love for all eternity. Jesus has paid the price for our sins.

Notice the emphasis here in verses 17-19: *“..,conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed...with the precious blood of Christ…”* Do you see the relationship between fear and love here? God, in His love, sent His Son to shed His blood for our sins. Let’s just pause here.

Non-Christian friend or family member, here’s what that means. We have all sinned against God and we all deserve judgment from God for all of eternity—everlasting condemnation for our sins. That’s what we deserve. But God loves us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die on a cross to pay the price for our sins, to die for us, to rise from the grave so that anyone anywhere, including anyone today, who trusts in Jesus can be saved from all their sins and restored to relationship with God for full, eternal, everlasting life. This full, eternal, everlasting life is only possible through the blood of Jesus, Who died on the cross for us. So I invite you to put your trust in Jesus and His blood to cover over your sins and bring you into relationship with God as your Father.

When you do—and for all who know God as Father—then fear Him, which means living in a way that shows that Jesus’ blood and God’s love for you are now precious to you. Fear disobeying God as Father as you give in to sin, knowing God gave His Son to free you from that. Fear living like that sin is a light thing to you. Love for God produces that kind of fear of God.

I’ll use one more illustration; this one I heard from John Piper in my previous church. It’s not a perfect illustration—most illustrations are not—but I think it helps communicate the point. Imagine an 18-year-old girl kidnapped from her wealthy father. The kidnappers demanded a huge ransom, so the father liquidates all his assets—selling his house, his possessions, right down to his wife’s wedding ring, all that he has. He brings it all to the appointed place, sets the ransom down in a field and walks away. Soon, the daughter comes out, gets the ransom and takes it back to the kidnappers. Then she puts her arm around one of them as she walks away, looking over her shoulder at her father, laughing and hollering, “Sucker!”

First Peter 1:17 is saying, “Fear saying that to God.” You don’t want to say that to God. Don’t live like that. Fear taking His sacrifice for your sin—the blood of His Son—and using it as a license to sin, to run after the things of this world, to put your hope in the things of this world. Don’t do it. With love for God, in light of His love for you, be fearful of God. Don’t miss how this is a step to the full life. When you love God like this, when you know the depth of the value and the preciousness of His love for you, then you are experiencing what it means to know and enjoy God as your Father, which is the most awesome way to live.

Nothing in this world can compare with knowing and enjoying God as your Father. This intensity of love and fear in my relationship with my dad is why I miss him so much. This intensity of love and fear in my relationship with Heather is why I enjoy her so much. And this intensity of love and fear in relationship with God is critical to knowing and enjoying life to the fullest with God as your Father.

**4. Love like God.**

Those words “our Father” lead right into the final step to the full life. So hope in God, be holy like God and be fearful of God in these ways. Then, fourth, verses 22-23:

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.

Wow, that is so good. Follow this. The fourth step to full life is to love like God. This phrase, *“Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth…”* is talking about how people become Christians, followers of Jesus. They trust in Jesus to save and purify them from their sins, then they follow Him as Lord. It’s followed by this in verse 23, *“,,,Since you have been born again...through the living and abiding word of God.”*

What’s so awesome here is the way God links their conversion to Christ with their affection for one another in the church. Don’t miss it. When we think about holiness, we so often think holiness is not doing this or not doing that in this world. That’s true—we are to flee a variety of things in this world that we’ve been saved from. But here God is saying, “Holiness is defined in what you do in this world to show love for one another. My Word has created not just new life in you. My Word has created a new love in you, a sincere love, like family, brotherly love. It’s earnest, from a pure heart.” The picture here is a supernatural love—a love that is not natural to us—because it’s made possible in us by the living and abiding Word of God. Even the word here for “earnest” could be translated “stretched” or “strained.” It’s a depth of love that is not natural.

This is such a needed word for us today, right? Let’s be honest. In a day, when love for one another is stretched and strained in this world—whether it’s disagreements on COVID and regathering or disagreements about justice, race or politics, all in a day when there’s so much temptation to be critical and suspicious of each other, even to give up on each other—we need to hear God say to us in His Word today, “You’re actually saved for a sincere brotherly love, for the purpose of loving each other. My Word gives you supernatural power to do this in otherworldly ways.”

I was so encouraged this week talking with a group leader describing two people in his group, saying, “These two people are polar opposites in so many ways, from personality to politics and everything in between. They’re both approaching this election and a host of other things very differently, but they both love Jesus. They both love His Word. They’re both holding on to those ropes we pictured a few weeks ago, caring for each other. They’re both serving and sharing the gospel together in our community.” This is the kind of supernatural, otherworldly love the living and abiding Word of God creates in us.

Think about this love, not just in the present, but in light of the future. Picture this rope going toward eternity future because there’s coming a day in the future when we won’t have conflict with each other anymore. Like none. There’s just so much sickness among Christians that is evident in social media, back and forth, in so many different ways. I would encourage you to spend far more time in God’s Word and sharing the gospel than you do patrolling social media.

I was reminded this week of something John Newton once wrote. In case you don’t recognize that name, John Newton served as a captain on slave ships before he became a follower of Jesus. The Word of God changed his heart, then he began working against slavery. He’s probably most well known for writing the hymn, “Amazing Grace.” He wrote many other things also, including a letter called “On Controversy.” A pastor had written Newton saying that this pastor was going to write an article criticizing another pastor. Newton replied with some cautions for him to consider—not just in his writing, but in his heart. One of the things Newton talked about in his reply was viewing this other pastor in light of eternity:

If you count him a believer, though greatly mistaken in the subject of debate between you, the words of David to Joab concerning Absalom are very applicable. Deal gently with him for my sake. The Lord loves him and bears with him; therefore, you must not despise him or treat him harshly. The Lord bears with you likewise and expects that you should show tenderness to others from a sense of the much forgiveness you need yourself. In a little while, you will meet him in heaven, and he will then be dearer to you than the nearest friend you have upon earth is to you now. Anticipate that period in your thoughts. And though you may find it necessary to oppose his errors, view him personally as a kindred soul with whom you are to be happy in Christ forever.

Is that not a good word? Christians, view each other that way—even Christians you disagree with. Deal gently with them and do not treat them harshly, as the world would have you do. Instead, anticipate the day when you will love him or her more than you love even your closest friend or family member right now. Love him or her today as one with whom you will be happy together in Christ forever. That’s truly an otherworldly love.

That is a critical step to a full life, which is right where this text lands in verses 24-25: *“For all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever. And this word is the good news that was preached to you.”* In other words, this world is fading, so live like it. Love like it. God has just told you, right where you are, that your life will be futile apart from knowing and enjoying Him as Father. God has just told you that your life will be full when you know and enjoy Him as Father. This means you are to hope in Him, to be holy like Him, to be fearful of Him and to love like Him.

So what are you going to do with what God just said? The way I see it, you have two options. One, you can choose not to believe what God has just said, thinking, “I reject God. I reject the hope and love He offers. I don’t believe in what Jesus has done for me.” Or a variation of this option would be to say, “I guess I believe some of that, maybe all of it, but I’d still rather live my own way. Functionally, I’d rather live apart from knowing and enjoying God as Father.”

With either of those variations, I urge you today to not make that choice. I believe God is speaking to your heart right now, saying, “Don’t do it.” Based on God’s Word, I urge you not to choose futility with this life you’ve been given. Don’t miss the whole point. It could be today, it could be tomorrow, but in any moment you might find yourself in eternal, everlasting judgment, condemnation and separation from the love of God. I urge you, don’t make that choice.

I urge you to take the second option which is to choose life! As Moses said in Deuteronomy 30:19, *“I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life.”* God wants you to have life which is only possible through knowing and enjoying Him as your Father. This is possible for you, no matter what you’ve done, no matter who you are, what your past is or what you’re walking through right now. He wants you to experience full and abundant life. I invite you to trust and hope in Him. Believe He is Who He says He is. He loves you. Put your hope, trust and faith in Him today.

I invite you to bow your heads with me as I lead us into a time of prayer. I invite some of you right now to say, “Today is the day when I’m going to choose life in Jesus. Today’s the day I’m going to put my hope in Jesus.” Say to God right now from your heart, “Yes, today I choose You. I choose to hope in You. I choose to put my faith and trust in Jesus to save me from my sins by His blood on a cross and to give me new life, full life, abundant life. Today I choose Jesus. I choose to hope in You, God.”

O God, for all of us who have made that choice, help us today to experience the life You’ve called us to live, to experience the life you’ve created us for—a life of hope, a life of holiness. We want to be like You, O God. We want a life of fear in all these good and right ways. And God, give us a life of otherworldly love for each other and for a world around us that desperately needs hope in You. I pray over every single person listening right now that You would help them experience full life, knowing and enjoying You as Father.

I pray this over every child, every teenager. Help them to see that the things of this world don’t satisfy anywhere close to how You satisfy. May children and teenagers know and enjoy You as Father. I pray this for every young adult all the way up to senior adults and everything in between, every man and woman.

God, help us to hope in You, to be holy like You, to fear You, to love like You and to experience life with You as our Father. I pray this, based on Your Word to us today, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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