

Do You Know Life?

by Dan Stone

There are three truths that we have the right to know: that our sins are removed from God's sight; who and where *the Life* is; and who we are.

According to 1 Corinthians 2:11, only the Spirit of God can give this "knowing" to us. In spiritual matters, *knowing* comes by revelation. To "know about," on the other hand, is merely a work of the intellect. Even though we may accumulate a great amount of "know about," or information, we will never *know* spiritual truth if the Spirit does not reveal it to us.

When the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, has done His work, we will *know* the things freely given to us by God (v. 12). The Spirit reveals that the key to all three truths that we need to know is found in the *Person* who is imparted to us. We do not *earn* some thing or some one; rather, it is a gift already given. Mark it down—when one does not *know* he has the Life, he will seek to *earn* the Life, by gaining more information about it or by trying to deserve it.

Knowledge is *know-about*. But, in the unseen and eternal realm, knowing is spirit. We are tempted to think that a direct positive relationship exists between the amount of *know-about* acquired about spiritual matters, and our ability to perform them. But experience teaches just the opposite. The more the individual *knows about* spiritual matters, the more frustrating are the results. A square peg will not fit a round hole. That round hole is made for just one item—a round ball. Jesus Christ is that round ball.

Incredible as it may seem, it is the love of God that frustrates the "know-abouters" in matters of the Spirit. He never permits the square peg to fit the round hole. He never stops us from trying to fit it either. The attempt and the frustration are a part of the search for most believers. The resulting frustration keeps us searching, for in the final analysis we are on a spiritual quest. We think it is a cerebral one. Consequently, when we come to our end, and are at our worst in the flesh, we are the nearest to hearing the Spirit of God. He will say something like: "Jesus Christ is the Life; you will never *become* the Life. Rest, let Him be what you have been trying to become."

Put aside the concept of knowing spiritual matters via the mind. Let the Spirit teach the spirit in you. After all, it is His responsibility.

I will take for granted that readers have experienced the first truth we need to know: the forgiveness of our sins. It is not a slighting of the question, but a recognition of a fact of the reader's life.

Now to the other two truths: "Who and where is *the life*?" and "Who am I?" Underscore this: If I know where Christ is, I will know that *the Life* will look like my life.

"*I am the Life*," states John 11:25. Who is this "I am" speaking? It is Jesus. What claim does He make? He makes the claim to be *the Life*. In the context of the Scripture mentioned above, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead by imparting life to that body. Lazarus had no life and could do nothing to earn life. Life is always imparted. It is never earned.

John 14:6-10 informs us that Jesus does not claim to be His own Life. He says that the Father is His Life. As *the Father* was His Life, Jesus is our Life.

To Philip, Jesus said, "*If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father.*" Isn't it possible that such a statement to Philip at this time was too much for him to comprehend?

Remember, when you know who the Life is and where the Life is, you will know that the Life looks like you. Jesus is the speaker, but the words and works are of the Father. Until the Spirit brings the revelation, it is more than Philip can handle. "The only way you will see the Father, Philip, is to take a good look at Me in faith believing," Jesus might have said.

Remember that Jesus told the disciples: "*The Holy Spirit . . . He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you*" (John 14:26). Knowing the deep things of God awaits the work of the Spirit of God in the believer. Jesus did not play the game of modern religion—that of trying to fabricate a life and then present it to the Father as an offering.

Who is *the Life* in Paul's writing? We know Galatians 2:20: "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*" This coupled with Galatians 4:19, "*until Christ be formed in you,*" presents the idea of who the Life is and where He is. It is in Paul and it looks like Paul.

In Colossians 1:27 Paul speaks of "*Christ in you.*" Then again, continuing in verse 28, Paul states that his purpose is to present every man perfect in Christ, thus providing us with another picture of who and where the Life is.

Philippians 1:21 states, "*For me to live is Christ.*" Who is doing the living? Is it Paul, or is it Christ? This coupled with Colossians 3:4, where Paul calls Christ "*our life,*" indicates again just who Paul knew the Life to be.

Finally, look at 2 Corinthians 5:20: "*We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us.*" What is God doing in this new creature called Paul? He is pleading as Paul. God is doing His pleading for the Gentile world in the form of Paul, His willing servant.

The second part of the second question is, "Where is the Life?" He is in me! When I know He is in me *being* the Life, then I do not have to try to *become* the Life I already am. I am free to let someone operate me. Union is simple. When I know who the Life is and where the Life is, my main frustration is removed.

For years I lived from a separated concept of my relationship with God. The result: I had a *duty* to look like Christ and to act for Christ. My pattern was to get information (know-abouts) so that I might properly pattern my life after His. I wanted people to say, "Now there goes a person whose life looks like Christ's!"

At the start, I had a *sins* problem. If someone had told me that Christ lived in me I would probably have linked it with the fact that He died for me. I was happy just being saved and forgiven. My big problem was sins. It was sometime later that the frustration began. The complete answer to the problem was only resolved when the Spirit of God revealed to me and illuminated me with the total truth of who and where the Life is.

The last question is, "*Who am I?*" 2 Corinthians 4:7 ("*We have this treasure in earthen vessels*") tells us that we are earthen vessels. It is easy for me to be me. Also, it is difficult to become someone I was never meant to become.

I am a right-handed person. It is natural for me when I do something right-handed. But if I tackle the same task left-handed, it is a disaster. The results in me are frustration, anger, desperation and eventually surrender. Haven't we all experienced these same results in the Christian life in trying to become someone we were never intended to become? It will always happen when we are attempting the unnatural, let alone the impossible.

In Genesis 2:7, we read the incident of God's making man as an earthen vessel. He formed man of the dust of the ground and inspired him with the capacity to receive Him and express Him. The earthen vessel was always meant to be the means by which the Treasure would flow out. It is the serpent's lie that we should try to become like God.

What are some examples of the earthen vessel? The vessel is like the fruit to the tree, the branch to the vine, the wife to the husband in expressing the husband's seed, the temple to the icon it contains, and the slave to his master.

Scripture teaches that we are joint heirs with the Heir, brothers to the elder Brother, and sons by faith to the Son. We have been raised to a level we could never earn. It is bequeathed! Consequently, an earthen vessel is a royal position, or as Peter said, "*a royal priesthood.*" The vessel is the means by which the unseen and eternal is known on the plane of the seen and temporary (2 Cor. 4:18).

Indeed, this is an important role to perform. To be an earthen vessel is a privilege. I do not have to become like anyone else, nor do I have to submit to anyone for retraining. I am free to be me, with the wink! It really is He, and it is me.

Last Autumn in New England, I reveled in the colors of the leaves provided for our viewing. All with whom I talked expressed the same delight. We were spellbound by the variety of color, mixed with the firs and green pastures. It was perfect. No one desired for every leaf to be the same color and every tree to be the same species. Sometimes I think that Christians all try to look alike—just like Jesus, of course. But when we know who *the Life* is, we will know that *the Life* has a variety of colors.

The key is this: If I do not know who and where the Life is, I will attempt to make my life look like Christ's; but if I know who and where the Life is, I will know that the Life looks like me.