

Discussion Guide: Three Stages of Life

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42 (NIV)

November 3, 2002: "Three Stages of Life" by Joe Bartemus - Pastor Adult Education CPC. Joe gleans three important stages in the life of a growing Christian from Paul's second letter to Timothy 4:5-8: Living, Dying, After Dying.

1. Stage #1 of Life: Living. 2 Timothy 4:5 (four imperative statements...directives). This is the stage most of us are now in...where we are breathing and moving about with intent. Paul encourages Timothy to...
 - **Be** sober (Gr. nehpo) in all things (NASB), be self-controlled in all things (NET), be watchful in all things (NKJV), keep your head in all situations (NIV). The Greek word nehpo (nay' fo) means 1) to be sober, to be calm and collected in spirit, 2) to be temperate, dispassionate, circumspect
 - **Endure** hardship. The journey will not be easy.
 - **Do** the work of an evangelist. As a "good angel" let your life be a proclamation of the gospel...share the good news of Jesus Christ.
 - **Fulfill** your ministry. Be actively involved in serving the Lord and people.

Discussion Questions:

What is the benefit of being calm and collected in spirit...in all things?
Why does life's journey seem to take us to places we don't want to go?
What can we do to encourage one another to be a "good angel?"
How is God at work in your life...as you serve Him and others?

2. Stage #2 of Life: Dying. 2 Timothy 4:7 (Three perfect verbs...completed actions with continuing results). As Paul contemplates his own passing, he reflects over his life and tells Timothy...
 - I have **fought** the good fight. I have competed well in the fight of faith. I have loved and followed Jesus with all my heart, soul, and mind.
 - I have **finished** the race. I stayed the course of the high calling of God and did not give up...I persevered.
 - I have **kept** the faith...in Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

Is your life a fight? If so, how does it manifest itself?
What is the good fight?
What are the implications of viewing our life as a race?
What can we do to encourage one another to keep the faith?

3. Stage #3 of Life: After Dying. 2 Timothy 4:8. Paul sees that right now, his award awaits. His vision of eternal life after the death of his physical body is one in which he will live forever with Jesus, clothed in the righteousness of God.

Discussion Question: How should our being clothed in the righteousness of God effect our lives today? (2 Corinthians 5:16-21, 2 Peter 1:1-11)