

## The Rhythm of Life

Online Sermon: [http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567)

One of the greatest gifts God has given to humanity is the gift of life itself! We have but one life to live and the way in which we think, speak and act matters to our Creator. Having been created in His image (Genesis 1:27) and a little lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:7) God rightly expects the masterpieces of His grace to honor Him not by burying (Matthew 25:19-30)



or outright rejecting knowledge of Him (Romans 1:28) and His right to rule over our lives (Psalms 2) but by belief (John 3:16) in and total submission to (1 John 5:2-5) He who atoned for our sins (1 John 2:2) and bought us at the price of His very life (1 Corinthians 6:20)! While our feeble attempts to “carve out” a legacy in a fallen world where sin is rampant and “chance” often dictates the results of one’s best intentions (Ecclesiastes 9:11), life is far

from meaningless (Ecclesiastes 1). It is not what happens to us that defines who we are but the rhythm of response to the mountains, valleys and daily events in our lives that defines our character! To obtain a legacy that truly matters we are not to merely let life happen but are to seek, know and obey God’s will for our lives (Romans 12:1-2). To accomplish this, we are not to be satisfied with being mere babes in Christ but are meant to humbly come before His throne of grace so that in total submission we might “become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13)! A legacy unto the Lord is a life lived for the Lord! The following sermon is going to use my experience learning to play a guitar to help explain some of the steps necessary to offer one’s life as a sweet fragrance unto God.

### Step 1: Being Born Again

How does one get the full measure of Christ as their eternal legacy? While this seems



like an easy question, the answer is not easily obtained. Since Christ often used parables to help explain complex truth, I am going to use my experience of learning to play the guitar to help explain the complexities of striving to obtain holiness. As a bi-vocational pastor I tend to work many long hours and as such God has told me to develop one or more hobbies to rest and “recharge” my batteries. Since I was a small boy, I always wanted to

play an instrument. I tried playing the trumpet in high school, but it required a lot of wind and I got easily bored and dare I say annoyed with my lack of progress. Our church has been blessed with many great musicians but the instrument that I have always admired is the guitar. It requires no wind and has a mere six strings so foolishly I thought to myself, how hard can it be to play? If I wanted to learn to how to play a guitar my first step of course was to get a guitar! While I could try to play “air guitar” and go through the motions of making imaginary chords and hitting imaginary strings the best such an exercise could do is make me look foolish for everyone knows that imaginary guitars cannot produce sound much less music!

Likewise, if one wants to “make obedient music” in God’s kingdom then one must first have His Spirit living inside of them. While the actions of non-Christians have occasionally led to the furthering of God’s kingdom (Exodus 7:3-4; Matthew 7:21-23), without the Spirit to guide one in the truth concerning God (John 16:13) one remains outside the vine and incapable of



bearing good fruit (John 15). While admission into God’s kingdom is impossible for any human to earn (Ephesians 2:8-9), it is a gracious gift offered to anyone perishing in their sin (John 3:16)! The moment one believes in the atoning sacrifice of the Son (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2) and asks Him to be the Lord of their lives (Romans 10:9) one is “born again not of a natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1:13). Becoming a “new creation” is a radical transformation from

spiritual death to everlasting life (1 John 5:11). Having God’s Spirit living inside a person means not only is one adopted into God’s family (John 1:12) but one also receives spiritual gifts to perform divinely assigned roles in His kingdom (1 Corinthians 12). What was once foolishness in one’s sight (1 Corinthians 1:18) becomes the bread and life by which one lives (Mathew 4:4; John 14:6). No longer do worship songs, reading the Bible and prayers seem senseless but instead they become heart-felt words that leap and resonate unspeakable joy (1 Peter 1:7-9) of having received every spiritual blessing in Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). Like I could not play guitar without physical guitar neither can a person play beautiful music of submission and service in God’s kingdom without His Spirit.

## **Step 2: Learning from the Teacher**

After one has possession of a guitar the next step is to get a teacher. While the standard acoustic guitar has only six strings it has some 20 frets, 120 different notes and literally thousands of chord combinations. If that was not intimidating enough there are pentatonic scales, the CAGE system, licks, and genres of playing ranging from blues, country, flamenco and

jazz to punk, reggae, rock, soul, and pop! As I looked at my first guitar, I remembered my dismal attempt at playing the trumpet and soon realized my only hope of learning this



instrument was to obtain a teacher. While randomly placing one fingers on the strings to “bang” out a tune will produce noise it will unlikely qualify as music! I don’t think anyone truly learns how to play an instrument without first getting instructions. Even those who are “self taught” obtained their understanding of music theory, how to play chords and fingerpick from YouTube videos and written instructions of other players. The search for the “right” teacher is

a daunting task! Patience, knowledge, the ability to play and ultimately the right teaching methods were all things I took into consideration. I finally chose a friend I grew up with who had his maters in guitar as my first teacher ... and did he ever earn his money!

If it is necessary to get the right teacher to learn guitar, how much more necessary is it to get the right Teacher to help us learn to serve well in God’s kingdom? While becoming born again fills the believer with unspeakable joy from his/her miraculous transformation and adoption into God’s family, he/she still needs to be taught how to walk in the steps of Jesus!



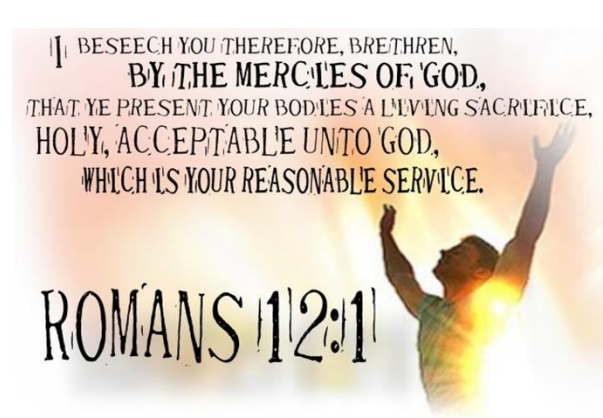
The Bible for instance is an amazing love letter from God (Psalms 119:97-104) but without an expert interpreter it is nearly impossible to understand much lest put into practice (James 1:22)! Believers also need the divine aid of a Comforter in times of trouble to teach them how to persevere so that they might become “mature and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2-4) and to obtain victory over the rulers, authorities, and “powers of the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). And while other believers can build one up in the

faith (1 Thessalonians 5:11) and spur one onto good deeds (Hebrews 10:24), they are pale teachers in comparison to the Holy Spirit of God who’s power one was converted in the first place (Romans 2:29)! Who better than the Spirit of Truth to teach us God’s word (John 16:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17) and who better to protect us from those who hate us because our Light exposes their evil deeds (John 3:20) than He who is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4)? Since the Spirit knows all things about God because He is part of the Godhead (1

Corinthians 2:11-16), He is unquestionably the very best Teacher to train believers to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:16)!

### Step 3: Breaking the “Baby” Rhythm

The pain of change often throws one into a sea of complacency, making growth nearly impossible! While those six strings on the guitar were not intimidating when I first looked at them, once soft flesh pressed on them, I soon learned sounding good meant temporary pain! If I wanted to make a chord sound good, then I simply had no other choice but to press on the



strings with a lot of pressure which was painful but necessary to keep the strings from “buzzing” or “muting” and sounding bad! Likewise, mere babes in Christ quickly learn that asking Jesus to crucify the evil desires of their hearts is a painful thing to endure! While those born of the Spirit have “died to sin” and have had “the old self crucified” (Romans 6:1-7) this does not negate the struggle between the flesh and the spirit for control over one’s thoughts, words, and deeds (Galatians 5:17). If

one truly wants a legacy that matters, then as painful as it might be one needs to press on towards the goal (Philippians 1:13-14) of becoming more like Jesus which inevitably means no longer living and loving the ways of this world (1 John 2:15-27). This can only be done by asking Jesus to never stop helping one remove the sinful pleasures of one’s heart and to renew one’s mind daily (Romans 12:1-2)! How sad it is that many believers remain “babes” simply because they refuse to endure temporary pain despite even though it is the key to inviting Jesus to plow furrows of righteousness in their hearts!

### Step 4: Inviting God to Change Us

As I started to learn to play, I soon realized the value of repetition. When I first made a “C” chord and strummed it I was delighted with my playing right up until my teacher said to keep strumming at the same pace but after four strums switch to a “D” chord, then after four more strums go back to a “C” chord. While this task seemed impossible to ever master eventually what is called “muscle memory” kicked in and to my surprise and delight I could make the chords and play without even thinking! While muscle memory helps one become a great guitar player it is often a ferocious enemy of spiritual growth! When the words of our prayers become a mere mechanical recitation of Christian doctrine and our reading of the Bible a mere check mark on a “to do list” with no intent of change (James 1:22-25), then our spiritual walk with Christ is at best a baby’s crawl and at worst pure vanity because it only seeks praise

from others (Matthew 6:5-14). If the offering of our lives is to be a sweet fragrance unto the

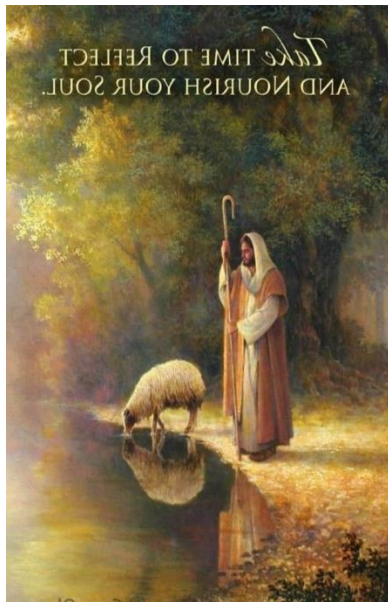


Lord, then all our heart, mind, soul, and strength (Matthew 22:37) must praise Him while serving Him! Also, while repetition of a basic pattern is easy and comfortable to us it is not acceptable unto God who is constantly asking us to become more like Him! While it would have been easier to never stop playing my three chord songs without any pattern, my teacher pressed me to explore new techniques, chords, and genres so that I might become a better payer! Likewise, to grow

spiritually one must always be ready to say YES to the Lord Jesus to serve Him in any manner He wishes for in doing so one will soon realize one can do anything through Christ Jesus our Lord who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13)!

### Step 5: Taking Time to be Holy

The final step in obtaining a spiritual legacy in the eyes of Christ is to never stop taking time to be holy. Since my teacher was a classical guitar player I soon switched from a “little”



strumming and started fingerpicking. The first pattern that I learned was basic, easy to play but was not too easy to master. Due to its simplicity I tended to play faster and faster and as result not only was my tempo off, but I made a lot of mistakes! We are often like my fast guitar playing too busy to make good spiritual music! For example, it is easy to merely let life happen and get so busy with “worldly stuff” or running from one ministry to another that there simply is no time left to bask in the presence of the Lord and be fed by His mighty hand! Too many believers don’t take time to be holy and as a result do not reach the fullness of Christ in their lives and die as mere babes! No wonder people say that “busy” is an acronym for “**Being Under Satan’s Yoke**”<sup>1</sup>! My favorite fingerpicking style that I have learned is called “Travis Picking.” It is methodical and easy to maintain the tempo because it forces the player to alternate

the thumb between base notes and the fingers from high to low strings. In the same manner when we alternate between taking care of one’s family, doing ministry service and taking time to sit at the feet of Jesus our rhythm of life becomes fertile ground in which spiritual health can

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<sup>1</sup> Not my quote but I am not sure who originally made up this saying.

flourish. This of course will only happen when one sees taking time with Jesus in total submission to His will as our utmost priority of living an honorable unto God life. So let me conclude as I began: a legacy unto the Lord is a life lived for the Lord!